



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Policy Statement on Hate

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

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The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was established under statute on 1 November 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, to promote a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding, to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality, and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination.

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Glossary

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CoE	Council of Europe
DSA	Digital Services Act
ECNI	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EHRIA	Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment
ENNHRI	European Network of National Human Rights Institutions
Equinet	European Network of Equality Bodies
EU	European Union
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NIHRC	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SLAPPs	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is committed to developing robust responses to current and emerging threats to human rights and equality. The rise of hate in our communities and our society necessitates a robust framework of measures to prevent and respond as hate is a fundamental barrier to the realisation of rights.

Hate is manifested with different degrees of severity, ranging from microaggressions and discrimination to hate speech and hate crime. The impacts of hate are not new; however, the rise of technology has changed the nature of how hate can be spread. Online platforms and AI-driven recommender systems are being used to spread hate and coordinate anti-rights activity which is leading to the increase in protests, riots and arson attacks. Hate in society is not an uncontrollable natural phenomenon, rather it is the outcome and consequences of policy decisions and political rhetoric. Hate is a systemic and structural issue which must be addressed. Hate incidents demand a sustained, robust response to halt the active undermining and erosion of the principles of human rights and equality, democracy, rule of law, and social cohesion.

In this current climate, political leaders, public representatives, public servants, judges, lawyers, academics, researchers, the media, internet intermediaries, the private sector, and civil society must demonstrate leadership and courage to work collectively to combat the rise in hate, safeguard structurally vulnerable communities, and foster inclusion. Hate incidents should be recognised as such, and robustly and promptly responded to with human rights and equality-based counter-narratives that recognise the value of the targeted group to Irish society.

The policy statement sets out the policy, legislative, regulatory and educational measures we consider are required to prevent and respond to hate. Preventing, countering and responding to hate requires a holistic approach, which recognises that everyone in society has a role in addressing hate, and that a broad range of interventions are required to address the conditions and environment, which give rise to hate. The framework for responding and preventing hate should be appropriately resourced and independently evaluated to ensure it is effective in combatting hate.

Greater coherence and alignment are needed on the actions required to combat hate. We call for the State to prioritise the development and implementation of a national strategy and action plan on hate. This would provide a coordinated long-term framework for preventing and responding to hate, which clearly establishes the responsibilities of the different actors in society. As structurally vulnerable groups can experience hate differently, there is a need for targeted measures to address the various ways hate can be manifested in communities.

Our recommendations in this policy statement set out the measures we expect to see the State prioritise to ensure that the prevention and response to hate is underpinned by human rights and equality standards.

Recommendations

Framework for preventing and responding to hate

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The Commission recommends that:

- public bodies actively demonstrate application of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, including conducting effective Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments, when developing and adopting policy, legislation, regulation, and processes to prevent and respond to hate.

Policy

The Commission recommends that:

- the Government designates a department with the responsibility for the coordination across Government of measures responding to and preventing hate, including the development and implementation, in collaboration with communities affected by hate, of a whole-of-government national strategy and action plan to prevent and respond to hate.
- the lead department on hate establishes robust implementation and accountability mechanisms for a national strategy and action plan to prevent and respond to hate including a dedicated monitoring body and independent annual and mid-term reports on the delivery of the strategy and action plan.
- the lead department on hate includes, in a national action plan on hate, targeted measures and interventions to address the specific safeguards and protections required for structurally vulnerable groups.

Legislation

The Commission recommends that:

- the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration fully implements the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and commits to an independent review of the Act three years post-commencement.
- the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and An Garda Síochána prioritise the development and implementation, in collaboration with affected communities, of a public information campaign on the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and how to report hate crime. The informational material should be tailored to the experiences of specific communities who are targeted by hate.
- the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration leads on a renewal of efforts to undertake a comprehensive reform of laws prohibiting incitement to hatred in line with international standards, by specifying and clearly defining in criminal law expressions of hate speech subject to criminal liability, striking an appropriate balance with the right to freedom of expression, and ensuring alignment with the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022.

Online regulation

The Commission recommends that:

- Coimisiún na Meán be appropriately resourced to ensure effective timely investigations, the removal of harmful online content and the enforcement of the online safety framework.
- online platform recommender systems are turned off by default for people over 18 and disabled entirely for children.

Media regulation

The Commission recommends that:

- codes of practices and rules for the media should be actively kept under review by Coimisiún na Meán, the Office of the Press Ombudsman and the Press Council of Ireland to ensure that they are effective and responsive to the changing nature and dynamics of hate speech.
- media organisations provide members of the media with ongoing training on hate speech including how to recognise and report on hate speech, as well as on how to avoid using and disseminating hate speech.

Political discourse

The Commission recommends that:

- an action plan on hate includes actions to prevent and counter the spread of hate during candidate selection processes, and election and referendum campaigns. The measures must recognise the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Coimisiún Toghcháin, Coimisiún na Meán, the Standards in Public Office Commission, the Oireachtas, local authorities, mainstream political parties, online platforms and civil society.
- the Standards in Public Office Commission develops a code of conduct for public representatives which clearly prohibits the use or endorsement of hate speech in political discourse.

Counter-narratives and community responses

The Commission recommends that:

- the lead department on hate coordinates the development of a common pledge for political, public, and community leaders which commits them to promptly and robustly respond publicly to incidents of hate speech and hate crime with strong

counter-narratives and alternative narratives centred on human rights and equality values, while also expressing solidarity with those targeted by hate.

- the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht makes available core, multi-annual, ring-fenced and autonomous funding to civil society, including community development organisations, working at the national and local level to build community resilience and to combat and resist hate, extremism, and disinformation.

Education, digital and media literacy

The Commission recommends that:

- the Department of Education and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science adopt a comprehensive national approach to human rights and equality literacy as a core element of preventing hate speech, hate crime and broader expressions of hate. This should include embedding media and digital literacy across all levels of education, supporting a whole-school approach, strengthening initial teacher education and continuous professional development, promoting lifelong media and digital literacy beyond formal education, and ensuring coordinated implementation across Government, education providers, regulators and civil society.

Training

The Commission recommends that:

- An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Judicial Council continue to develop initial and ongoing training for members of An Garda Síochána, prosecutors, and the judiciary on the offences under the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.
- the lead department on hate develops a standard for the provision of training to public bodies on the nature and impact of hate and how to effectively combat hate.

Reporting mechanisms and victim support

The Commission recommends that:

- An Garda Síochána greatly expands its engagement with affected communities to strengthen trust in the reporting procedures for hate speech and hate crime.
- the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration provides sustainable core funding to culturally appropriate and trauma informed services supporting victims of hate speech and hate crime, and to civil society operating third party reporting mechanisms.

Data

The Commission recommends that:

- the Central Statistics Office, An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Courts Service record and publish accurate and reliable disaggregated data on hate crime and incitement to hatred offences.
- the lead department on hate routinely publishes quantitative and qualitative analyses of hate speech and hate crime trends online and offline, which include recommendations on the measures required to prevent and combat the trends.

Cross-border and transnational hate

The Commission recommends that:

- the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration lead on ensuring that the cross-border and transnational aspects of hate are considered by public bodies in developing and implementing measures to combat hate.

Who we are

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (the Commission) is Ireland's independent National Human Rights Institution and National Equality Body.¹ We protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland.²

We are also the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for Ireland under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³ and the Independent National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings,⁴ and we will be assigned the role of the Co-ordinator of the National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture,⁵ pending ratification. Alongside Northern Ireland's human rights and equality bodies, we have a mandate to consider and report on human rights and equality issues with an island of Ireland dimension.⁶ We also have legal powers under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021,⁷ and an imminent fundamental rights role in relation to the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.⁸

We are mandated to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice in the State relating to the protection of equality and human rights; and to make recommendations to the Government in relation to the measures that we consider should be taken to strengthen, protect and uphold equality and human rights in the State.⁹ We assist public bodies with their statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and

¹ Established under the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014](#).

² See our recently published Strategy Statement 2025–2027: IHREC, [Strategy Statement 2025-2027](#) (2025).

³ Section 103 of the [Assisted Decision-Making \(Capacity\) \(Amendment\) Act 2022](#).

⁴ IHREC, [Commission Takes on New Role as Ireland's National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings](#) (2020).

⁵ To be provided under the Inspection of Places of Detention Bill, when enacted.

⁶ We work with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) in the Joint Committee, as set out in the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, we also comprise the Article 2(1) Working Group of the Dedicated Mechanism, along with the NIHRC and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI).

⁷ [Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021](#).

⁸ Article 77 of the [European Union Artificial Intelligence Act](#). Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, [Minister Calleary announces key milestone in the implementation of the EU regulation on AI](#) (31 October 2024).

⁹ Section 10(2) of the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014](#).

protect the human rights of their staff, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.¹⁰

In our Strategy Statement 2025-2027, we have prioritised the following aims within the context of our work:

- Developing robust responses to current and emerging threats to human rights and equality;
- Enhancing accountability mechanisms;
- Strengthening the human rights and equality infrastructure in the State;
- Fulfilling our international role as part of a global network of National Human Rights Institutions and National Equality Bodies; and
- Operating as a model organisation for implementing human rights and equality in practice.¹¹

¹⁰ Section 42 of the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014](#).

¹¹ IHREC, [Strategy Statement 2025-2027](#) (2025).

Introduction

Hate crimes and hate-related incidents are on the rise in Ireland,¹² fuelled by online incitement, misinformation and disinformation,¹³ orchestrated by anti-rights actors exploiting legitimate social concerns such as housing shortages and pressure on public services,¹⁴ and exacerbated by the wilful inaction of online platforms.¹⁵ Ireland has a growing, diverse population,¹⁶ which unfortunately is not welcomed by all parts of society.¹⁷ Our annual poll 2026 highlights that there is a significant decline in the proportion of the population who believe that there is equality in terms of the enjoyment of human rights in Ireland.¹⁸ Our poll also shows a sharp decline in the belief that the efforts made by the State to fight discrimination are effective, with only one in four considering the efforts as effective.¹⁹

¹² A total of 780 hate crimes and hate related incidents were recorded in 2025, up 15% from 674 in 2024. See: [An Garda Síochána Release Hate Crime and Hate Related Incidents Statistics for 2025](#) (14 August 2026). In its recent country monitoring report, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expressed concern with incidents of racist hate speech (motivated by anti-migrant, anti-Black/African, anti-refugee/asylum-seeker sentiments) and anti-LGBTQI+ hate speech across online platforms, news media and politics: ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 15. Citing research by the [Irish Network Against Racism](#) and [Belong To](#).

¹³ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, [Clout, kicks and clicks: Analysing the surge in anti-migrant harassment and violence in Ireland](#) (September 2024).

