



# Addressing hate speech in the media:

the role of regulatory  
authorities and  
the judiciary



INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE

ACTIVITY  
REPORT

6-7 November 2018  
Zagreb, Croatia

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Agencija za elektroničke medije  
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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**“Addressing hate speech in the media:  
the role of regulatory authorities and the judiciary”**

Organised by the Council of Europe in partnership  
with the Croatian Agency for Electronic Media

**Zagreb, Croatia, 6-7 November 2018**

ACTIVITY REPORT

By Tanja Kerševan Smokvina

## Overview of the conference

More than 130 participants and speakers from 28 Council of Europe (CoE) member states met in Zagreb, Croatia, on 6-7 November 2018 to discuss how hate speech is tackled by national authorities and at the international level. The conference was organised in Zagreb in partnership of the CoE and Croatian Agency of Electronic Media (AEM), with the support of the Embassies of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

The roles and practices of the judiciary, national media regulatory authorities and media self-regulatory bodies were in focus of the discussions, which highlighted also the responsibility of the media to avoid divisive narratives and rhetoric of hate in reporting on migrants and refugees, and for making their voices heard. The conference further explored how media literacy programmes can raise awareness about hate speech and its risks for democracy, while empowering citizens of all demographic groups for critical understanding of media, as well as engaging in dialogue, counter-speech and alternative narratives.

The line-up of 34 speakers brought an extensive range of expertise from diverse sectors. Primarily aimed at regulators and judiciary of Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia, “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo,<sup>1</sup> the conference was attended by prominent legal and media experts, media literacy experts, judges, prosecutors, journalists, representatives of numerous European regulatory and self-regulatory bodies and civil society organizations from a larger selection of countries, as well as representatives of the Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, UNESCO and embassies. It is important to note the participation of a senior representative of Facebook.

The conclusions of the conference pointed to the scale of hate speech affecting ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, immigrants and other groups in Europe, and stressed that the fight against it is a complex and multidimensional process requiring coordination of various stakeholders, including institutional and non-institutional actors, politicians, legislators, regulators, judges, prosecutors, media, digital intermediaries, journalists, civil society organisations and academia.

The conference was covered by several media, including the Croatian Public Service Broadcaster Hrvatska Radiotelevizija which reported on it in the main evening news and two other live studio interviews with speakers, a national radio network which broadcast a report with recorded statements, the most circulated daily Večernji list, the Croatian news agency HINA and various Croatian and regional online media.

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

## Opening and keynote speeches

**Patrick Penninckx**, Head of Information Society Department, Council of Europe, underlined the importance of discussing hate speech in the global context and highlighted the range of activities, standards and measures of the Council of Europe addressing it. The Croatian Minister of Culture **Nina Obuljen Koržinek** stressed that hate speech negatively affects the whole society and pointed to the new challenges in the digital environment. She emphasized the need for legislative reform, as well as for education and media literacy, encouraging citizens to critically analyse news and information. **Mario Horvatić**, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, emphasised the importance of the conference, held in Zagreb at the time of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of Europe. In his remarks, **Robert Tomljenović**, Vice-President of the Croatian Electronic Media Council at AEM, said that, both, regulators and judiciary, shall gain a better understanding of the new media landscape and the role they play in it. To him, it is equally important that internet intermediaries take over their share of responsibility. What is needed, is a wider cooperation of all actors in the society and more focus on media literacy which remains the core systematic approach to raising awareness on hate speech.

Keynote speeches, offered by **Sejal Parmar** (Central European University) and **Tanja Kerševan Smokvina** (Wagner-Hatfield), set the scene of the conference by explaining the international legal foundations and national approaches. **Parmar** (CEU) presented the concept of hate speech in the framework of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe instruments, and the uneasy balance between freedom of expression and hate speech. Outlining that hate speech is covered by media laws, criminal codes, and codes of conduct/ethics, she stressed the importance of independence of regulatory authorities and courts; training provided to judiciary, law enforcement agencies and other key state actors, particularly on issues concerning online hate speech; as well as clear policy guidelines and easily accessible complaint procedure. **Kerševan** (WH) pointed to the lack of published data on recorded cases and scientific research on the root causes of hate speech and correlation between hate speech online and its offline effects. She discussed national approaches and current regulatory practices in the context of the upcoming changes brought about by the revision of the AVMS Directive. She underlined the importance of self-regulatory bodies and civil society organisations, and stressed the need for more clarity and guidance in the implementation of the hate speech regulation, as well as collaboration on the inter-institutional and transnational basis. She called for regulators to assume more responsibility, and apart from classic regulatory intervention, use their knowledge, skills and voice to engage in research, dialogue and awareness raising.

