

# Experiencing Hate Speech

Responses, Coping Strategies  
& Interventions

## Compendium



Smart for Democracy  
and Diversity

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# Introduction

For many people in Europe, June 2021 was the month of football. The EURO 2020 championship was one of the first sports events to take place after more than a year of empty stadiums and sports fans being confined in their homes without being able to participate in their favourite activity at all. The sight of fans gathering in European cities and rejoicing in the victories of their teams was supposed to be a joyful one – and for the most part it was, even amidst all the uncertainty around possible COVID-19 infections. Incidentally, June 2021 was also the month when the Hungarian government, led by Viktor Orbán, prime-minister, leader of the ruling party Fidesz and one of the main proponents of the European take on “illiberal democracy”, passed a controversial law that prohibits depicting LGBTQ+ issues in Hungarian schoolbooks on the pretence of protecting the pupils against paedophilia and sexualisation. The fact that this legislation was passed did not surprise anyone given the long-term political developments in Hungary and its slow but steady path towards a populist conservative authoritarian society. However, more people follow football than political developments in Eastern Europe, and that is how the Hungarian anti-LGBTQ+ law has become widely known and discussed.

In a series of events that started with Hungarian football fans raising homophobic banners during their national team’s match against Portugal in Budapest’s Puskas stadium [1], followed by booing at Irish players for ‘taking the knee’, a gesture that is widely interpreted as anti-racist and made by many teams at the beginning of their matches in support of the Black Lives Matter movement [2], and perhaps culminating in (but not ending with) the row over the rainbow flag projected on the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany, the EURO2020 ceased to be only about football and became a political event.

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/16/uefa-receive-report-on-homophobic-banner-at-hungary-v-portugal-match>

[2] <https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53098516>






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These events reflect the deep-seated tensions and cultural conflicts around racism, discrimination, and minority rights. When England's national team Black and Muslim players were abused on social media after they lost in penalties the final against Italy, the British Home Secretary Priti Patel took to Twitter to condemn the abuse (and became herself a target for people blaming her for being a hypocrite because earlier that month she had criticised the gesture of taking the knee as being too political).

There are several takeaways from the events and heated discussions surrounding the politicisation of the EURO 2020 matches. Perhaps the most visible one is this: at the beginning of 21st century, Europe still has a problem with discrimination and racism. Although the continent is home to so many different people of all skin colours, sexual orientations, genders, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds (and if you are talented, you have a chance to make it to a national football team), not everyone enjoys equal opportunities, and, most importantly, not everyone is treated equally. Black and minority background players are treated differently and can be victims of a horrifying amount of online abuse, hate speeches and threats whenever they lose (even though everyone sometimes loses in football or any other sport).

Another important takeaway is this: if you are a target of hate and abuse and you happen to be a famous football player, thousands of people and maybe even the British Home Secretary and the President of of UEFA may stand up for you, at least in word if not in action.

**However, if this is what tends to happen to people in privileged positions, what about everyone else?**



**What about all the Black, transgender, Roma, Muslim and other people, living and working in EU member states, who face racism, discrimination and hate speech on a daily basis?**

According to the ODIHR, in 2019 7,278 hate crime attacks were reported in the EU with almost half of them (3,026) being related to racism and xenophobia. [3] As most of these attacks did not happen to famous people, most of them did not make it to the frontpages of European mainstream media. They did not even make the headlines of local media. In fact, the above numbers are misleading, because most of the hate speech attacks do not even make it to the authorities to be counted as statistics as they are never reported. However, they do take place and are an everyday occurrence for thousands of European inhabitants. The aim of this Compendium is to tell the stories that are rarely included in statistics and are, sometimes, even hard to define as hate speech or hate crimes, because their character is elusive. Nonetheless, they are no less serious and threatening to those who happen to be their protagonists as they affect their lives. Hate speeches and hate crimes, however problematic their definitions, are widely discussed issues. The European Commission itself reports that hate speech and hate crime have been rising steadily for the past ten years [4] and acknowledges that they

**“...poison societies by threatening individual rights, human dignity and equality, reinforcing tensions between social groups, disturbing public peace and public order, and jeopardising peaceful coexistence. They affect private lives, or in cases of violent bias crimes, even victims’ life and limb. They stigmatise and terrify whole communities. They erode social cohesion, solidarity, and trust between members of society. Hate speech blocks rational public debate, without which no democracy can exist; it leads to an abuse of rights that endangers the rule of law.”**

[3] <https://hatecrime.osce.org/infocus/2019-hate-crime-data-now-available>

[4] [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/655135/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)655135\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/655135/IPOL_STU(2020)655135_EN.pdf)



# Introduction



The reason why hate speech and hate crime are on the rise are manifold and varied depending on local and national contexts. The so-called “migration crisis” that polarised Europe in 2015 played a significant role since it posed a challenge that was widely perceived as unprecedented. Nevertheless, as many researchers and analysts have shown [5], in many cases the migration crisis only served as a catalyst for anti-democratic tendencies that had long preceded it. The case of Hungary, where the prime minister Orbán successfully managed to cement his position as saviour of the nation when he refused to treat refugees as human beings, is perhaps the most prominent example of these tendencies [6]. However, the expression ‘illiberal turn’ was coined long before that: in 1997 by the American journalist and thinker Fareed Zakaria. In the Netherlands, for example, the Islamophobic tendencies proliferated after the September 11 attacks [7] and culminated around historical events such as the murder of the film director Theo Van Gogh [8] in 2004. The recent significant increase in discrimination cases was observed during the era of the right-wing populist Geert Wilders. Official records of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior show a staggering 63,9% rise in reported discrimination cases in 2014, when Wilders campaigned in local elections [9]. Although hate speech situations occur regularly in offline spaces, a new territory where hate speech situations and dynamics proliferate has emerged, i.e., online spaces with social media being the most prominent ones.

In the Czech Republic, for example, racist and discriminatory content is often disseminated from propaganda websites connected to Russian pro-Putin troll farms that gained significant influence in the public space during the Russian occupation of Crimea and the subsequent violent conflict on Ukrainian territory. In the hyperconnected societies of Europe (and the rest of the world), the unprecedented speed of communication that characterises digital communication platforms has forever altered the media landscape and the way we communicate with each other. While social networking sites such as Facebook have undoubtedly democratised the public discourse and given voice to those who could not be heard before, they have also evolved in a wild, unregulated arena where hate speech and harmful content flow freely and uncensored, and both national and European legislators are having a hard time to catch up with the superpowers of platform capitalism. [10]

[5] <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bup/gd/2019/00000009/00000001/art00021>

[6] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0268580920930591>

[7] <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-biggest-problem-in-the-netherlands-understanding-the-party-for-freedoms-politicization-of-islam/>

[8] [https://web.archive.org/web/20070605110344/http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations\\_EN.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20070605110344/http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations_EN.pdf)

[9] <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2021/06/01/discriminatiecijfers-in-2020>

[10] <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/671987/summary>



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However, most of the available information, including the above reports, rely on expert statements and statistical data. In both applied and academic research the main focus is on the perpetrators of hate speech and hate crime, i.e., who they are, what their motivations are and how we can prevent them from committing crimes. The everyday effects of discrimination, racism and hate speech and their subtle, elusive, yet ever-present manifestations are harder to capture and analyse. Yet, for every famous football player who is forced to read racist slurs on his Twitter timeline, there are probably thousands of shopkeepers, nurses, stay at home mums, human rights advocates, students and many others who may read about racist slurs targeted at football players on their morning commute to work in the newspapers. These are the people who, on the same day, may hear the same or similar racist slurs from random people whether they are at a bus stop, in a shop or at the workplace.

Many of the respondents who took part in the research at the basis of this Compendium talk about racism and hate speech as everyday occurrences: they hear or read about allegations every day, and are being targeted on buses and trains all the time by the police, etc. To protect their privacy, our respondents have remained anonymous in this Compendium. However, their stories are real, true, and experienced every day. The harm they are suffering from, the struggles they are facing, the changes in their behaviour they had/have to make in order to stay composed, and the feeling of being vulnerable and never feeling safe and secure are real too – and find an echo in all the stories from all the five countries where we collected our data (Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Italy).



# I. Terminology & Perspective

H A T E S P E E C H

## Problems with Definitions

Hate speech is defined in EU law [11] as public incitement to violence or hatred on the basis of certain characteristics, including race, colour, religion and national or ethnic origin. While the Framework Decision on combatting racism and xenophobia covers only racist and xenophobic speech, the majority of Member States have extended their national laws to other grounds such as sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. The different implementations of the Framework, however, cause significant differences in how hate speech is defined, treated, and prosecuted in each member state. In the Czech Republic, for example, sexual orientation, gender, and disability are not included in the definition, thus making state authorities' focus (and that of expert reports as well) much narrower than, for example, in neighbouring Germany.

Both European and national legislations, however, use two main approaches to define and prosecute hate speech and hate crime. One approach focuses on who is targeted and consequently differentiates between terms such as bullying (targeting individuals) or discrimination (targeting groups). By contrast, the other approach is based on the content of the speech itself (incitement to violence or hatred).

As a result, in most cases hate speech and hate crime are defined by the combination of the two, i.e., who the victim is (ethnic origin, gender, etc. being the reason at the basis of the hatred) and what is being said/done (incitement or acts of violence).

In the wider expert and media debate, hate speech and hate crime are often defined or perceived differently based on the context where they occur. While in some cases hate speech is mainly associated with online speech, in others it points towards racist and discriminatory discourse in offline environments. Various terms used by both experts and state and local authorities such as hate speech, verbal hate crime, online hate, cyberbullying, etc. lead to confusing differences in terminology and ultimately obscure the core of the problem – the fact that, regardless of the words we use to describe it, the phenomenon itself manifests on an everyday basis, both online and offline, verbally and non-verbally. That is why we consider the perspective of people who are affected by hate speech and hate crime the most important aspect in the debate around definitions. Yet, their voice is mostly missing from this debate.

[11] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:I33178>

In the Compendium, we take into account all the above categories, i.e., who is targeted (applicability of the group identity criteria), how (content) and where (contexts) they are targeted. However, we complement them by taking into account the impact these acts have on those who are affected by them. From this perspective, for example, making a distinction between online and offline contexts is not meaningful because frequent online hateful comments will have an impact on how the target behaves offline i.e., when s/he leaves home, how s/he moves in a city, how alert s/he is in public places, etc. Furthermore, one person can also be affected differently in different contexts based on a particular role: someone can be attacked because of their religion, ethnicity, gender or for not fitting into the beauty standards of a particular society. One circumstance is usually not separable from the other and that is why the second important perspective we use here is the intersectional one.

## The Neglected Perspective

In the area of discrimination, the question of who speaks for whom, and who is represented and how, is of crucial importance but is often not recognised. An illustrative example is the voice of discriminated people in the Czech media. According to our research, there is a very clear disproportion in terms of focus on victims vs. perpetrators of hate speech and hate crime. The voices of the people affected by discrimination and their perspectives are almost completely absent. About 80% of all coverage focuses on the perpetrators, their personalities, and motivations. This is further supported by policy briefs, studies, and academic reports (reported in the media and reflected in the public debate) that also overwhelmingly focus on the perpetrators. Thus, perpetrators are depicted as people with histories, biographies and names whereas voices and perspectives of people affected by discrimination do not in many cases reach the media.





The absence and neglect of the perspective of people affected by discrimination is no one-time curiosity or isolated specificity of the Czech media. On the contrary, such neglect is systematic, takes place throughout Europe and is replicated and expanded in other spheres of life, including many studies on and theories of hate speech. Various aspects of hate speech have been broadly investigated within the last four decades. The focus has been on its legal and constitutional regulation (since the mid 1980s), and the processes of deep learning in order to detect hate speech online (since the 2010s). With only few exceptions, mainly from English and German speaking countries, the perspective of the people who are discriminated against and how hate speech is experienced by them is still under-researched.

An example is the so called *Extremismus*, a highly influential concept originating in post-war Germany which was first entrenched in a discourse of police forces and secret services and later (from the late 1980s) systematically developed by academic circles as *Extremismustheorie* [12]. Throughout the years, the concept has established itself as a crucial security tool as well as an educational umbrella used by the German State to frame debates on discrimination. It has also become a conceptual alternative to 'hate crime' as used in Anglo-Saxon countries. Moreover, the concept has been successfully exported to other countries like the Czech Republic or Slovakia, where Ministries of the Interior, police forces, secret services, courts as well as sections of academic circles started to use it in the 1990s.

The concept and its usage have been criticised on many levels and for many reasons. What needs to be pointed out in this Compendium is its one-directional and one-dimensional focus on a perpetrator - an extremist. The *Extremismustheorie* defines aggressors and perpetrators but neglects the lives and perspectives of the people affected by discrimination and thus also the concrete facts of the discriminatory case.

Although the cumulative neglect of the voices and perspectives of the people who are discriminated against is still an urgent and pending problem throughout public spaces across Europe, first glimpses of change are coming mostly from the bottom up, activist circles and non-governmental organizations. To continue with the German example, after years, or even decades, of debates in enclosed activist circles, the problematisation of who speaks for whom and the voicelessness of those who are discriminated against have finally reached larger parts of society, the media and broader audiences in the public arena.