¹⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Olivier De Schutter, has warned that increased economic insecurity fuels right wing populism and simplistic and divisive narratives that target migrants, minorities and other marginalised groups, as the source of social ills: [Far-right populism and the future of social protection](#), A/80/138 (2025). See also Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, [Online racist hate speech](#), A/78/538 (18 October 2023) paras. 24, 55.

¹⁵ Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), [82% of Irish public wants Big Tech's toxic algorithms switched off](#) (January 2024).

¹⁶ See: Central Statistics Office (CSO), [Census of Population 2022 Profile 5 – Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion](#) (2023); European Migration Network (EMN), [One in ten of the population are non-Irish citizens, census 2022 figures show](#).

¹⁷ IHREC's annual poll finds that 48% of the population agree that Irish people welcome diversity and interculturalism. This figure is an increase on 40% in 2025 and 42% in 2024. 74% agree that refugees and asylum seekers experience racism and discrimination, and 47% agree that they are treated fairly. See: IHREC, Annual Poll 2026.

¹⁸ 39% believe that everyone in Ireland enjoys the same basic human rights, compared to 48% in 2025 and 2024. See: IHREC, Annual Poll 2026.

¹⁹ Only 26% (compared with 40% in 2025) of the population believe that the efforts to fight discrimination are effective, with 36% (compared with 28% in 2025) considering the efforts as ineffective. Perceived ineffectiveness of the efforts has increased year-on-year. 42% of respondents also believe that the Government is not doing enough to address racism in Ireland, with only 31% thinking the Government was doing enough to address racism. See: IHREC, Annual Poll 2026.

The rise in hate and hate-driven incidents is having profound consequences within Irish society. Hate is actively undermining and threatening the principles of human rights and equality, democracy and rule of law.²⁰ Social cohesion is eroded by public discourse and narratives which seek to divide and dehumanise. Hate is a fundamental barrier to the realisation of rights including participation in public life. Physical and online community spaces which are intended to connect and unite people have been increasingly permeated by hate.

Hate has always been present in Irish society; however, its scale and impact has changed with the rise and spread of technology.²¹ The use of online spaces to agitate and amplify hate through livestreams, disinformation, and content creation is becoming more widespread, with the platform's AI-driven algorithms amplifying content, and small number of highly active accounts receiving disproportionate visibility.²² Online hate is increasingly being manifested into physical acts and violence. The use of social media by anti-rights actors to mobilise is seen in the increase of protests, riots and arson attacks²³ across the country including the Dublin riots in 2023,²⁴ Coolock in 2024,²⁵ and Citywest in 2025,²⁶ amongst further protests and riots outside of Dublin.²⁷ These incidents are not isolated, and they form a pattern that demands a national sustained, robust response.

²⁰ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 15; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, [Online racist hate speech](#), A/78/538 (18 October 2023) para. 31.

²¹ United Nations, [Hate Speech](#).

²² Online propaganda is being used with targeted offline mobilisation. Online platforms share misinformation and disinformation and direct participants towards closed groups to facilitate coordination, radicalisation and recruitment. See: Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026) pp. 10, 18, 30.

²³ In arson incidents analysed between 2018 -2025, 82% related to attacks on empty buildings or properties rumoured to be intended to provide accommodation for asylum seekers, with online disinformation playing a role. The circulation of these arson attacks online glorifies and normalises the attacks and desensitises people. See: Hope and Courage Collective, [Snapshot Series #5 Fires of Hate: Arson as a Far-Right Tactic in Ireland](#) (2025); Irish Independent, [Security increased at Tipperary refugee site after two arson attacks](#) (2024).

²⁴ See: IHREC, [Collective action is required to tackle racism and reverse polarisation](#) (24 November 2023).

²⁵ RTÉ, [Bot-like accounts spreading Coolock disinformation – investigation](#) (2024).

²⁶ See: IHREC, [Commission Statement on Citywest](#) (23 October 2025); Hope and Courage Collective, [Snapshot Series #3 Online Playbook Behind Citywest](#) (2025).

²⁷ Small political groups within Ireland are taking inspiration from international groups as seen in protests targeting the transgender community. See: Irish Examiner, [Far-right protesters target closed library in Clare](#) (2023); Irish Examiner, [First libraries, now schools are under attack for teaching about LGBTQ+ identities](#) (2023).

Hate is complex and multidimensional and is experienced in different ways across and within communities. The impact of hate is felt not only by those who are directly targeted by hate based on their identity but also those who are members of the community that is directly targeted. Hate is intrinsically linked to discrimination, prejudice and intolerance, and its impact on specific communities such as misogyny and sexism, ableism, povertyism,²⁸ anti-LGBTQI+ hate (including homophobia, transphobia and hate against non-binary and intersex people), xenophobia (including anti-migrant hate), anti-Muslim hatred, antisemitism, and racism (including anti-Black, anti-People of African Descent, anti-Traveller, and anti-Roma hate). Hate targeted against communities with intersecting and overlapping identities may compound or reinforce their experiences of the existing structural inequality and discrimination.

The community groups, civil society and human rights defenders who are leading the fightback against hateful rhetoric often experience hate directly targeted against themselves which has significant impact on their health and wellbeing.²⁹ Individuals, communities, and civil society who make invaluable contributions to making Ireland an inclusive and welcoming society are withdrawing from public spaces and self-censoring their advocacy for human rights and equality due to the toxic environment. Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) are a practice which can be used alongside targeted hate by actors seeking to harass, silence and intimidate community groups, civil society, academics, the media and human rights defenders,³⁰ The chilling effect on civic space is undermining the quality of public debate on how to effectively combat hate.

Hate in society is not an uncontrollable natural phenomenon, rather it is the outcome and consequences of policy decisions and political rhetoric. Hate is a systemic and structural issue to be addressed. Preventing, countering and responding to this hate requires a holistic approach, which recognises that everyone in society has a role in addressing hate and that a

²⁸ UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Olivier De Schutter has argued that “povertyism” should be recognised as a distinct form of discrimination. Defined as negative stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination directed at people experiencing poverty: [Extreme poverty and human rights](#), A/77/157 (13 July 2022).

²⁹ Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026) pp. 8.

³⁰ European Network of Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), [State of the rule of law in Europe: Executive summary](#) (2026). There is a need for a strong framework of legislative, regulatory and policy measures to counter the use of SLAPPs.

broad range of interventions are required to combat hate. Political leaders, public representatives, public servants, regulators, Judges, lawyers, academics, researchers, the media, internet intermediaries, the private sector, and civil society must demonstrate leadership and courage to work collectively to combat the rise in hate, safeguard structurally vulnerable communities, and foster inclusion.

This policy statement is one element of our work to combat the rise of hate. The Commission has pledged in our Strategy Statement 2025-2027 to develop robust responses to human rights and equality threats, including the rise in hate.³¹ To progress this aim we are protecting and promoting human rights and equality in communities by partnering with and supporting civil society to: combat hate, as well as misinformation and disinformation; increase solidarity; and support effective community responses.³² We need solidarity, not fear, and for communities to stand together and reject division.

The policy statement aims to set out the policy, legislative, regulatory and educational measures we consider are required to prevent and respond to hate. It is important to emphasise that the response to hate cannot be limited to the criminal justice system. A broader range of measures are needed to address the conditions and environment which give rise to hate, as well as address the impact of hate on victims and the communities they belong to.³³

While the risk of hate to our democracy is real, it is not inevitable that Ireland becomes a less inclusive and equal society. Irish people believe in human rights and equality,³⁴ and we need collective leadership to protect and promote human rights and equality by confronting hate with effective and sustained long-term measures. We call for the State to meaningfully engage with progressing our recommendations in this policy statement and to work collectively with a

³¹ IHREC, [Strategy Statement 2025-2027](#) (2025) p. 14.

³² IHREC, [Strategy Statement 2025-2027](#) (2025) p. 14. Under our Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme, we are funding civil society projects which are combatting disinformation, misinformation and hate by applying the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. See [Grants Scheme 2025-2026](#) for list of projects funded under Strand A.

³³ United Nations, [Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) (2019) p. 2; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Online hate speech](#), A/74/486 (9 October 2019) para. 28.

³⁴ In our annual poll 2026, the vast majority of respondents (84%) agreed that everybody should be treated equally. This is a return to 2024 poll results after a decline to 80% in 2025. See: IHREC, Annual Poll 2026.

broader range of stakeholders including civil society and structurally vulnerable groups to ensure a whole-of-society response to combating and preventing hate.

Understanding and combating hate

There is no internationally agreed definition of hate or hatred under international law. However, international standards have broadly defined hatred as a state of mind characterised as intense and irrational emotions of opprobrium, enmity and detestation towards the targeted group.³⁵ Ireland’s legislation on hate speech and hate crime provides that “hatred” means hatred against a person or a group of persons in the State or elsewhere on account of their protected characteristics or any one of those characteristics.³⁶ We recognise the difficulty of applying international standards and the language of emotion to specific incidents of hate; however, this definition is not clear, precise or accessible in terms of the conduct which is criminalised.³⁷

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recognise that hate can be manifested with different degrees of severity, ranging from “everyday stigmatisation and manifestations of intolerance, verbal abuse and microaggressions through to discrimination, hate speech, violence and hate crime, and ultimately to terrorism or genocide”.³⁸ While not all incidents of discrimination will be manifestations of hate, the Committee of Ministers recognise the importance of comprehensive and effective non-discrimination legislative protections alongside other legislative and policy measures to address hate speech and hate crime.³⁹

³⁵ Definitions of hatred are provided by international standards such as the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech](#), the [United Nations Rabat Plan of Action](#), and the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#). See IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (February 2022) pp. 28–30.

³⁶ Section 2 of the [Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#) and section 1 of the [Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989](#).

³⁷ IHREC, [Letter to the Minister for Justice re: Criminal Justice \(Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences\) Bill](#) (30 November 2023).

³⁸ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) pp. 5, 18.

³⁹ The Committee of Ministers recommend that “Member States should ensure that their anti-discrimination legislation applies to all expressions of hate speech prohibited under criminal, civil or administrative law.” The Committee of Ministers state that “[h]ate speech can also fall under the definition of discrimination under European and national anti-discrimination legislation where the author treats the person targeted differently from other persons in relevantly similar situations without an objective and reasonable ... or it can constitute as harassment as defined in anti-discrimination law.” Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) pp. 9, 26-27.

Hate speech⁴⁰ and hate crime⁴¹ lack a universally agreed understanding under international human rights law which can lead to a fragmented approach to combating hate across States. Hate speech and hate crime are targeted against individuals or groups on the basis of their actual or perceived association with a group that shares a protected characteristic, or on the basis of their intersecting identities.⁴²

While hate crime is a category of criminal offences, not all forms of hate speech are criminal offences.⁴³ International law recognises that only the most extreme versions of hate speech should be criminalised; and prohibits public incitement to hatred, discrimination, hostility or violence.⁴⁴ Addressing hate speech through legal or non-legal measures does not mean disproportionately limiting freedom of speech, it is to ensure that hate speech does not escalate into discrimination and violence.⁴⁵ The right to freedom of expression is a foundation of our democratic society; and the relationship between prohibiting hate speech and enabling freedom of expression to flourish should be seen as compatible and complementary “and not the expression of a zero sum game where the priority given to one necessitates the diminution

⁴⁰ The 2019 [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) defines hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.” The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers understand hate speech “as all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status”: Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 7.

