

# European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society

## Recommendations

### Final recommendations

**Disclaimer:** This document contains the results of the European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in society. They have been structured by topic fields. This is the preliminary version of the final recommendations. The final document together with translations in 24 EU official languages will be provided shortly.

**Warning:** This document has been e-translated. Translation might not be accurate.

Over three weekends, we, the European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society composed of 150 randomly selected citizens from the 27 EU Member States, discussed how to deal with hatred in our society. We have diverse backgrounds, yet we share a common understanding of the problem. This Panel recognises that there are various causes and drivers which contribute to the rise and persistence of hatred in our society, whilst emphasizing the complex interplay of emotional, social, and economic aspects.

- **Conflicts and Historical Legacy:** Historical and current conflicts can lead to a legacy of hate across generations. In Europe's complex history, each instance of conflict, war, and geopolitical tension has contributed to this cycle. Without active efforts to address and heal these wounds, the hatred fostered by conflicts continues, threatening to perpetuate a cycle of animosity and division.
- **Economic and Social Crisis:** Rapid social and cultural changes act as significant catalysts for feelings of loss and disadvantage, leading to the escalation of hatred. This can be against a wide range of groups and citizens, who are blamed for the economic and social crisis. Socio-political-economic factors not only lead to inequality but can also be powerful engines for insecurity and fear.
- **Politics and Responsibility:** All politicians and public figures have a great responsibility in addressing and tackling hate but can fuel hate themselves through the inappropriate treatment of ethnic groups and the exploitation of nationalism, as well as divisions and populism for personal gain. Political and public figures both within the EU and from outside can use hate speech to fuel territorial ambitions and to delegitimize democracy. Divisions are deepened by prioritizing loud arguments over reasoned discourse and deliberation, amplifying extreme opinions and conspiracy theories.
- **Media, Misinformation, and Accountability:** The growing expression of 'us versus them' and hatred towards various groups is exacerbated by traditional media and social networks, often in the pursuit of profit. Traditional media can deliberately misinform and reproduce hateful narratives. In social networks, anonymity and manipulated algorithms play a crucial role in the propagation of hateful speech and discriminations. These networks serve as conduits for misinformation and for perpetuating stereotypes, particularly against women and youth who face significant harassment online. This is further enhanced by a lack of accountability for networks and users.

- **Herd Mentality, Prejudice, and Intolerance:** A fundamental aspect of human nature is the desire to belong to a social group or dynamic, to feel 'like everyone else'. This desire can sometimes be so strong that it leads to an expression of hatred and intolerance, an 'us versus them' sentiment towards 'the other'. This dynamic of mistrust and hatred especially affects vulnerable individuals and groups based on ethnicity, migration status, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, family status and socio-economic factors. The lack of education about different identities, cultures, tolerance, debating and communication, as well as the lack of reliable online information, can reinforce misunderstandings, perpetuate prejudice, and result in hatred.

These causes and drivers of hate affect all parts of our society. We, citizens of the 27 European Union Member States with our diverse backgrounds, believe that combating hatred in Europe and around the world is a priority. It is our shared responsibility to prevent and respond to hatred in all its forms on individual, societal and institutional levels based on our common EU values and fundamental rights: peace, freedom, and equality. Therefore, we recommend taking action on various fields to protect these fundamental rights, to prevent discrimination, hate and conflicts, to protect the most vulnerable, and ultimately to shape a respectful and fair EU for all.

## Recommendation 1

### **Increasing Awareness About Hatred and Existing Measures and Remedies to Counter it With a Public Campaign**

We recommend that the EU implements a public campaign on the danger, causes and measures against hatred (both online and offline) to raise awareness and educate about its prevalence and dangers. At the same time, it would inform about the different EU initiatives against hatred, and available support channels and measures for victims.

To make anti-hatred messages campaigns as effective as possible, we recommend to clearly define and specify the target groups, channels, content, approach:

- **Target group:** To reach broad sections of society, change public opinions and ensure opinion and behaviour changes are sustainable, target the campaign both at the wider public as well as specific and important groups (e.g., victims, allies, children, parents, teachers and perpetrators). This also ensures that people who already hold anti-hatred values keep on acting accordingly. Tailor the campaign according to the context in each member states, and also think of residents who don't speak the local EU language.
- **Channels:** Use traditional and unconventional communication channels both offline and online to spread the anti-hatred messages to reach different sub-sections of society via more effective and user-friendly channels. In addition to social media, TV channels and movie productions, use a wide set of unusual and eye-catching offline means, e.g. billboards, various newspapers, specialised publications on the topic (potentially free of charge), lorries, radio, metro/public transport screens, supermarket flyers, shopping receipts (as by an Austrian campaign focused on violence against women). A movie on the subject could be broadcast for free across the EU. Another important approach is to involve influencers, such as actors, singers, people in the media and particularly those who are victims themselves both in drafting and sharing these messages to ensure they effectively reach the right people, including younger generations. There should also be more reports on the activities, debates and initiatives of EU institutions in national news.
- **Content:** Set-up messages tailored to different groups and the context of different EU Members States using light-hearted and accessible approaches tailored to the context of each Member State. Involve professionals from different sectors (advertisement, psychology, victim groups, etc.) and diverse people from the target groups (victims, influencers, younger people, etc.). Campaigns should inform on what hateful speech and behaviours are damaging, prohibited or encouraged. It should be tailored to the situation in different EU countries, build on existing (EU) initiatives and measures against hatred and tackle different kinds of hate, such as against minorities, immigrants, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+, Roma and Jews.
- **Approach:** To truly reach and change people, the campaign should be catchy and humorous. It should emphasise the responsibility of all EU citizens to work against hatred they encounter in their own lives, providing practicable tools and information. Focus on engaging citizens more directly, e.g. by public competitions or prizes for

campaign proposals by citizens, encouraging volunteering and civic engagement, involving diverse stakeholders, such as big companies (managers could support vulnerable societal groups) or the media. For example, there could be campaigns linked to particularly popular goods like food or toilet paper in each Member State with logos/mottos such as ‘pasta against hatred’ and a QR code leading to information about the initiative.. To reach broader audiences, the campaigns could also focus on raising awareness in sports among athletes and audiences by involving clubs, media and politicians to address the issue of hate speech. The necessary human and financial resources to achieve these objectives need to be secured.