## Hate speech in social media

**Elvana Thaçi** (CoE) interviewed **Gabriella Cseh**, Director of Policy for Russia and CEE (Facebook), on actions performed by Facebook in combatting hate speech on their platform, especially in terms of promoting responsible journalistic reporting, as well as content moderation and removal in line with international and national standards of freedom of

expression. The presented policies and measures of one of the largest social media platforms attracted a lot of attention, numerous questions and also criticism from the conference participants. **Cseh** informed that the company is making large investments in solutions combining AI and human resources. She revealed they will be hiring 20.000 moderators and if that won't suffice, they will hire more. They are not looking for hate speech pro-actively, it has to be reported by viewers. In responding to the questions from the audience, she claimed that it was very difficult to object false narratives. FB makes distinction in the treatment of disinformation and hate speech. While hate speech is to be removed, in case of disinformation campaigns, if they are led by fake accounts, the reaction of FB is also rather simple, and they have a special team for that. However, if it is not done by bots, it is more complicated. She said there was not many fact checkers whom FB can work with directly. What they do in certain cases is pushing down the visibility of content.

### **National regulators in the digital environment**

The panel discussion moderated by **Stanislav Bender** (AEM, HR) brought together representatives of national regulatory authorities to discuss dilemmas and challenges in implementation of national and European standards on hate speech in the digital environment. **Asja Rokša Zubčević** (CRA, BA) stressed that the independence of NRAs, being an absolute prerequisite for effective performance of regulators, is increasingly at stake. She noted wide tendencies to reduce regulatory independence or powers. As one of co-authors of the Study "Media regulatory Authorities and Hate speech: Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe", prepared under the umbrella of the CoE JUFREX project, she underlined the importance of such initiatives, build on regional collaboration. **Rosa Cavallaro** (AGCOM, IT) explained that the Italian regulator does not have possibility to sanction hate speech, but still applies a range of responses, including developing media literacy programmes. In her comprehensive intervention, **Elfa Ýr Gylfadóttir** (Media Commission, IS, vice-chair of CDMSI) presented the current forms of disinformation and how the information with emotional effect is more likely to be distributed on social media. She noted that communication is not just about distribution of correct facts, but also values and different narratives. She admitted that with the adoption of the new AVMSD, at the beginning of the period of 21 months the EU member states have at their disposal for transposing it to their national laws, most of them have no clue on what to do. She pointed to a question of scale; there is an enormous amount of content that cannot be tackled by traditional regulatory approaches. She stressed that technology is making the life of regulators more challenging, therefore media regulators will be looking into testing new, also technology-based approaches, while also encouraging people to be critical, engaging in media literacy, and building partnerships and trust. A special challenge to which she doesn't see the answers at this point is the issue of jurisdiction related to the extension of scope of the AVMSD to video-sharing-platforms (VSP). **Bissera Zankova** (Media 21, BG) also highlighted the constant challenges to independence of regulatory bodies and presented the results of the survey carried out by COMPACT, a transnational project within Horizon 2020, indicating that social media by their specific nature require to be overseen by newly set regulatory

bodies or extended powers of current audiovisual media regulators. **Adam Baxter** (Ofcom, UK) emphasised that regulators are rightfully concerned around the issues of hate and incitement, but freedom of expression has to be equally paid attention to. He described the Ofcom approach to hate speech as agnostic; they do not claim they want to regulate it, what they find important is to make a contribution to the debate. In terms of enforcement, he highlighted the importance of independence and transparency of regulators and availability of meaningful sanction powers. He also reported that Ofcom recently issued a hefty sanction of £ 200.000.

