SPOT

Racism
Online

A Practical Guide

About the LIGHT ON Project

A coalition of organizations from Europe are working together on the LIGHT ON Project to combat the normalization of racism and its manifestations, such as hate speech, online. This is a short practical guide on what you can do to stamp out hate speech online and how to make the best use of LIGHT ON and other resources to fight hate.

Globally, humanity is striving to create better societies that respect human rights, as stated in numerous international conventions and translated into various national legislations.

Media outlets around the world have implemented over **400 codes of ethics**, almost all of which prohibit hate speech. Usually, these are voluntary codes designed to inform '**terms of service**' for online use, which can be found at the bottom of every website

or in the '**community standards**' section of every social media platform.

In many EU countries, journalists' associations have signed up to specific codes such as **The Charter of Rome**, a code of conduct for journalists regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants.

However, as great as these voluntary codes of conduct are, hate speech is thriving online in every language.

Spot Racism Online, the Practical Guide of the LIGHT ON Project, aims is to assist and encourage all Internet and social media users to end hate speech online, by providing information and suggestions on how to act against hate speech in an easy and safe manner.

Why Should We Care About Hate Speech Online?

The Internet, social media and digital communications tools touch many aspects of our everyday life and blur lines between the public, the personal and the private.

The immediacy and global reach of the Internet revolutionized how we exchange information, knowledge and ideas about who we are. We shop, we learn, we work, we write blogs, we share personal photos, we tweet, we live online.

And so do racists and extremists. The global nature of the Internet, combined with easy access to technology and, most crucially, anonymity, makes it an ideal platform from which to promote hate.

"The first extremist website, Stormfront, was launched in 1995 by a former Ku Klux Klan member. In April 2014, the **Southern Poverty Law Centre** *reported that registered users of Stormfront were linked to the murders of nearly* **100 people in hate crimes**.*"*

While these kinds of hate groups and their activities are subject to law enforcement, their proliferation since the emergence of social media has given birth to a 'global racist subculture'.

The attempts to reclaim the web are not new, but they have been limited to special interest groups, **governments** and businesses. Increasingly, mainstream Internet users are also seeking ways to engage in individual and collective action against online hate speech.

What is Hate Speech?

There is no universal definition of hate speech, and yet most of us know it when we encounter it. Various online resources provide detailed information about how each national jurisdiction legally defines hate speech, of which **Wikipedia** is just one. While acknowledging that the legal and social understanding of hate speech is not a simple issue, the LIGHT ON project adopts **The Council of Europe's** Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 97(20), which defines hate speech as:

"covering all forms of expression which

spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin". **[Full text]**.

Concerned by the risk of misuse or abuse of computer systems to disseminate racist and xenophobic propaganda, the member states of the Council of Europe created the **Additional Protocol to the Convention on**

Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature.

Social media, mainstream media websites, **Internet Service Providers** (ISPs) and blogs have their own definitions and rules about what is a prohibited form of hate speech on their platform.

What does Facebook consider to be hate speech?

"Content that attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or disease is not allowed. We do, however, allow clear attempts at humor or satire that might otherwise be considered a possible threat or attack. This includes content that many people may find to be in bad taste (ex: jokes, stand-up comedy, popular song lyrics, etc.)."

The Guardian's Community standards and participation guidelines include the following:

"We will not tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia or other

forms of hate-speech, or contributions that could be interpreted as such. We recognise the difference between criticising a particular government, organisation, community or belief and attacking people on the basis of their race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age."

The LIGHT ON project has produced resources and examples of hate speech, including images, videos, symbols and language, which show a relationship between hate speech and racism and discrimination. These can be found on the LIGHT On website: **www.lighton-project.eu**

Hate Speech Online – What is The Right Thing to Do?

Once we encounter hate speech, especially when it offends us personally, what is the right thing to do? A number of questions and dilemmas arise when it comes to taking action against online hate, including: Is this illegal? What about freedom of speech? Is it just a joke? Will reporting it make any difference? Where do I report it and how? Where can I get support in reporting hate speech online?

Is Hate Speech Illegal?

Yes and no. Numerous international and domestic legal instruments clearly define certain acts of hate speech and hate crime as illegal. However, the architecture of the Internet complicates the issue of jurisdiction and makes it harder to police and stamp out hate speech, as national laws vary in the degree to which they police it.

