

International Conference

**“ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH IN THE MEDIA:
the role of Regulatory Authorities and the Judiciary”**

Zagreb, 6-7 November 2018

CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hate speech targeting ethnic, religious, sexual minorities, immigrants and other groups and individuals is and continues to be a widespread phenomenon in Europe.
2. Countering hate speech is a complex and multidimensional task which requires coordination of different stakeholders: states, international organisations, international and national NGOs and businesses, in particular internet companies such as social media.

At the national level, parliamentarians, law-makers, political leaders, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, journalists, national media regulatory authorities and self-regulatory bodies, civil society, academics, educators, internet companies are encouraged to work together to identify further action to combat hate speech:

- a) Political leaders must assume their responsibility: Europe should remain a region of peace and prosperity. Diversity is to be taken as a value and advantage, and not as a pretext for the division of society. As regards migration, political leaders should refrain from hate speech and instead engage with people's genuine concerns about migration, promote an open discussion of solutions and provide responses to real concerns;
- b) Law-makers, judges, and prosecutors should find the right balance between protecting freedom of expression and restricting forms of expression that seek to incite violence, hostility and discrimination: the European standards and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights provide valuable guidance in defining and addressing hate speech. A regular evaluation exercise should be put in place focusing on whether the national legislation adequately reflects and implements these principles and standards. Specific training modules on hate speech should be developed;
- c) National media regulatory authorities should play an important role in promoting democracy, a culture of tolerance and diversity: their engagement in combating hate speech includes transparency, professionalism, accountability, inclusiveness, and continued cooperation with all relevant institutional bodies and organisations. Ethical standards and codes of conduct, quality journalism, involvement, development of critical skills through media and information literacy activities, human rights education, campaigns against stereotypes and populism, regional and international cooperation should be further promoted, developed and supported;

- d) Media are a powerful force in society and have a corresponding responsibility in addressing hate speech: the media community is encouraged to further develop a system of collective self-regulation based on agreed codes of ethics and mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints on hate speech.

Media and information literacy programmes should be supported and promoted. Educational programmes and training materials especially for young people about countering hate speech should be developed.

Media are invited to engage comprehensively with the public attitudes towards migrants and refugees, not only by refraining from hate speech and providing fact-based information on migration but also by emphasising emotive and value-driven arguments about migration, shared values and the positive impact of migration in our societies;

- e) Media self-regulatory bodies play an important role in promoting the knowledge and understanding of ethical rules and quality journalism: they are encouraged to adopt and disseminate recommendations and guidelines on countering hate speech offline and online and to offer trainings to their members;
- f) Civil society, including victim's associations, should be supported in its efforts: individuals in both formal and informal organisations should be motivated to get involved in awareness-raising activities and campaigns against hate speech. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have an enormous potential for dissemination of information and can be used as a space for citizenship building and participation for young people to promote diversity and a culture of tolerance;
- g) The internet has become one of the principal means for individuals to exercise their right to freedom of expression: it offers essential tools for participation in activities and debates relating to questions of politics or public interest. The internet also enables hate speech to spread with unprecedented speed and volume, while its proponents and protagonists often remain anonymous. A charter of ethics for social media regulation should be created in order to comprehensively address hate speech and harmful content;
- h) Educational systems (formal and informal) have a vital role to play in ensuring a hate-free public communication sphere of the future: special courses and training programmes (not only in schools but also in continued education) seeking to promote a culture of tolerance and diversity are one of the best means to combat hate speech.
3. Media and information literacy provides an effective and engaging platform for applying critical thinking skills to a wide range of issues. Activities and actions pertaining to the media, information and internet literacy should be fostered to raise awareness about hate speech and the risks it poses for democracy and individuals.

4. The Council of Europe together with other international organisations should continue to play a sustained role as a coordinator of wider campaigning efforts against hate speech, and promote an environment favourable to a culture of tolerance and to respect for human rights. Activities/projects at the national, regional and international levels should continue to be part of the Council of Europe's continued action in combating hate speech.

As part of its concerted efforts, the Council of Europe should capitalise on these conclusions and engage in a process of reassessment and further development of the currently applicable standards on hate speech, with a view to developing approaches capable of addressing the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon and providing graduated responses and guidance to the member states and other relevant stakeholders.