## Judiciary in the digital environment

In the first session of the panel, focused on the role, practices and digital challenges in judicial consideration of hate speech, the panel moderator **Pavlo Pushkar** (CoE) presented the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) approach to hate speech. Two panellists, both lawyers at the ECtHR, **Kirill Belogubets** and **Khagani Guliyev**, joined in an in-depth discussion of the ECtHR's case law. It was pointed out to the *Perinçek v. Switzerland* (2013) case, a landmark case, which from the legal point of view should be a main point of reference as regards the judicial approach to harmful speech. If there is no call to violence or justification of violence, hatred and intolerance, the national authorities should not be invited to intervene. The rights of others should be dealt with by defamation laws and not be connected to hate speech. There should be a high standard of scrutiny for the utilization of criminal laws, hate speech interpreted in a limited manner, criminal offenses precisely defined and used in a very restricted mode. **Belogubets** also argued that sometimes it is better to tolerate hate speech instead of having intrusive governments. As regards the *Delfi AS v. Estonia* (2015) case, he explained that the case is about the role of intermediaries, but stressed that their responsibility should be applied proportionally, depending on their size.

The second sub-panel, composed by representatives of national judiciary and related bodies, examined their questions and challenges in defining hate speech, striking the right balance between freedom of expression and hate speech; implementing the standards resulting from the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights; judicial procedure challenging the decisions of the NRAs; and emerging issues brought by the digital (r)evolution. **Alexandru Tanase** (Venice Commission, former President of Constitutional Court, MD) used, among others, the case of the Pittsburgh synagogue shootings to illustrate how, once infiltrated in a society, hate cannot be controlled. He explained the limits of freedom of expression on a number of examples from the judiciary practice and by pointing to the proportionality test. **Tomas Åberg** (Nåthatsgranskaren, SE) presented the work of the social media hate crime examiner, engaged in disclosure and reporting of hate speech on social media to the judiciary, in cooperation with the Swedish police. Their goal is strengthening the expertise and methodology within the criminal justice system and reducing the number of unreported online hate crimes. **Eva Steinberger** (Judge, DE) and **Ivan Glavić** (County State Attorney's Office in Zagreb, Delegation of the Republic of Croatia to the Cybercrime Convention Committee, HR) described practical challenges of the national judiciaries in judicial treatment

of hate speech. The case law is rich, but it is constantly evolving, and each case the judiciary deal with is context dependent and has to be assessed on a case by case basis.

An important outcome of the discussions within the judiciary panel is that judiciary itself, like the law enforcement agencies, require specialist knowledge to counteract hate speech. This involves not only enforcing law against a particular incident, but understanding broader hate speech context, why hate speech had been used, is it an instrument of a larger campaign of seeding intolerance, negative stereotyping, eventually inciting to action in the long-term. Judges and prosecutors are moral authorities for dealing with allegations of hate speech – there is an external and internal element thus to what judiciary does – they don't only ensure impartial application of the laws, but also enforce moral and ethical standards in the course of the proceedings. However, the judge or law enforcement should not deal with allegations of hate speech on the basis of what they personally like or dislike, but their actions should be completely neutral.

### Media self-regulation

A varied and dynamic group of stakeholders composed the panel discussing the challenges and opportunities for media self-regulatory mechanisms. The moderator **Alf Bjarne Johnsen** (Norwegian Press Complaints Commission and Verdens Gang Media House, NO) initiated the debate by an overview of the questions related to the role of journalism and its self-regulatory bodies and chances for effective implementation of editorial standards and professional ethics. He stressed the availability of tools and pointed to the Ethical Journalism Network's 5-point test for hate speech.

**Daphne Koene** (Netherlands Press Council, NL) presented the Dutch case as a good practice and one of the possible solutions in making self-regulation more effective. She underlined that their activity is not limited to complaints handling, but they also make statements on their own initiative. Their blog is widely republished. When dealing with complaints, they normally process individual complaints, but, again, if there is a collective interest in place, they also take into account reports made by institutions that defend such interests. Besides, they co-organise debates, participate in meetings, and carry out research on what can be done to improve the existing approaches. **Ljiljana Zurovac** (Press Council, BA) also showed that the mandate of self-regulatory body is not limited to processing complaints. Among others, they engage in training activities aimed at journalists, students of journalism, citizens and judiciary. They also launched a campaign "Stop! Hate Speech" covering 7 most visited online media. She stressed that freedom without responsibility is anarchy, and pointed out also to challenges faced by self-regulatory associations in the region, namely the political pressures and misuse of defamation law, lack of resources due to poor economic situation in media, low transparency on online media and a lack of proper understanding of the role of the media in democracy.



