

# EXTENDING THE AGENDA. EQUALITY BODIES ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH

Few equality bodies have an explicit mandate in relation to hate speech, but considering its detrimental effects, it is high on their list of priorities.

This Perspectives looks at the context, priorities, strategies and actions of equality bodies in order to tackle hate speech and promote equal treatment for all.

## EQUALITY BODY STRATEGIES

Equality bodies have identified a number of ways in which to work on hate speech, despite the lack of an explicit mandate for many of them. They link it to their mandate on:

- Promoting equal treatment without discrimination, or preventing discrimination;
- Provisions in relation to harassment and sexual harassment in equal treatment legislation;
- Supporting the development of a society in which there is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual.



## TACKLING HATE SPEECH: ENABLERS



- Equality body action on hate speech is enabled in contexts where relevant public authorities are acting on the issue.
- Growing public concern about hate speech also enables equality body action.
- Equality bodies with an explicit mandate can take comprehensive and strategic action on hate speech, as long as they are also given the necessary resources.

## TAKING ACTION

Equality bodies take action to tackle hate speech through casework, research, policy advice, promotion of good practice, and communication.

- There are low levels of casework, largely reported by equality bodies with a decision-making function.
- Research includes surveys on attitudes to diversity, on racism, on sexism and on exploring different forms, causal factors and motivations of hate speech.
- Policy advice focuses on improving the legal basis for prosecuting hate speech comprehensively and effectively.
- Communication work focuses on making the issue of hate speech visible as a public concern.



## GOOD PRACTICE



Good practices by equality bodies include:

- Supporting better enforcement in relation to hate speech by the relevant authorities;
- Enabling educational establishments to address hate speech;
- Engaging political parties on the issue, especially linked to elections;
- Promoting positive duties in public bodies, employers and service providers;
- Publishing guidance for the media on hate speech and freedom of expression.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: EUROPEAN COMMISSION & MEMBER STATES

- **Enhance legislation** on hate speech to ensure uniform definition, coverage of all grounds, and a mix of criminal and administrative channels to address cases;
- Improve policy context by developing **multi-annual national action plans on hate speech**;
- **Ensure equality body have mandates** that explicitly enable them to address hate speech and are accorded the competences required.



## RECOMMENDATIONS: EQUALITY BODIES

- Explore and devise full and comprehensive **strategies** to address hate speech;
- **Develop communication work** to include sustained and substantial action on promoting **alternative narratives**;
- Engage with the European Commission **Code of Conduct** and secure funding for this work under European Commission **calls for projects**.

