

Hate on the web

Hate on the web. The daily hate on the internet and how we can deal with it



CHAMPIONS

Cooperative Harmonised Action Model
to Stop Polarisation in Our Nations



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Topical introduction





Introduction

"Hate speech" refers to the inhumane linguistic devaluation or insulting of whole social groups or persons as members of a social group. This includes, for example, expressions that belittle or denigrate entire groups. Hate speech expresses itself in racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, homophobic, sexist or to the appearance of a person related statements, often a mixture of these. It does not matter whether a person or social group actually bears the characteristics assigned to them or identifies with it (e.g. whether the person is "foreign", Jewish or gay or has a disability or not), what matters here is the perception and assignment by those who spread hatred. Hate speech uses and serves common stereotypes and prejudices, spreads false statements and conspiracy theories. Sometimes hate speech disguises itself as humour and is conveyed through pictures/comics. It can also be linked to threats and calls for violence. Hate speech is preferably expressed on the Internet and in social media spaces. From there it is carried into the analogue space and vice versa

Hate speech poisons social climate and endangers democracy, which thrives on debate in a civilised framework.

Hate speech - an important topic for (educational) institutions

Hate postings are not uncommon and have increased greatly in recent years. 85% of young people aged 14-24 years stated in a survey in 2019 that they have perceived Hate Speech on the Internet before. In 2016, just three years earlier, only 65% of those surveyed reported having noticed it. This is the result of an online survey entitled "Ethics on the Net", conducted by the Forsa research institute on behalf of the NRW Media Authority (LfM). Large newspapers feel increasingly forced to close their commentary columns on reports about refugees or Muslims because they are littered with hate.

Especially teenagers and young adults are active on the net and are confronted with new challenges, including hate posting. It is therefore important to reflect on the topic of hate speech in schools and youth facilities and also to develop possible courses of action. In the meantime, however, many older people also are on the net and contribute, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to the spread of hate mailings.





Hate Speech as a crime

So far, hate speech as such is not listed in the Criminal Code. Nevertheless, hate speech may be a criminal offence under various laws of the Criminal Code.

public provocation to commit criminal offences (§111)

Coercion (§240)

Threat (§241)

Insult (§185)

defamation (§187)

In some cases the facts of the incitement of the people (§130) can also be present

Regardless of its criminal liability, hate speech violates human and ethical standards, as set out in Article 1 of the Basic Law: "The dignity of man is inviolable. Respecting and protecting it is the duty of all state authority."

It contradicts the achievements of civilised interaction with one another, poisons the climate and, in the worst case, can provoke discrimination or even violence or serve to justify it.

Even if much of hate speech is not "forbidden", state institutions such as schools must ask themselves how they react to it in order to live up to their own guiding values, their protective mission, their obligation to human dignity and the creation of a good learning environment; the outlawing of and protection against hatred and violence are therefore among the essential tasks of schools. The same can also be transferred to non-governmental institutions, independent sponsors or commercial enterprises.

Here you can find all laws on the Internet
<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/>





The goals behind hate messages

Hate speech is propaganda in its effect, which is motivated and often used in a very targeted manner. Like any kind of propaganda, there are clear goals. Persons or groups are to be excluded from social life.

- It will create **a common enemy** and a feeling of "us against them". Who "they" are varies according to the group
- People get the feeling of **belonging to a group** and follow the social structures of their own group.
- **Simple explanations** and **solutions** for complex problems are provided. For example, that the own unemployment is the fault of people with migration background. The solution is that the refugees must leave, for then we will have work again.
- The **inhibition threshold** to physical violence is lowered by de-individualizing and dehumanizing persons or social groups.



Differentiation

Hate speech, discrimination, bullying

Hate speech, discrimination and bullying are closely related and can overlap and reinforce each other.

Hate speech and *discrimination* are always directed against persons who are assigned to a certain group based on characteristics such as origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation/identity, disability or appearance. Thus, hate speech and discrimination always refer to (assigned) group membership (as opposed to the very individual affront).