Among many other voices, Tupoka Ogette and Noah Sow, both authors and anti-racism trainers, have made an important and widely noticed contribution to the debate with their publications [13]. They describe the history of racism and the models of thought and action that are still based on it and affect everyday life.

[12] <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/200097/debatte-extremismustheorie>  
<https://review.soc.cas.cz/pdfs/csr/2018/05/05.pdf>

[13] <https://www.noahsow.de/dsw/> & <https://www.exitracism.de/>



This finding goes hand in hand with the fact that spaces or discourses are not equally accessible to everyone, and that voices are also not equally recognised within them. In a 2018 interview, Noah Sow noted that there had been important developments since her book was published in 2008. [14] For instance, there is now a good vocabulary for expressing experiences and the politics surrounding them. There is also a rising number of other publications as well as social media programmes that address racism and discrimination from the perspective of those affected by them.

After the terrorist attack in Hanau, where a man murdered nine people for racist reasons, the city tried to include the perspective of the victims and their families. The way the city of Hanau deals with this is now different from the way many other German cities have handled similar cases in the past. Efforts were made to involve the victims' families more as they were consciously given space to express themselves. However, a large part of the caring work being directed to the victims and the people subjected to racism was done in this case by the families and friends themselves with the support of self-help organisations and NGOs.

The **#saytheirnames** hashtag was used by families, activists and friends to name those who were murdered, and not just to focus the discourse on the perpetrator and his motives. Even though it was criticised for not being far-reaching enough, this approach is a new feature in dealing with racist violence and the perspective of those affected by it in Germany.

[14] <https://taz.de/Autorin-ueber-Rassismuskritik/!5493873/>

Thus, on one side there is a cumulative neglect of perspectives of people affected by discrimination, but on the other side, there are glimpses of initiatives to do things differently and aimed at respecting those perspectives. The Compendium strives to contribute to those perspectives and enrich spaces where voices, names, stories and personal testimonies of people who are and have been discriminated against are seriously taken into account. After all, the perspective of people suffering from hate speech must be respected as a guiding principle instead of suggesting what is best for them or ignoring them as voiceless, incompetent and without expertise.

During the research and while drafting the Compendium yet another problem emerged: **terminology**.

**What words should be used to describe experiences of people affected by hate speech discrimination?**

**How should they be called when writing about them in general terms?**

**Is "victim" in relation to daily discrimination and experiencing hate speech in everyday life always a proper term?**

**Let us discuss the term "victim".**

On the one hand, it is hard to imagine how to reflect and combat all forms of systemic racist discrimination without speaking about victims of the Holocaust, segregation, colonialism or slavery. All these forms of discrimination generate injustice, and it is important to have clear terms to name those who suffer under these conditions and are discriminated against.

Furthermore, as our research indicates, the status of victim is important in court and police proceedings, and many of our interviewees fought hard to be granted such status when deciding to report their experiences with hate speech to the authorities. Becoming a victim was a sort of victory for all interviewees with experiences of reporting discrimination. This meant that they were officially and legally recognised not as targets of hate speech in a non-prosecutable domain of freedom of speech principles, but as victims of verbal hate crimes who should be protected by the State.



On the other hand, experiencing hate speech in daily life is specific – it is thousands of small daily ‘bites’ and ‘stings’ and only a tiny number of such acts are reported to the police or other institutions. And it is precisely within this specific experience of daily discrimination that using the term ‘victim’ is problematic. There are two specific reasons for this: neglect of agency and personalisation of discrimination. [15]

The term "victim" is often connected to an idea of passivity and powerlessness. By using it to describe people who are targets of daily discrimination, their capability to stand up for themselves as actors in hate speech situations of discrimination is relativised. The term ‘victim’ implies that a perpetrator is in control of an entire hate speech situation and the agency of others is minimised or reduced to suffering. Very often this means restricting the context too much. All the different responses, coping strategies, interventions captured in this Compendium have forced us to reconsider such passive language. What is the point of accentuating the voices and perspectives of people affected by discrimination but using terminology that neglects or restricts their agency?

The second issue is about personalisation and individualisation of discrimination when using the term "victim". Being a victim means refusing the structural and systematic dimension of racist, sexist, etc. discrimination in favour of an actual individual and his/her story. Being recognised as a victim in police and court proceedings means dealing only with actual individuals and deeds. This problem was pointed out by one of our interviewees, Gianpaolo Silvestri. Silvestri is a person affected by LGBTQ+ discrimination but at the same time he was and is politically organised within a successful Italian gay movement. When asked about his experiences with hate speech situations as a public figure, he replied that his responses have been non-violent although vocal, because he believes that victims should overcome their “victim status” by getting together, organising themselves politically and giving visibility to the hate speech and discrimination they have had to go through in order “to win in the longer run”. Thus, according to Silvestri, political self-organising against discrimination is incompatible with the victim status as the former presupposes some forms of collectivity, whereas the latter is anchored in individuality.

[15] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1361332990020103>  
<https://educationjournal.web.illinois.edu/archive/index.php/pes/article/view/2029.pdf>  
<https://europe.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OlderPersonsInEurope.pdf>

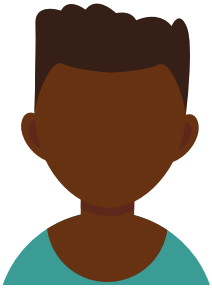


Photo by Tilo Teodor Il on Unsplash

All in all, it is difficult to find terms that reflect the reality of structural violence, daily discrimination and the peculiarities of hate speech situations while acknowledging the severity and suffering of these processes, without discounting the agency of the people affected by hate speech and all the while taking into account its systemic causes and solutions. Different terms have different connotations for public debate, academic discourse and people affected by discrimination and are accordingly perceived as adequate or unfitting. Although public debates on this topic differ extensively in our respective countries, we decided to follow many anti-racist organizations which do not usually use the term 'victim' unless it refers to racist murders or police violence. Thus, in the Compendium we try to avoid the term 'victim', unless we are talking about people struggling to be recognised as victims of acts of discrimination and hate crimes in the legal sense. Instead, we prefer writing about 'people affected by discrimination', 'people affected by racism/sexism,' or 'people at risk of experiencing hate speech'.



## II. Hate Speech Contexts



### *Meet Tobias*

#### **Example 1**

Tobias is in his early 20s and currently lives in a large German city. He grew up and went to school with his siblings in a small Bavarian town. After graduating from high school, he soon left the small town where he was living and moved to another city to study. His father is black and comes from Nigeria and his mother is white. He visits Nigeria once a year to see his family and acquaintances. His family also lived in France for a while. He describes himself as a political person and is interested in human sciences.

Tobias points out that as one of the few black people at his school and in his day to day life, he always felt very exposed. Racist comments, especially insults, have been the order of the day for as long as he can remember. He describes them as commonplace and potentially present everywhere. When he talks about his youth, he is visibly annoyed. In the big city, he says, life is much better than in the village where he grew up. It is more liberal, he says, and he no longer feels so exposed.

He was repeatedly insulted with the N-word when he was younger, even by his teacher, so much so that he felt he had to do something about it. Only a conversation between his mother and the headmaster was able to stop his teacher's behaviour. Tobias recalls attacks and fights, for example during public events. He is sure that these attacks were often racially motivated. He also remembers people crossing to the other side of the street to avoid walking past him.

Examples of discrimination from his youth do not only concern him alone. For weeks, his father was being stopped by the police almost every day during his 40-kilometre commute to work, and was often late because of this. Tobias has also had extremely negative experiences with the police.

They repeatedly stopped him for no reason as the only one in a crowd. He once had to submit to a body search at the station with his hands up. He describes this procedure as stigmatising because many people in the small town where he lived knew him. On a different occasion, one evening he and some friends were stopped at the train station. He was 17 years old at the time. The police had especially focused on him and found a very small amount of marijuana on him. He was taken to the police station and searched several times. When talking to his mother, he was forbidden to speak French. The police officers then went to his home. His mother was no longer there as she was on her way to the police station. Nevertheless, the police officers, despite the fact that they had no legal right to do so, entered the flat and began searching his room. He describes this experience as traumatising and states that to this day he feels very uncomfortable when in contact with police officers.

His father taught him early on that he had to fight back and assert himself. Tobias says that friends have always stood by him. Strangers, on the other hand, often tend to ignore such situations.

He doesn't trust the police and is sceptical about other institutions. He wished he had known about support services when he was younger and facing discrimination, but he was not aware of their existence. He considers information events held in schools, for example, as positive activities. He assumes that a lot of racist discrimination is due to ignorance and hopes that these educational initiatives will change this situation.

In general, he does not feel comfortable in Germany. He says that he doesn't really plan to stay there. Although he appreciates Germany's stable job market and realises there are some financial advantages if he were to stay, he doesn't want to feel vulnerable all the time. Visiting Nigeria is pleasant for him, one of the reasons being that he doesn't stand out because of his skin colour, something that he finds relaxing.



## II. Hate Speech Contexts

### Who is targeted?

In general, our research has shown that the people most often exposed to hate speech are characterised by a certain degree of 'otherness' that is publicly visible. Thus, the most significant proportion of hate speech cases are related to race and/or religion. People most frequently subjected to hate speech discrimination are immigrants, more specifically PoC, or Muslims, in particular Muslim women because of the way they dress. The specific groups of people affected by hate speech also vary from country to country (for example, in Portugal, it is often Afro-descendants and the Brazilian community).

There are two groups that are among the most frequent targets of hate speech across Europe – Roma and LGBTQ+ people, in particular transgender persons. Even those who are merely considered to be LGBTQ+ are sometimes attacked.

Another specific group is disabled persons, who are also mentioned as targets of hate speech.

An interesting point in this area is the disproportion between groups identified as targets of hate speech in the Czech Republic and similar groups in the other countries. According to the findings of non-profit organizations dealing with hate crime, hate speech is most often directed at Roma (49%), Muslims (23%), and refugees (9%) with the last two categories usually overlapping.

It seems that the Czech Republic, with a more recent history of both hate speech and interventions against hate speech, has so far only focussed on the most blatant cases of racism, while more subtle cases, such as those related to LGBTQ+ or disabled people, have not yet been addressed. A feature that distinguishes the Czech Republic is the high level of verbal attacks against NGO workers, especially those dealing with refugees.

**The most common groups that are the targets of documented discrimination, hate crimes, negative stereotypes, and hate speech, include:**

- Immigrants / Refugees
- People of Color
- Muslims
- Jews
- Roma and Sinti
- LGBT persons
- Disabled persons

## II. Hate Speech Contexts



### Meet Marion

#### Example 2

Marion lives in the Portuguese city of Coimbra. She is 61 years old and already has great-grandchildren. Marion's mother is of Roma origin and her father is Portuguese. She proudly keeps many Roma customs in her daily life although not in the way she dresses. Her mother's family is from Lisbon and all her Roma relatives who live in Lisbon are employed (they mainly have industrial jobs) and are socially well integrated. She feels that the Roma community in Coimbra is not united. According to Marion, Porto, Lisbon, Leiria are different because Roma communities there stick together and carry out many initiatives related to their traditions. In Coimbra, Marion has more non-Roma than Roma friends.

Since 2008 Marion has been involved in several inclusion projects, working full time for a year and a half, and receiving training grants or subsidies the rest of the time. While she was doing work as a domestic cleaner, she qualified for reduced social security benefits. Afterwards she worked in the social sector for a year and a half. Her husband sells pastries from a trailer, but the pandemic has made his business very difficult.

When her children were young, she experienced a lot of discrimination. She remembers being at the Paediatric Hospital with her daughter who had high fever and was vomiting. The waiting area in the hospital was crowded. When she complained that it was taking too long to be seen and that her daughter was very ill, the worker at the desk replied: "You gypsies have the habit of arriving here and thinking you have to be taken care of right away". The worker called a doctor and said: "There is a gypsy woman here who is already shouting because she wants to be seen". Marion replied that she had an identity card and a name and that her name was not Gypsy.

The experience was not altogether negative because the doctor who finally treated her daughter was very kind to her and told her not to worry about the behaviour of the desk worker.

Another instance of discrimination happened when Marion was out walking with her mother. On a balcony there was a woman feeding a baby. When she saw Marion and her mother walking past, she said: "*Look, darling. Eat. There's a gypsy woman who takes away those babies who do not want to eat*". Marion's mother replied that Roma people do not steal babies and that she should be careful with such statements as white people too abuse children. Marion recalls that her mother had an expressive way of speaking whereas Marion herself likes to think things through before speaking. She is determined to defend herself in whatever way is necessary, but always politely. However, if Marion were to find herself in a situation of serious discrimination, she would call the police.

Marion thinks people do not give jobs to Roma people in her home town. Very often members of her family apply for vacancies and schedule interviews, but they are never called. The idea that the Roma steal and do not want to work is still very present. Because of this, some of her family had to move to another town to find work.

Marion thinks that work is the most important part of life. Having a start and finish time, knowing one's rights and duties is very important for self-esteem and self-image, she says. In her opinion, it is better to be working than being on benefits, especially because benefits are not sufficient and lead many people to commit crimes or become involved in shady businesses and that, again, discredits the Roma's image.