⁴¹ The [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#) define hate crimes as “criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people.” The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers use a broad definition of hate crime where hate crime is understood as a criminal offence committed with a hate element based on one or more actual or perceived personal characteristics or status, where: a. “hate” includes bias, prejudice or contempt: Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) p. 7.

⁴² Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 16.

⁴³ The United Nations Rabat Plan of Action sets out “in terms of general principles, a clear distinction should be made between three types of expression: expression that constitutes a criminal offence; expression that is not criminally punishable, but may justify a civil suit or administrative sanctions; expression that does not give rise to criminal, civil or administrative sanctions, but still raises concern in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.” See United Nations, [Rabat Plan of Action](#), A/HRC/22/17/Add.4 (11 January 2013) para. 20.

⁴⁴ See United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, [OHCHR and freedom of expression vs incitement to hatred: the Rabat Plan of Action](#); Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) pp. 8-9.

⁴⁵ United Nations, [Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) (2019) p. 1.

of the other.”⁴⁶ Robust societal responses to hate should protect both democratic discourse and structurally vulnerable groups.

The complexities of addressing hate speech and hate crime have been considered by international human rights mechanisms who have provided the guidance and support on how to comprehensively address the drivers and root causes of hate through legal and non-legal measures.⁴⁷ Particular consideration has been given to the high threshold for restrictions on freedom of expression to ensure responses to hate speech are appropriate and proportionate. While recognising the complexities of identifying the legal boundaries of hate crime and hate speech in individual cases, the significant impact of hate on individuals and communities means that inaction and passivity on the part of the State to comprehensively prevent and respond to hate in Ireland cannot be accepted. The State must address the systemic gaps in the protection against hate, discrimination and intolerance in Ireland, which has facilitated the rise in hate, misinformation and disinformation.

⁴⁶ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, [General Recommendation No. 35 Combatting racist hate speech](#), CERD/C/GC/35 (26 September 2013) para. 45. See also United Nations General Assembly, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#), A/67/357 (7 December 2012) para. 3.

⁴⁷ United Nations, [Rabat Plan of Action](#), A/HRC/22/17/Add.4 (11 January 2013); United Nations, [Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) (2019); ECRI, [General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech](#) (2015); Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022); Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024); Council of Europe, [Self-assessment tool to prevent and combat hate speech](#) (2024).

Framework for preventing and responding to hate

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

We emphasise the importance of the statutory obligation under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the Duty') on public bodies⁴⁸ in the prevention and response to hate at the national and local level.⁴⁹ The Duty requires all public bodies to systematically integrate and mainstream equality and human rights considerations into their decision-making processes. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) is an instrument that supports public bodies in meeting the ongoing statutory obligations of the Duty.⁵⁰ EHRIAs bring equality and human rights into the analysis, development and implementation of the policies, plans, strategies and service delivery methods of the State.⁵¹ We have issued guidance to public bodies on implementing the Duty, including a template on how to conduct an EHRIA to assess the impact of plans, programmes or policy developments on the specific groups protected under the Duty and under Irish equality law.⁵²

⁴⁸ Key public bodies with responsibility for responding to and preventing hate include Government Departments, local authorities, An Garda Síochána, National Office for Community Safety, Policing and Community Safety Authority, Courts Service, Coimisiún na Meán, and An Coimisiún Toghcháin.

⁴⁹ Section 42(1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 states that public bodies must, in the performance of their functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of staff and service users. Section 42(2) provides a governance framework, requiring public bodies to identify relevant equality and human rights issues and set out the policies, plans and actions to address them within their strategic planning and reporting frameworks. This embeds the operational obligation within a structured strategic cycle comprising of assessment, actions to address issues arising, and public reporting. This process ensures continuity between the day-to-day decision-making process and long-term organisational priorities. See IHREC, [Public Sector Duty](#).

⁵⁰ IHREC, [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies – Second Edition](#) (2024) pp. 39-43.

⁵¹ The principal purpose of the impact assessment process is to think about the purpose of the policy/plan/service and how the proposed actions relate to and impact on the public, in particular the specific groups protected under the Duty and under Irish equality law. EHRIAs support public bodies in understanding the effect, including unintended negative consequences, that plans and policies may have on these groups. EHRIAs should be carried out at the planning and development stage of any new functions, plans or policies, and when functions, plans or policies are being reviewed.

⁵² The template brings public bodies through six key steps which aim to ensure equality and human rights are embedded within the objectives and activities they are planning to do: 1) setting the context; 2) screening; 3) information and consultation; 4) assessing the impact; 5) review and revise; and 6) monitoring. See IHREC, [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies – Second Edition](#) (2024) pp. 62-66.

The Commission recommends that public bodies actively demonstrate application of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, including conducting effective Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments, when developing and adopting policy, legislation, regulation, and processes to prevent and respond to hate.

Policy

Ireland does not have a specific national strategy or action plan focused on hate. There are explicit actions to address hate speech and hate crime in national whole-of-government strategies.⁵³ While not containing specific actions on hate there are other policy frameworks, published or under development, whose implementation is key to ensuring an environment that is free from hate, intolerance and discrimination.⁵⁴ As the actions on or related to hate are across multiple strategies and with multiple actors responsible for delivery of the actions, there is a need for a coordinated approach to implementation.

There are significant concerns with the implementation processes for national human rights and equality strategies,⁵⁵ including inadequate indicators to measure progress, ineffective monitoring of implementation and a lack of meaningful collaboration with civil society in the implementation of actions.⁵⁶ We also have concerns whether the measures to address hate in national policies are sufficiently ambitious to ensure systemic and structural change to the

⁵³ See [National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027](#); the [2024-2026 Action Plan](#) for the [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#); and the [2025-2026 Action Plan](#) for the [National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028](#). The actions are the responsibility of An Garda Síochána; Coimisiún na Meán; Department of Children, Equality and Disability; Department of Culture, Communications and Sport; Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration; and the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

⁵⁴ Including the [National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025 – 2030](#), the [National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030](#), the new Migration and Integration Strategy (when published), the new National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (when published), the new National Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector (when published), the National Strategy for Improving Community Safety (when published), the [National Counter Disinformation Strategy](#), and the [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2026-2030](#).

⁵⁵ The 2025 Annual Report of Ireland's Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism highlighted that implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism "remains fragmented, under-resourced, and insufficiently accountable." Dr Ebon Joseph, [Annual Report of the Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism](#) (2026) p. xiv.

⁵⁶ See our concerns raised with the processes for national equality strategies: IHREC, [Core components of national equality strategies](#) (2025). We identified five core components underpinning the lifecycle of national equality strategies: Evidence; Collaborative governance; Implementation; Intersectionality; and Accountability.

environment giving rise to hate. We note that the Coalition Against Hate Crime⁵⁷ have advocated for a comprehensive national action plan on hate to be developed in partnership with affected communities.⁵⁸ The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers have recognised the importance of policies, strategies and action plans to prevent and combat hate speech and hate crime.⁵⁹

A whole-of-government strategy and action plan focused on hate would provide a coordinated long-term framework for preventing and responding to hate, which clearly establishes the responsibilities of the different actors in society and sets out the tangible outcomes to be realised. An action plan would reflect and consolidate existing strands of work related to hate that departments and other public bodies are already delivering under the policy frameworks referenced above. This will support monitoring, oversight and progress of delivery of all activities related to hate under an overarching framework. It would provide transparency on the measures being taken by the State to combat hate as the current approach of relevant actions on hate being fragmented across multiple policy frameworks means that it is not always clear to the public and stakeholders the extent of the measures that are being taken to prevent and respond to hate. An action plan would support implementation of the legislation on hate crime and hate speech, but the action plan should go beyond criminal law measures to include a mix of education, awareness-raising, victim support, monitoring, reporting,

⁵⁷ The Coalition Against Hate Crime Ireland is a civil society coalition whose members represent groups commonly targeted by hate crimes, including minority ethnic groups, LGBTQI+ communities, disabled people, and others, as well as academics and researchers working to advance the aims and objectives of the Coalition. See [Coalition Against Hate Crime](#).

⁵⁸ The Coalition Against Hate Crime have called for the national action plan to go beyond criminal justice measures, and include measures on awareness raising, education, monitoring, reporting, victim support, and data collection so as to address the underlying drivers of hate. Coalition Against Hate Crime, [Civil Society Warns of Escalating Hate and Violence: Calls for Coordinated, Human Rights-Based National Action](#) (10 November 2025); Coalition Against Hate Crime, [Briefing Note for TDs on Incitement to Hatred and Hate Crime](#) (7 November 2022). See also ICCL, [Submission to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\): Contribution to inform the upcoming visit to Ireland and the 6th country report](#) (2024) pp. 14-15.

⁵⁹ The Committee of Ministers emphasise that the response to hate requires a holistic and multifaceted approach with the cooperation and coordination of key stakeholders in society. Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024); Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022).

regulatory, and criminal law measures to address the attitudes, systems and structures which give rise to hate.⁶⁰

To ensure a coordinated whole-of-government approach and to recognise the importance to Irish society of combatting hate, we consider that the Government should name a specific department to lead on the development, implementation, and monitoring of the strategy and action plan. While departments and public bodies will have ownership of the delivery of their respective actions, designating a department with the responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the strategy and action plan would provide accountability in the delivery of the actions. The lead department would also coordinate activities between action holders to ensure that a whole-of-government approach is taken in practice.

A dedicated accountability structure should be established to monitor the implementation of the actions.⁶¹ The monitoring body should include officials from public bodies responsible for delivering on the actions and representatives of civil society. There should be independent annual monitoring reports and a mid-term review submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas regarding the process, impact, and outcome of the strategy.

An action plan must take account of different communities' experiences of hate, and include targeted measures for specific groups while ensuring intersectional identities are also protected from hate.⁶² A recent report has highlighted concerning examples of hate being systematically targeted against people seeking asylum, ethnic minorities and migrants; LGBTQI+ communities, women, workers and public services, civil society organisations, and politicians and public representatives.⁶³ Wider fundamental issues such as poverty and homelessness are linked to the rise of anti-immigrant views and an increase of targeted hate

⁶⁰ Guidance on actions within a national strategy should be drawn from the Committee of Ministers' recommendations on hate speech and hate crime: Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024); Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022).

⁶¹ See IHREC, [Core components of national equality strategies](#) (2025).