**Menno Ettema** (No Hate Speech, CoE) informed that hate speech will be in the focus of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its 6<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle (next year). Within the No Hate Speech movement, they launched a youth campaign mobilising people to combat hate speech and promote antidiscrimination. They built a network of national campaigns in 45 states; national authorities are also participating. According to him, multi stakeholder approach is one of the key strategies. Monitoring is also important, especially if qualitative, describing hate speech, the narratives behind it and its results. Also, he was of the opinion that self-regulation must come with education and training, and saw a possibility of self-regulation to engage more with tech providers. In case of grey areas, he wondered, the tech companies may wish to transfer such cases for the assessment of independent bodies. **Mikko Salo** (Faktabaari, FI; also EU High-Level Expert Group on Fake News) stressed that while hate speech is illegal, disinformation is difficult to regulate. According to him spilling on bad news can make the things worse and the more we talk on fake news the more we legitimise it. He welcomed the set of EC Roadmaps to implement the Code of Practice on disinformation published on 16 October 2018 as something to follow and praised the work of Reporters without Borders who created the Journalism Trust Initiative and gathered a high level group of experts from entities that create communication architecture and norms in a joint effort addressing disinformation by a set of trust and transparency standards.

**Marius Lukošiūnas** (UNESCO) stressed that hate speech is a collective responsibility of public officials, media and other actors. He sees an opportunity in a global self-regulatory initiative within the framework of European standardisation organisations creating a certification mechanism to be used on social media and provide safeguards on the source of media. He underlined the importance of quality journalism and pointed to the CoE initiative on quality journalism of which UNESCO is a part of. In South East Europe, they are supporting self-regulatory authorities in 7 countries, mainly through developing their capacity to address the digital challenges. He emphasised the need to reinforce and reinvent press councils in the world – they have to become gatekeepers of quality journalism in the digital world.

### Public debate on migration and refugees

in his address, **Tomáš Boček**, Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees (CoE), talked on how to avoid divisive narratives and the rhetoric of hate. He highlighted the need for humanistic reporting and making refugees' and migrants' voices heard, and in this regard underlined the special role of the media in engaging positively with the public attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

### Media literacy

The last panel examined how NRAs, self-regulatory bodies and other relevant stakeholders can promote media literacy to build critical thinking and enable media and their users to effectively respond to the rhetoric of hate. The moderator **Martina Chapman** (Mercury

Insights Limited, IE, MSI-JOQ) believes that media literacy is a dynamic concept that evolves in response to challenges that arise from changes in technological, social, cultural and political factors, often differing not only from country to country but also from sector to sector. She stressed that since media technology keeps evolving, media literacy is a life-long learning journey and a behaviour-change journey. This takes energy, insight, and a range of different stakeholders providing support to people at different stages of their personalized learning journey, but most of all, as stressed by **Chapman**, it takes time and long-term funding. She warned against seeing media literacy as some kind of magic bullet or panacea.

Not surprisingly, the panel was overrepresented with examples of practices from Nordic countries, which are often cited as leaders in promotion of media literacy. **Kristine Meek** (Norwegian Media Authority, NO) presented a long and elaborated tradition of Norwegian NRA with regards to media diversity and media literacy. Their efforts are supported by constant research on a national scale. They also engage in campaigns and produce teaching materials, tools and resources. **Saara Salomaa** (National Audiovisual Institute – KAVI, FI) described the Finnish approach to media literacy as comprehensive and inclusive. Many organisations are involved in promoting media literacy, such as NGOs, public and private, schools, libraries, kindergartens, museums. KAVI is responsible for governance and strategic work, research and reports, promotion of co-operative culture and awareness raising. She emphasized that media education is not a quick solution; and also that since education is mostly advocating for good, not against bad, being proactive, not just responsive, is also important.

**Lana Ciboci** (Association for Communication and Media Culture, HR) talked from the perspective of civil society organisations and highlighted their special contribution in media education, due to their specific role in society, bridging divisions between other stakeholders and supporting dialogue. Their special advantage is their access to adults and disadvantaged people and their mandate in providing lifelong support. She presented notable results including 800 workshops and lectures and more than 17500 participants, all achieved with only 20 active volunteers. Their efforts were recognised by the Evens Foundation which granted them a special jury prize for media education in 2017.