## II. Hate Speech Contexts

### What is intersectionality?

The term intersectionality was first coined in 1989 by the American sociologist Kimberlé Crenshaw. Although it has since been used, reconceptualised, and widely discussed in the relative quiet of social sciences academia, recent political developments have turned it into a somewhat viral buzzword. This change has led to confusion and has obscured its original meaning. Regardless of how much it is misinterpreted in the media and in public debate, the term itself has not lost its analytical value. Crenshaw used the term to describe how structural characteristics such as race, gender and ethnicity overlap with one another and how the particular 'intersection' of these characteristics causes accumulation of inequalities in a person's life. [16]

We tell the story of Aura, a Brazilian woman living in Portugal, to illustrate intersectionality. She set up a beauty studio in her home where she serves her clients. She often receives calls from potential clients who ask for sexual services. Aura says this is because she is a woman from Brazil. Sometimes, when clients learn that she is not a prostitute and does not offer sexual services, they ask her: "But are you not Brazilian?". She has even had clients who have been to her establishment for massages but ended up undressing, thinking that the massage was sexual. Aura refers to the stereotype that exists in Portuguese society about Brazilian women who move to other countries to do sex work and "destroy families".

Aura's individual experience is coloured by her gender and nationality; her daily struggles with clients or clients who undress are the result of these two factors interconnecting.

Aura's experience with harmful stereotypes and discrimination cannot be explained by simply pointing to one category or another. It is the intersection of her vulnerable position as a migrant AND woman that determines her experience of life in Portuguese society.

Besides, if we look at Aura's experience from an intersectional perspective, we can also explain why behaviours and practices that are perhaps not meant to be harmful (i.e., expecting specific services from a Brazilian woman) are in fact racist and discriminatory because they are based on deeply embedded preconceptions of how a person with her characteristics (woman, migrant, Brazilian) should behave and what her place in society is. Intersectionality can help us explain how discrimination is produced by exploiting vulnerabilities caused by the fundamental power structures of our society. Discriminatory behaviours are displayed in individual encounters, and discriminatory practices are certainly adopted by individuals. However, they would not disappear if these encounters were avoided, or individuals educated. The theory of structural inequality, which forms the basis of the intersectional approach, explains for example the racism embedded in institutions as well as customs that impact everything in our society from the educational system to State surveillance. In his seminal works on structural racism in the US, sociologist Loïc Wacquant analyses the structural oppression of Afro-American people in US society and identifies the main 'race-making' institutions (slavery, the Jim Crow system and what he calls a ghetto in reference to the territorial segregation of Black people). However, he points out that these institutions

*"...do not simply process an ethno-racial division that would somehow exist outside of and independently from them. Rather, each produces (or co-produces) this division (anew) out of inherited demarcations and disparities of group power and inscribes it at every epoch in a distinctive constellation of material and symbolic forms."* [17]

[16] <https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/books/255/>

[17] <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii13/articles/loic-wacquant-from-slavery-to-mass-incarceration>



## II. Hate Speech Contexts

*What is intersectionality?*

In the context of this Compendium, the intersectional approach and the focus on the accumulation of structural inequalities is crucial because it places the individual experiences of the people presented here into the context of both national and global structures that shape up their everyday experiences. Last but not least, the intersectional approach also needs to be a basis for possible interventions against hate speech and discrimination. This is because, given what has just been said about Aura's and many other similar stories, it is impossible to recognise the harm being done to people affected by hate speech without acknowledging its structural aspect.



## II. Hate Speech Contexts



### Meet Romana

#### Example 3

Romana is a 40-year-old woman from Czechia who left her partner seven years ago after experiencing domestic violence. She has two children from this relationship and is raising them by herself. At the time when she left the partner she converted to Islam. Since then, she has experienced verbal attacks both from her ex-partner and in public. She raises her children to be open and let them choose their own beliefs. Her older daughter also converted to Islam.

Romana is not publicly active and, therefore, has no experience with online hate speech. Nonetheless she often experiences discrimination in public spaces, mainly in public transport and at bus stops, places where large numbers of people gather and are impossible for her to leave. She has also experienced discrimination in shops and commercial areas but less frequently; Romana says that people only “jabber” there. The situation always evolves in a similar way: the aggressor notices her in a group of people and starts attacking her verbally. Aggressors are primarily male. Younger boys and teenagers tend to mock her (shouting “Bomb!”), older men and senior citizens swear at her. Romana also notes that perpetrators are often also drunk.

Romana reports that she has never experienced help or support from bystanders. She describes the worst situation she has ever experienced. During a bus journey with her older daughter, an older man and (presumably) his grandson were very rude to them for the whole journey. The man kept telling his grandson that “If you see a gypsy or a Muslim, you must kill them there and then.” No one stood up for them. Finally, when they got off the bus, they both burst into tears.

This experience has led Romana to start avoiding situations where there is a risk of verbal attacks which means avoiding public transport. This has caused a significant limitation to her mobility. Before the pandemic, Romana liked to visit Wenceslas square in Prague city centre, because it used to be crowded with tourists from all over the world, including from muslim countries, which made her feel safe. Now this is no longer possible for her.

She usually walks around the city with her head down, trying to avoid eye contact. She only feels safe at home or at religious meetings organised by the Muslim community.

Similarly, she only seeks work from friendly Muslims. Outside the Muslim community, she would only work in jobs that do not require personal contact with customers or colleagues (a call centre, for example). Working in a kebab kiosk, cleaning embassies, or babysitting within the Muslim community are acceptable choices for her. During the Covid-19 pandemic, home office work has been very pleasant for her.

Romana ignores milder attacks and only deals with the worst ones by talking about them at home or with friends. After a while, the pain caused by these experiences usually subsides.

Romana doesn’t want to move and leave the Czech Republic because she does not understand why she should give in and be driven out of her home. Likewise, she knows that she can stop wearing the headscarf or start wearing something else. She knows ‘sisters’ who have done it but she does not want to do it.

Romana’s experience with institutional support is mostly negative. In her domestic violence case, the police wanted evidence, recordings, etc. but it was impossible to obtain them given the nature of the crime. The case was treated as an allegation without the required evidence and, therefore, her ex-partner was not convicted. Her younger daughter experienced bullying and consequently psychological problems at school but no one at the school helped her. The experience with the Child Welfare Authority was explicitly bad. The local authority constantly questioned Romana’s ability to take care of her children, which, according to Romana, stemmed from its hostile attitude towards Islam.

The only positive experience she has had was with a lawyer from the Muslim community who helped her both in court when dealing with her ex-partner (where Romana also appreciated the fact that he, as a man, played a protective role) and with the Child Welfare Authority. The lawyer’s intervention led to a replacement of the official dealing with her case.



## II. Hate Speech Contexts

### Contexts When and Where

Hate speech takes place virtually anywhere. Yet, there are three main areas where it can be encountered.

- Online
- In institutions and encounters with authorities
- In the street and in public places

Most of the attention has long been focused on the cyberspace. Online hate speech is a phenomenon addressed on many levels, in both scholarly and popular literature. Online hate speech is often triggered by historic domestic and international events. For example, since the beginning of the 'migration crisis', immigrants are being increasingly targeted. Far-right or anti-immigrant groups are often significant instigators of hate speech, spread via specific propaganda tools. They are also involved in so-called mob attacks, i.e., massive 'raids' on selected websites which they flood with hateful comments. This tactic is usually considered a form of cyberbullying.

Two of the most important findings of our research are that: a) in the everyday lived experience of our respondents, the online and offline spheres are not really separate; and b) hate speech in the offline world tends to have a more significant impact on them.

Although there are differences between online and offline situations, and perpetrators, targets and circumstances vary in both spheres, this does not change the fact that the main targets of online hate speech are immigrants, foreigners, Roma, Muslims, women or people from the LGBTQ+ community.



Photo by Daniel Korpai on Unsplash



Other places where hate speech occurs are schools, public institutions, police stations, and workplaces. In these contexts, we can identify both direct hate speech and various kinds of microaggression and unconscious forms of discrimination or insensitive behaviour. An example of such behaviour is the Dutch tradition of 'Black Pete' which is not directed against PoC but is perceived to be discriminatory through the reproduction of racist and colonial stereotypes. The example of Black Pete shows how thin the ice can be on the issue of hate speech and how contextual it is. This is a practice that many perceive as non-racist and simply 'traditional'. However, it still feels hurtful to people affected by racial discrimination.

Hate speech very often happens in public places. Public transport and department stores feature frequently because these are places where significant numbers of people gather and spend time in. Concentration of people and longer periods of time spent in these places create situations in which verbal attacks occur. The trigger is usually the mere presence of people who are visibly from a minority.

What follows from the description of hate speech contexts is that a significant part of the European population is exposed to possible verbal attacks virtually anywhere. Although we often think of online and offline hate speech as separate entities, for migrants or LGBTQ+ people these are just two different sides of the same coin.

Last but not least, it is essential to point out that verbal attacks may not only be made by the majority towards minorities but that similar attacks also occur among minorities themselves, as is the case with the Kurdish and Turkish minorities in Germany.



Photo by kate.sade on Unsplash



## II. Hate Speech Contexts



Meet Lia

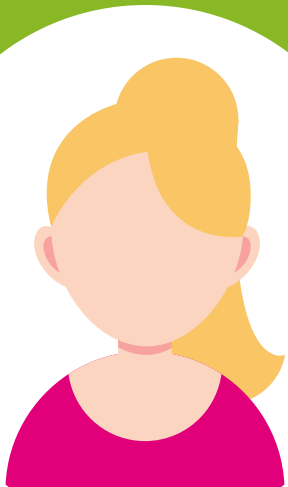
### Example 4

Meet Lia. She was born in 1964 in Rome and is the daughter of two Shoah survivors. Lia works as a journalist and publisher. Her parents were children when the anti-Jewish laws were passed by the Mussolini regime in 1938. During the persecutions that followed, her father managed to escape a sting by chance and had to take refuge in a monastery during the entire 9-month long Nazi occupation of Rome. Her mother first found refuge in the countryside and later, escaping via the Alps, in Switzerland. Lia has used her family history as an inspiration for her writing about the Italian Jewish community and the antisemitism shown by right- and left-wing parties. In the process, she has become one of the leading Italian Jewish writers.

Lia recalls one recent event - the online presentation of her latest book entitled 'The Desert Generation' - organised by the Turin Hebrew Studies Group and the Institute for the History of Resistance. A few minutes after the start of one of the guest speakers' talk, Zoom bombing started (a coordinated attack by individuals who join videoconferences to disrupt them). The attackers joined the online event with false profiles and started shouting "Since when is a Jewish woman allowed to publish books?", "Jews in the ovens", "Go hide yourselves". Images of Adolf Hitler started to appear on the participants' screens while *Faccetta nera* (one of Mussolini's popular songs) was used as musical background.







## II. Hate Speech Contexts

### Meet Ela

#### Example 5

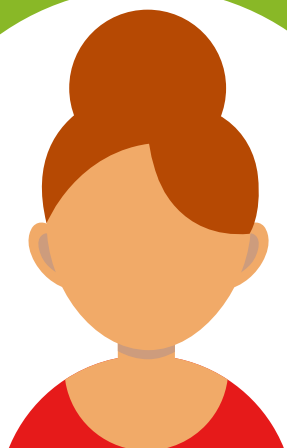
Ela is 30 years old and works as an artist. She moved to Germany from Eastern Europe with her mother, also an artist, when she was seven, following her parents' separation. Since her mother was an artist and dressed quite extravagantly, she was always a topic of conversation in her village. Consequently, Ela suffered from discrimination because her clothes were different than her classmates at school usually wore.

Today, Ela describes herself as someone who does not conform to common beauty standards. In this context, she refers to lookism and recounts many attacks against her based on how she looks and notes that they are based on both racism and sexism. As an artist spending a lot of time on social media, Ela is also exposed to aggressive comments. She always responds directly to these comments and takes a strong stand against sexism. She uses various methods of counter-speech. She has also been put under pressure by her agency and stylist because of her body shape. Ela points out that the entertainment industry perpetuates harmful gender roles and body images and is determined to fight against them.

Ela struggles with being recognised for her talent because she does not fit into the usual standards of female beauty. In this way, the discrimination she experienced in her childhood is now being perpetuated in her work environment.

Ela recalls many discriminatory experiences from her school days. They were triggered by her choice of clothes, the initial lack of German language skills, but also incidents during P.E. lessons. For example, she was often the last choice in sports events or her sports clothes and backpack were thrown into a bin. Regarding her lack of German language skills, her strategy was to make a special effort to learn German quickly. She was able to learn German within half a year and was always a good pupil. She received recognition and praise for this effort from her teacher. This praise, however, was turned against her since it caused other parents to put pressure on their children. She says that she did not really have any friends at primary school. Only at a high school with a focus on the arts did she manage to break free from discrimination and othering. Here she found friends.





## II. Hate Speech Contexts

### Meet Lena

#### Example 6

Lena's family comes from Ukraine. Her parents moved to Czechia in 2000 when Lena was 9. She immediately went to a Czech school without being able to speak a word in Czech. In 2020 she obtained a master's degree. She now speaks perfect Czech without any accent, has married a Czech man and therefore has a Czech surname. Unlike her parents, she managed to obtain Czech citizenship in 2015 as a second-generation migrant. She feels at home in Czechia and does not want to move anywhere else, especially now that she has children and after experiencing migration herself as a child.

