

Speaking points for CDADI Chair Triantafillos Loukarelis on 31 May 2022 at the Launch Conference of the Combating Hate Speech in Sport Project

Strasbourg

Welcome:

Thank very much you for inviting me to speak at the launch of this new project, which is **both very relevant and timely**, as it addresses the pressing issue of hate speech.

This project can make a strong contribution towards supporting **member states, sport clubs, sports association and other key stakeholders to implement policies and practices in line with** the newly adopted **Recommendation** of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers **on combating hate speech**.

Moderator/IRENA: Can you introduce us to the new recommendation?

Two weeks ago, the **Ministers of Foreign Affairs** of the Council of Europe's 46 member states **adopted** on 20 May in Turin under the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers **this new CM Recommendation** (2022)16 on Combating Hate Speech.

Due to the complex nature of hate speech, it was important that this Recommendation was **prepared by a joint-expert committee under the guidance** of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion (CDADI) and the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI).

The recommendation is **built on the case law of the European Court on Human Rights** and draws upon existing Council of Europe standards, such as ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 15 and CM Recommendation, CM/Rec(2018)2 on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries, and on the legacy of the No Hate Speech Movement Youth Campaign. It not only covers offline but also **online hate speech** and its impact on European societies.

The draft recommendation provides guidance to member states and key actors on how to put in place a **comprehensive and properly calibrated set of legal and non-legal measures**, which reflect the principle of proportionality. This set of measures covers the following areas:

- The legal framework for preventing and combating hate speech, which should be comprehensive and effective, include criminal, civil and administrative law provisions and legislation regarding online hate speech;
- Recommendations for self- and co-regulatory procedures for addressing hate speech and in particular online hate speech;
- Awareness-raising measures, education, training as well as counter- and alternative speech;
- Providing support to those targeted by hate speech,
- Monitoring and analysis of hate speech, and

- Increased national co-ordination and international co-operation.

Moderator IRENA: *It sounds like the recommendation tries to cover all possible measures that can be taken to address hate speech. Are there specific sections that are relevant for our work in the sports field?*

Yes, the Recommendation aims indeed to cover the issue of hate speech in a comprehensive way. It provides for guidelines for **preventing and combatting hate speech through a range of proportionate measures**.

To reach this goal, a big number of **key stakeholders were involved in the drafting process**, member states, intergovernmental organisations such as the EU, UN and OSCE, and civil society organisations.

This Recommendation also provides guidelines for private businesses, media, political bodies, civil society organisations and other actors and it is therefore **also addressed at all stakeholders in the field of sports, and very relevant for your efforts to address hate speech**.

Moderator IRENA: *can you give some concrete examples what can be done to prevent and combat hate speech in Sports?*

Let me elaborate on some of the areas covered by the recommendation which I believe touches on the work done in sports.

To address hate speech in sports we need to **gather data**.

We need get a grip on the number of incidents, information on the perpetrators of hate speech and on those who are targeted by hate speech. Such data is necessary for improvement regarding the prevention of hate speech, victim support and engagement with the wider public. And we need it in general for policy development.

Education is a fundamental pillar of any strategy against hate speech. It is essential that we learn what hate speech is, why it is a threat to human rights and democracy, how to recognise it and how best to respond to it.

We also need to **raise awareness** about how **hate speech impacts** individuals and groups and creates barriers for those targeted **to engage in sports clubs and events**.

Formal and informal human rights education is essential for **preventing** effectively and with long term impact the spreading of **stereotypes, discrimination and hate with**. Such human rights education should be combined with **training on media literacy**, including social media literacy, which provides essential competencies to **critically assess content** and engage with it.

The Council of Europe's Anti-Discrimination Department has **developed a range of online and offline training tools** for promoting the rights of groups that often fall victim to hate speech and discrimination, and for strengthening intercultural learning and integration. I invite you to explore these tools within your project.

Self-regulation is another important tool for preventing and combating hate speech. Building the capacity of sport clubs, sport federations, trainers and supporter clubs to prevent and combat hate speech through education can be combined with the adoption of a self-regulatory **Code of Ethics** that is widely promoted, supported and implemented, if needed through sanctions.