While discrimination more comprehensively includes actions of individuals or institutions or entire structures, hate speech refers to the verbal part. Bullying refers to the individual devaluation and exclusion of a single person, who is chosen as a victim on the basis of very individual characteristics, e.g. because he or she wears glasses, because of his or her clothing or personal characteristics. The aim of bullying is to humiliate and destroy the attacked person over a long period of time and to make oneself feel right and strong. Often bullying overlaps with discrimination, for example when someone is bullied because of the colour of their skin.

Hatespeech on the Web and Cyberbullying

Both take place on the Internet and in the social media. In addition, there are the special features of the Internet. Anonymity, easy and widespread distribution, eternal memory, inherent logic of algorithms. These have an accelerating and reinforcing effect, are particularly easily accessible for the perpetrators and can be carried out with one click. For those affected, Hatespeech and cyberbullying are particularly difficult to understand, and the consequences are particularly difficult to process

Is Hate Speech free speech?

The fifth article of the Basic Law gives every person the right to inform oneself freely and also to express ones opinion in word, writing and pictures. It is further stipulated here that there must be no censorship of the press. In the second paragraph this right is restricted. Freedom of expression ends when the dignity of another person is attacked. This restriction shows the legal difference between freedom of expression and hate speech. Racist, sexist or anti-Semitic expressions of opinion are therefore not simply "an opinion" but hate speech.



Spreading mechanisms on the Internet

(Social) Bots



Another technical achievement used to spread hatred is bots. These are computer programs that work for the user, even when he is not online.

An extension of such bots are the so-called social bots. These programs simulate interpersonal interaction. They are programmed to react to certain content in discussions with programmed comments. It is also possible to use these bots to publish a wave of posts at certain times. In this way the programs are also used to spread hatred.

Fake News



Anyone who is active on the net can share their opinion and write contributions. Here, negative and provocative content spreads faster than other posts. This has a simple reason. People feel the more likely to be addressed, the more emotionally a piece of content is presented.

Hate messages in the form of fake news are deliberately provided with outrageous headlines and provocative content and thus achieve more distribution. They are thus shared more often than serious news. One example is an annually recurring chop "700€ Christmas bonus for refugees". This headline causes outrage every year and stirs up hatred in people. But it is simply wrong!

Algorithms



The social media's own programs also ensure that hate messages are spread. Algorithms pre-sort news on the home pages and in search queries. The most popular posts, or those with the most reactions, such as comments and likes, are displayed to users first.

An algorithm also evaluates personal interests and past search queries in order to present the user with suitable content. A so-called filter bubble is created, in which the user is mostly provided with information that matches his views. Thus, a one-sided picture of a topic is produced, and other views and opposing reports are filtered out. Studies show that racist messages are more often flushed upwards.



Who is behind Hate Speech?

Call to info-warfare

The people behind hate postings on the net are mostly from the political right-wing scene. Right-wing extremist posts are a growing problem. Although hatred also emanates from politically extreme left-wing and Islamist groups, it is not as widespread as from right-wing groups..

Ein großer Anteil von Hassposting gehen von einer sehr kleinen Anzahl von Internertaccounts aus. Diese sind aber sehr aktiv und posten sehr viel, manchmal hunderte von Nachrichten am Tag. Diese sorgen dann auch für eine hohe Anzahl an Likes für hasserfüllte Inhalte. Viele Likes erzeugen den Eindruck, dahinter ständen viele Menschen. Damit ziehen sie dann wiederum weitere User an.

Right-wing extremist groups such as the Reconquista Germanica are causing hate campaigns on the net and dominate the commentary columns. These groups call for so-called "info-warfare" on the net. In a military manner they call for virtual weapons.

Of trolls and warriors

There are different parties involved in spreading Hate Speech.

Trolls try to lure others into discussions with provocations (e.g. through insults). In doing so, the other person should be tempted to make himself vulnerable and punishable by his statements.

Faith Warriors try to convince others of their opinion through targeted false reports and supposed facts and to win them over to their own group. They try to convince everyone of their own opinion, without accepting facts that contradict their own opinion.





