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INTERNATIONAL MEETING, ROME, 22-23 NOVEMBER 2019



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HATE SPEECH ANALYSIS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN SIX EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

AUSTRIA, CYPRUS, FRANCE, GREECE, ITALY AND SPAIN





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The objective

- ▶ To develop an independent analysis of the evolution of the discriminatory, racist and xenophobic political discourse that characterized the public debate in 2018 in Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, in Italy and Spain.
- ▶ To examine the civil society initiatives promoted against hate speech focusing on countering political hate speech
- ▶ To reflect collectively and in an international dimension on the priorities that CSOs must address in order to try to have a greater impact on the public debate



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The structure

- ▶ 1 **Defining** hate speech in a non-homogeneous legal context
- ▶ 2 A phenomenon **difficult to quantify**
- ▶ 3 An overall picture: **themes, target groups** and **actors** of hate speech in the public discourse
- ▶ 4. **Civil society's actions** against hate speech
- ▶ 5. **Towards coordinated strategies** against discriminatory, xenophobic and racist hate speech
- ▶ 6. **Conclusions**
- ▶ **Appendix:** Debunking for hate speech narratives. Three examples



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A difficult definition

- ▶ The first chapter offers a recognition of the **definitions of "hate speech"** **highlighting** the difficulties that derive from the lack of a shared definition both internationally and in the individual countries.
- ▶ **The focus of our report is the racist hate speech of political nature identified with public and disparaging concepts expressed by people in power** (politicians, public servants, religious leaders, media professionals) **meant to provoke a negative reaction against a specific individual or social group.**
- ▶ These individuals and groups are identified on the basis of **negative stereotypes and prejudices** used as tools of **inferiorization and denigration.**



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The lack of official data

- ▶ The second chapter illustrates the criticalities linked to the **lack of an official and standardised system of data collection** at international and national level, a direct consequence of the absence of a shared regulatory definition. This makes it **impossible to make a quantitative comparison** between the data available in the individual countries.
- ▶ Each country adopts different methodologies for the collection of data on so-called hate crimes; no country, among those considered, has an official and systematic system of data collection dedicated to hate speech, **broken down by type of act, target, motivation of the party, perpetrators, references to the law.**

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Hate speech: the main **targets**

- ▶ The **third chapter** analyzes the **target groups**, the most recurrent **topics** and the most aggressive **public actors** of hate political speech on the basis of a qualitative analysis of some exemplary cases collected and analyzed in each country.
- ▶ Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, Muslims and Roma are the target groups most affected by discriminatory and violent political rhetoric.
- ▶ Hostility against **black people** is particularly evident in Italy and Spain, with messages and speeches that come to evoke biological racism.
- ▶ The **anti-Semitic discourses** go through the public debate in Italy, Austria, France and Spain. In the last country, however, Muslim men are the group most affected by violent public rhetoric.
- ▶ In Greece, the hostility expressed towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees goes hand in hand with the one that affects **Albanian communities** that have long been resident in the country.
- ▶ In Cyprus the **anti-Muslim** rhetoric overlaps with the revolt against the new arrivals of migrants from third countries and the unresolved conflict between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey.
- ▶ In Italy and in Spain attempts are also made to **criminalize NGOs** that work with migrants and minorities.

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WAS results. 1 first picture on targets/topics

	ITALY	SPAIN	AUSTRIA	GREECE	FRANCE	CYPRUS
MAIN TOPICS						
(In)Security/Criminalization	X	X	X	X	X	X
Invasion	X	X		X		X
Competiton in welfare/work	X		X			
Cultural Incompatibility	X	X	X	X	X	X
Costs	X	X	X			
Islamist terrorism		X				X
MAIN TARGETS						
Immigrants/refugees	X	X	X	X	X	X
Muslims	X	X	X		X	X
Roma	X	X	X	X		
Jews	X		X		X	
Black people	X	X				

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Hate speech: the most recurrent **topics**

"There's an ongoing invasion"

"Immigrants cost too much. Our
money for our people"

"Immigrants = Criminals"

"Moors out, you're bastards"

"European first, #migrants out"

"They alter our national and cultural
identity."