### **Justification:**

Although we already have different frameworks addressing hatred at the EU level, not enough has been done to inform European citizens about these initiatives. Most EU citizens do not know what programs, initiatives and regulations exist at both EU and national level. Reports, news and debates on hate mostly focus on instances of hate and what is going wrong, which is important but paints a depressing and biased picture. Thus, there should also be positive reports on how hate is tackled, as well as practical suggestions for what people can do against it.

We recommend an awareness raising campaign, rather than hard law or code of conduct on what influencers and professional media channels are allowed to say, as this approach might be perceived as censorship and could create reactance and discontent among people with divergent views and the broader society. In contrast to how most citizens perceive most EU initiatives, this campaign should be catchy and humorous to really reach and change people. Focusing on outreach and awareness raising could enable citizens to grasp the significance of the topic and equip them to contribute to the implementation of solutions and counter hatred in their own lives. By explaining the reasons behind hateful emotions, we can help people who might engage in hateful speech or behaviour to understand both their motives and the impact of their actions.

### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Target the humorous and catchy campaign both at the wider public as well as specific and important groups (e.g., victims, perpetrators, children) with a set of messages tailored to these different groups and the context of different EU Members States.
- The campaign should also emphasise the responsibility of all EU citizens to counter and work against hatred they encounter in their own lives, providing practicable tools and information on how they can do that.
- Use both traditional and unconventional communication channels offline and online to spread the anti-hatred messages to reach different sub-sections of society via more effective and user-friendly channels.
- Involve traditional and social media, as well as influencers and voices of victims, both in drafting and sharing these messages to ensure they are more effective and reach the right people.

## Recommendation 2

### **Creating an EU-wide Platform Combining Information, Resources, Measures and Support Systems Regarding Hatred**

We recommend creating an EU-run platform that is easy to navigate and free of charge, providing access to information materials (including on other organisations or initiatives countering hatred), definitions, articles, and videos. Moreover, the platform could include the problem definition, recommendations and all relevant materials from the European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society. The platform style and structure should be user-friendly. It could contain practical tips and a section targeting youngsters with information on issues relevant to them. The focus should be on the measures that successfully helped victims and practical advice for people across society on how they can effectively support victims, particularly in everyday encounters with hateful behaviour. People should also be able to connect with and support others experiencing similar issues. The platform should be integrated in an awareness-raising campaign and should be actively advertised via the means of social media, TV commercials and other mass media channels.

Artificial intelligence can help people interact with it more naturally and find relevant content, e.g. provide guidance and recommendations for victims and refer them to the right channels and organisations for support.

Moreover, this website should also encourage, enable and empower people to think critically about these issues instead of being overly restrictive or presumptuous, which could scare people away. This is particularly relevant for perpetrators or people more open to hateful speech and messages, to encourage critical thinking and knowledge gathering. Support and moderation should be provided to ensure freedom of expression, facilitate constructive debates, exercise content control, and prevent escalation.

Major social media companies could assist in the implementation of a function where users are referred to the platform to find support if they think certain posts might be hateful. There could be referral programs or reward systems that link to the website that should be creative and attractive to different subsections of the population. Finally, users should be able to provide specific feedback on what resources were helpful and how the platform could be improved further.

#### **Justification:**

The aim of this recommendation is not to create a platform that replaces similar ideas, but functions as a one-stop-shop and a database of relevant resources. Hence, the platform should be interlinked with other, existing websites, resources on hatred and support channels for victims of hatred and particularly vulnerable groups to make it as easy and helpful as possible. Another aim of the platform is to raise awareness and promote conscious engagement with relevant resources on one central platform. While there are a multitude of different initiatives, resources, and campaigns, most people don't know where to find all that information.

On the platform, person-to-person exchanges (e.g. via a chat function) could help people understand emotions, diverse experiences and obstacles in real-time from the comfort of their own homes. This could also allow victims to share their experiences and reach out to someone who can help them feel better, thus alleviating their burdens.

One challenge for this platform is that it might be difficult to implement and ensure that its structure is easy to understand, access, and navigate for citizens. Likewise, it will be challenging to make it interesting enough for many EU citizens to visit it voluntarily. Moreover, while the panel is aware of the challenges of creating such a website in all the languages needed, we believe that this would be a worthwhile effort. If people such as victims can share personal stories on the website this could make it more emotionally engaging and effective.

Hatred is a phenomenon that has preceded the internet, although it might have been exacerbated by it, and it won't be easily overcome by a single platform. Yet the panel believes that the platform could be an effective tool to not only increase awareness and knowledge about the prevalence of hatred but equip people to ameliorate and deal with the hatred they encounter on- and offline.

**Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- We propose to launch an easily accessible platform run by the EU that acts as a one-stop-shop for providing information, definitions of key terms, data on the negative effects of hatred, practical and relevant resources, links to other platforms, initiatives, organisations, as well as an overview of existing measures and support systems in different Member States.
- The platform should be integrated with other existing measures, platforms and websites focused on countering hatred on national and EU level to make it as easy as possible for users to find the information and support they need and not duplicate efforts.
- The website could also be used as part of the awareness-raising campaign and should be actively advertised via the means of social media, TV commercials and other mass media channels.

### Recommendation 3

#### **EU Safe Surfing Card**

We recommend the introduction of an EU Safe Surfing Card for children from 8 years on. This card would also be available in an adapted version to older age groups. With this card, children will acquire the skills they need to navigate the internet independently and safely and to deal with hateful content online. In a training course conducted by civil society organisations at schools, children would learn in an age-appropriate manner, amongst other things:

- How can I recognize and respond to hate content?
- What do I have to watch out for to avoid (unknowingly) spreading hateful content myself?
- Who can I turn to if I become a victim of hate?
- Where are the boundaries of privacy?

The trainings should be fun and age appropriate. The trainers (civil society organisations, NGOs, etc) should be supported by appropriate and necessary funding from the EU and Member States. The trainers should also be provided with common standards on terminology. Once the children have completed the training, they will receive an EU Safe Surfing Card. At the national level, parents and teachers should be involved in the promotion and implementation of the card (considering its voluntary nature), while at the EU level, the promotion of the EU Safe Surfing Card should be mandatory in all Member States. In addition, it should be examined whether access to certain content on the Internet could be linked to the acquisition of a driving license. Children who have obtained a driving license should also have the opportunity to network online with other children from all over the EU.