Overall and over time, the tendency to be an object of hate speech has diminished as she has learned Czech, acquired a Czech surname through marriage and, above all, obtained a Czech ID. Unlike her parents with no Czech ID and a foreign accent, she is now virtually invisible in the Czech Republic. This diminishing tendency is apparent in her experiences with hate speech at school. When she was in primary school, hate speech was a daily occurrence. In secondary school it was constantly done by two teachers. At university there were several random situations involving with different staff – lecturers, professors as well as administrators.

One of the instances happened when Lena needed to sort out some back payments in connection with her health insurance. She went to the Student Administration office to ask for a document confirming that she was attending university. As she spoke perfect Czech by that time, the woman at the administration office was initially very kind and willing to help solve her problem. However, when she asked for her ID and Lena took out her Ukrainian passport, the situation quickly changed. The woman started to tell Lena off for not having her health insurance in order, making a connection between disorder and Ukraine. At some point, Lena coughed and the woman became even more aggressive, verbally kicking her out of the office saying that she did not want to be infected by Lena and whatever disease she might be having. When Lena objected that she had covered her mouth when coughing, the woman did not believe her and said: "You do not have manners".

Lena did not know what to do on occasions like this while at university. She wanted to finish her studies but was afraid that if she engaged in counter-speech, defended herself vocally or made such issues public, her studies could be impacted as someone would take revenge on her.



## II. Hate Speech Contexts

# Meet Mateo

### Example 7

Meet Mateo. Mateo is queer [18] (prefers to be addressed with masculine pronouns) and is 25 years old. He has been dealing with his gender identity since 8th grade and has been discriminated against because of it since then (on top of being discriminated against as a PoC). Mateo is confronted with hate speech at school, work, when he is out, in the streets and in general everyday situations.

Questions like "What are you?" are typical of hate speech situations he finds himself in. He also says that he is stared at and looked over from top to bottom by strangers. In addition, Mateo reports derogatory statements such as "Get out of here" or "Fuck off". When he explains himself and talks about his gender identity, he often encounters misunderstanding and is told things like "Huh, you need to get some counselling". People are often cold towards him, ignore him or do not answer his questions. During the interview, Mateo mainly talked about men who discriminated and insulted him; he also said that many young people react better towards him. It is older people in particular who stare at him or insult him.

He is also discriminated against because of his origin (he was called a drug dealer because of his Latin American origin, for example). Mateo, however, mainly talked about his experiences of discrimination related to his gender identity.

One incident that still seems to bother him happened when Mateo was working for a small company where he otherwise got along well with everyone in the team. However, there was one colleague who talked to everyone else but him. The strange thing was that everyone else in the team spoke highly of this colleague. Mateo felt like this colleague was always angry with him. Hence the strange atmosphere at work. At some point, this colleague resigned. Mateo is apparently still sad about this situation and said that he would have liked to have talked to the colleague and told him that he is just a normal person.

[18] The term queer has a controversial history and can be perceived as abusive. First used as a derogatory term against LGBTQ+ minorities, the term was soon proudly adopted by them. We use it here in this new, empowering sense. For more information on the history of this term, visit, among others, [https://www.cjr.org/language\\_corner/queer.php](https://www.cjr.org/language_corner/queer.php)



## Immediate responses

Immediate responses vary greatly depending on the context, the specific situation, and the personal situation and feelings of the people affected by discrimination.

Most people affected by hate speech describe its immediate effect in very similar terms: anger, stress, and sadness. Many of our respondents do not mention fear but rather helplessness which, in the long run, can lead to changes in their behaviour. Typically, over time, their willingness to explain some of the circumstances in which they are subjected to attacks may diminish which means they gradually withdraw into themselves.

For example, one of the respondents said that when she arrived in Portugal, she felt a great need to defend herself from hate speech. She did so by using defensive statements to explain that, for instance, she had a decent job and paid taxes. After some time, however, she gave up on this active attitude, resigned herself to the situation and started to ignore hate speech.

Most of our respondents report that the short-term effect lasts for about two days. After that, they need to go over the occurrence several times with someone who is close to them as this helps them to clarify what exactly happened and cope with the whole situation.

Some respondents reported that they try to ignore verbal attacks, whether in public or online. They try to avoid verbal conflicts or conflicts that can escalate and lead to physical violence.

In many cases, reluctance to actively respond to hate speech situations is caused by the repetitive nature of the issue - respondents are simply too tired and worn out, reluctant to explain themselves yet again and feel resigned and passive. They have lived through discrimination so many times that it almost feels 'normal' to them. Other respondents however distinctly point out that this is not a good strategy.



Some respondents recommend responding in some way, i.e., counter-speaking. There is no universal handbook on how to counter-speak and it always depends on the context, situation, mood, etc. One respondent from Germany, for example, explained that she does intend to counter-speak and defend others when experiencing hate speech even though it is not always possible. She recounted one situation when she faced a racist insult but she ignored it because it was too early in the morning and she was on her way to work.

In public spaces counter-speaking usually takes the form of a debate with the attacker which may be driven by an attempt to explain that their condemnation is wrong. A common response is to try and inject some humour into the attack. Several respondents quoted their responses to a verbal attack such as "Where are you from?" (with reference to the background, skin colour, or a Muslim headscarf) with "I am from the next town over" (or from a particular town).

In this way, it is possible to figuratively knock the gun out of the attacker's hand and point out that many people with a migrant background are born (and often fully established) in that country.

It needs to be pointed out that our respondents rarely employ any counter-speaking strategy. Although they said that they would like to counter-speak, they do not in the end because of the reasons mentioned above. This raises the question of whether this is a widespread technique among experts and activists and is used rather selectively by people directly affected by hate speech. Some respondents recommend not to react at all and let it go; for others, this is unacceptable and are ambivalent about what to do. However, especially for those who have experience with public activism in specific circumstances, reacting is good because failing to react may seem like an admission of guilt.

What all respondents agreed on was the fact that if there must be a response, it needs to be calm, to the point, and in no way aggressive and hateful so as not to provoke conflicts. The desire to remain calm and somewhat helpful is one of the points on which virtually all respondents, no matter what country they are from, agreed.



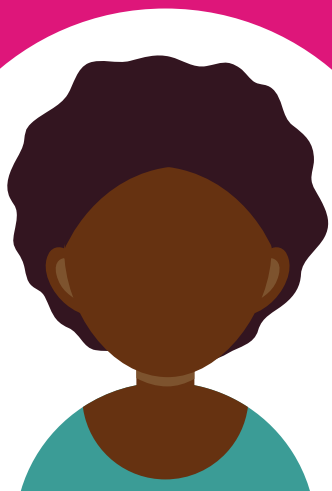
photo by Kat Smith on Pexels

Responses to hate speech in cyberspace include an extra approach. The range of responses includes ignoring and debating, but some respondents reported that a good strategy was to post offensive statements targeted at them on their websites or in the media (this applies to publicly active persons). In their view, this has a two-fold objective:

- it de-anonymises the offender and
- the people affected by hate speech can prove that the verbal assault is taking place as many people, including their closest ones, tend to consider it as non-existent and unreal. Some respondents, on the other hand, consider this strategy dubious. One respondent from Italy captures this perfectly as she reflects on her potentially wrong response to online hate speech:

"I recently made a mistake: I took a photo of a message from a guy accusing me of getting money for a pro-Covid-19 vaccination article I had written. I posted on Twitter both the message and the photo of the person who had apparently sent it. I then thought about it and felt that I had done something wrong: what if the author had used somebody else's picture? And, in any case, I felt I had reacted to hatred with hatred, which was not what I wanted. So, I decided to remove my post. All in all, I feel that one should never respond to hate speech with more hate speech. It is much better to try with rationality and kindness. Haters are floored by them."

**Regarding no-go responses, there was a consensus that violence is never the correct response although some people mentioned defending themselves physically against verbal attacks in their youth. Both bystanders and people affected by discrimination reject violence. Similarly, vocal support from bystanders must not be rude, insulting, or aggressive. These considerations apply to online spaces as well.**



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

## Meet Alisa

### Example 8

Alisa is 47 years old, currently unemployed and lives in Portugal. She lives alone; her daughter lives abroad. Alisa is Guinean and moved to Portugal when she was 8 years old. She came from central Guinea and could not speak a single word of Portuguese. She only knew how to speak 'mandiga' and communicated by gestures when she arrived.

She went to a school in Lisbon because her father worked for a bank and had a decent salary. Alisa became aware of her difference at school: she did not speak Portuguese and was used to being free, not stuck inside a building. She was the only black person at school but came from a wealthy background, which made it difficult for her classmates to 'label' her. Alisa' schoolmates let her know that she did not fit in because she was black and should instead be in a ghetto or in some social housing block and not in a good school.

They insulted her and sang offensive songs which she did not understand because she did not speak Portuguese. When she realised what was going on, she started attacking the other children. The school workers who saw these attacks let her beat the children for a little while before stopping the fights. The schoolteacher always helped her. In the long run, she managed to reverse the situation. She still maintains contact with some of her classmates and is friends with people she used to fight against when she was 9.

The experiences she had at school have always led Alisa to defend minorities. Alisa is not able to witness racism or hate speech and remain indifferent without intervening. Today, unlike when at school, she responds calmly and has an educational approach.



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies



## Meet Sabina

### Example 9

Sabina is a Jewish woman from Prague. She is an activist and the director of an NGO. Her experiences with hate speech happen online and are related to her activism. In this case, Sabina went on a business trip to Brussels shortly after the attacks in Molenbeek. She decided to go to Molenbeek and make a short video where she says “Look, it is not a no-go zone; it is a normal city district, but no one writes about it when nothing is happening”. The video went viral on Czech Facebook and she received a flood of hate comments almost immediately, with people telling her she is ugly, fat, wants to fuck Arab men, etc.

She noticed that most of the attackers were men but not exclusively. The content of the hate speech was overwhelmingly ad hominem in nature, i.e., most of the commenters had not really wanted to discuss the situation in Molenbeek but were commenting on Sabina’s looks, weight, sexuality, etc.

Sabina was overwhelmed because her phone was constantly beeping and she could not switch it off. She was worried that something worse would happen (i.e., someone hacking her profile, misusing her identity, etc). She decided to call her sister to talk about it. She always tries to find someone to share these experiences with. Her sister is one of her closest friends. She is also one of the few people who never tries to downplay her experiences and always takes her seriously.

She felt as if all her work, her life and her identity were being reduced to “fat and ugly”. From a long-term perspective, she says she would do it again as it helped her to gain new followers and gain greater engagement on her NGO’s FB pages. Therefore, from that point of view it worked. She is also firm in her convictions and ideals (i.e., showing people the everyday reality of Molenbeek is a good thing, for example). This is why she does not regret her decision although she is aware of the long-term effects that events like these have on her mental wellbeing.

### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

Example 9

"I would absolutely say that most of the stuff people tell me on Facebook is gender-related and has a sexual content. For haters everything is about sex in the end, my lack of it or that I want it and nobody wants me, etc. I would also say that this is the hardest part for me, because I stand behind my job, I can always defend myself on an intellectual level; they cannot stop me from that point of view. But all the stuff about my looks, that is personal and interacts with my personal insecurities, can definitely harm me and makes me feel even more insecure."

Sabina decided to contact *In Iustitia*, an organization dedicated to helping people affected by hate speech and hate crime. The experience itself was a very positive one:

"When I contacted them, I immediately felt better. They told me that we can at least try - and maybe we can at least be able to - prove you have suffered and get you some compensation. And actually, I was so happy when I heard this. Because it is like: Why should I spend my own money on psychotherapy? Why do I have to pay because people are being jerks? Some compensation would be an acknowledgment that it is not my fault and that I deserve the help".

*Sabina*

Example 9



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

#### Long-term Coping Strategies

By long-term strategies we mean effects and consequences, changes in behaviour and practices of people who deal with hate speech on a daily basis (which most of our respondents are).

If we talk about examples of 'bad' coping strategies in relation to hate speech, accepting the limitations that hate speech brings and its normalisation, often mentioned by our respondents, come first. To some extent, the opposite is hypersensitivity. It means an overreaction to any external verbal stimulus that respondents believe to be possible hate speech. Loss of self-esteem is also mentioned very often. All the strategies that are mentioned in the interviews show how much psychological pressure is exerted by repetitive exposure to hate speech situations. Not surprisingly, self-harm was also mentioned several times by respondents.

Another strategy is the attempt to flee the city or country in question, a highly complicated strategy (as even the respondents themselves admit). For asylum seekers and migrants in general, leaving the countries they live in is complicated because of legal barriers, whereas for people without a migration background, the idea of leaving their homeland often feels nonsensical and hurtful. A few respondents openly stated that they had considered fleeing their cities but concluded that there was nowhere to go, either because they would take the problems with them or because they felt as if they should not have to run because of something which is not their fault.

Isolating oneself as a strategy was also mentioned quite often. The respondents closed off, shutting themselves up in an imaginary ghetto, both mental and physical. Respondents talked about avoiding public transport (including bus stops) as this is where hate speech frequently occurs. This, in turn, restricts their mobility when trying to find a job, for example. Due to their experiences, they often find work only among 'their own people', that is to say people with a migrant background, of the same religion (Muslims), or ethnicity. They also mention that they delete their social media profiles because they are exposed to online attacks. We consider both outcomes to be very significant because they lead to greater societal disintegration.