**Migrants, refugees and
minorities = THREAT**

❑ **INVASION**

❑ **INSOSTENIBILITY**

❑ **INSECURITY**

❑ **MUSLIM THREAT**

❑ **COMPETITION** (welfare/ labour
market)

❑ **CULTURAL INCOMPATIBILITY**



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Hate speech: the **actors**

- ▶ Main actors: Parties and movements belonging to **the far right history and political culture** and impregnated with nationalism and populist impulses.
- ▶ These forces have a **cultural and political hegemony** in the current historical phase in the public debate concerning migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and minorities.
- ▶ This hegemony has the effect of also **orienting the political communication of other parties** towards forms of stigmatization and towards arguments that, even when they do not take on the explicit characteristics of hate speech, can contribute to nourish public feelings of hostility towards these groups.
- ▶ **Left parties** seem not to be able to influence the public debate

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CSO's INITIATIVES TO COUNTER HATE SPEECH

- ▶ **Reporting** hate speech and racist violence
- ▶ **Legal assistance** activities;
- ▶ **Monitoring, mapping and analysis** of hate speech;
- ▶ **Human rights education** in schools and media literacy;
- ▶ **Promotion of correct information;**
- ▶ **Campaigning**
- ▶ Development of initiatives and spaces for **intercultural dialogue** offline
- ▶ We note **the absence of any specific self-regulatory initiative promoted by political parties and movements to promote a more correct** political debate, free from all forms of discrimination and stigmatization.

Strength:

plurality of original projects and initiatives at local and national level;

high awareness of the importance to countering political hate speech.

Weakness:

fragmentation, weak tools, lack of coordination, weak legal aid systems to report hate speech and to support victims of discrimination and racist violences

- ▶ First of all, **there is the need for a specific, transversal, coordinated and multidimensional commitment** capable of involving all the relevant actors in a common strategy:
- ▶ **migrants, minorities and their representative organisations, anti-racist organisations, the traditional and online media system, national and local institutions, law enforcement and the judiciary, the world of education, culture, research, entertainment, cinema and sport.**
- ▶ **The transversality and coordination** of strategies to combat racist discourse are in fact **essential conditions** to ensure the effectiveness and impact of our campaigns, as well as the protagonism of migrants, refugees, Roma and religious minorities in their definition and implementation.
- ▶

- ▶ **Reforming legislation** on hate speech and hate crimes
- ▶ More effective and timely **implementation of legislation**
- ▶ **Set up official monitoring and data collection systems** on racist discourse and propaganda
- ▶ **Allocate adequate public resources** for legal, psychological and social support interventions
- ▶ **Information and awareness-raising** in schools
- ▶ **Training** (journalists, lawyers, judges, social workers)
- ▶ **Promoting good information by media**
- ▶ **Encouraging the adoption of self-regulatory instruments by the political parties**

▶

From counternarratives to alternative narratives

- ▶ **Alternative narratives** should take into account the main themes at the heart of violent political rhetoric **without remaining subordinate to it, reversing the order of discourse** with particular reference to the causes of the **persistent economic and social inequalities that characterise European societies** and the political and institutional responses that could/should be put in place.
- ▶ **The over-representation in negative terms of the migration issue** on the political agenda of many European countries **indicates a lack of convincing alternative proposals on general economic and social structural policies**, which should instead return to the centre of public and political debate.
- ▶ The relaunch of a participatory public debate to discuss and advance alternative concepts on some **key issues** and concepts seems essential to this end: **identity, culture, citizenship, community, equality, human rights, security, perception, well-being.**

NEW COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- ▶ **Communicating the right to equality** together with denouncing discrimination
- ▶ Networking!
- ▶ **Creative, proactive and more professional** communication!
- ▶ Give priority to **people's stories** (possibly positive) in our narratives.
- ▶ Involve **non-professionals, influencers, testimonials** in our campaigns to achieve greater visibility.
- ▶ But all the analytical, technical and cultural expedients on **online communication cannot replace** the need to fight against economic and social inequalities, discrimination and racist violence **offline**.

- ▶ We are faced with what we have called **a kind of internationalisation of wickedness, hatred and discriminatory, xenophobic and racist violence.**
- ▶ In an attempt to curb it, civil society and democratic political forces are called upon to respond with **proactive, autonomous and independent narratives**, but above all with **social practices and convincing proposals on the structural, economic and social policies** needed to combat inequalities and social injustice for all.

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