#### **Justification:**

We think the idea is effective because younger children in particular would be proud to have an EU Safe Surfing Card (similar to a bicycle license). The card also makes it easier for parents, who often do not have the necessary skills to prepare their children to use the Internet safely. They can also attach various conditions to obtaining the card (e.g. access to a specific online game). Last but not least, the introduction of the EU Safe Surfing Card ensures a low-threshold intercultural exchange between children in Europe, which in turn promotes tolerance and empathy.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Introduce an EU Safe Surfing Card for children 8+, with training courses on internet safety and handling hateful content, provided by civil society organizations.
- Ensure EU funding and common standards for trainers, involving parents and teachers in promoting the card.
- Award the card upon training completion, potentially linking it to access to certain online content.
- Promote intercultural exchange and networking among children across the EU, fostering tolerance and empathy.

## Recommendation 4

### **Training for Tolerance (T4T)**

We recommend that the EU makes existing training courses on hate crime, hate speech and non-violent communication better known and promotes them to specific target groups. In principle, all social groups should be better educated and develop skills to tackle hate. However, we believe it is particularly important to provide better training for people working in the public sector (e.g. police or social workers). After all, these are often the first people that victims and affected people encounter when they have experienced hate. It is particularly important that civil servants are able to deal sensitively with the issue and the individual. There should be a regular training offer for civil servants in EU member states, whereby both on-site and online training can take place. Content creators are another important target group, both as participants and ambassadors for the trainings. They have a major influence on younger target groups and act as multipliers. People who work in public positions in the EU should set a good example and carry out the training as well. To make training opportunities accessible to the wider population, trade unions or other organizations could be involved to promote the trainings. Advertisements could also be placed in community newspapers. Participants would receive a certificate for successfully completing the training, with which they can demonstrate their acquired competence in dealing with hate to the outside world.

#### **Justification:**

The pyramid of hate begins with the stereotypes and clichés we have in our heads. These are promoted by hate speech. It is therefore important to get to the root of the problem. Trainings do not only have an impact on the people who take the training, but also on the people around them. Training courses are an important addition to formal educational programs (such as education at school or at university). The EU already offers many well-evaluated programs and training materials. However, these are difficult to find. To ensure that the programs developed are truly effective and sustainable, and that they reach the target group, they need to be better advertised. The focus on people in the public sector is also important, as there are still too many cases of those affected who have had negative experiences with government agencies.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Promote existing EU training courses on hate crime, hate speech, and non-violent communication, especially targeting public sector workers and content creators.
- Provide regular, on-site and online training for civil servants to handle hate-related issues sensitively and effectively.
- Involve trade unions and community newspapers to increase awareness and participation in training programs.
- Issue certificates to participants to publicly demonstrate their competence in addressing hate-related issues.



## Recommendation 5

### **Reinforce the Social and Emotional Skills of Children and Youth to Prevent Hate**

We request to deploy short-term and mid-term measures to reinforce children's emotional and social skills. To do this, we recommend improving the learning environment in schools and offering activities such as theater, arts, nonviolent communication, and civic education in and around schools to teach critical thinking, empathy, and emotional skills. In the short term, we demand to have more and better research studies on the impact of the activities we propose to prevent hatred. In the short-term and mid-term, we request to refocus the priority of programs like ERASMUS+, CERV, or programs funded by structural EU funds to support those activities preventing hatred in and around schools. The European Commission should be proactive in flagging those priorities and communicating them widely (e.g. by making recommendations to the member states and calls for projects) and cooperate with UNESCO and the Council of Europe to synchronize with their corresponding programs. Schools, teachers, and local actors could then use those funds to deploy the activities. To increase social inclusion, activities should be free of charge for everyone. After a period of about 5 years, we demand to have a proper evaluation of this, to refocus and decide if the measures were impactful. This could lead to increasing the capacity of the EU in hatred-prevention in schools.

#### **Justification:**

The current educational system doesn't take the questions of emotional and social skills seriously enough. Schools are also a place where hatred is being experienced. Kids are not well prepared to become adults who are aware of their emotions. Schools are the place where all children go and can learn how to live together. Creating a good learning atmosphere is the best way to prevent hatred. Getting to know oneself and others allows better critical and self-critical thinking and more tolerance. Activities like theatre, dance, non-violent communication are good ways to acquire these skills.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- One solution to prevent hatred in society is to improve the learning environment in schools and to offer activities such as theater, arts, nonviolent communication, civic education in and around schools.
- This will allow children to learn and develop their emotional and social skills and will lead to better mutual understanding between children, and down the line to less hatred in society.

## Recommendation 6

### **Education for Every Generation for Every Nation on Non-Violent Communication**

We recommend that:

- In the short-term, to create non-violent communication guidelines (inspired by documents such as "From Hate Speech to Non-Violent Communication" handbook) tailored to educational materials for youth and adults;
- In the mid-term, for Member States to prepare non-violent communication courses complementary to unemployment benefits for adults;
- In the mid-term, for Member States to prepare educational materials for employees;
- In the short-term, for the EU to create videos on the 3 concepts (TOLERANCE - KINDNESS – FORGIVENESS) in media content;
- In the mid-term, for schools to offer non-violent communication educational possibilities for parents (e.g. in schools);
- In the mid-term and long-term, for the EU to adopt implicit texts adaptation (e.g., trainings and exams): non-violent communication should be embedded as default within our language;
- In the long-term, for Member States to make the methodology of non-violent communication a part of prisoners' reintegration processes.

#### **Justification:**

Communication is one of the most important ways of getting understood in life, but one does not get to be taught it. If we teach this skill, there will be much less conflict and disputes among people. Awareness of one's own feelings, introspection and compassion towards others. There would be much less hate in Europe if this is implemented. We are at the top of hate now, we should see a decrease after this. Better communication leads to better collaboration, which would lead to a more united Europe.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Conveying the following key concepts: TOLERANCE - KINDNESS – FORGIVENESS to members of society via direct and indirect educational actions.
- Spread the knowledge and usage of non-violent communication for all ages of society from youth to adults, also including parents.
- Using existing UN guidelines and tailoring them to educational materials.
- EU to create free, educational materials for adults (in work and educational environments alike);
- Create awareness raising media content to spread the word about this method;
- Make NVC style communication part of any official communications as an embedded way to address citizens.