Hatemongers also take advantage of the tradition of free speech in the United States and the protection offered by the First Amendment to the US Constitution, so they use US-based platforms and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in a jurisdiction where they will be safe from prosecution.

But, that does not mean that there is nothing we can do to stop hate speech. Many countries, as well as the EU, take a legal stance on the issue. Even though this may be different in every country, there is a consensus that action must be taken against hate speech. In addition, many ISPs will have their own terms of service, codes and guidelines regarding acceptable forms of expression on their platforms.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) – Legal measures to combat racism and intolerance in 47 member States of the Council of Europe can be found at **www.coe.int**

Finally, people around the world object to hate and want to take positive action against hate speech—even when legal action is not an option—and use social media and the Internet to speak out against it.

What about Freedom of Speech?

Freedom of speech is one of the fundamental conditions and achievements of democracy, while the Internet is its most advanced technological expression. Free speech is defined and protected by numerous international conventions and national legislation.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of expression", including the "freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers". However the Convention also stipulates that the exercise of these freedoms carries with it duties and responsibilities, and establishes restrictions to this right, such as the right to be free from discrimination.

A lively debate exists between different traditions on how to deal with the challenge of online hate speech and freedom of speech. On one end of the spectrum is the notion of the Internet as a 'marketplace of ideas' in which we do not need to legislate against hate speech but rely on users to organically eliminate hate speech—to counter it with better ideas as opposed to legislating against it. On the other end is the notion that hate speech is not going to disappear on its own and needs to be addressed and regulated online in the same way that hate crime is regulated in real life.

Hate speech is not a simple exchange of ideas or a form of democratic disagreement. It leads to discrimination and violence with real consequences in everyday life. Hate speech online has the potential to cause even more harm, as the posted contents often become permanent and those targeted can be repeatedly offended by different culprits at different times. It is therefore essential that the victims of hate speech feel safe and have a voice.

Just making hate speech illegal will not do the job. That is why hate speech needs to be monitored, reported and condemned by the wider society, and not just by victims or by law enforcement.

Is This an In-group Speech or a Joke?

One of the challenges of dealing with hate speech is not only identifying who is saying what and where and deciding how to deal with it, but also identifying the context in which it is being expressed.

Sometimes social groups use distinctive language, including the use of racial terms, to define themselves. The debate about reclaimed slurs, context, and in-group language can be confusing. So, who decides whether something is funny or offensive?
Hate speech is usually direct and easily identifiable and there is nothing funny about it. Even when those who are communicating it are not aware of it, or they think they are communicating within an in-group, they are operating and publishing content in a public space and what is said might have unintended consequences.
If you feel attacked, bullied, offended and discriminated against because of your nationality, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age, online or offline, then it is not a joke and you are entitled to seek redress and support in ways that are legally available to you.

Will Reporting Hate Speech Online Make any Difference?

In short, YES!

The most successful action against hate speech has been a collaborative effort between civil society and ISPs or social media platforms. In 2013 Women, Action and The Media and The Everyday Sexism Project lead a successful campaign to change Facebook community standards on hate speech against women:

"Facebook has long allowed content endorsing violence against women. They claim that these pages fall under the "humor" part of their guidelines, or are expressions of "free speech." But Facebook has proven willing to crack down on other forms of hate speech, including anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and homophobic speech, without claiming such exemptions."

Legal framework, research and education, combined with an organized community

British artist Dean Atta tackles the issue of in-group slurs in his poem "I Am Nobody's N****" www.deanatta.co.uk

LIGHT ON Project has produced a number of resources, such as a training manual on hate speech, which can be useful in identifying hate speech online. These can be found at www.lighton-project.eu

of Internet users who report and counter hate speech online, has produced results in creating *a new subculture of cybercitizens* united against all forms of hate speech.

Google has produced tools allowing users to report posts which breach Google's policy and practice regarding hate speech:

"From homophobia and racism to political and religious extremism, hate speech on the internet is a raising concern. YouTube and other Google products such as G+ have strong Community Guidelines and offer effective tools to flag inappropriate content."

Another example is Cyber-Safety Action Guide by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which helps Internet users to better navigate the various mechanisms available for reporting online hate speech.

For details of your local initiatives to counter hate speech online, check the LIGHT ON website: www.lighton-project.eu

Where Do I Report Hate Speech Online and How?