⁶² Equinet, [Hate Speech: Equality Bodies Gearing Up for Effective Practice](#) (2025) p. 9.

⁶³ Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026) pp. 7-8.

attacks on migrants.⁶⁴ The rise in misogyny and hate speech against women can manifest in incidents of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.⁶⁵

Disabled people are frequently victims of hate crime but it remains hidden and misunderstood.⁶⁶ The LGBTQI+ community is facing an increase in prejudice and intolerance in recent years,⁶⁷ with a notable deterioration in attitudes towards transgender and intersex people in particular.⁶⁸ A large percentage of the Traveller and Roma communities continue to experience hate motivated harassment.⁶⁹ Similarly, People of African Descent and Black

⁶⁴ See: Top Crime Incident Types include: 246 Public Order Offences; 127 Assault Minor; 99 Criminal Damage (Not by Fire); 57 Assault Causing Harm; 28 Murder – Threats. Discriminatory Motives include: 327 Anti-Race; 192 Anti-Nationality; 78 Anti-National or Ethnic Origin; 70 Anti-Sexual Orientation; 53 Anti-Colour; 52 Anti-Religion; 38 Anti-Gender; 15 Other. See: [Hate Crime and Hate Related Incidents 2025](#) (2026). See also: IHREC, [Ireland and the 6th Monitoring Cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (2024) p. 7; Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026) p. 25.

⁶⁵ IHREC, [Ireland and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (2025).

⁶⁶ IHREC, [Ireland and the 6th Monitoring Cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (2024) p. 25. Recent research highlights the targeting of disabled people through hate crime, which is complex and falls into broad categories of hate crime making it difficult to report and get justice. See: University of Galway, [Living Independently and Free from Targeted Abuse \(LIFT\): Understanding Hate Crime and the Experiences of Disabled People in Ireland](#) (2026).

⁶⁷ In a survey carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 60% of respondents say that violence against LGBTQI+ people has increased in Ireland. 51% of respondents say that LGBTQI+ prejudice and intolerance has risen in the last five years. FRA, [EU LGBTIQ survey III: Country Data - Ireland](#) (2024).

⁶⁸ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 5. Transgender people are more likely to experience online hate speech in comparison to other sexual and gender minority groups. Transgender people who have migration backgrounds face further challenges. See: BelongTo, [Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland](#) (2024) pp. 119-133.

⁶⁹ 41% of Roma and 50% of Travellers experienced hate-motivated harassment in 2024. See: Pavee Point, Travellers and Roma in Ireland, [Summary and Perspectives on the Irish findings the Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries – Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024](#) (2025). Similar to Muslim women, Roma women are the most at risk as they are easily identifiable by their traditional dress: Network Against Racism, [Reports of Racism in Ireland 2022](#) (2023) p. 24.

communities in Ireland have experienced an upsurge of attacks.⁷⁰ Along with other countries in Europe,⁷¹ Ireland is seeing a rise of anti-Muslim hate and antisemitism.⁷²

The Commission recommends that the Government designates a department with the responsibility across Government for the coordination of measures responding to and preventing hate, including the development and implementation, in collaboration with communities affected by hate, of a whole-of-government national strategy and action plan to prevent and respond to hate.

The Commission recommends that the lead department on hate establishes robust implementation and accountability mechanisms for a national strategy and action plan to prevent and respond to hate including a dedicated monitoring body and independent annual and mid-term reports on the delivery of the strategy and action plan.

The Commission recommends that the lead department on hate includes, in a national action plan on hate, targeted measures and interventions to address the specific safeguards and protections required for structurally vulnerable groups.

⁷⁰ In a 2023 FRA Survey on experiences of people of African descent, it found an increase in the number of people who felt racially discriminated against from 24% in 2016 to 34% in 2022. See: FRA, [Being Black in the EU, Experiences of people of African descent](#) (2023) p. 35; RTÉ, [‘Brutalised’: Nigerian architect speaks out about Dublin attack](#) (2024); Al Jazeera, [Ireland’s Black community opens up about racism after ‘George Floyd moment’](#) (2026).

⁷¹ The FRA report on experiences of Muslims in the European Union found that racial discrimination across the EU increased from 25% in 2016 to 35% in 2022. See: FRA, [Being Muslim in the EU – Experiences of Muslims](#) (2024). Since 2023, threats and hatred against Muslim communities in the European Union have increased both offline and online, with Muslim women particularly affected. Across the EU Muslim women who wear traditional or religious clothing in public are more likely to experience racist harassment than those who do not. See: European Commission, [Combating anti-Muslim hatred](#).

⁷² An Garda Síochána hate crime and hate related incidents data from 2025 has recorded 52 Anti-Religion discriminatory motives. See: An Garda Síochána, [Hate Crime and Hate Related Incidents 2025](#) (2026). While there is no official mechanism to capture antisemitism in Ireland, the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland reported 143 incidents in six months. Among the most common incidents reported were 40% threats and 36% verbal abuse. Direct digital targeting incidents accounted for 47%. See: Jewish Representative Council of Ireland, [Antisemitic Incident Report](#) (2026).

Legislation

The commencement of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 provides, for the first time in Irish law, increased sanctions for crimes proven to be motivated by hatred, or where hatred is demonstrated against a broad list of protected characteristics.⁷³ It is a positive step in fulfilling the State's obligations on implementing the European Council's Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia⁷⁴ and international monitoring mechanism recommendations.⁷⁵ The full implementation of the legislation is critical to improve the criminal justice response to hate crimes.

We note the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration have recently published a report on the operation of the Act one year on from enactment and the Department is satisfied that the act is meeting its objective.⁷⁶ While this report is welcome, there is only limited data available on charges and prosecutions, with no information provided on conviction rates, and the responsible actors in the criminal justice system are only now putting in place the policies and procedures to support the implementation of the legislation.⁷⁷ The Coalition Against Hate Crime have raised concerns with the lack of a cross-sectoral mechanism to oversee the implementation of the Act, and that public awareness of the Act is low and that members of

⁷³ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, [New hate crime legislation comes into force](#) (31 December 2024).

⁷⁴ Article 4 of the [Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law](#) provides that EU Member States "shall take the necessary measures to ensure that racist and xenophobic motivation is considered an aggravating circumstance, or, alternatively that such motivation may be taken into consideration by the courts in the determination of the penalties."

⁷⁵ See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, [Fifth Opinion on Ireland](#) (2024) para. 111; UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Ireland](#) (26 January 2023) paras. 15-18; UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, [Concluding observations on the combined fifth to ninth reports of Ireland](#) (23 January 2020) paras. 21-22.

⁷⁶ The Department consulted with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and with the Coalition Against Hate Crime: Department of Justice, [Post-Enactment Report – Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#) (2026).

⁷⁷ Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions: Offence codes for offences under the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 were introduced in September 2025. Four prosecutions have been recorded since the offence codes were introduced. Court Services: In the period between 23rd April and 30th September 2025, 8 prosecutions came before the courts. Of those 8 prosecutions, 5 offences were finalised in the District Court in relation to S.7(d); S.6(c) (two offences); S.7(f); and S.6(f). At the time when this information was compiled, four prosecutions had been concluded and one had been sent forward for trial to the Circuit Criminal Court. An Garda Síochána: From commencement to 27th January 2026, 43 charges/summonses have been issued citing an offence aggravated by hatred and referencing the Act. Department of Justice, [Post-Enactment Report – Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#) (2026) pp. 8-9.

structurally vulnerable communities are unaware of how to report hate crimes.⁷⁸ We strongly believe there is a need for an independent review of this legislation three years post-commencement to allow an assessment of how the provisions of the legislation are operating in practice and to ensure the penalties are effective, proportionate and dissuasive.⁷⁹

The Commission recommends that the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration fully implements the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and commits to an independent review of the Act three years post-commencement.

The Commission recommends that the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and An Garda Síochána prioritise the development and implementation, in collaboration with affected communities, of a public information campaign on the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and how to report hate crime. The informational material should be tailored to the experiences of specific communities who are targeted by hate.

It is regrettable that provisions dealing with incitement to violence or hatred were removed during the legislative process for the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024.⁸⁰ While the Government committed to amend the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 in its 2025 Programme for Government,⁸¹ we are concerned that the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration has appeared to renege on this commitment and considers the 1989 Act as sufficient to address hate speech.⁸² We, civil society and international monitoring mechanisms have repeatedly labelled the 1989 Act as ineffective, including its low usage and

⁷⁸ The Coalition's view is that that the implementation of the Act is not keeping pace with the ambitions on the legislation: Department of Justice, [Post-Enactment Report – Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#) (2026) p. 9.

⁷⁹ The 2024 Act does not provide a mechanism to review the adequacy and effectiveness of the legislation after a set period. This review should involve consultation with relevant stakeholders involved in the application of the legislation, such as legal practitioners, judges and An Garda Síochána. In addition, it should include a public consultation, consultation with relevant civil society organisations and affected persons (both victims and offenders). The review report should include data on the number of prosecutions, convictions, and length of sentences for the respective offences, as well as information on the training provided to the criminal justice actors responsible under the legislation. The review report should be placed before the Houses of the Oireachtas to ensure adequate parliamentary scrutiny of the legislation. See IHREC, [Letter to Minister for Justice re: Criminal Justice \(Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences\) Bill](#) (30 November 2023).

⁸⁰ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 15.

⁸¹ Programme for Government 2025, [Securing Ireland's Future](#) (2025) p. 122.

⁸² See: Kildare Street, [Dáil debates Thursday 9 October 2025](#) (2025).

ineffectiveness at addressing online hate speech.⁸³ The 1989 does not cover all protected equality grounds.⁸⁴ The exclusion of the gender ground is a significant gap due to the prevalence of misogyny, particularly online.⁸⁵ The European Commission considers that the 1989 Act does not fully transpose the Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia.⁸⁶

We note the previous discourse, including divisive public and political commentary, around the legislative proposals on incitement to violence and hatred with respect to the right to freedom of expression. However, within the current climate of hate, leadership is needed within Government to progress reform of the 1989 Act, in line with international standards. While recognising the complexities of addressing criminal forms of hate speech, we note that a significant amount of the discussion and debate on balancing the prohibition on hate speech with freedom of expression has already taken place during the legislative process of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and a prior Government consultation on hate speech.⁸⁷ Through supporting these processes, IHREC,⁸⁸ civil society, academics and other

⁸³ ECRI has raised that the 1989 Act has an extremely limited application and is particularly ineffectual in combating online hate speech: [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 15. We have previously raised that the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 is inadequate to effectively address hate speech that calls for a response in criminal law: IHREC, [Review of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989](#) (2019); IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (2022) pp. 4-5; IHREC, [Ireland and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (2025) pp. 71-72.

⁸⁴ The [Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989](#) covers race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, membership of the travelling community or sexual orientation.