## Recommendation 7

### **Ads Aid Against Hate**

We recommend that the following communication strategy be considered to tackle hate:

- Short opt-in phone text messages on inclusivity for all citizens (e.g. receiving on a weekly/monthly basis);
- Bus stop posters promoting inclusivity;
- Large billboards for those who are tired of social media, for example use the EU election billboards for positive messaging on anti-hate speech;
- Google ads on tackling hate if you opt-in;
- Creating emojis and memes for anti-hate messaging;
- Positive notes added to existing official messages (such as governmental documents);
- Awareness videos played on TV, or in movie theatres before a film (make it positive reinforcement when possible);
- At sports events' (like the Olympics or the World Cup) opening acts to be used for spreading awareness, e.g. the Queen with Paddington bear at the London Olympics, which was wholesome/heartwarming content;
- Longer videos to be played at sport events with a "hook" of having the relevant player involved in the video (e.g. footballer at football matches);
- Campaigns with popular people/influencers (like Pommeliën in Belgium) to raise awareness on topics of hate.

### **Justification:**

It will lead to a:

- Healthier and safer social media environment, a different kind of social media, a more interpersonal one.
- Healthier, more aware and happier society.
- Better Europe with less polarisation.
- A situation which avoids escalation and puts things into perspective.

### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Holistic communication for all age groups on digital channels to promote empathy, inclusion, and acceptance of different background groups/individuals.
- Need for communication experts to get the content and strategy designed for the different platforms and diverse target groups.
- Communicating indirectly/implicitly such as "respect" button similar to a thumbs-up emoji.

## Recommendation 8

### **Reliability, Facts and Transparency: Verifying and Clarifying the Financing of Information**

We recommend requiring the media to collaborate with independent fact-checking organisations, to be transparent about their funding sources, to encourage citizens to verify the information that they receive, and to limit the political influence of media audience, by:

- Establishing rigorous protocols for verification and certification of information for individuals, associations, and companies that have a commercial purpose and/or who use public funds (e.g. to disclose their legal status);
- Independent media for a better diversity of sources, publish the financing of certification studies and the beneficiaries of the dissemination of information;
- Launching campaigns to raise awareness among citizens on the importance of verifying information;
- Limiting the number of media outlets that one person or company can possess (radio, television, social platforms, newspapers, etc.);
- A “Black Box” tool\* must be easily accessible to the public and be obligatory for people or companies having a commercial purpose or financed by a third party; these people or companies will be sanctioned depending on their global turnover in case of voluntary dissemination of fake news/hate speech.

#### **Justification:**

The spread of misinformation fuels divisions and hatred in our society. By guaranteeing that information is verified by independent bodies and by funding independent media, we can reduce misunderstandings and manipulation. Transparency on sources of funding for media benefitting from the dissemination of information strengthens public trust in the media. Furthermore, encouraging citizens to adopt a more curious and critical attitude towards the information they receive is essential for a more informed and resilient society in the face of misinformation. These approaches help to promote a more united society and ensure a plurality of voices in the media space.

*\* "Black Box" versus Mediapart in France: transparency of sources, verification process, research methodology, contexts and limits, media ownership, and media funding.*

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Include all necessary information for media transparency
- Support funding of independent media to promote media plurality
- Limit concentrated ownership of media

## Recommendation 9

### **Europe Meets You: Participative Media for Citizens**

We recommend the enlargement of citizens' participation to legitimise media content and foster a shared culture of mutuality and respect that eradicates hate. Such participation will be based on three channels complementing each other, namely:

1. A participative media outlet where citizens contribute to editorial choices. This system will be based on existing networks and companies, both public and private, that will be incentivized to publish high-quality information through new funds. Local channels will be especially valued as the closest to citizens, as well as citizens panels at the local and national levels to understand their priorities in these domains;
2. A forum for debates in the form of a social media channel with an engaging and user-friendly app protected by transparency rules;
3. An online, collaborative repository that stores quality news and discussions to enable citizens to build a shared history for the education of youth and progress in key subjects for the future of the EU.

This system will convey EU values against hateful speech, previously defined in a common charter. A body with ombudsman functions and an ethical committee will filter content to ensure it is aligned with these values; the possibility of using AI is also to be considered. Finally, the implementation of this system will be monitored by a select committee of citizens who ensure that editorial choices are not imposed by economic or ideological interests.

#### **Justification:**

This recommendation is important as it directly includes citizens, thus legitimizing EU institutions themselves through direct democracy. It will enable citizens to find information about whatever they want and without being influenced in a political manner, for example to agree with their national government. Special attention is devoted to younger people as this media system also considers means of communication that are closer to them than traditional TV channels. Similarly, children can be included through tailored content like educational courses or games, depending on their age. We believe this system to be important to fully eradicate disinformation and hate speech as it will be a media platform that does not carry hateful messages. As we know there is a risk of people not using this system, we will need to make sure to make it attractive and engaging by investing sufficient funds into the system.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Enlargement of citizens' participation to tackle hate speech using media.
- Three-point approach: media outlet, social media channel, and an online collaborative repository.
- Monitoring and filtering with a multilateral approach: an ombudsman body, ethical committee, and citizens' supervision committee.

## Recommendation 10

### **Addressing anonymity online to tackle hatred**

We recommend that anonymity online is regulated so that perpetrators of hate speech are better tracked, investigated, and held accountable by the appropriate authorities.

We therefore recommend:

- The EU and Member States to enforce the application of existing and future regulations and legislations;
- Setting up an identity authentication system at each Member State level, in which the minimum necessary information to identify someone is collected through a government-managed portal. This should be gradually harmonised at the EU Member State level;
- A requirement that the most important social media platforms better cooperate with European and national authorities in the application of existing and future legislations and the use of the identity authentication system;
- Raising awareness for online users of their responsibilities when posting content through a new European Charter of conduct, implemented across the most important social media platforms as well as through public entities, schools, and community groups.