Working on the issue of hate speech also invites us to **review critically our own conduct**. Using inclusive speech and refraining from spreading prejudice and hate speech strengthens our ability to build a platform with others including those generally targeted by hate speech and address the issue more effectively.

Support for victims is another important strand of dealing with hate speech.

Hate speech can have a **devastating impact on victims**. At the same time, it often has a **long lasting and divisive impact on a community** such as the sports community or a sports association, because hate speech towards a single victim or towards a group within such a community **signals that the victim and the group he or she belongs to are not equally valued within the community or even not welcome at all**.

It is at those moments that the **community leaders**, such the heads of the sport clubs involved, the head of the relevant sports association, the coach or the captain of a team **need to stand up and protect the direct victim and the group indirectly targeted**, clearly acknowledge that they are part of the sports community and react, if needed, through imposing effective sanctions. Those sanctions can be directed at individuals, for example a stadium ban or reporting an offense to the police. Other kinds of sanctions can be imposed in order to put pressure on bigger groups of perpetrators, such as for example the interruption or early termination of a match.

Action by sports community leaders should contribute to mobilise the community as a whole to show their support and to stand by those targeted by hate speech by showing solidarity and exposing the perpetrators of hate speech.

It is also important to provide clear and comprehensive information on such incidents and how they are dealt with. Such measures are essential for **healing to take place** and to re-build trust of those targeted by hate speech in the integrity and inclusiveness of the sports community.

Such an inclusive sports community will also understand that **redress mechanisms are needed for both: the victim and the group targeted as a whole**. And it will be able to build resilience towards the temptation to resort to hate speech, **prevent escalation** and deal properly with hate speech cases when they take place.

Sadly, we see too often that badly chosen words lead to a **re-victimization of the victims** and reinforce existing stereotypes. It is therefore important **that sports community leaders build a strong relation with those who are or could become targets of hate speech**, even before an incident happens.

Finally, **ensuring diversity** and the full and equal participation of persons with different personal characteristics and backgrounds is important at all levels in sports, be it in the management of clubs, in teams, in sports associations and supporters clubs. Such diversity strengthens resilience against hate speech and provides for a safe sporting environment for all.

The Council of Europe **has developed three new tools** to support our partners to develop alternative human rights narratives to counter hate speech. Those could also be helpful for inclusive sports communities:

- **Hate Calculator** is a tool to assess the severity of a given hate speech incident, its potential to spread online and its damage to individuals and groups. Based on the results you will be able to better judge whether to push back, report (and to whom) or to ignore a given hate speech incident.
- The [Human Rights Narrative Builder](#) tool allows you to develop your arguments for promoting and defending human rights with regard to a particular issue. Thus, it helps you to clarify your messages and to push back against hate.
- The [online toolbox](#) will help you to develop a communication strategy. It contains [step by step guidelines](#) and [checklists](#) to help you to communicate online. It furthermore explains the pros and cons of different [social media platforms](#) and how to use them for campaigning by providing [technical tips](#) and advice on measuring impact

Finally, a **multi-stakeholder approach** is essential. Sports clubs and federations need to work together with the coaches, the players and supporter clubs to address hate speech. Beyond that, sport organisations need to work with the media to ensure that hate speech and spectator violence are covered in a way that avoids re-using stereotypes and re-victimising those targeted.

Equally, cooperation with public authorities and law enforcement services needs to be in place to ensure that hate speech is tackled effectively in the field of sport, that victims of hate speech receive appropriate support and that the prohibition of certain forms of hate speech under criminal, civil and administrative law is enforced.

Moderator IRENA: *You are the Director of UNAR, the Italian National Office against Racism. Have you worked on discrimination in the context of sports?*

Yes, UNAR recently launched an awareness raising video campaign against Racism in Sports. If we have time we could show it.

We believe that sports is an essential part of peoples' lives both as a personal hobby and as spectators of sports events. Sport should be accessible, enjoyable and safe for everyone, and therefore there is no place in sport for racism, sexism, LGBTI-phobia and hate speech.

I believe addressing hate speech in sport must be a priority also in Italy, and I'm happy to share that UNAR is working closely with the Italian coalition of civil society organisations and other national partners in Italy for combating hate speech in sports.