⁸⁵ Research has shown that misogyny is the most prevalent form of online hate: FRA, [Online Content Moderation: Current Challenges in Detecting Hate Speech](#) (2023) p. 10; European Women's Lobby, [Report on Cyber Violence Against Women: Policy Overview and Recommendations](#) (2024) p. 36. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression has recognised the importance of addressing sexist hate speech: [Gender justice and freedom of expression](#), A/76/258 (30 July 2021) paras. 68-72, 108-109.

⁸⁶ The European Commission has an active infringement procedure on Ireland as it considers that Ireland has not fully transposed the provisions related to criminalising the public incitement to violence or hatred against a group or a member of such group based on certain characteristics, as well as the conducts of condoning, denial, and gross trivialisation of international crimes and the Holocaust. In 2025, the Commission sent a reasoned opinion to Ireland on its failure to comply. See: European Commission, [Commission calls on Ireland and Finland to comply with EU rules on combating racism and xenophobia](#) (2025); European Commission, [European Commission calls on Ireland, Bulgaria, and Estonia to correctly transpose EU law combating racism and xenophobia](#) (2024).

⁸⁷ The Department of Justice ran a public consultation on hate speech in 2019-2020 and received 182 submissions (77 of them from IHREC, civil society, professional and academic organisations) and over 3,500 responses to an online survey: [Legislating for Hate Speech and Hate Crime in Ireland: Report on the Public Consultation 2020](#).

⁸⁸ Including: IHREC, [Review of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989](#) (2019); IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (2022).

stakeholders have undertaken significant work on examining the international standards on hate speech and how to translate these standards into domestic legislation. This body of work examining the threshold for when an act of hate speech requires a criminal law response should inform the basis for progressing reform of the 1989 Act.

Without appropriate legislation, hate speech is being amplified through online platforms and becoming more prevalent in our communities and fuelling division which is leading to impunity for organisers and agitators inciting hate. The State should prioritise reform of the 1989 Act, including alignment with the regulation of online platforms under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 to ensure there are no gaps in the implementation of the law addressing online hate speech.⁸⁹

The Commission recommends that the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration leads on a renewal of efforts to undertake a comprehensive reform of laws prohibiting incitement to hatred in line with international standards, by specifying and clearly defining in criminal law expressions of hate speech subject to criminal liability, striking an appropriate balance with the right to freedom of expression, and ensuring alignment with the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022.

Online regulation

Platform design and regulation policies shape the Irish narrative environment surrounding hate speech and hate crime.⁹⁰ We welcome the progress made on online regulation with the enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022,⁹¹ and the establishment of

⁸⁹ IHREC, [Submission to the Fourth Universal Periodic Review Cycle for Ireland](#) (2026) p. 6; IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (February 2022) pp. 24–26. Ensuring alignment with international standards on the regulation of online hate speech including: Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Threats to freedom of expression online in turbulent times](#), A/80/341 (18 August 2025); Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Online hate speech](#), A/74/486 (9 October 2019).

⁹⁰ While X is the dominant force, content does appear across other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, blogs, and online news sites. See: Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026) p. 18.

⁹¹ [Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022](#).

the media regulator, Coimisiún na Meán, to regulate harmful online content.⁹² Given that many of the largest online platforms⁹³ fall under Irish jurisdiction for their EU operations,⁹⁴ Coimisiún na Meán has an important role to play in enforcing the Online Safety Framework made up of the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Online Safety Code, and the Terrorist Content Regulation.⁹⁵ We welcome that incitement to hatred and violence is named as a category of harmful content requiring regulation in the Online Safety Code,⁹⁶ but we are concerned that it does not categorise disinformation as an online harm, and measures to address toxic algorithms were removed.⁹⁷

It is imperative that Ireland's 'competitiveness' and its attractiveness to technology companies do not overshadow the negative role online platforms can play in our communities. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has recently raised concern with the engagement-based business model of online platforms and the significant negative impact that the political climate on freedom of expression is having on content policies and moderation.⁹⁸ The

⁹² Coimisiún na Meán is the Digital Services Coordinator and lead competent authority for the DSA. The regulation applies in full across all EU member states from 2024. See: Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, [Digital Services Act](#).

⁹³ The European Commission have stated that [online platforms](#) cover a wide range of activities including social media, online marketplaces, app stores, search engines, payment systems, creative content outlets, price comparison websites and platforms for the collaborative or gig economy. Online platforms share key characteristics, such as the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate interactions between users, collection and use of data about such interactions, and network effects.

⁹⁴ Meta (Facebook and Instagram), X (formerly Twitter), Google, Microsoft, and Apple all have headquarters in Ireland.

⁹⁵ Coimisiún na Meán, [Online Safety Framework](#). The European Commission supervises very large online platforms (VLOPs) or very large online search engines (VLOSEs) which have more than 45 million users per month in the EU.

⁹⁶ The Online Safety Code operates alongside the EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online. See: Coimisiún na Meán, [Online Safety Code](#) (2024). European Commission, [Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online +](#) (2025). For civil society commentary on a previous version of the draft Code, see [Joint submission on the draft Online Safety Code: Submitted to Coimisiún na Meán by more than sixty civil society organisations](#) (2024).

⁹⁷ See: Oireachtas, Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, [The State's response to online disinformation and media/digital literacy, including social media and fake news](#) (2024); ICCL, [ICCL disappointed at removal of recommender system measures from Online Safety Code](#) (May 2024).

⁹⁸ The Special Rapporteur has raised concern that large technology companies based in the United States have aligned their policies and positions on online safety with their Government: [Threats to freedom of expression online in turbulent times](#), A/80/341 (18 August 2025). The Special Rapporteur also previously stated that internet companies have seemingly been "spurred on by a business model that values attention and virality" without due regard for human rights standards in their products, services and policies: [Online hate speech](#), A/74/486 (9 October 2019).

Special Rapporteur has emphasised the importance of technology companies adhering to international human rights standards, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,⁹⁹ and conducting effective human rights due diligence as part of the content policies and moderation.¹⁰⁰

Online regulation is pivotal to ensure online and offline safety for our communities.¹⁰¹ We note concerns with the complexity of the regulation of online hate speech as there is a no common definition of hate speech used across regulations, legislation and policies within the EU,¹⁰² across Member States and on online platforms.¹⁰³ While important progress on online regulation has been made with Coimisiún na Meán launching several investigations into online platforms,¹⁰⁴ online platforms AI-driven algorithmic systems and algorithmic amplification have been shown to boost harmful content, eliciting stronger reactions from users and keeping them online longer and encouraging compulsive checking using the

⁹⁹ United Nations, [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework](#) (2011). See discussion and recommendation in the section on ‘Digital regulation and artificial intelligence’ in our policy statement on business and human rights: [Business and Human Rights in Ireland](#) (2026) pp. 37-39.

¹⁰⁰ [Threats to freedom of expression online in turbulent times](#), A/80/341 (18 August 2025) para. 110. See also OHCHR, [UNGPs Compass for Tech Regulation: A Policymaker’s Guide on how to apply the UNGPs to require rights-respecting corporate responsibility](#) (2025); United Nations, [Human Rights Due Diligence for Digital Technology Use – Guidance of the Secretary-General](#) (2024).

¹⁰¹ Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Threats to freedom of expression online in turbulent times](#), A/80/341 (18 August 2025); Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Online hate speech](#), A/74/486 (9 October 2019). See also IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (February 2022) pp. 24–26.

¹⁰² For example the [Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law](#), the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#), the [Digital Services Act](#), and the [Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online](#) +.

¹⁰³ This is due to an absence of an internationally recognised definition of hate. See discussion in Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, [The Fight Against Digital Hate Speech: Disentangling the EU’s Regulatory Approach and Hurdles](#) (2024) 25 German Law Journal 1182, pp. 1182-1196.

¹⁰⁴ See: Coimisiún na Meán, [Two investigations commenced into Meta, in respect of Facebook & Instagram](#) (5 May 2026); Coimisiún na Meán, [Coimisiún na Meán commences investigations into TikTok and LinkedIn](#) (2 December 2025); Coimisiún na Meán, [Coimisiún na Meán Investigation into X](#) (12 November 2025).

recommender system and algorithm amplification.¹⁰⁵ This system contributes to online hate and the incitement of violence which drives real-world harm.¹⁰⁶

AI language models play a role as they can not only replicate but amplify sexist or racist narratives and spread misinformation and hate more effectively than ever envisaged before.¹⁰⁷ Traveller and LGBTQI+ organisations have raised concerns about automated discrimination in some large language models and that minority groups are being targeted online, with AI perpetuating discriminatory stereotypes.¹⁰⁸ Young people are particularly vulnerable to hate-based harms online, with automated discrimination inherent in some language models, algorithms and pages or bots being set up solely to negatively stereotype.¹⁰⁹ This is filtering down to young people with boys more targeted online with extreme views.¹¹⁰ Due to the impact on children and wider society, two Oireachtas Committees¹¹¹ and the Online Health

¹⁰⁵ There is strong evidence that algorithms frequently push exploitative, abusive, sensational or extreme content, exposing children and young people to harmful material such as misogynistic, abusive, extremist, and self-harm related content. A recent survey found that 63% of young people hear more extreme views online than in person. See: Ombudsman for Children, [Extremism, Discrimination and Gender Roles, A Survey on Young People's Views on Emerging Social Issues in Modern Ireland](#) (2025) p. 15; Department of Health, Online Health Taskforce, [Online health and rights for Ireland's children and young people](#) (2025) pp. 32-33. See also: [Joint submission on the draft Online Safety Code: Submitted to Coimisiún na Meán by more than sixty civil society organisations](#) (2024) pp. 4-5; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, [Online racist hate speech](#), A/78/538 (18 October 2023) paras. 19-20.

¹⁰⁶ Social media platforms have the ability to shape public discourse by tweaking what is promoted or suppressed, either knowingly or through algorithmic bias. Repeated exposure to algorithmic biases can shape and manipulate users' beliefs without their knowledge. See: Amnesty International, [Breaking up with Big Tech](#) (2025) p. 22; Jörg M. Fegert and Maria Melchior, [Child safety online – protecting and empowering minors in a digital world: Report by the co-chairs of the special panel on child safety online](#) (July 2026) p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ See: IHREC, [Opening statement Liam Herrick Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#) (21 October 2025).

¹⁰⁸ Oireachtas Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence, [First Interim Report](#) (December 2025) p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Oireachtas Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence, [First Interim Report](#) (December 2025) p. 31.

¹¹⁰ A recent survey found that 56% of students had heard that “men are more entitled than women to more authority” and 61% reported hearing that “society should revert to traditional gender roles for men and women.” See: Ombudsman for Children, [Extremism, Discrimination and Gender Roles, A Survey on Young People's Views on Emerging Social Issues in Modern Ireland](#) (2025) pp. 24, 30. An Irish study reviewing YouTube and TikTok shorts found evidence that boys are being targeted by high profile “manosphere” influencers through algorithmic recommendations. See: Catherine Baker, Debbie Ging and Maja Brandt Andreassen, [Recommending Toxicity: The role of algorithmic recommender functions on YouTube Shorts and TikTok in promoting male supremacist influencers. DCU Anti-Bullying Centre Dublin City University](#) (2024).