#### **Justification:**

This recommendation is important because there is a dramatic increase in hate speech, especially online. Regulating anonymity would make perpetrators of online hatred more easily identifiable and accountable.

That said, anonymity needs to be protected based on current understandings of freedom of speech, guaranteeing a free exchange of views and opinions online.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Make accountability online a reality.
- Make regulations and legislations more efficient.
- Implement a European authentication system.
- Raise awareness of the consequences of hate speech.

## Recommendation 11

### **One Europe, One Definition: Criminalising Hate Speech**

We recommend that the EU Commission establish a diverse working group to update and expand the common definition of "illegal hate speech" to better criminalise its dissemination. The current definition, adopted in 2008, focuses on racism and xenophobia but excludes other forms of hate, such as ableism and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, age, and more. This outdated term needs urgent revision to reflect the inclusive values of our modern society.

A new, comprehensive definition is crucial for making the spread of illegal hate speech a criminal offense prosecutable across all EU Member States. This adaptation will ensure that all forms of hate speech are uniformly recognised and penalised, reinforcing our commitment to a more inclusive and respectful society.

By including hate speech in the list of EU crimes, we can protect marginalised communities and uphold human dignity. This initiative distinguishes illegal hate speech from freedom of expression, ensuring that we strike the balance between fundamental rights and the need to combat discrimination and hate.

#### **Justification:**

**Promotes Social Cohesion:** Updating the definition to include all forms of hate speech fosters a more inclusive society where everyone feels respected and valued. This promotes social cohesion and reduces the divisions caused by unchecked hate speech.

**Enhances Legal Clarity:** A unified definition across all EU member states eliminates inconsistencies and gaps in legal protections. This clarity ensures that perpetrators of hate speech are held accountable, regardless of where they are in the EU.

**Protects Marginalized Communities:** Expanding the definition to cover more forms of discrimination provides better protection for marginalised groups, reducing their exposure to harmful and derogatory language.

**Strengthens Human Rights:** By criminalising all forms of hate speech, the EU reinforces its commitment to human rights and dignity, aligning legal frameworks with contemporary values of equality and respect.

**Balances Freedoms:** This approach carefully distinguishes between hate speech and freedom of expression, ensuring that free speech is protected while preventing speech that incites violence, hatred, or discrimination.

**Fosters Empathy and Understanding:** Exposure to diverse perspectives and the criminalization of hate speech encourage empathy and understanding among citizens, contributing to a more harmonious and respectful society.

Implementing this recommendation will lead to a more just and cohesive Europe, where all individuals, regardless of their identity, can live without fear of hate and discrimination.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Establish a diverse working group to develop a comprehensive definition of "illegal hate speech" that includes all forms of discrimination.
- Update the outdated 2008 definition to include all types of hate speech.
- Recognize and penalize hate speech uniformly across the EU.
- Make the dissemination of illegal hate speech a criminal offense across all EU Member States.



## Recommendation 12

### **AI Moderation: Protecting Social Media from Hate Speech**

We recommend the development of an AI tool to detect illegal hate speech on social media platforms, ensuring compliance with EU standards. This tool will function as follows:

#### Detection and Flagging:

- Detects hate speech based on the EU definition of illegal hate speech;
- Flags posts as potential hate speech and informs the creator;
- Flagged posts are reviewed by a human moderator within 24 hours;
- Posts falling under free speech are released;
- Posts containing illegal hate speech are forwarded to authorities for prosecution and subsequently deleted.

#### Pre-Posting Detection:

- Detects hate speech before content goes live;
- Notifies creators if their posts appear to contain illegal hate speech;
- Provides an opportunity for creators to revise or post anyway;
- If posted, the content remains flagged until reviewed by a human, with a warning about the legality and consequences of posting hate speech.

Mandatory implementation of this tool across social media in the EU will enhance online safety, protect marginalized communities, and ensure compliance with hate speech regulations, fostering a more respectful digital environment.

#### **Justification:**

**Enhanced Protection:** This AI tool provides robust protection for marginalized groups by detecting and mitigating hate speech before it can cause harm. By swiftly identifying and removing illegal content, we create a safer online environment.

**Efficiency and Accuracy:** The combination of AI detection and human review ensures high accuracy in identifying hate speech while respecting free speech. The 24-hour review process balances speed and thoroughness, minimizing the spread of harmful content.

**Accountability:** By notifying content creators about potential hate speech and the legal implications, the tool promotes accountability and awareness. Users are educated about what constitutes illegal hate speech, encouraging more thoughtful and respectful communication.

**Preventative Measures:** Pre-posting detection allows users to revise potentially harmful content before it goes live. This proactive approach helps prevent the spread of hate speech, reducing the need for punitive actions and fostering a culture of respect.

**Legal Compliance:** Ensuring that social media platforms adhere to EU hate speech laws creates a uniform standard across the digital space. This harmonisation simplifies enforcement and strengthens the legal framework against online hate speech.

Positive Social Change: Implementing this tool promotes a more inclusive and respectful society. By reducing the prevalence of hate speech, we encourage diverse voices and perspectives, enhancing social cohesion and mutual understanding.

Overall, this AI tool represents a significant step toward a safer, more respectful online environment, aligning digital interactions with the values of inclusivity and dignity.

**Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Develop a tool that detects illegal hate speech on social media platforms including the following functionality.
- Detecting and flagging potential hate speech per EU standards, informs creators, and submits for human review. Illegal content is deleted and reported; free speech is released.
- Scanning content before posting, notifying creators of potential illegal hate speech, and allowing revisions. Flagged content is reviewed with a legal warning.

## Recommendation 13

### **Burst the Bubble: Promoting Diverse Perspectives on Social Media**

To combat online radicalization, we recommend that social media platforms be mandated to diversify the content shown to users. Algorithms often create echo chambers, pushing biased content and leading users down narrow rabbit holes. By adjusting algorithms to present a broader range of viewpoints, we can prevent the dominance of any single perspective and promote a more balanced understanding of topics.

How? Our proposed solution ensures that when users view extremist content, the algorithm will subsequently display content from opposing viewpoints. This approach encourages users to see a more nuanced and comprehensive narrative, effectively bursting the content bubbles that currently isolate them.