The importance of research was accentuated by the last presentation, offered by **Gitte Stald** (IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark Break, DK). She shared the findings of a recent research, carried out in the period of 2016-2018 among young people in Denmark. The study explored the young people's perceptions of democracy, information, debate, and participation. The study showed that 18-35 years old compared to 35+ mainly access to news via Facebook, use the traditional media for news less, but trust traditional media more than 35+. Similarly, they find Facebook much less trustworthy than 35+. They are more likely to change opinion when debating online, more often find that news stories online are not trustworthy and more often search for alternative information.

## Closing of the conference

The penultimate session of the conference offered a space for discussing the immediate take-home messages while also pointing to issues that – due to the scope of the conference – have not been discussed that broadly, for example the responses to data profiling, algorithmic processing and business models contributing to online distribution of disinformation and hate speech.

According to the conference Rapporteur **Tanja Kerševan Smokvina** (WH) one of the key messages was that the traditional regulatory frameworks are not adapt to digital challenges and not effective in combating hate speech online. The internet transmitted communication, in case of violations, calls for quick reactions, which are not possible in the current organisational frameworks and require different resources and approaches. The scale of the problem and lots of unanswered questions, especially with regards to jurisdiction, indicate lots of work for regulators, but also the need to create effective partnerships with other stakeholders, based on trust and surpassing the state borders. As confirmed through numerous examples at the conference, a range of responses is possible besides the classical regulatory or judicial tools.

**Lejla Dervišagić** (on behalf of CoE) presented a set of policy conclusions and recommendations for future activities. The comments from the floor highlighted that it should be clear from recommendations that media literacy programmes should address adequately all demographic groups, and also that the various activities planned should be ongoing, not project based, what opens a question of sustainability that should be effectively addressed. The revised policy conclusions and recommendations are attached at the end of this report (below). They include the possibility of reassessment and further development of the currently applicable standards on hate speech.

The closing speeches were delivered by **Patrick Penninckx** (CoE) and **Robert Tomljenović** (AEM). Both representatives of the organisers of the conference expressed a great satisfaction with the event and the quality of discussions. **Penninckx** called for a thorough rethinking of existing approaches, taking into consideration also the changed media habits and consumption patterns and altered roles of different stakeholders in the new media environment.

## Special event and guests

Alongside the conference, the screening of the movie *Utøya: July 22* was organised for the conference participants on 5 November 2018, as a reminder of the 2011 terror attack in Norway that left 77 people killed and several wounded. Throughout the duration of the conference, the Ambassadors of Norway **Astrid Versto** and of Sweden **Diana Madunic** were present at it with their teams, provided encouraging speeches at the evening reception and engaged in discussions with participants. The conference was attended by other members of

diplomatic corps in Zagreb, including the Israel Ambassador **Zina Kalay Kleitman**, and representatives of Danish, Finnish, French, British and Russian Embassies.

## Conclusions and 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 for young people, and other demographic groups, 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 the promotion of 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.

**Hate speech** and other, less extreme forms of derogatory and offensive language targeting ethnic, religious, sexual and other minorities, migrants and refugees and many other groups and individuals, are a widespread phenomenon within Europe. The Council of Europe and its member states have over decades developed a comprehensive range of standards and measures to curb expression that spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred, intolerance, discrimination and hostility, while guaranteeing everyone the right to freedom of expression and information.

**The international conference** examines how hate speech is regulated in different member states of the Council of Europe, focusing on the specific roles of the judiciary, national media regulatory authorities and media self-regulatory bodies. It further explores how media literacy programmes can raise awareness about hate speech and the risks it poses for democracy, empowering citizens to critically analyse news and information and develop counter-speech and alternative narratives.



The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) is an independent regulatory body for electronic media in Croatia. It grants concessions, issues licences, monitors the operations and programme contents and programme quotas of electronic media as prescribed by law, especially with a view to the protection of human rights as well as the rights of minors and consumers. The AEM passes secondary legislation acts, manages the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media and organizes, inter alia, projects and campaigns related to media literacy and gender equality.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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