¹¹¹ The Joint Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport recently recommended that platforms should be required to disable recommender algorithms entirely for children and by default for people over 18: [Regulation of online platforms, and supports to improve online safety and participation](#) (May 2026) p. 9. The Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence recommend that recommender systems should be switched off by default and social media companies should be banned from turning on recommender algorithms for accounts used by children: [First interim report](#) (December 2025) p. 10.

Taskforce¹¹² have called for the State, Coimisiún na Meán and online platforms to comprehensively address the role of recommender systems including turning off recommender systems by default for people over 18 and disabled entirely for children. Turning off by default recommender systems based on personal or sensitive personal data would provide people with the individual choice of whether they want to turn on recommender algorithms on online platforms. An Oireachtas Committee has also called for the establishment of a statutory individual complaints mechanism to ensure access to effective remedy.¹¹³

The Commission recommends that Coimisiún na Meán be appropriately resourced to ensure effective timely investigations, the removal of harmful online content and the enforcement of the online safety framework.

The Commission recommends that online platform recommender systems are turned off by default for people over 18 and disabled entirely for children.

Media regulation

Media institutions, broadcasters and journalists have a critical role in combating hate speech by reporting on and challenging incidents of hate speech.¹¹⁴ This is of particular importance, as members of the media in Ireland and across the world have been the targets and victims of online and offline hate and hostility which has a significant negative impact on press

¹¹² The Online Health Taskforce recommend that platforms should ensure effective measures to mitigate the risks of children being recommended inappropriate or harmful content, and regulators need to enforce these obligations: Department of Health, [Online Health Taskforce: Final Report – Online health and rights for Ireland’s children and young people](#) (2025) pp. 32-33, 36-37.

¹¹³ Joint Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, [Regulation of online platforms, and supports to improve online safety and participation](#) (May 2026) p. 10. The Children’s Rights Alliance have called for Coimisiún na Meán to establish, as provided for under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022, an effective and accessible independent complaints mechanism which is enabled to make binding decisions in relation to online harms where an online platform fails to act or they provide an inadequate response: [Online Safety Monitor](#) (2025) pp. 32-25; [Submission to the Joint Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport: Regulation of online platforms and supports to improve online safety and participation](#) (2025) p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 6.

freedom.¹¹⁵ Members of the media have a particular responsibility in how they frame narratives involving structurally vulnerable groups. While it is important to ensure balanced reporting and protect freedom of expression, it should not be confused with an obligation to platform hateful and intolerant views. It is welcome that it is clearly set out in media codes that TV and radio broadcasters¹¹⁶ and print and online newspapers, magazines and online-only news publications¹¹⁷ are prohibited from broadcasting and publishing content which is likely to incite hatred or violence. The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recommend that States, while not encroaching on the independence of the media, encourage and support members of the media to receive training on hate speech.¹¹⁸

The Commission recommends that codes of practices and rules for the media should be actively kept under review by Coimisiún na Meán, the Office of the Press Ombudsman and the Press Council of Ireland to ensure that they are effective and responsive to the changing nature and dynamics of hate speech.

The Commission recommends that media organisations provide members of the media with ongoing training on hate speech including how to recognise and report on hate speech, as well as on how to avoid using and disseminating hate speech.

¹¹⁵ National Union of Journalists, [Journalists report physical attacks and deaths to safety tracker](#) (28 April 2026); UN Women, [Tipping point: Online violence impacts, manifestations, and redress in the AI age](#) (2026); Dawn Wheatley, [Social media and online hostility: Experiences of women in Irish journalism](#) (Dublin City University, 2023).

¹¹⁶ Coimisiún na Meán regulates TV and Radio broadcasters: Coimisiún na Meán have developed [Codes & Rules](#) to govern the standards and practices of broadcasters and video-on-demand platforms based in Ireland including a prohibition of content which incites violence or hatred: [Code of Programme Standards \(Radio and Television Broadcasters\)](#) (2024).

¹¹⁷ The Press Council of Ireland and Office of the Press Ombudsman are statutory self-regulatory bodies providing oversight of the press in Ireland. The [Code of Practice](#) of the [Press Council of Ireland and Office of the Press Ombudsman](#) provides under Principle 8 that “the press shall not publish material intended or likely to cause grave offence or stir up hatred against an individual or group on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, colour, ethnic origin, membership of the travelling community, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, illness or age.”

¹¹⁸ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 12.

Political discourse

Anti-rights narratives are actively shaping mainstream political discourse in particular on migration and the transgender community.¹¹⁹ The influence and the legitimisation of anti-rights discourse in the Irish political system is concerning when anti-rights narratives are being driven by actors who are directly targeting hate against public representatives and political candidates at the national and local level.¹²⁰ The harms associated with hate and intimidation during electoral campaigns extend beyond individual candidates; this behaviour can have a chilling effect on democratic participation, discourage members of the targeted communities from entering and remaining in politics, may silence new political perspectives, and undermine the ability of voters to engage in informed political debate.¹²¹ This toxic political atmosphere has a significant impact on ensuring our political system at a national and local reflects the diversity of Irish society.

Political parties must avoid being ‘baited’ into adopting anti-rights policy positions and should refuse to make concessions which appease these groups.¹²² Increased leadership is required from public and political representatives to challenge these divisive narratives and condemn hate speech and hate crimes in all their forms.¹²³ In light of the increase of anti-rights groups and the registration of a number of anti-rights parties,¹²⁴ the State must adopt a strong

¹¹⁹ Hope and Courage Collective, [Ireland in Focus 2025, Mind the Gap](#) (2026).

¹²⁰ The Hope and Courage Collective and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue have identified the spread of hate, harassment, and disinformation both online and offline during the [2026 By-elections](#), [2025 Presidential Election](#), [2024 General Election](#), and the [2024 Local and European Elections](#). Women and candidates from migrant backgrounds were particular targets of abuse. Women members of the Houses of the Oireachtas experience more sexual and sexist abuse, digital harassment, prejudicial slurs, threats with sexual violence, to be sexually harassed and to receive unwanted sexual approaches and sexually explicit messages, as well as receiving comments about their appearance. See: Houses of the Oireachtas, [Report of the Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life](#) (2024); Houses of the Oireachtas and UCD Centre of Digital Policy, [Report on the Abuse and Harassment of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and Political Staff](#) (2024).

¹²¹ Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Freedom of expression and elections in the digital age](#), A/HRC/59/50 (11 June 2025).

¹²² We have seen examples of politicians making immediate statements in reaction to events in their community, resulting in ill-informed responses which escalate tensions further: IHREC, [Ireland and the 6th Monitoring Cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (2024) p. 9.

¹²³ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 10.

¹²⁴ An Coimisiún Toghcháin, [Register of Political Parties](#) (2026).

leadership role in protecting the integrity of election campaigns in the coming years.¹²⁵ The State should strengthen the monitoring and reporting of hate, intimidation and harassment during electoral campaigns through enhanced cooperation between key stakeholders and ensure improved transparency obligations for online platforms regarding the dissemination of harmful content during election periods.¹²⁶

The Commission recommends that an action plan on hate includes actions to prevent and counter the spread of hate during candidate selection processes, and election and referendum campaigns. The measures must recognise the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Coimisiún Toghcháin, Coimisiún na Meán, the Standards in Public Office Commission, the Oireachtas, local authorities, mainstream political parties, online platforms and civil society.

The Commission recommends that the Standards in Public Office Commission develops a code of conduct for public representatives which clearly prohibits the use or endorsement of hate speech in political discourse.

Counter-narratives and community responses

The rise of hate is a significant challenge to human rights and equality as well as cohesion within society. While legislative and enforcement measures remain essential, evidence suggests that these measures alone are insufficient to address the underlying drivers of prejudice and hostility.¹²⁷ An effective response must therefore also include sustained

¹²⁵ IHREC, [Ireland and the 6th Monitoring Cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (2024) p. 9.

¹²⁶ The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (ODIHR) Needs Assessment Mission undertaken prior to the 2024 General Election identified the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics due to the prevalence of violence and harassment of women in politics, which is exacerbated by the growth of social media platforms and the inadequate regulation of online content: [Ireland early parliamentary elections 29 November 2024: ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report 14-16 October 2024](#) (2024) p. 4.

¹²⁷ Recent research demonstrates that public perceptions of immigration in Ireland are frequently shaped by inaccurate information rather than objective evidence. The Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) found widespread and systematic misperceptions regarding the scale and nature of migration, with participants consistently overestimating the size of the migrant population, the proportion of migrants seeking international

investment in evidence-based counter-narratives that challenge hate, disinformation, misinformation; provide fact-based evidence;¹²⁸ promote accurate public understanding; and strengthen social cohesion.

Counter-narratives should form a central component of Ireland's response to hate. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) have highlighted to the State the importance of increased leadership from political and public representatives to condemn hate speech and to address it through the use of counter-narratives and alternative narratives.¹²⁹ Counter-narratives should also be used when civil society and human rights defenders are targeted with hate and disinformation.¹³⁰ Effective counter-narratives should not simply rebut false information but should promote factual, accessible and evidence-based public information, and support constructive dialogue between communities.

The Commission recommends the lead department on hate coordinates the development of a common pledge for political, public, and community leaders which commits them to promptly and robustly respond publicly to incidents of hate speech and hate crime with strong counter-narratives and alternative narratives centred on human rights and equality values, while also expressing solidarity with those targeted by hate.

Civil society's advocacy work and work to build community resilience is taking place in the context of anti-rights discourse with poorly regulated hate, misinformation, and disinformation leading to a silencing of critical civil society voices and undermining the safety of human rights defenders.¹³¹ The verbal and physical threats and attacks against civil society impacts the physical and mental health of staff and volunteers which can lead to burnout and

protection, and migrant use of social housing, while underestimating migration for employment and education and migrants' labour market participation. The most accurate understanding of migration was linked with more positive attitudes, suggesting that improving access to accurate information may contribute to more informed public discourse and reduce susceptibility to misinformation. See: ESRI, [The Role of Misperceptions in Attitudes to Immigration](#) (2026).

¹²⁸ The Northern Ireland Commission noted that the absence of robust evidence has often resulted in policy responses being developed without a comprehensive understanding of the problem, reinforcing the importance of evidence-informed approaches that both uphold freedom of expression and protect individuals and communities from incitement to hatred and discrimination: [Briefing Paper: Racial and Ethnic Minority Rights and Online Misinformation and Disinformation](#) (2025).

¹²⁹ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 16. See also Council of Europe, [Toolkit for human rights speech](#) and [Self-assessment tool to prevent and combat hate speech](#).