This strategy not only reduces the risk of radicalization but also fosters critical thinking and empathy by exposing users to diverse opinions. Implementing this change will make social media a more informative and balanced space, contributing to a healthier online environment for all.

#### **Justification:**

**Enhanced Critical Thinking:** Exposing users to diverse perspectives fosters critical thinking and encourages individuals to evaluate information more thoroughly, reducing susceptibility to radical ideologies.

**Reduced Polarization:** By breaking down echo chambers, this approach can diminish societal polarization, promoting dialogue and understanding between different groups.

**Informed Public:** A more balanced information diet ensures that the public is better informed about various issues, leading to more nuanced discussions and more thoughtful decision-making.

**Improved Mental Health:** Consuming a variety of content can reduce anxiety and stress associated with consuming repetitive and potentially inflammatory information.

**Democratic Strengthening:** A society that is exposed to a diversity of viewpoints is better equipped to engage in democratic processes, fostering a healthier and more resilient democracy.

Implementing this recommendation will make social media a platform for education and constructive discourse, ultimately leading to a more informed, cohesive, and empathetic society.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- **Diversify Content:** Mandate social media platforms to adjust algorithms to present a broader range of viewpoints, countering echo chambers and biased content.
- **Balanced Viewpoints:** Ensure that viewing extremist content triggers the algorithm to display opposing viewpoints, promoting a nuanced understanding.

- **Reduce Radicalization:** This strategy reduces the risk of radicalization by exposing users to diverse opinions, fostering critical thinking and empathy.
- **Healthier Online Environment:** Implementing these changes will create a more informative, balanced, and healthy online space for all users.

## Recommendation 14

### **Helping to Return to the Meaning of Life**

We recommend that the EU encourages the creation of community spaces to support marginalised people. This assistance may be channelled in different directions depending on one's needs. We recommend that people are given the opportunity to find work, as a form of personal autonomy and stability, while at the same time providing specific support for those groups that have more difficulty accessing the labour market, for example, people with disabilities, refugees, homeless people, the abused, etc. Specific help in these cases could consist of preparing for job applications, interviews, the ability to take care of one's hygiene and obtain appropriate clothes for work.

There could be public funding for this kind of community-led initiatives while leveraging solidarity networks and volunteer initiatives that are already existing in the community, so that the financial investment can be sustainable for public budgets. There should be a commitment for the centres' long-term financing conditions to be maintained.

These solidarity and support initiatives should encompass together two needs: on the one hand, providing specialised assistance to specific groups that may have special needs and, on the other hand, remaining open to diverse marginalised groups without creating priority scales or preferences that may contribute to further hate and discrimination.

Specific and immediate assistance can be found in these centres according to personal cases, with the support of properly trained volunteers and/or professionals who can direct people to places where they can receive specific assistance. Assistance may be provided not only to people from marginalised groups but to anyone in personal circumstances or life situations for which support may be needed.

There may also be workshops, activities, cross-cultural exchanges, events and celebrations at these community centres that help create a sense of community and overcome barriers of discrimination. Those spaces should be humanised, i.e. making people feel welcome and at ease.

There should be a mutual commitment between the centre, which will provide help, and the recipient, who has to achieve agreed results within a certain timeframe. Special cases might need longer time to resolve, assessed on a case-by-case basis by experts.

#### **Justification:**

It is important because people would get a lot of relief by going to these community centres. They would be novel, offer hope and inspire. It would improve mental health, help people with problems at home, it could provide a roof for all people in a weak position that can be helped by this solution, enjoy their fundamental right to lead a dignified life and help people find meaning. It is important because people can influence each other, build relationships, and understand each other's problems. People would not feel stigmatised or labeled. We need to become human beings again (not only accelerating technology in detriment to humanisation). People need opportunities, and this recommendation could create job opportunities.

The recommendation could foster a more inclusive, just, egalitarian, meaningful and empathetic society, where everyone can participate equally in society, and where we don't normalise issues such as poverty and homelessness because they create hatred.

This recommendation could help society at grassroot level. In terms of impact, we have to provide global responses to global issues. Impact would be seen on the small-scale before building up.

There are risks if social workers are not equipped to do the work and if the idea is not designed well. Other risks could be financial, linguistic or related to integration.

**Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- The EU should encourage the creation of community spaces to support marginalised groups.
- Assistance should be tailored to one's needs with the support of properly trained volunteers and/or professionals, with mutual commitment between the centre and the recipient to agreed results and timeframes, with possible extensions for special cases.
- There should be a commitment to long-term public funding while leveraging already existing solidarity networks and volunteer initiatives.

## Recommendation 15

### **Establishing an independent Trust Committee**

We propose to set up an independent Trust Committee to establish a Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament and monitor hate speech and misinformation. The Trust Committee should be composed of multidisciplinary experts (for instance citizens, legal experts, psychologists, sociologists, NGOs and political experts) and supervised by citizens. To ensure wide representation, the citizens are randomly selected - with criteria enforced to enhance the representation of vulnerable groups in society. Once it is founded, the Committee will deliberate and decide upon a Code of Conduct, applicable to public officials and authorities. The Code of Conduct is adjustable. The Trust Committee uses the Code of Conduct to collect data, monitor implementation and develop further guidelines on identifying and tackling hate speech. The Trust Committee also has an official point of contact to other EU citizens, to report violations and hate speech by politicians. Members will rotate to ensure pluralism among the Committee. To maintain its integrity, the committee will enforce strict rules for joining the Trust Committee to prevent conflicts of interest of its members.

#### **Justification:**

A Trust Committee, which monitors, tracks and develops the implementation of a code of conduct against hate speech, is necessary to protect individuals and communities from the harmful effects of hate speech, especially from public officials and authorities. By developing a comprehensive code of conduct based on the input from legal experts, psychologists, sociologists, citizens and others, this committee can set clear guidelines and expectations for behaviour. Such a trust committee is vital for regaining and fostering trust in institutions and representatives. By implementing and monitoring a Code of Conduct for trustful behaviour, greater transparency is assured. The Committee acts independently, transparently and is supervised by citizens, thereby increasing its legitimacy. To be effective, the committee must have a well-composed, multidisciplinary team, representing diverse perspectives and vulnerable groups.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Establish an independent Trust Committee to create and enforce a Code of Conduct for EU public officials, addressing hate speech and misinformation.
- The Committee will include multidisciplinary experts and randomly selected citizens, ensuring representation of vulnerable groups.
- The Committee will monitor the implementation of the Code of Conduct, collect data, and handle reports of hate speech by politicians.
- Citizen supervision and rotation of members will maintain the committee's integrity, transparency, and legitimacy.