Photo by Sasha Freemind on Unsplash



Some respondents also mentioned that they fear that their children will experience the same situations.

The coping strategies that are considered to be good are based on the concept of 'not giving up'. It is often said that it is vital for people affected by hate speech to try to carry on with their regular work and do it well because by doing so, they prove (even to themselves) that they are an integral part of society and that their worth does not depend on the colour of their skin or their countries of origin. While this was often mentioned by the respondents as a good coping strategy, it is important to point out that this strategy shifts the responsibility from perpetrators to the targeted people who are tasked with providing 'proof' of their 'normalness'.

Some respondents talked about regular psychotherapy helping them with depression, self-harming, etc. as effects of long-term discrimination. Others, however, reported that they refused to see a psychologist because they usually feel that they must cope with the situation themselves.

Some respondents found it helpful to refer the problem of hate speech to State institutions and deal with the situation at institutional level; however, as we discuss in the following sections, this strategy is not always successful.

Respondents often mentioned that it is useful to find a community of people who have similar experiences, go to demonstrations against hate speech, cooperate with NGOs, or join a political party that addresses this issue.



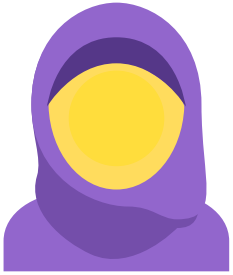


## *Meet Mateo again*

### **Example 10**

Mateo's responses to discrimination depend on the place and the circumstances of the situation. He often replies to strangers who attack him and talks to them about his gender identity. As a basic response, he tries not to get angry but stay calm and control his thoughts. He used to avoid certain places because of the daily hate speech situations and ignored attacks in any way he could in order to protect himself. Nowadays, he tries not to let himself be restricted. One of the consequences of his approach is that he often finds himself thinking about the reasons for people discriminating against him. However, over time he has learned to stop asking himself "Why me?". Mateo has learned not to take 'small matters' seriously anymore. He has also tried different coping strategies. For example, he tried to dress inconspicuously in order not to be noticed, but it was not helpful in the end. Meditation is his method of choice because it helps him deal with discrimination.





### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

## Meet Klara

### Example 11

Klara was born in the Czech Republic and has Czech nationality. However, she identifies as a Muslim which, in the Czech context, makes her a member of a minority group. She converted to Islam 12 years ago when she met her husband who is from North Africa. She is raising three children (of pre- and elementary school age) and lives with her family in a small town in central Bohemia. Besides being a stay-at-home mother, she also works for a government agency as a social media manager (she works from home most of the time). Part of her job involves looking after the agency's social media profiles and moderating discussions. This means that she encounters hate speech as part of her job as well. Since Klara wears a headscarf, her religious identity is apparent when she is in public spaces, and this has a significant impact on how she experiences hate speech.

Klara is trying to deal with her experiences publicly by sharing them on her FB profile and educating people. She has also contacted lawyers and pressed charges against several perpetrators. While sharing with people and discussing her experiences with them usually helps, contacts with the police and State institutions have been very unpleasant and have left her feeling extremely helpless.

The long-term and continuous experiences in hate speech have impacted her both personally and professionally. In her job, she sees hate comments as an opportunity and believes it could be helpful if she, as a Muslim woman, politely engages in discussion with people who hate Muslims because there is a chance that they will see a real person with a normal life instead of an abstract and dangerous ideology. On a personal level, on the other hand, verbal attacks have led her to make some changes in her everyday behaviour: for some time, she avoided public transport altogether, and now only uses trams and buses but still avoids the metro.

Following a series of unpleasant experiences, she stopped going to the zoo (at least not during the weekend) and, in general, tries to avoid crowded places.

She says that the main negative effect of all these incidents on her personal well-being is the erosion of her feeling of safety. She used to feel safe at home but now she does not really feel safe anywhere because she has learned that several of her neighbours are supporters of an anti-Islam movement and that even 'normal' everyday interactions can trigger hate speech. In her job, she knows that by simply being there she can indirectly provoke a situation but she can handle it. However, the everyday level and the constant sense of danger is hard for her to deal with.

As a result, she has not changed her online behaviour but she has made changes to her everyday practices and routines because of her experience with hate speech.

She also finds it hard to talk about these events with other people. She has one or two really close friends and one colleague whom she really trusts. Even though not all of them have the same experience, they all offer her unconditional support and, most importantly, take the incidents seriously and believe her when she explains how she feels. On the other hand, even her husband, as a man and as someone less exposed because his faith is not visible, sometimes struggles to understand her and tends to diminish her experiences, or solve them by saying things like "Maybe you should step back a little bit. ." This makes her feel as if hate speech is her fault, because she is not willing to "step back." She is not angry with her husband or anyone else for not understanding what she is going through because she knows it is impossible to understand the impact of hate speech without having actually experienced it. On the other hand, though, it creates a certain sense of distance and sometimes makes her feel lonely.



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

#### Self-Organization & Empowerment

Counter-speech is usually possible and also effective as an immediate reaction. Through counter-speaking, hate speech situations can be turned into a kind of political debate. In this way, it can develop into a longer-term coping strategy as well. People who are discriminated against on a daily basis may end up politicised, i.e., willing to solve structural discrimination by getting organised politically.

The research has highlighted several levels of politicisation. Some respondents do participate in public events tackling the issue, examples being street actions in support of campaigns like Black Lives Matter. Others go as far as making their stories and life with daily discrimination public and use their voice to mobilise others, or use their own artistic platforms, as is the case of rapper Typhoon or singer Pearl in the Netherlands.

Some interviewees have decided to join grassroots, non-governmental organizations dealing with discrimination, hate speech and anti-racist education. They have thus become 'organic activists', i.e., people experiencing hate speech whose profession is to combat discrimination and help people affected by it, legally, socially, psychologically, educationally, politically, and through the media. On a political level, one of the most impactful and ultimately effective reactions is to join or create a political party. We observed these cases in the Netherlands in parties such as Bij1 for racial equality (<https://bij1.org/>) or DENK (<https://www.bewegingdenk.nl/>), led by people with a Turkish and Moroccan background who have decided to fight in order to achieve equal rights.

**Becoming politically active and organised attracts, and greatly intensifies, experiences of hate speech and discrimination as the people become public figures and are not only targeted for their gender, colour, etc., but also for their opinions and role as spokesperson. Sometimes this can lead to a direct threat to their lives and well-being.**



Photo by Natalie Hua on Unsplash



An illustrative example is the life story Jasmina Kuhnke from Germany. Jasmina is a Black activist and has been campaigning against racism for years. In 2021, she started to receive threatening letters.

It is important to note that in Germany Jasmina is one of many people forced to live with constant death threats. People who campaign against discrimination are receiving serious threats more and more often and threatening letters are sent to their home addresses. In particular, it is journalists, politicians, NGO employees and activists who are attacked with threatening letters. Since 2018, victim advocates in the NSU trial have received an increasing amount of threats signed by 'NSU 2.0'. These threats have also concerned their families. Jasmina herself has been attacked with racist and anti-feminist threats and her address has been published with the appeal to 'Butcher Jasmina Kuhnke'. This has forced her and her family to flee their home. As a result, she has had to pay for a new home as well as legal and police protection. A fundraising initiative called the 'SHEROES Fund' has been launched to support activists like her. More than €180,000 has been raised, indicating that many people support the fight against hate speech. Thanks to this fund, Jasmina Kuhnke has been able to find a new safe place for herself and her family and is taking legal action against the attackers. The name of the campaign also highlights the need for a careful and sensitive approach to terminology. Using terms like 'heroes' to refer to all those people who are fighting back structural discrimination and facing even worse consequences because of this fight means giving them back their agency and free will.



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

Example 12 & 13



#### Meet Emma

##### Example 13

Emma is a 25-year-old woman of Chinese origin who has lived in Arnhem since she was a little child. She was adopted by her parents. At school she was sometimes yelled at by her classmates ('white banana'), but most of the time she had a happy childhood and many friends. She mostly ignored all the insults ("They do not know any better"). However, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, she noticed that she was being ignored and avoided in the shops and in the streets. She also heard that people were referring to her when saying things like: "They caused the outbreak" or "the Chinese virus". This experience made her join the rallies called 'Stop Asian Hate'. She had the feeling that she had to do something and not let the virus of hate go any further.



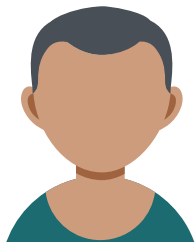
#### Meet Marilyn

##### Example 13

Marilyn is a young woman with a Dutch father and a Moroccan mother, living in the Hague. She has a degree in mathematics from Rotterdam University and works for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Because she is interested in politics, she went to an election rally of the Party for Freedom, which is led by the famous populist Geert Wilders. He asked the audience: "Do you want more or less Moroccan people in your country?" The audience yelled back: "Less, less, less". Marilyn was shocked and left the rally. She tried to ignore the feeling of shock. However, she later joined the group who raised charges against Wilders and succeeded in getting him prosecuted and convicted. Marilyn was very pleased with the result of their group action. The Court of Appeal confirmed the verdict.







## Meet Gianpaolo

### Example 14

Gianpaolo, 67, is Italian, catholic, and works as a journalist. He comes from the Lake Garda area in Northern Italy. He is a co-founder of the Italian LGBTQ+ movement and former Senator and Member of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

Gianpaolo has experienced many discriminatory situations throughout his life. Right after he came out as gay, in the second half of the 1970s, he had to face verbal insults in the streets of his small town, with the population more or less split into half between those asking for respect – including one of the local Catholic priests – and those distancing themselves from him, not talking to him anymore or even spreading lies about his lifestyle. The hardest part was facing the social pressure exerted towards his parents, both working class people who were forced into having to cope with something unprecedented for them. These experiences led Gianpaolo and others to start organising a gay movement and becoming politically active. In December 1980 he co-founded one of the first local groups in Sicily affiliated to Arcigay, to this day the largest Italian gay rights organisation. Gianpaolo's work and the creation of the group was accompanied by physical attacks against Gianpaolo by right-wing extremists, just after two young gay guys had been killed because they had a relationship. Gianpaolo and his friends were seriously scared because they thought they were going to be killed. Gianpaolo says "I was afraid they would kill me too" and he recalls how the police first let the right-wing extremists "do their dirty job" and then intervened to supposedly help those who had been attacked.

When combating hate speech, and in this particular case anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech, Gianpaolo mentions what has been a collective effort by the Italian gay movement rather than individual victims' reactions: when facing the AIDS emergency which was labelled the 'faggots' plague', the gay community reacted by taking the lead with a widespread information campaign, among gay communities, in schools, cities and towns to advocate the use of condoms.

According to Gianpaolo, counter-information is crucial as a long-term strategy. In this case, it led to successful engagement by thousands of people who were able to network, convince people and build social and political majorities around the principle that the virus did not depend on sexual orientation but sexual practices, be they homosexual or heterosexual.

According to Gianpaolo, a crucial and, after all, successful strategy was to build a winning mass movement to campaign, advocate, study, inform, teach, take part in public debates and conferences, multiply the impact of information, lobby the media and politicians, discuss with the Catholic church as well as other churches. As they managed to reach their goals of dismantling HIV-related prejudices and stereotypes and obtaining free medicines and medical care for those who were infected, people affected by LGBTQ+ discrimination turned into winners and have had their arguments acknowledged by public opinion, the media and policy-makers.

Gianpaolo has remained politically active in anti-discriminatory politics including hate speech situations in the new millennium. In 2007, when he was Senator, he spoke during a debate in the Senate on the abolition of death penalty in Italian military law, arguing that the refusal to accept death orders, in addition to being a right, is a duty, and expressed his solidarity to soldiers deserting the armed forces. The next day one of Italy's leading conservative dailies published an article in its front page, signed by the newspaper's editor, saying: "Senator Silvestri is a founder of Arcigay and loves deserters. Maybe because when they run away, they offer their asses." After four years of legal battles, the editor was found guilty of homophobia and had to pay Gianpaolo € 50,000.00 in compensation.

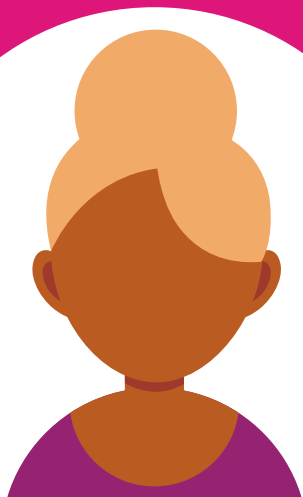
### III. Responses and Coping Strategies



## Meet Sylvana

### Example 15

Sylvana is a 50-year-old woman of colour born in Surinam. She left Surinam in the early 1970s to move to The Netherlands with her parents. She was a well-known presenter on Dutch television and radio and was often invited as a guest in chat shows. It was completely commonplace for her to be regarded and treated differently than other (white) women throughout her whole life and, in most cases, she ignored it. At some point she read an article in a prominent Dutch magazine about 10 reasons why Dutch women should date men with dark skin. She immediately expressed her disbelief to the editors of this magazine and talked about it in the next chat show that she was invited to. This event marked the beginning of a series of actions she took to combat discrimination towards black people. She started to heavily oppose the figure of Black Pete in Saint Nicholas' tradition and correct people who (even if only by accident) used discriminatory words. Her attitude gained a lot of support but also a lot of negative reactions. She was accused of "taking away our Black Pete and not understanding Dutch folklore". She responded by founding her own political party. She was elected member of Amsterdam City Council and has been a member of the Dutch Parliament since the beginning of 2021.