¹³⁰ ENNHRI, [State of the rule of law in the Europe: Report on the European Union](#) (2026).

¹³¹ ENNHRI, [State of the rule of law in Europe: Report of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#) (2026).

reduced retention of staff and volunteers.¹³² These attacks and threats lead to increased costs for civil society who have to invest from their own resources in physical and digital security measures, psychological support, and capacity building and training on physical and digital safety.¹³³

We acknowledge the vital role being played by civil society and community development organisations working at the local and national level to challenge hate and disinformation by promoting a culture of tolerance and inclusion, and in building community resilience and continuing to support communities who are experiencing hate.¹³⁴ We recognise the importance of appropriately resourcing and empowering civil society to undertake this work;¹³⁵ however, we continue to have concerns around the persistent underfunding of civil society organisations working on human rights and equality; and the conditionality of funding.¹³⁶ Responses to hate should involve collaboration with communities who are at the front line of the defence against hate, extremism and disinformation as they have the expertise and insight to know the measures needed in their communities.¹³⁷

The Commission recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development and Gaeltacht makes available core, multi-annual, ring-fenced and autonomous funding to civil society, including community development organisations, working at the national and local level to build community resilience and to combat and resist hate, extremism, and disinformation.

¹³² FRA, [Summary of key findings from FRA's civic space consultation covering 2024](#) (2025) p. 19. 453 organisations across the EU and Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia provided valid responses to the consultation, with Ireland having the highest number of organisations (57) responding from a single State.

¹³³ FRA, [Summary of key findings from FRA's civic space consultation covering 2024](#) (2025) pp. 23-26.

¹³⁴ The [Hope and Courage Collective](#) work to support community groups to be resilient to threats to hate and to respond to hate. See: [Something to Fight For: Narrative Research & Guidance](#) (2025); [Greater than Fear: A community based response to tackling hate and extremism](#) (2023); [Top 10 Tips for Responding to Hate and Extremism](#) (2023). The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) have developed an educational tool and practice manual for youth workers engaging with young people who express hateful speech and/or behaviour in youth settings: [Transforming Hate in Youth Settings: Education Tool and Practice Manual for those working with young people](#) (2023).

¹³⁵ See Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, [Report on Refugees and Integration](#) (2023) pp. 54-64.

¹³⁶ IHREC, [Ireland and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (2025) pp. 46-49.

¹³⁷ Hope and Courage Collective, [Submission on the National Strategy for Improving Community Safety](#) (2025) pp. 2-3.

Education, digital and media literacy

Education and digital literacy are integral to creating a comprehensive and robust response to hate. In order to prevent hate speech in the long term, people need to be given the skills to critically assess online information, recognise harmful narratives and engage responsibly in digital spaces.¹³⁸ Hate speech, particularly online, can spread easily at schools with children and young people, both as potential victims and perpetrators, and teachers are insufficiently prepared to address such situations.¹³⁹ ECRI have called for a unified and effective approach to human rights education in Ireland which should comprise of mandatory topics to be covered by all schools, such as combating racism and intolerance, including against Travellers and Roma, People of African Descent and LGBTQI+ people.¹⁴⁰

Strengthening media and digital literacy should form part of a broader, preventative strategy to build resilience against misinformation, disinformation and online hate.¹⁴¹ Developing these skills enables individuals to identify misinformation, challenge harmful narratives and participate safely and responsibly in democratic discourse. Media and digital literacy should also be understood as a lifelong process that extends beyond formal education.¹⁴² Adults, parents and wider communities continue to encounter misinformation and harmful online narratives and should therefore be supported to develop the skills necessary to critically engage with digital content. Addressing hate, misinformation, and disinformation cannot be achieved through isolated initiatives but requires sustained collaboration, clear leadership and long-term investment. A whole-of-society approach to education, media and digital

¹³⁸ UNESCO, [Media and Information Literacy: Combating Hate Speech in the Digital Age](#) (2026).

¹³⁹ ECRI, [Hate speech levels across Europe alarming, stronger action needed](#) (28 May 2026). The European Commission have provided guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. European Commission, [Guidelines for teachers to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation - European Education Area](#) (2026).

¹⁴⁰ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 15. The National Youth Council of Ireland did a study in Ireland of racism in schools and found that the structural and institutional facets of racism presenting in the Irish education system are visible through various manifestations: the reproduction of inequalities through biased disciplinary systems, programming, biased curricula, admissions criteria which favour the white settled communities: [The Silenced Struggles: Impact of Racism in Schools](#) (2025) p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Media Literacy Ireland, [Media Literacy Policy](#) (2022) pp. 1-3. A [2024 European Parliament Youth survey](#) highlighted that 76% of young people say they were exposed to disinformation or fake news in the past week. According to the [2025 Flash Eurobarometer](#), 80% of people agree skills and digital literacy help protect them from online disinformation.

¹⁴² An IHREC-funded project developed a workbook to counter hate and disinformation in the adult and community education sector: AONTAS, [Community Education Against Disinformation Workbook](#) (2025).

literacy strengthens community resilience, promotes informed public discourse and reduces vulnerability to online hate.¹⁴³

The Commission recommends that the Department of Education and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science adopt a comprehensive national approach to human rights and equality literacy as a core element of preventing hate speech, hate crime and broader expressions of hate. This should include embedding media and digital literacy across all levels of education, supporting a whole-school approach, strengthening initial teacher education and continuous professional development, promoting lifelong media and digital literacy beyond formal education, and ensuring coordinated implementation across Government, education providers, regulators and civil society.

Training

Effective operation and enforcement of hate crime and incitement to hatred legislation requires that members of An Garda Síochána, prosecutors and the judiciary be provided with ongoing training on these offences.¹⁴⁴ Comprehensive knowledge of the elements of the offences should contribute to more effective criminal justice responses.¹⁴⁵ Training should equip members of An Garda Síochána and prosecutors with the understanding of the important societal value of pursuing hate crime and hate speech charges in cases where charges may be more easily brought under another piece of legislation. Effective training programmes will ensure hate offences and incitement to hatred offences are thoroughly investigated, perpetrators are prosecuted and appropriately sentenced. Other sectors of the

¹⁴³ The Oireachtas has similarly recognised that strengthening media and digital literacy requires coordinated action across Government, education providers, regulators, civil society and digital platforms. and national frameworks to address hate in Ireland. Joint Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, [Regulation of online platforms, and supports to improve online safety and participation](#) (2026) p. 10; Joint Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, [The State's response to online disinformation and media/digital literacy, including social media and fake news](#) (2024) pp. 7-10.

¹⁴⁴ IHREC, [Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice \(Hate Crime\) Bill](#) (2022) pp. 18-20. The UN Human Rights Committee recommended that the State provide adequate training to law enforcement officials, judges and prosecutors on addressing hate speech and hate crimes: [Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Ireland](#) (26 January 2023) para. 18(e).

¹⁴⁵ An Garda Síochána delivers an online hate crime training programme: Department of Justice, [National Action Plan Against Racism: Second Implementation Report 2024](#) (2025) p. 19; ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 19; OSCE ODIHR, [National frameworks to address hate crime in Ireland](#).

public service should also receive training on hate as they have responsibility for combating hate and engaging with victims of hate.¹⁴⁶ Training courses and materials should be developed and delivered in collaboration with civil society organisations working with affected communities.¹⁴⁷

The Commission recommends that An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Judicial Council continue to develop initial and ongoing training for members of An Garda Síochána, prosecutors, and the judiciary on the offences under the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

The Commission recommends that the lead department on hate develops a standard for the provision of training to public bodies on the nature and impact of hate and how to effectively combat hate.

Reporting mechanisms and victim support

An Garda Síochána have initiated positive steps in recent years to support the reporting of hate crime, including the launch of an online hate crime website to receive non-emergency hate crime incidents from victims and witnesses¹⁴⁸ and the formalisation of third-party reporting allowing civil society organisations to refer cases of hate crime directly.¹⁴⁹ Civil society organisations play a vital role for hate crime victims as they operate third-party mechanisms to collect and report data on hate crimes.¹⁵⁰ However, concerns have been raised with the lack of data and information on the operation and impact of the third-party

¹⁴⁶ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 12. The [National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027](#) includes an action to “Introduce mandatory and continuing anti-racism education, including cultural competency and unconscious-bias training for all staff at all levels throughout the public sector, as part of the fulfilment of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.”

¹⁴⁷ Many civil society organisations have collaborated with public bodies in developing and delivering training on equality, discrimination, cultural awareness, anti-racism, and inclusion.

¹⁴⁸ In July 2021, An Garda Síochána launched an online hate crime reporting system. See: OSCE ODIHR, [Hate Crime Reporting Ireland](#) (2020).

¹⁴⁹ OSCE ODIHR, [National frameworks to address hate crime in Ireland](#).

¹⁵⁰ INAR, [iReport racist incident reporting system](#); See discussion in Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Schweppe, [Lifecycle of a Hate Crime: Country Report for Ireland](#) (ICCL, 2017) pp. 19, 81-88.

reporting mechanism.¹⁵¹ The reporting mechanism procedure should ensure safe reporting conditions for both victims and witnesses of hate crimes and hate speech.¹⁵²

Despite the progress made, hate incidents are still underreported¹⁵³ and research has highlighted that there is a significant lack of trust in An Garda Síochána when reporting a hate crime.¹⁵⁴ For example, the Traveller and Roma communities continue to experience mistrust and conflict with the justice system, which manifests in low levels of reporting crimes.¹⁵⁵ Disabled people face particular barriers to reporting hate crime,¹⁵⁶ and measures are required to ensure that there are no obstacles to investigating or prosecuting disability hate crime.¹⁵⁷ Members from ethnic minorities are hesitant to report crimes as they perceive reporting to An Garda Síochána as risky and potentially unsafe.¹⁵⁸ The vast majority of people from minority communities report that they receive differential treatment in comparison to the white settled Irish population.¹⁵⁹ Racial profiling by An Garda Síochána towards members of ethnic minority groups contributes to the lack of trust in reporting crimes.

¹⁵¹ Dr Ebun Joseph, [Annual Report of the Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism](#) (2026) p. 56.

¹⁵² European Commission, [Final Recommendations – European Citizens’ Panel: Tackling Hatred in Society](#) (2024) p. 4.

¹⁵³ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 17.

¹⁵⁴ INAR reported that only 20 percent of crimes were reported to Gardai. There is a feeling among victims that do report that the responses are inadequate. See: INAR, [Reports of racism in Ireland](#) (2022) pp. 7, 11. Those who experience racial profiling by the police have a lower level of trust in the police than those who do not. See: FRA, [Being Black in the EU - Experiences of People of African Descent](#) (2023) p. 52. Racialised groups often fear police violence due to knowing victims of discrimination, affecting their trust in police. Socio-economic disparities can further increase mistrust. Mistrust is the primary reason for low reporting rates, with the most common reason being the belief that the Gardai would not act. See: Policing Authority, [Experiences of Policing amongst Brazilians and People of African Descent](#) (2025) pp. 23-25.