## Recommendation 16

### **Looking for the People: Tackling Social Inequality to Combat Hatred in the EU**

Social inequality, as outlined in the problem definition, represents one of the key drivers/causes of hatred in our society. Despite its importance, EU institutions and member states have not adequately addressed this problem, underscoring the need for comprehensive EU-funded research to identify and tackle the linkages between social inequality and hatred.

Understanding these linkages is essential for developing effective policies and interventions. Without solid empirical evidence, based on qualitative and quantitative data, efforts to address social inequality may be misdirected or ineffective. Involving social organizations in data collection ensures that the data reflects the realities of those most affected by inequality, providing a more accurate and relevant foundation for research with a bottom-up approach. Continuous publication of these findings will inform and refine ongoing efforts. The results of the studies may be incorporated in awareness-raising campaigns.

#### **Justification:**

Developing guidelines and campaigns based on thorough research allows for targeted actions that address the specific ways in which social inequality fosters hatred. This strategic approach can significantly reduce social tensions and promote social cohesion, as well as enable systemic change.

Collecting data on the impact of positive measures and continuously publishing findings fosters transparency and accountability. This process not only informs policymakers and stakeholders but also builds public trust and encourages collaborative efforts to address social inequality.

Establishing standards for verified, trustworthy data and a harmonized methodology, including both personal voices and quantitative and qualitative data, ensures the reliability and comprehensiveness of the research.

Addressing social inequality through comprehensive research and data collection is crucial for mitigating hatred and fostering a more cohesive society within the EU. This approach provides the necessary insights and tools to develop effective policies and interventions, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and harmonious social landscape.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- EU Institutions and member states have insufficiently tackled social inequality (as a driver and cause of hatred) so more research needs to be done to ensure linkages between social inequality and hatred are identified and tackled.
- Conduct comprehensive EU-funded research on the link between social inequality and hatred, involving diverse stakeholders in data collection. Use the findings to develop targeted policies and awareness campaigns to promote social cohesion. Engage NGOs, member states, and research institutes in extensive data collection using both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Ensure continuous publication of findings.



## Recommendation 17

### **National Office for Combating Hate in Member States**

We recommend establishing an independent Office for Combating Hate in each Member State. We need a strong institution with legal authority and effective communication, providing tangible assistance to people through an objective and independent system for reporting crimes.

Firstly, the Office will be responsible for providing legal and psychological support to every victim of hate crime in their Member State, working closely with NGOs and a citizens' committee. The Office will provide a platform to effectively report hate crimes safely for the victims.

Secondly, the Office will work closely with the EU High Level Group on Combating Hate Speech and Hate Crime, or similar, to fulfil its mission and ensure the implementation of Codes of Conduct for businesses, organizations, and politicians. This cooperation will help create an effective and supportive environment for victims. In addition, the Office could provide information and best practices to individuals seeking advice. Personnel of the Office should serve on a term basis.

Thirdly, the Office will disseminate EU tools, programs, mechanisms, and materials about hate, ensuring they reach educational institutions, administrative institutions, and the general public at national and regional levels. To ensure this, the Office will provide training for the services involved in the first response after reporting.

Lastly, the Office will gather data about hate crimes to develop effective responses to the future needs of the population.

#### **Justification:**

Hate crime has increased in our polarised societies, worsening the well-being of people. To prevent, to react to hate crime, and to take care of the victims, it is necessary to have effective institutions and mechanisms in place. Moreover, at the beginning of every crime lies a thought or a word. To ensure education on respect and to raise awareness, it is necessary to establish a dedicated institution that prevents hate crimes and supports victims, especially since such an office simply does not exist yet but is much needed.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Create an effective and supportive environment for victims.
- Establish an independent Office for Combating Hate in each Member State.
- The Office will work closely with the EU High Level Group on Combating Hate Speech and Hate Crime, or similar, to fulfill its mission.

## Recommendation 18

### **European Effective Response Protocol for Hate Crime Notifications**

We recommend a clear and uniform procedure for reporting hate crimes across all EU member states. This legal procedure should be effectively implemented in organisations that interact with victims of hate crimes. We suggest revising all previously proposed and ineffective measures and developing a straightforward process to enable victims and witnesses to report all crimes, including crimes on online platforms, safely.

Firstly, the procedure should ensure safe reporting conditions for both victims and witnesses of hate crimes. Ensuring their safety can increase the number of reported crimes. This includes legal and psychological protection measures and, if necessary, physical protection from individuals seeking revenge. The procedure could also involve working with offenders, who may often be previous victims of hate.

Secondly, the procedure should involve all actors participating in the crime reporting chain to reduce the risk of secondary victimisation and exacerbation of trauma.

Lastly, the procedure should be supported by an appropriate online channel designed for safe crime reporting.

#### **Justification:**

This recommendation is important because it helps to avoid and/or minimise the secondary victimisation of victims. The procedure will enable a quick response and assistance for victims, as well as support and protection for witnesses. Such a procedure will also facilitate the actions of the services receiving the report. If the procedure proves effective, society will be encouraged to respond to and report crimes more frequently.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Establishment of a clear and uniform procedure for reporting hate crimes across all EU member states.
- Revision of all previously proposed and ineffective measures and development of a straightforward process to enable victims and witnesses to report all crimes, including crimes on online platforms safely.
- Implementation of an online channel for safe crime reporting.