### III. Responses and Coping Strategies

## Meet Doreen

### Example 16

Doreen is a 40-year-old woman working in public relations. She was born in Europe and grew up in Germany. Doreen has been a political activist since she was a teenager. She experiences hate speech online, through comments on social media platforms, and offline, in everyday situations like on public transport. In addition, her address and private identity were published on right-wing networks, and she has been sent threatening letters. She considers these events to be very dramatic and reflects on and talks about them in great detail in the interview.

Doreen recalls when she started receiving threatening letters. Initially, she found it very difficult to deal with them. One of her first reactions was to take two weeks off work. When she heard in the media that, for example, female politicians were also receiving threatening letters, her trauma resurfaced. As a reaction, she no longer goes outside alone in the evening and avoids any dark or dangerous places. She also tries not to sleep alone, which is often difficult. To deal with such serious dangers and hate speech situations, her community, family and friends are giving her refuge.

In addition, she relies on her network for support in this case. She mentioned that it is important to have people who are privileged and well connected in your network who can support you in these situations. It is also important for her to talk about it and seek professional help. In the case of the threatening letters, she contacted a counselling office that advised her to go to the State Office of Criminal Investigations (and accompanied her there). As with other discriminatory experiences, she finds it particularly hard when she is not believed and not taken seriously. Even the threatening letters were not always taken seriously enough by government agencies. Some people do not understand the reference and even ask “What is racist about it?” although there is a right-wing extremist symbol on the letter. Having to explain and prove racism is very stressful for Doreen. The State Office of Criminal Investigations does not take her seriously because it does not believe that the circumstances are threatening. The Office has tried to take the fingerprints on the letters but said that there was not much it could do. It also claimed that Doreen has nothing to worry about, which in Doreen’s eyes is no help at all.

Moreover, Doreen emphasises that attempting to prevent people from using insulting language or certain words cannot overcome racism and discrimination because those are only symptoms of the situation and that the underlying systemic disadvantage and exploitation are still there.



## IV. Interventions and Support

### Available infrastructures of help

It is difficult to analyse support infrastructures from the point of view of people affected by discrimination because, as we have already mentioned, most incidents are never reported and most of our respondents deal with its impact on their own, or with the help of their families and friends, without seeking external help.

In general, there are two main infrastructures available:

- 1) **State institutions**, including police, courts, and the judicial system; and
- 2) **Civil society support networks and NGOs** working in the field of racism, discrimination, protection of victims of crimes, etc. Many participating NGOs cooperate with each other at European level through umbrella organisations such as ENAR (European Network Against Racism). The EU has its own organisation that monitors racism, xenophobia and discrimination: the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Besides monitoring, ECRI has a mandate to issue recommendations to EU member states and advise on EU-level legislative processes. European bodies, however, rarely make a direct impact in cases of individual hate speech attacks unless the person can reach out to an NGO which in turn is able to take the case at EU level.

### 1) State infrastructures Local authorities, Police and Courts

As far as State infrastructures are concerned, our respondents mainly report experiences with the police and, if their cases are prosecuted, with courts. While in most countries the police are trained and educated to identify hate speech, the practice, and the infrastructures themselves are often insufficient. In this area, the experience of our respondents varied widely. Many of our respondents report negative experiences with the police, from insensitive and unpleasant all the way to outright racist and taking the form of secondary victimisation.

### 2) Civil society actors, NGOs

The actions of civil society are interpreted by our respondents as helpful, sensitive and caring and in their interpretation, the help of NGO stands in opposition to the state infrastructure. Some examples of support from the part of NGOs include:

- Legal counselling
- Psychological counselling, organisation of support groups
- Education and awareness activities about the rights of victims and the possibility to raise charges against attackers
- Intercultural mediation, counselling in public places such as schools
- Public campaigning against hate speech and racism, organising public protests and direct actions in support of people targeted by hate speech and hate crime.

The main expectation from institutional help on any level is a recognition of the severity of the hate situations the respondents have been confronted with. Many people who are affected by hate and discriminatory practices on a daily basis struggle to explain how exactly it affects them; when they learn about possible support and interventions, they greatly appreciate the feeling of being seen as people who actually need help. Any type of intervention helps them because it sends the signal that the problems they are facing are undoubtedly real and require solutions and actions that are not their responsibility.



Photo by mentaldgt on Pexels

### Unhelpful Institutional Assistance

Experiences with NGOs were mostly seen as positive (caring, listening, defending, etc.) whereas experiences with the interventions of State institutions were ambivalent and sometimes even negative. Some police officers, school teachers, or judges intervened appropriately, while others did so improperly or even in a way that violates their professional codes of conduct.

The issues our respondents are addressing are sensitive and very personal. A key factor in dealing with them when they report or recount their experiences is a certain level of personal engagement. Unlike NGOs and activists, for government officials, this is difficult to achieve. Our respondents often described their dealings with the authorities as detached, and sometimes felt that their problems were basically of no interest to them unless they were explicitly bothering them. In short, our respondents expected to be taken seriously by the authorities, which was not always the case. On the other hand, when interacting with an NGO, people affected by hate speech were, and often for the first time, treated with respect they otherwise did not receive. Thus, the difference between dealing with the authorities and dealing with NGOs was that our respondents saw NGO staff as helpful, empathetic, genuinely interested in their situation and really wanting to help them, even when NGOs could not help because their assistance was limited (e.g., apprehending or convicting the perpetrator of hate speech).





Photo by Bahador on Unsplash

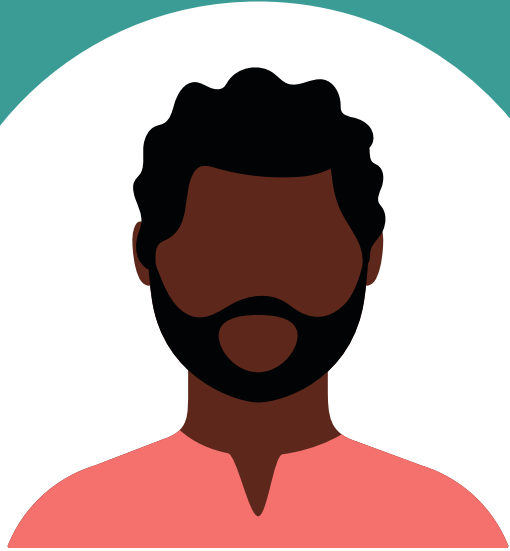
On the other hand, dealing with the police was sometimes perceived as stressful. Some respondents thought that the police often have no genuine interest in solving their problems, or that hate speech is not considered as a real problem. Many people say that there is a significant difference between the younger generation of police officers, who are seen as more supportive, and the older generation, who are often hostile. This situation may also be related to the special emphasis that has been placed on hate speech in recent years. This means that younger police officers might have a better understanding of, and be better trained in, this issue than their older colleagues. In general, however, some of our respondents' experiences were harrowing, and the contact with the police was exhausting.

The problem of hate speech was itself overshadowed by the repeated and difficult contact with police officers which resulted in a diminished quality of our respondents' lives.

This experience can lead to distrust in the State and its institutions. A significant number of respondents are convinced that trying and solve problems caused by hate speech with the police is useless because nothing happens. Perpetrators will not be caught, let alone convicted. This experience also reinforces their belief that it is better to ignore hate speech situations, without reacting and defending oneself from verbal attacks.

In some instances, the same holds true in schools. The role of teachers is criticised on various occasions but also described as being positive and helpful. Again and again, educational aspects are positively emphasised, also in schools. The behaviour of the perpetrators and bystanders was blamed on their lack of education by many interviewees.

The most significant conclusion drawn from the interviews and cross-referencing to all the respondents is the importance of education. This should start with parents and in school, and should be supported by online campaigns, through television or video presentations.



## IV. Interventions and Support

# Meet Jonas

### Example 17

Jonas is a 39-year-old man and has four children with his partner.

He is Angolan and went to study in Portugal when he was 17. In Portugal, he attended secondary school and went to university, finishing with a master's degree in International Relations. He would have liked to have studied Law but that was not possible for him. While studying for his degree, he took a driving instructor training course because he is interested in road laws and codes. He has been a driving instructor since then.

Jonas recalls a particularly traumatic incident that took place in a bank. In 2004, his father had transferred some money from Angola to Portugal. Jonas went to the bank to collect the money but noticed that the staff was very quiet. After 10 minutes, a group of police officers arrived, hit him on the back of the head and handcuffed him.

The bank was being robbed and the employees had alerted the police. When the officers arrived, they decided to handcuff him, the black person, instead of the two white Portuguese robbers who were standing next to him.

Jonas felt powerless, was unable to do anything, had no one in Portugal to help him, and might have even been discredited in the eyes of his parents. If the bank employees had not said he was not the robber, he could have even been arrested without being able to defend himself. Neither the employees nor the police were very sensitive. Only one woman said that he was not the robber and showed solidarity to him. The police officers apologised, but they did not seem sincere. Jonas left the bank in physical pain and also with a feeling he describes as horrible. He describes this experience as life-changing, in the worst possible way.

## IV. Interventions and Support

### Available infrastructures of help

Although many aspects of our findings on hate speech across Europe varied, there was overwhelming agreement on one point among all respondents. One of the essential factors that help partially eliminate the effects of hate speech was individual bystanders' interventions during a verbal attack. All respondents reported that personal intervention helps them immensely. At the same time, however, all of them also said that it rarely occurs or, more precisely, it does not occur during the actual verbal attacks. However, it is an essential part of the 'psycho-hygiene' that follows an attack when our respondents discuss the whole situation with their friends or families. There was a significant difference here with people whose families understood their experiences and were significantly more supportive as a result. Typically, these are immigrant families where hate speech is experienced continuously by all family members. In contrast, family support was low in families where a similar understanding was lacking, such as families of converts or LGBTQ+ people. They often went as far as 'blaming the victim' saying things like "You made that up" or "Why are you surprised? You have to deal with this yourself". Neither of these approaches is really what our respondents needed to hear to be able to cope with hate speech situations.

All respondents agreed that on-the-ground support is critical. Whether it is a direct intervention or expressing solidarity after an attack, it is essential to remember that it is not always helpful to directly target the attacker with counter speech. On the contrary, willingness to argue with the attacker or reciprocate in the same way and tell him off was not perceived as meaningful by any respondent. Our respondents reported that if someone wanted to help them, it would be helpful to stay with them and always do so calmly and matter-of-factly, without aggression.

What is also quite significant is support from public figures. People affected by hate speech perceive official statements by politicians, journalists or celebrities as an important support.





## IV. Interventions and Support

### Tragedy of Non-Intervention: Collection of quotations

"In the experience of racism, it is a very important aspect, I call it the racism triangle - in terms of the people involved. The offender, the victim and the third party the bystanders, the spectators."

"Strangers tend to intervene less, although there have been single cases where I have received verbal support."

"The witnesses walk away, they don't react, they don't want to meddle."

"When other people see me being discriminated against, it makes me really angry. It's often like that. For example, at work. Colleagues see it and don't say anything."

"Most people like to look the other way when they are not directly affected by hostility."

"I had a very negative experience with the judiciary and the media system: I reported the stalking I was victim of and I was left alone. Nothing happened."

**"The worst thing is the silence, when they look away. That also makes the moment and the difference. The victim realises that they are actually very much alone."**

"I really think that when people intervene, it helps to stop hate speech. When people react mainly in groups, the person who is practicing hate speech tends to stop."

## V. Conclusions

### Grassroots Recommendations

Many recommendations and proposals regarding policies and attitudes against hate speech and discrimination have already been written and promoted. Out of these, we mention two recent examples, one from the Netherlands and the other from Italy. The first one is a report on discrimination of Muslims in Utrecht published in 2020 in Dutch and based on a research among 585 respondents. [19] Recommendations are included in the report and we have integrated them into the Compendium as *Appendix I*. The second example relates to Lunaria's work. Lunaria is a member of our team and, as an organization, they have been active for years in researching anti-racist, civil-society actions through monitoring and analysing daily and ordinary racism and hate speech in Italy (see [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)). They have also participated in the work of the so-called Jo Cox Committee of the Italian Parliament. [20]

The Jo Cox Committee on Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racism and Hate, as it was formally called, was set up in May 2016 and renamed the 'Jo Cox Committee' the following July, in remembrance of Jo Cox, the British Member of Parliament murdered on 16 June 2016. The Committee has been chaired by the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and its members included one Member of Parliament for every political group in the Chamber, representatives of the Council of Europe, the United Nations, ISTAT (the Italian Statistics Institute), research centres and civic associations that investigate and campaign against hate speech as well as experts on these topics. The final report was approved by the Committee at its session of 6 July 2017 after 14 months of work that included hearings with 31 people and collecting 187 documents (studies, research papers, monographs, data records, position papers). The report examines the extent, causes and effects of hate speech and outlines proposals and recommendations for combating hate speech which have been included in the Compendium as *Appendix II*.