¹⁵⁵ See: Pavee Point, [Submission to the Department of Justice and Equality: Towards the Development of a Strategy for the Criminal Justice Strategy](#) (2024) pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁶ OSCE ODIHR, [Factsheet: Disability Hate Crime](#) (2016) p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ Failing to recognise within the criminal justice system that there are offences perpetrated against disabled people which are motivated by prejudice can create a culture of impunity for perpetrators and may lead to repeat victimisation. See: FRA, [Equal protection for all victims of hate crime: The case of people with disabilities](#) (2015) p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Research amongst Brazilians and people of African descent highlights that the perception of An Garda Síochána within minority groups is predominately negative. They are viewed as actively harming them through discriminatory policing. This perception contributes to the low levels of reporting crimes. See: Policing Authority, [Experiences of Policing amongst Brazilians and People of African Descent](#) (2025) pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁹ In a recent survey participants reported negative experiences with An Garda Síochána when reporting a crime. The majority of participants have either experienced, witnessed or believe An Garda Síochána engage in racial profiling. See: INAR and ICCL, [Policing and Racial Discrimination in Ireland: A Community and Rights Perspective](#) (2024) pp. 21, 26.

There are also gaps in provision, support and information for victims, leading to drop out from reporting processes and poor outcomes. ECRI have expressed concern with a potential gap in Irish law, where victims of hate incidents which do not meet threshold for a criminal offence are not entitled to support under the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017.¹⁶⁰ ECRI calls for victims of hate crime, regardless of whether they engage with the criminal justice system, to be provided with specialist trauma-informed supports support, assistance and protection including psychological, medical and legal assistance.¹⁶¹ Victim support services and reporting mechanism should be adequately resourced, and information on victim support services and reporting mechanisms should be accessible, in a range of formats and languages, and tailored towards specific structurally vulnerable groups. Victims of criminalised hate speech and hate crime who go through the process of reporting should benefit from redress, including adequate compensation,¹⁶² through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme¹⁶³ or through the court system.¹⁶⁴

The Commission recommends that An Garda Síochána greatly expands its engagement with affected communities to strengthen trust in the reporting procedures for hate speech and hate crime.

The Commission recommends that the Department of Justice Home, Affairs and Migration provides sustainable core funding to culturally appropriate and trauma informed services supporting victims of hate speech and hate crime, and to civil society operating third party reporting mechanisms.

¹⁶⁰ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 17.

¹⁶¹ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) pp. 8-9.

¹⁶² As international standards call for: ECRI, [General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech](#) (2015) p. 51; Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) pp. 19, 27; Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) pp. 10, 28.

¹⁶³ See [Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme](#).

¹⁶⁴ Victims may be awarded compensation as part of a court order or they may take a civil case for compensation against the offender: [Victims Charter](#).

Data

In recent years An Garda Síochána have published annual statistics on the reporting of hate crime and hate related incidents to An Garda Síochána.¹⁶⁵ While this data is welcome, since the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 there has been an absence of publicly accessible data on investigations, charges, prosecutions and convictions under the Act.¹⁶⁶ This is despite the obligation on the State to collect and make publicly available data on hate crimes from across the criminal justice system.¹⁶⁷ There is a similar deficit in terms of available data on incitement to hatred offences.¹⁶⁸ This means that it is impossible to gain a full understanding of the levels of hate crime and hate speech which in turn impacts on developing and implementing legislative and policy measures to effectively respond to hate.

There should be uniformity in approach in collecting and analysing data across criminal justice actors from the initial reporting stage to sentencing.¹⁶⁹ ECRI have called for Ireland to establish a comprehensive publicly available data collection system of cases of hate speech and hate crime, which is disaggregated by category of offence, type of hate motivation, target group, as well as judicial follow-up and outcome.¹⁷⁰ We note the recently published National Equality Data Strategy which aims to improve the collection, disaggregation and use of equality data in the Civil and Public Service in Ireland and hope that this will assist public bodies in the criminal justice sector to collect and use disaggregated equality data.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ An Garda Síochána, [Hate crime statistics](#). In 2026, the statistics for 2025 were produced to align with the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024.

¹⁶⁶ Limited data was published in the Department of Justice's one-year post-enactment report: Department of Justice, [Post-Enactment Report – Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#) (2026). Data was provided in the Minister for Justice's response to a parliamentary question: [Departmental Data](#) (15 January 2026).

¹⁶⁷ As a participating State in the OSCE, Ireland has made a commitment to "collect, maintain and make public reliable data on hate crimes, across the criminal justice system from the police to the courts: OSCE ODIHR, [Hate crime data](#). ODIHR have noted that Ireland has never reported to them on the number of people prosecuted and sentenced: [Hate crime report – Ireland](#).

¹⁶⁸ Ireland's Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism has noted the need for comprehensive data collection on online hate and for the publication of annual hate crime statistics disaggregated by race, gender, and location: Dr Ebon Joseph, [Annual Report of the Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism](#) (2026) p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ ECRI, [Sixth monitoring cycle report on Ireland](#) (2025) p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Government of Ireland, [The National Equality Data Strategy 2026-2031](#).

The State should regularly monitor and analyse the criminal justice data, as well as other sources of data on hate speech and hate crime, such as online reports or victimisation surveys.¹⁷² This quantitative and qualitative analysis will assist in identifying trends at a national and local level which will inform developing measures to respond to these trends.

The Commission recommends that the Central Statistics Office, An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Courts Service record and publish accurate and reliable disaggregated data on hate crime and incitement to hatred offences.

The Commission recommends that the lead department on hate routinely publishes quantitative and qualitative analyses of hate speech and hate crime trends online and offline, which include recommendations on the measures required to prevent and combat the trends.

Cross-border and transnational hate

There is a high degree of transnational influence across the online misinformation, disinformation, hate and extremism landscape.¹⁷³ Irish social media users account for only 25 per cent of anti-rights narratives relating to or referencing Ireland, meaning that international actors are dictating the messaging and public perception around incidents which are driving social unrest.¹⁷⁴ Social media platforms are being used to coordinate, radicalise, and recruit members across borders to partake in hate crimes and hate speech.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#) (adopted on 20 May 2022) p. 13; Council of Europe, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) (adopted on 7 May 2024) p. 13.

¹⁷³ Anti-migrant mobilisation across the island of Ireland is increasing through online mobilisation. There is also an increase of US and Russian actors playing a role in pushing content and narratives. See: Zoe Manzi, [Emerging cross-border dynamics in Ireland's anti-migrant mobilisation](#) (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025).

¹⁷⁴ Predominantly from accounts based in the UK and the US. See: Hope and Courage Collective, [Mind the Gap](#) (2026) pp. 17-20. Protests in Ireland are being used to validate US-based far-right influencers' narratives of "Western civilisation under attack," casting Ireland as a symbolic frontline of White identity and Christian heritage: Zoe Manzi, [Emerging cross-border dynamics in Ireland's anti-migrant mobilisation](#) (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025).

¹⁷⁵ There are 13 identified active anti-rights and extremist groups currently operating in Ireland. Six of these have emerged in recent years. These groups embody ideologies that include anti-immigrant, anti-women, anti-LGBTQI+, and anti-Muslim. While Ireland's anti rights movement is small in comparison to other countries, the recent protests and unrest towards migrants is seen as motivation and inspiration to the movement. See: Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, [Ireland's Far Right Growing. Driving Escalating Anti-Immigrant Violence](#) (2025).

It is evident that there are shared characteristics on the island of Ireland in how hate is being spread and coordinated online and offline.¹⁷⁶ It is also clear that Irish actors are fomenting hate in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which is also happening the other way around. There is evidence of an emerging cross-border infrastructure for anti-migration mobilisation with groups with traditionally opposing ideologies mirroring narratives and sharing grievances around the threat to immigration to their communities.¹⁷⁷ There is a move from online coordination and amplification of messaging to active collaboration with cross-border movement of protestors.¹⁷⁸ This highlights the need for cross-border engagement on hate and knowledge sharing of the trends being witnessed across public bodies which have responsibility for responding to hate.

It is our view that the Department of the Taoiseach, as the department responsible for coordinating the Shared Island initiative, should, along with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, have responsibility for coordinating the response to cross-border and transnational aspects of hate. While recognising that there are different legal frameworks for tackling online hate and hate crime in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK, we emphasise the importance of the Department of the Taoiseach in ensuring alignment and coordination between the State's measures to combat hate and the actions taken by the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government.

The Commission recommends that the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration lead on ensuring that the cross-border and transnational aspects of hate are considered by public bodies in developing and implementing measures to combat hate.

¹⁷⁶ The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission have documented examples of protests fuelled by online misinformation and disinformation: NIHRC, [Briefing Paper: Racial and Ethnic Minority Rights and Online Misinformation and Disinformation](#) (April 2025). These examples share similar characteristics of online misinformation and disinformation with protests organised in Ireland.

¹⁷⁷ Cross-border coordination between ethnonationalists groups on the island of Ireland can be seen in street protests, intimidation, targeted violence and coordinated amplification online: Zoe Manzi, [Emerging cross-border dynamics in Ireland's anti-migrant mobilisation](#) (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025).

¹⁷⁸ Protests are being replicated on both sides of the border. The first sign of cross-border collaboration was seen in August 2024 when representatives from *Coolock Says No*, a grassroots anti-immigration protest group, travelled to Belfast to participate in anti-migrant protests. See: Zoe Manzi, [Emerging cross-border dynamics in Ireland's anti-migrant mobilisation](#) (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2025).

Conclusion

The rise of hate, both online and offline, in Ireland requires a reconsideration of the effectiveness of current measures to tackle hate. While there have been welcome recent developments in legislation on hate speech and online regulation, the frameworks to support the implementation of this legislation still need to be firmly established and resourced. The ongoing delays in reforming the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 leaves a substantial gap in Irish law which requires renewed focus from the State to ensure its legislation is appropriate for tackling the changing and growing nature of hate.

The impact on hate in our society is evident and is having a significant impact on the ability of communities to engage meaningfully in public life due to threats to their safety. There is a need for increased leadership from across society to combat hate. The prevention and response to hate requires a broad range of legal and non-legal responses. While there are a range of measures being taken by the State, we are concerned with the lack of coordination between the actions and shortfalls in the implementation of actions. Priority should be given to developing and implementing a coordinated framework to prevent and respond to hate. We see a national strategy and action plan on hate as a key element in supporting the State in structuring its response to hate.

Ireland becoming a more hateful and intolerant society is not inevitable.

Human rights and equality-based leadership can counter hateful narratives and ensure effective action to prevent and respond to hate.



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