## Recommendation 19

### **Spreading a Culture of Debate in Schools Inspired by Citizens' Panels**

We recommend the organisation of mini-debates at school, like a “mini citizen panel”, during school time. The most effective way to engage children in debating (not creating “civic class”) is to set the initiative in a safe environment, with the support of the educative community: such as supervisors, assistants, and teachers. For instance, organizing a debate on meals in the canteen, paying attention to the habits of different religions, is a way of creating discussions based on concrete subjects that affect children daily and of benefiting from the expertise of people in the school, such as canteen staff and chefs. People coming from different backgrounds that are not strictly connected to the educational sector (i.e. police) could also be involved in the process of explaining their work to the children. Regarding the topics covered by these debates, we should directly consult children about the topics on which they want to deepen their understandings. Children can discuss any subject as long as it is adapted to their level and appropriate. To share this experience and culture of debate across the European Union, twinning among schools could be effective. For example, during exchanges, school delegates who have taken part in a debate could travel and share their experience and points of view with other school delegates from European countries. The "results" of these debates could feed into the citizens' platform for children.

#### **Justification:**

Young people are more open-minded and capable of accepting different viewpoints, which is a crucial aspect of combating hate. Therefore, children must be made aware of civic culture and civic engagement at school (from 6 to 16). These "panels" organized at school should be a training tool for children. The culture of participation and the skills developed during these debates can be useful throughout their lives. The twinning programs among schools could be effective because it doesn't change completely the educational programs of Member States, but it implements a common initiative aiming to increase critical thinking and understanding among European children.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Young people are more open-minded and capable of accepting different viewpoints
- Children should experiment with civic engagement culture and debate at school (from 6 to 16).
- Twinning among schools can be relevant for sharing experiences at a European level and to exchange/understand other cultures, and mindsets.

## Recommendation 20

### **Creating European Citizens' Panels for Young People (Ages 16-25) for Tackling Hatred**

The European Citizens' panels for young people should apply a random selection process, as the current European citizens' panels, because it leads to the representation of diverse groups. The panels should cover topics that are related to challenges and opportunities faced by young people (i.e. bullying, tolerance, respect, stereotypes, and social inclusion). These panels should use young people as experts to deepen understanding of crucial issues and raise their voices at the EU level. For instance, young people involved in anti-discrimination or migrant integration associations could act as "experts" and "resources" for the Youth Panel. These Panels should be promoted in the citizen engagement platform (which needs to be rethought, made more interactive, "cooler" and better promoted).

#### **Justification:**

Young people are often disinterested in politics and vote at decreasing levels. Their political representatives (whether at the national or European level) are elected by older people. To familiarize themselves with political debate, to be aware of what the European Union does, and to take an interest in it, participating in a European citizen panel like ours could be an interesting tool to foster more permanent engagement. The European level is crucial because, in many member states, the vision of the European Union is reduced to "Brussels decides." Brussels is perceived as "the big boss who imposes many rules." Experimenting with a citizen panel could allow young people to feel closer to Europe and other young Europeans. As young people are among the main victims of hate, therefore, it is crucial to focus on them.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- We recommend the creation of Europe-wide panels specifically for young people on anti-hate issues.
- The aim is twofold: to combat young people's distrust of politicians and to see young people as part of the solution to the various problems.

## Recommendation 21

### **Developing Voluntary Civic Services in Local Communities for Adults**

The time to take part in these volunteering activities has to be provided, for instance by having paid leaves from work reserved specifically for civic engagement. At the same time, we have to take into consideration self-employed workers. Economic benefits could be great motivators to increase civic engagement among different categories (e.g. tax reduction). Finally, the importance of local initiatives should be promoted at the EU level: the EU could incentivize and support these local initiatives around Europe, providing experience and financial support. The duration of this voluntary service would be shorter than an Erasmus for employees or the self-employed (one week, for example).

#### **Justification:**

To combat hate, the local level is very important, and local communities are a valuable support for social cohesion. Volunteering in associations that promote integration, for example, should be accessible to all ages. The European Union could support these initiatives to combat hate at the local level and allow for exchanges of experiences between different local actors.

#### **Recommendation in a nutshell:**

- Voluntary civic services should be accessible to all, regardless of economic or professional circumstances.
- Companies must allow their employees to try out these European volunteering schemes (with support from Europe).
- Volunteering and the skills acquired should be valued.

## Overview of the assessment results

(with recommendations sorted according to their level of support)

Rank	No.	Title of recommendation	Level of support (mean)	Approval rate (share of votes 4-6)	Votes
1	4	Training for Tolerance (T4T)	5,23	97,9%	143
2	19	Spreading a Culture of Debate in Schools Inspired by Citizens' Panels	5,20	89,9%	139
3	11	One Europe, One Definition: Criminalising Hate Speech	5,09	91,2%	137
4	18	European Effective-Response Protocol for Hate Crime Notifications	5,04	90,6%	139
5	20	Creating European Citizens' Panels for Young People (Ages 16-25) for Tackling Hatred	5,01	89,2%	139
6	5	Reinforce the Social and Emotional Skills of Children and Youth to Prevent Hate	5,00	90,2%	143
6	17	National Office for Combating Hate in Member States	5,00	87,1%	139
8	1	Increasing Awareness About Hatred and Existing Measures and Remedies to Counter it With a Public Campaign	4,88	89,5%	143
9	6	Education for Every Generation for Every Nation on Non-Violent Communication	4,85	88,0%	142
10	8	Reliability, Facts and Transparency: Verifying and Clarifying the Financing of Information	4,83	80,0%	140
11	21	Developing Voluntary Civic Services in Local Communities for Adults	4,77	85,5%	138
12	13	Burst the Bubble: Promoting Diverse Perspectives on Social Media	4,74	82,4%	136
13	14	Helping to Return to the Meaning of Life	4,72	85,6%	139
14	7	Ads Aid Against Hate	4,68	81,8%	143
15	12	AI Moderation: Protecting Social Media from Hate Speech	4,66	79,6%	137
16	16	Looking for the People: Tackling Social Inequality to Combat Hatred in the EU	4,59	81,0%	137
17	15	Establishing an Independent Trust Committee	4,57	80,4%	138
18	3	EU Safe Surfing Card	4,50	76,2%	143
19	10	Addressing Anonymity Online to Tackle Hatred	4,48	74,5%	141
20	2	Creating an EU-Wide Platform Combining Information, Resources, Measures and Support Systems Regarding Hatred	4,45	78,2%	142
21	9	Europe Meets You: Participative Media for Citizens	4,18	68,3%	139