**Although there are already many recommendations, we have nevertheless thought it useful to highlight the most crucial ones which came up during the interviews with people who are discriminated against on a daily basis. The intention is to provide grassroots recommendations and sum up the main conclusions of our research and this Compendium.**

[19] [https://cdn.goserver.nl/art1middenland.nl/doc/Moslimdiscriminatie2\\_710494177.pdf](https://cdn.goserver.nl/art1middenland.nl/doc/Moslimdiscriminatie2_710494177.pdf)

[20] <https://www.camera.it/leg17/1264>





## V. Conclusions

### Responses & Copings:

#### Needs, Wishes & Good Practices

People affected by discrimination do not share a common view on the best response to hate speech situations. According to individual mood and situational context, three main responses prevail for both on-line and off-line hate speech situations:

1. **counter-speaking;**
2. **ignoring;**
3. **asking for help.**

Although there is no single recipe or a handbook of proper conduct, what has emerged is that setting up personal boundaries for one's responses and sticking to them is positive.



### Counter Speaking

**Discussion:** If it is safe and you feel like doing so, confront the attacker speaking his/her language, and ask her/him politely, but directly, why they are being rude. Present yourself as an every-day, polite person. Staying calm, cool, and controlled requires self-control, an attitude that improves with experience. This approach holds true for online and offline situations.

**Example:** When mistreated in the bank, one respondent said: *"Do you also treat other customers like this? Is this respectful interaction? Why are you treating me this way?"* The respondent's strategy led to an apology by the bank employee.

**Humour:** Ridiculing, making fun of the attacker and finding the funny side of the situation may help as well.

**Example:** Reply with *"I love you too"*.

**Non-verbal communication:** Not responding verbally but using parts of the body like eyes, eyebrows, face, hands, etc.

**Example from a respondent:** *"A mean stare is often a good strategy. It doesn't mean that the person shuts up, but at least he is irritated."*

**Ignoring:** When not feeling good and/or in the mood, just try not to engage in conflict, stay calm, indifferent, quiet, and avoid verbal as well as non-verbal contact (including eye contact).

In most cases you are not alone in hate speech situations even though you are the only one who is being targeted. Do not hesitate to ask bystanders, witnesses, friends, or family members to help out if they are not taking any action, not only after but also during the event itself.



## V. Conclusions

### *Responses & Copings: Needs, Wishes & Good Practices*

If counter-speaking, ignoring or asking for help have no effect, you can threaten to call the police. Do not take it personally even though you are targeted by the offender. Do not forget that discrimination is a structural problem and has nothing to do with your actions and lifestyle.

On the other hand, you can try personalising the attacker, which is obviously easier to do online. You can do so by de-anonymising online offenders and their attacks in private chats.

In terms of a long-term coping strategy, do not keep your experiences with hate speech to yourself. Talk about them when you feel ready to do so. You have several options which you can combine:



Photo by Ritesh Kumar Ghirao on Unsplash

- Talk with the people you are close to (friends, partners and family members, for example) in a private environment. Talking with people you are close to who have gone through similar experiences is very helpful because, as one respondent reminded us, **"shared suffering is half the suffering"**.
- Create and help organise a support group for people affected by discrimination. The group can meet as often as necessary.
- Talk to your nearest counselling organisation dealing with these issues.

- See a psychologist or a therapist to talk with on a regular basis.
- Talk to your superiors about the problem taking place on their watch, i.e., in their 'territory of responsibility'– be it your teacher, a headmaster, a senior officer, etc.
- Go public. Talk to the media, use your social media platforms, make your private issue a public concern and make the situations known.



## V. Conclusions

### Interventions:

#### Needs, Wishes & Good Practices

When witnessing hate speech, **DO INTERVENE** right away or after and stand up for the people affected by it. It does not happen very often, but it is the most welcome and needed intervention on which almost every respondent agreed. As expressed by one of them:

"My recommendations, wishes and needs are more a call to individuals to act: if they witness hate speech, they should intervene and support the victim/s in front of the hater/s or, in case they cannot, call the police."

By doing so, you will make people affected by discrimination feel more visible and thus safer, both online and offline, and you will help make their problem real (this is important in online spaces). Besides, you will take the wind out of the offender's sails, as s/he will no longer be able to pretend to be speaking on behalf of the silent majority. Furthermore, you can always turn a hate speech event into an anti-racist awareness-raising opportunity.

If someone is a friend, a partner or a family member of someone who may have experienced hate speech, they should try to talk to them about it, be interested, listen, discuss it, and offer all the necessary support.

Do not leave all the responsibility and active roles to the affected person – be there for them, be active, ask them what you can do for them.

If you are a well-known figure – a politician, a journalist, an influencer, etc. – express your support for people affected by discrimination publicly. Stand up for them and take a clear stance against the perpetrators.





When asked questions on institutional support, respondents highlighted the following points that need improving:

- The psychological support network should be denser, accessible, well trained and with more staff.
- Independent complaints offices should be established (as is the case in Belgium or Denmark).
- More support by local authorities is welcome as they are often the most readily accessible bodies to people in their daily lives: more dedicated to local information, campaigning, help-desks, etc.
- Counselling organisations and people working on anti-discriminatory education should be better equipped and more stable from a long-term perspective; they should not face precarious working conditions because of unstable, limited and short-term financing schemes.
- Existing legal support should be more easily accessible.
- Legislative changes aiming at protecting victims who decide to press charges are needed (i.e., not being forced to travel to see the attacker, etc.).
- The police should be more protective, supportive and less ambivalent.

## V. Conclusions

### *Interventions: Needs, Wishes & Good Practices*

Apart from these concrete steps, all respondents stress the importance of focusing on anti-discriminatory education in kindergartens, schools, at work, at home, online, on TV, in films, etc. Some practical suggestions include:

- More time spent on teaching the history and cultures of other continents at schools.
- More interactive games.
- More exchanges, communication, debates, openness in schools.
- Closer and more systematic cooperation between schools and organisations providing anti-discriminatory education.
- Better training of teachers.
- More public campaigns on: 1) Everyday experiences 2) Consequences and effects that hate speech situations have on people affected by them.

After all, and from a more abstract point of view, all respondents underline the importance to forge a culture of mutual respect, equal treatment and civil courage - a culture where people are treated with respect no matter how 'prestigious' their jobs are and where they come from, a culture where standing up publicly for people affected by discrimination is normal, a culture where people are being heard and treated as persons with names, biographies and where their voices and perspectives do matter.





## V. Conclusions

### Responses & Coping Strategies: No-Goes & Bad Practices

**When experiencing a hate speech situation, beware of:**

- Responding with the same hatred and aggression as your attacker.
- Escalating a hate speech situation into a physical confrontation and losing control.
- Taking it personally and seeking revenge.
- Ignoring signs of depression, self-hatred, self-harm and self-isolation.
- Starting to believe that it is your fault and that the insults might be justified.
- Letting yourself be overcome by feelings of guilt.
- Turning apathetic and giving up on dreaming and thinking big about your life.
- Becoming overwhelmed by daily discrimination at the expense of the quality of your life (e.g., being always on edge in public spaces).



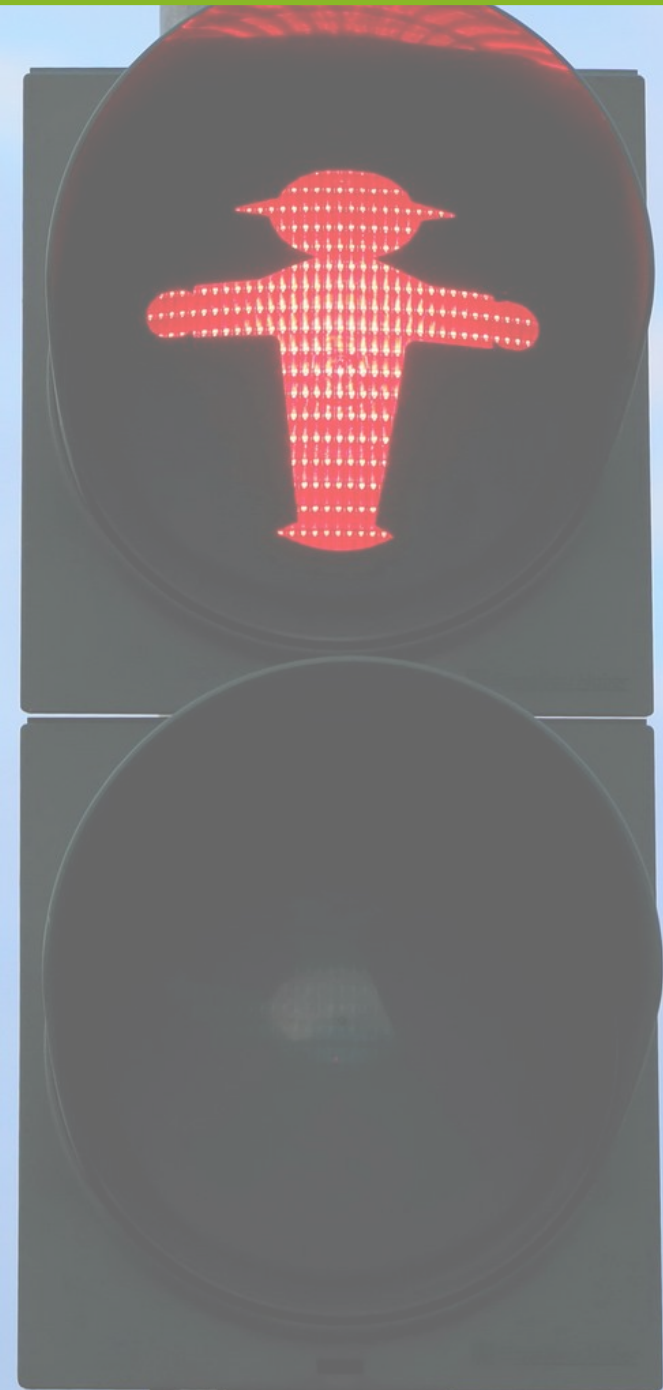
## V. Conclusions

### Interventions:

#### No-Goes & Bad Practices

##### When witnessing a hate speech situation,

- Do not remain silent.
- Do not deny the insult and do not pretend that it is not happening.
- Do not diminish the insult but take it seriously.
- Do not align yourself with the perpetrator and do not blame the people affected by discrimination.





If you are a friend, a family member, a co-worker, a classmate or the partner of someone who is subjected to hate speech, do not communicate with them using phrases like:

*"It is just on the internet, it's not serious."*

*"It's your fault."*

*"What do you expect when you go out in public?"*

Furthermore, do not force someone who has experienced a hate speech situation to explain and prove the discrimination.



## V. Conclusions

If you are an official of any institution and are interacting with someone affected by hate speech, treat them as someone affected by hate crime. Even if they have no obvious and physical injuries, it does not mean that they are not in pain. Take them seriously and treat them sensitively. When asked during interviews about problems related to institutional support, the following is a list of institutional failures that were mentioned:

- Police are unwilling to address victims' problems, do not take them seriously, downplay victims' experiences, speak with prejudice, accuse victims.
- Employment offices are not doing anything when someone reports discrimination when applying for a job.
- Schools act as firefighters and extinguish fires instead of adopting a preventive, informative and proactive approach.
- Large institutions push the problem under the carpet by reporting it to a higher authority without accepting responsibility.
- In general, institutions only focus on the perpetrators and do not pay attention to the person under attack or at risk of being attacked.



## Appendix I. Recommendations from the Art. 1 Midden Nederland research in 2020

### ***Make reporting discrimination more accessible and low-barrier***

The research shows that people rarely report their experiences of discrimination. In order to increase the willingness to report, it is important to organise a structure that is accessible to older and less educated Muslims in particular. These people are not always aware that they can report and how they can do it. Moreover, not everyone is digitally literate.

To overcome this, it can help to leave declaration forms or forms for people to report at libraries, mosques, churches, synagogues or meeting centres. In case of illiteracy, managers or young people can help people fill in such a form. For young people, it might help to give them the opportunity to report discrimination via social media.

Incidentally, it is not only the elderly and low-educated people who are insufficiently aware of the possibility of reporting. Not everyone knows reporting can do for them in cases of discrimination. This is more than just registering reports. For that reason, it is important that places to report become more visible and that it stimulates people to report. Public authorities themselves can also play a role in this by providing online information on the website about the possibilities of reporting discrimination.

Another way to make reporting more accessible is to set up a specific contact point for different kinds of discrimination. Such as Muslim discrimination contact points. In this way, the language used, the communication, the symbols and the means can be attuned to the needs of the target group and to the specific problems and situation of the target group. Witnesses also have the opportunity to report. This could be made more widely known.

### ***Train representatives of mosques and self-organisations***

It was also mentioned that anti-discrimination organisations could train ambassadors and representatives of mosques and self-organisations (such as Blijf van mijn nikaab af, Al Amal) so that they would be better able to recognise discriminatory acts such as anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and accept complaints, register them and refer them on. In order to be able to support both male and female victims properly, it is important to train both men and women. Reports can be registered anonymously (depending on the wishes of the reporter). When reporters want information, advice or support about possible next steps, they are referred to an experienced complaints handler the organisations.