Victims of Hate Speech

Those directly affected

People experience hate on the net for a variety of reasons. In 2015 there was a significant increase in **xenophobia** on the net. People were discriminated against based on their origin. There was targeted agitation against refugees and a "us and them" mentality was created. **Religious affiliation** is also a target for hate-speakers. Above all, **anti-Semitism**, **anti-gypsyism** (i.e. the devaluation of Sinti and Roma) and **anti-Muslim racism** (the devaluation of Muslims and Islam) are strongly represented on the net. Other reasons for hate speech are **gender**, **sexual orientation** and **gender identity**, and **lookism** (when people are attacked because of their appearance, e.g. because they do not conform to a slim beauty ideal). Especially women are attacked on the net because of their gender.

However people who want to help also quickly become victims. By now public figures such as politicians and journalists have become the target of hate speech campaigns, for example when they campaign for minorities, although even small local conflicts, for example over a bypass road, can be a cause.

often even most, users are present without actively participating in communication themselves. They read and observe hate speech and react to it. No matter how they react, they are always part of the communication and often the real addressees of those who spread Hate Speech:

- They may find a content funny and send it on.
- They click carelessly on a Like and thus cause further spreading of hate.
- They are unsure what to think of the hateful content, but they let it influence them imperceptibly.
- They do not agree with the hateful content, but they do not switch on, perhaps out of concern that they will then be exposed to attacks themselves. If many do this - and this is the case - others get the impression that everyone in the forum agrees, i.e. the field is left to the agitators.
- They do not agree and leave the forum. Only those who outdo each other in their hatred remain.
- They do not agree and make a counter argument. This is good and right on the one hand, but on the other hand it increases the probability that the conversation will be spread even more by an algorithm.

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Hate Speech und youth culture



Hate messages in youth culture

In order to bring hate messages on the net to young people and to convey relevant content and messages, the tools on the net are adapted to the interests of young people.

The ‚identitäre Bewegung‘ as an example maintains its own app as well as an online shop and supports various rappers of the Nazi scene. In different YouTube channels, which at first sight are not connected to the Identitäre, videos are published in which scene rappers like Bloody32 and Chris Ares are asked about their "patriotic" attitude. The rappers are attractive for young people not only because of their music but also because of their appearance as sportsmen. Although the lyrics of Chris Ares are clearly right-wing extremist, the right-wing rapper can look forward to a lot of popularity on music streaming services like Spotify.

Young people's prejudices are subliminally conveyed through humour by means of alleged funny memes. They make use of familiar images from pop culture (film, television, music, gaming), which are combined with supposedly funny, provocative texts. Memes are quickly produced and shared; especially among young people via social networks they spread very quickly.



After a long discussion we decided to show a meme here, so that FLPs can get an idea of it, although we contribute to its spread. Many memes are much harder than this shown, for example they use Nazi symbolism (a swastika).

Trslt.: What do Children play in Afghanistan? He who seeks finds, he who steps on it disappears.

Confronting hatred



Recommended actions 1/4

Message the site operator and Counter Speech

Option 1: Reporting to the site operator

One way to counteract hatred in the network and prevent its further spread is to **report the post to the network operator**.

However, it is a question of wording whether a comment is punishable or not. A statement can discriminate against people in terms of content, even if the user has not made himself or herself liable to prosecution with the wording. **Accordingly, the provider of the platform is not obliged to delete it.** It can therefore happen to users, when they report a violation to Facebook as an example, that they receive a notification in which the company thanks them for their report, but points out that the reported post does not violate the community conditions. Users are then asked to contact the author and request deletion or block the post so that they no longer see any posts from the author.

With the tightening of the Network Search Act (NetzDG), platform operators will in future be obliged to report hate comments to the Federal Criminal Police Office.

Option 2: Counter Speech

If the reporting of a post is not enough, strategies like **counter-argument** or **counter speech** can be used. Successful counter-statement should on the one hand invalidate the arguments of discriminatory statements, and on the other hand it should strengthen the victims of these statements and motivate silent readers to also express themselves and take a stand against discrimination and racism on the net.