Photo by Campaign Creators on Unsplash



## ***Make it more visible to people that reporting does make sense***

Another conclusion is that people do not report, because they do not feel that it is worth reporting. It is indicated that it might therefore be useful if public authorities were to publish examples online where it becomes clear that reporting discrimination can have an effect and where, for example, the perpetrators of discrimination are punished as a result of a report. If people see that reporting in this way can lead to results, the willingness to report may grow.

A further consideration in this connection is to adapt or broaden the policy goal of reports. If public authorities were to explicitly state that the importance of reporting is not (only) to prosecute, but (also) to gain insight into the extent to which people experience discrimination, then this could also increase the willingness to report. And if people do report, make sure as a police force or anti-discrimination agency that the results are fed back to them. Sometimes, there is no feedback and this makes people discouraged and disappointed and does not invite them to report again in the future.

## ***Support victims of discrimination***

The possibility of reporting is important, but not sufficient. Victims of discrimination must also be supported. The research shows that these experiences have a strong emotional impact on people. It leads to feelings of sadness, powerlessness and anger, people experience stress and are limited in their full participation in society. It is therefore important that there is (psychological) support and assistance so that victims can gain insights into how they can deal with discrimination. The municipality can contribute to increasing resilience, empowerment, self-confidence and assertiveness of people by investing in training courses.

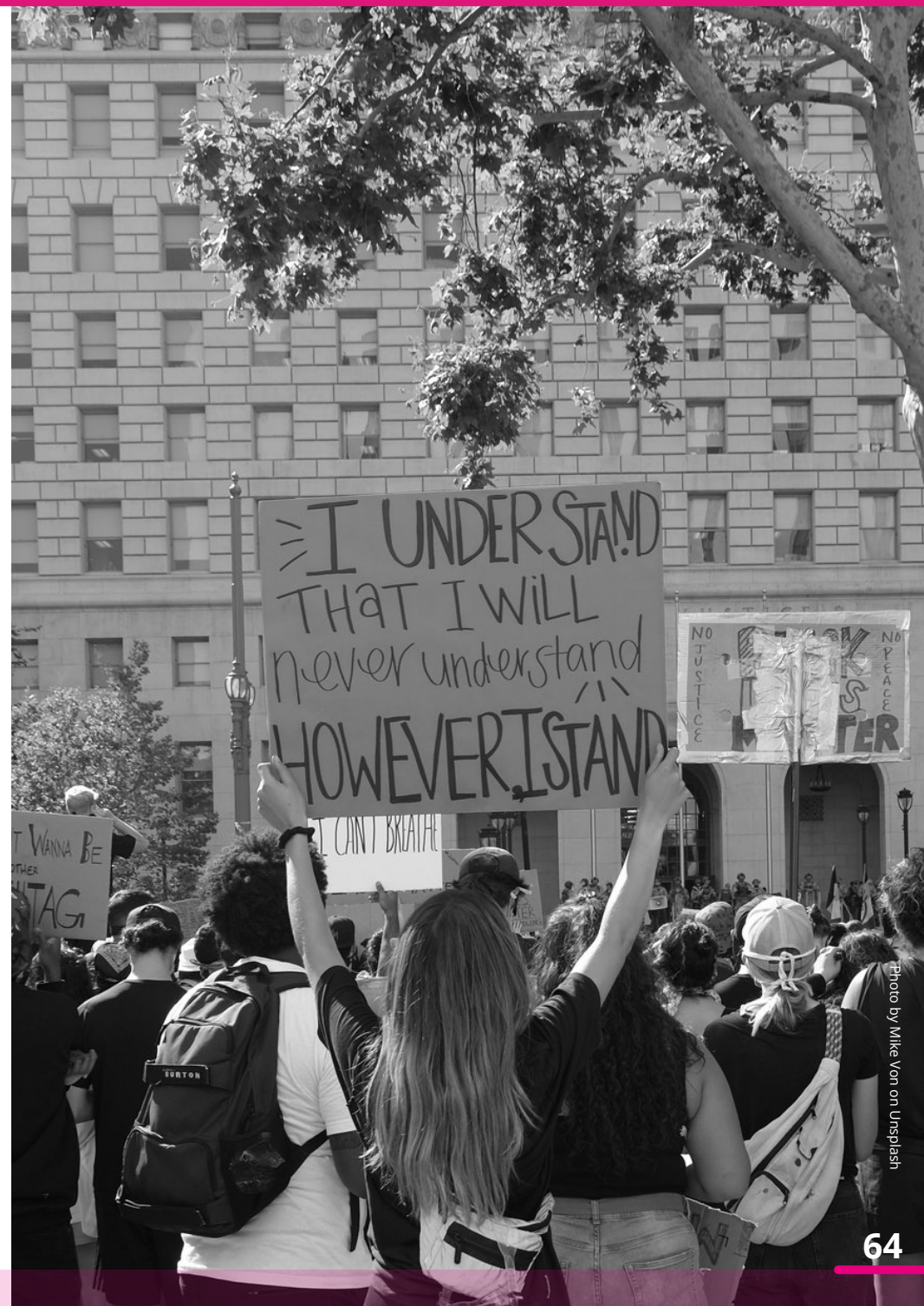


Photo by Mike Von on Unsplash



### **Set a good example as public authority**

People in government, in public functions and in government buildings also experience discrimination. Therefore it is important that public authorities set a good example by always making it clear that discrimination cannot be tolerated.

Public authorities could also choose not to cooperate with companies known to be guilty of discrimination. If the government does not make clear statements and does not let itself be heard, it creates a one-sided image and this also sends signals to society. For example for Muslims, some form of recognition is important so that people feel that the government is there for them and does not discriminate against them. If the municipality and politicians in authority speak out against Muslim discrimination, this can also have a powerful effect on public opinion.

In line with the above, a diverse representation in the public authority's personnel database is an important means of showing that minority groups are also part of society. This can support the image that minorities can also end up in important positions.

The governmental communication could also be more inclusive. This also applies to the broadcasting organisations. They receive public money, but according to members of the focus group, they do not reach all groups.

### **Work on positive perceptions of minority groups**

The image of minority groups is sometimes negative. That partly explains why people experience prejudice and discrimination. For this reason, it is necessary to pay more attention to positive stories of, for example, civil servants with a Muslim, Jewish or Surinam background. They can function as role models who have managed to achieve success in spite of perhaps negative experiences. The importance of communicating what the Dutch identity stands for was also mentioned. The 'Dutchman' is not just people with blond hair and blue eyes. It is necessary to show that people with a different origin are also Dutch in order to connect groups. It was also mentioned that there are very concrete ways of working on such an image, for example by making the Dutch diversity visible on posters in the cities and in bus shelters.

### **Make cooperation between the government and minority communities visible**

Most municipalities in the Netherlands take many positive actions with regard to conducting dialogues with various groups of Muslims and other minority groups. These dialogues, however, mainly take place behind the scenes. Meanwhile, in front of the scenes, the government is very active in waging a legal battle against controversial Islamic persons. This gets a disproportionate amount of media attention. The result is that both Muslims and non-Muslims get a certain image of the government and of Muslims. The impression is created that this is the only policy priority. Therefore, make more visible which partnerships there are with Muslim communities and what this yields.

Photo by Adi Goldstein on Unsplash

# TOGETHER

## **Counteracting polarisation between groups**

Organise meetings and dialogue between population groups to counteract social tensions and polarisation. Facilitate, for example, meetings between pupils of Islamic and Catholic schools. Involve Muslims and LHBTI not only in integration and security issues, but also let them participate in discussions about business, sustainable living, healthy living, the future of the country or other topics. In this way, people can become more aware that Muslims and non-Muslims also have common interests and challenges.

## **Appendix II. Recommendations from the Jo Cox Committee Report, 2017**

The following are those which are reflected also in the results of the SDD desk research and interviews.

### **Horizontal actions.**

- Launch a comprehensive national strategies to counter hate speech in all its forms, encompassing specific plans of action to combat discrimination against individual groups.
- Adopt a legally recognised definition of “hate speech” based on the definition given by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in Recommendation no. 15, adopted on 8 December 2015.

## **Improve data collection and knowledge of phenomena.**

- Monitor ongoing developments in the sociocultural context that threaten to give rise to hate phenomena, hate speech and hate crimes, by gathering up-to-date and relevant information.
- Ensure that data collection is based on principles of verification and disclosure and that it meets common European standards.
- Ensure that national statistics institutes document hate phenomena.
- Extend the collection of data on hate crimes beyond the scope of criminal justice, and broaden the criteria used for the definition of what constitutes a hate crime.
- Recognise sexism as a discriminatory motive and a specific category of hate speech.

## **Regulatory actions.**

- Consider the possibility of measures to prevent religious-based radicalisation and violent extremism, to avert the emergence of hate and violence phenomena.
- Approve comprehensive laws on religious freedom that, by guaranteeing respect for all religious communities, freedom of worship and dignity in the exercise of religious rights, will combat institutionalised hate and discrimination both at a national and at a local level.
- Subsume sexist and homophobic hate speech under the laws on hate and discrimination.

- Criminalise hate campaigns (e.g. public insults, defamation and threats) that are directed against persons or groups on racial, linguistic, religious, nationalistic, ethnic, sexist, homophobic grounds.
- Impose self-regulation requirements on internet platforms so as to take down hate speech, prevent fake news stories from generating advertising benefits, and comply with the Code of Conduct agreed with the European Commission in May 2016.
- Adopt anti-hate speech rules without prejudicing the freedom of information on the internet; consider the possibility of making internet providers and social network platforms jointly liable under law, and of compelling them to take down without delay any content that has been flagged as offensive by users.
- Stringently check the adequacy of the measures taken by internet service providers to effectively regulate unlawful conduct.

## Political and institutional initiatives

- Promote a sense of responsibility among institutional and political figures who influence public discourse, and, also drawing upon amendments made in December 2016 to the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament as a model, adopt regulatory mechanisms to suppress hate speech.
- Ensure that leading political and public figures are unwavering and resolute in their condemnation of all episodes of hate speech and discrimination.
- Make victims of violence more aware of their rights, including the right to administrative, civil or criminal compensation, by launching targeted information campaigns, setting up help desks in welfare offices and health centres, and enlisting schools, civil society associations and religious organisations in the campaign.
- Promote and extend international collaboration with the “No Hate Speech” movement and the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Alliance against Intolerance and Racism.

## Cultural and educational initiatives

- Develop an effective system of training for teachers and educators with the assistance of associations for the defence of civil rights and the rights of families; encourage collaboration among the various individuals and entities working to counter discrimination and hate speech, such as research institutes, teachers, the judiciary, law enforcers and civic associations.
- Approve new legislation on education and citizenship with a view to nurturing respect and openness between cultures and religions, and opposing intolerance and hate.





## **Cultural and educational initiatives**

- Enhance gender education in schools to cultivate respect for differences of sex and sexual orientation.
- Develop educational syllabi for the study of religious traditions, including their historical, social, legal and cultural aspects; design programmes of primary, secondary and tertiary education to counter anti-Semitism and racism, beginning with Shoah remembrance; promote media and internet literacy and encourage counter-narratives that oppose anti-Semitism, Shoah-denial and Islamophobia.
- Strengthen intercultural training programmes for law enforcers, members of the judiciary, and of civil society organisations.

## **Media-related initiatives**

- Oppose stereotyping and racism by raising awareness and inculcating a sense of responsibility in the media, especially online, to prevent all forms of hate speech, which includes baseless, false and defamatory reports.
- Force major social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Google to follow the European Commission's Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, urge them to act with transparency, efficacy and promptness in installing filters and controls, and demand that they quickly remove offensive content and incitements to hatred that have been reported by individuals or by associations acting in the defence of individuals.

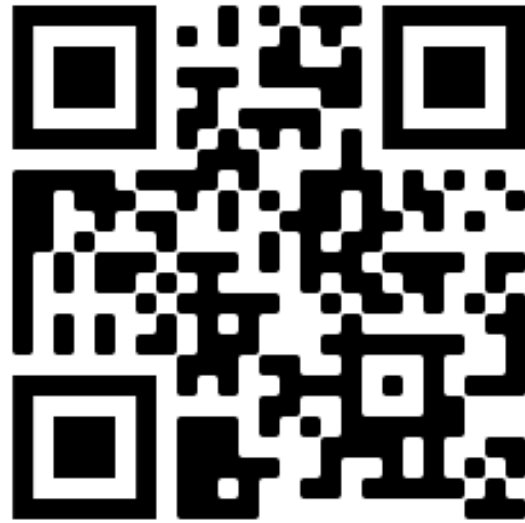
- Require social network platforms to set up offices with adequate staff numbers to receive complaints and promptly take down hate speech, to activate an alert function on web pages by which users can flag such material, and to set up help-lines for the same purpose.
- Require internet platforms to include effective alert or early-warning systems to advise users of the possible penal repercussions of propagating hate speech.
- Guarantee “the right to be forgotten” for persons who have been harmed by hate speech.
- Support and promote “No Hate” blogs and activists, and publications that offer counter narratives or sponsor information campaigns against hate speech, especially if they are part of a non-profit organisation, school or university, including through the awarding of a “No Hate” certification issued by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Alliance against Intolerance and Racism.
- Urge national registers of journalists and journalist unions to enforce compliance with professional standards by investing in training and in the contractual status of journalists.



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