It is important to pay attention to one's own integrity when replying in any form. This means that you should look at the profile of the other person and if necessary work with a fake account that does not allow any conclusions about your own real person.

Strategies and implementation tips
for Counter Speech can be found
on the following pages



Recommended actions 2/4

Counter speech: victim support and tips for argumentation

there are different strategies for Counter Speech that can help users to distribute themselves and others on the net and to assert themselves against hate speakers.

Solidarity with and support for those affected

First and foremost is solidarity with those affected. Hate speech aims to hurt people and unfortunately it can succeed in doing so. Those affected feel ashamed, helpless, at the mercy of others and lonely. This makes it all the more important not to see hate speech as a problem of the affected person, but as a common problem. The attack could affect anyone and aims at society as a whole.

- Support for those affected can be found on the "HateAid" advice platform: <https://hateaid.org/>
- The aim of <https://www.das-netz.de/ueber-uns> is to form a "community of response".
- The Facebook group <http://www.ichbinhier.eu/ichbinhier-e-v> advocates a better culture of discussion on the net.
- A lot of information about the topic for schools can be found here: <https://www.klicksafe.de/service/aktuelles/news/detail/aktuelle-angebote-zum-thema-hate-speech/>

Argumentation strategies against hate speech

- The general aim of argumentation strategies is **to invalidate the statements** of the hate speakers in a discussion.
- The strategy of **debunking** is about exposing false statements and convincing silent readers. Good research and sources are needed here.
- Empowerment aims to help the victims of hate speech to assert themselves. It is therefore about showing solidarity with the victim.



Recommended actions 3/4

Counter speech Information and strategies

Assistance for counter-statement / counter speech

For a successful counter-argument, the network offers various possibilities for information and assistance:

For example, those who prefer to remain in the background have the option of using different registration pages, such as the registration office of the Landesanstalt für Medien NRW (beschwerde@medienanstalt-nrw.de).

If you would like to expose FakeNews you can use different pages for a fact check. For example the page of Mimikama (www.mimikama.at).

If you like to take a humorous approach, you can also visit the "Hass Hilft" report page. Every reported hate mail provides donations for refugee projects. The author is informed about his involuntary donation by a comment. (www.hasshilft.de).

Strategies of counter speech

For Counter Speech there are different strategies that can help users to defend themselves and others on the net and to stand up to hate

speakers. These include argumentation strategies, debunking and empowerment.

As far as argumentation strategies are concerned, the general aim is to invalidate the statements of hate speech speakers in a discussion.

- The strategy of **debunking** is about exposing false statements and convincing silent readers. Good research and sources are needed here.
- Empowerment aims to help the victims of hate speech to assert themselves. It is therefore about showing solidarity with the victim.



Recommended actions 4/4

Project ideas for youth work

a hashtag campaign

One way to combat hatred is to have a hashtag campaign of your own. Such a campaign can also network and empower those directly affected by hatred. An example of this is the international #metoo campaign, which makes sexism and sexualised violence against women public. In Germany, the #meTwo campaign against everyday racism was also initiated in a modified form (the meTwo stands for the feeling of multiple cultural identities).

A hashtag campaign can be initiated together with the students or a youth group. This way young people get the chance to actively deal with the topic again and to create their own contribution against hate on the net. When creating your own hashtag campaign, please make sure that the chosen hashtag is not too long and that it is not easily twisted for the other group. As an example, the #cultural enrichment could be used as a call to share positive experiences with people with a migration background.

Once the hashtag is created, the young people have to start spreading it and create the first posts with the hashtag themselves.

Selfmade memes against hate

Another possibility to fight against hate in the net is to create own memes with the young people. For this purpose there are some free tools like Canva, which is also available as an app.

When creating your own memes, please make sure that no copyrights or personal rights are violated in the pictures. It is best to use self-created images or license free images provided by the app.

When using your own pictures, please make sure that no conclusions can be drawn about yourself or others involved.

Once the memes have been created, it's back to busy posting, sharing and disseminating.



Additional information



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