When you encounter hate speech online, what you do will depend largely on the platform that is hosting the hate speech. In principle, in order to take safe and effective action to report and remove hate speech, you should do the following:

STEP 1: Record the incident of hate speech online

This is crucial, as social media content is easily removed and web pages get lost. Immediately **copy the URL** link and take a **print screen** (**screen grab on mac**). Do this for all incidents, regardless of the medium in which the hate speech occurs. For example, if you receive an email containing hate speech, save the email but also take a picture of it on your screen, as this may be a more effective way of sharing it and storing it for the purpose of reporting.

STEP 2: Look up the Terms of Service or Community Guidelines of the platform in question

This should not take more than a few minutes of your time and should provide you with all the necessary instructions regarding hate speech, such as that provider's definition of the term. The Terms of Service or Community Guidelines should also state where and how you can report hate speech and what action the provider will take to address your complaint.

On the following page are the links for some of the most popular social media platforms and websites on what their rules are and how to report directly to them.

Mainstream Media

If the hate speech appears on a mainstream media site of a newspaper or a broadcaster, look at their Terms of Service and moderating policies which are usually located at the bottom bar of the homepage.

For example, *New York Times* **Terms of Service**:
http://www.nytimes.com/content/help/rights/terms/terms-of-service.html

		Rules	Reporting	Useful information
f	Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards	https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/?id=274459462613911	https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-safety/controversial-harmful-and-hateful-speech-on-facebook/574430655911054
Twitter	Twitter	https://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-a-violation/topics/121-guidelines-best-practices/articles/18311-the-twitter-rules	https://support.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser	https://support.twitter.com/articles/15794
Instagram	Instagram	http://instagram.com/about/legal/terms/	https://help.instagram.com/165828726894770	http://cyberbullying.us/cyberbullying-on-instagram/
in	LinkedIn	http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/34593	http://help.linkedin.com/app/safety/answers/detail/a_id/146	http://help.linkedin.com/app/safety/home
g+	Google +	http://www.google.com/intl/en/%2B/policy/content.html	https://support.google.com/plus/answer/1253377?hl=en	http://googlepolicyeurope.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/combating-online-hate-speech.html
YouTube	YouTube	https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801939?hl=en&rd=1	https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803138?hl=en&ref_topic=2676378	http://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/
v	Vimeo	http://vimeo.com/help/guidelines	http://vimeo.com/help/faq/watching-videos/reporting-abuse-and-violations#how-does-vimeo-define-hateful-harassing-defamatory-and-discriminatory-content	https://vimeo.com/log_in
Y	Yahoo	https://info.yahoo.com/legal/us/yahoo/utos/terms/	https://help.yahoo.com/kb/index?page=topics&y=PROD_ACCT&locale=en_US&topics=TOP_ABS&actp=lorax	http://www.cbsnews.com/news/nazi-items-to-be-thrown-off-yahoo/
B	Blogger	https://www.blogger.com/content.g?hl=en-GB	https://support.google.com/blogger/answer/82111?hl=en	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogger_(service)
Reddit	Reddit	http://www.reddit.com/help/useragreement	http://www.reddit.com/contact	http://www.reddit.com/wiki/reddiquette
t	Tumblr	http://www.tumblr.com/policy/en/community	http://emergencycenter.tumblr.com/post/22769438497/is-there-a-way-to-report-something-on-tumblr-because	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumblr
MySpace	MySpace	https://myspace.com/pages/terms	https://www.askmyspace.com/t5/Articles/How-do-I-Report-Abuse/ba-p/991	https://www.askmyspace.com/t5/Articles/Staying-Safe/ba-p/977
P	Pinterest	http://about.pinterest.com/en/acceptable-use-policy	https://help.pinterest.com/en/articles/report-something-pinterest#Web	https://help.pinterest.com/en/articles/content-policies

STEP 2: [CONT.]

The Guardian has Community Standards to moderate their comments pages in addition to the Terms of Service, which regulate user content.

Websites and ISPs

If the hate incident is on a website of an organization or a group, you can first contact their ISP provider, as many of them will have Terms of Service. To find the ISP for any website domain you can use domain name search engine http://who.is or http://www.betterwhois.com

For example, Nominet UK Terms of Service can be found here: http://www.nominet.org.uk/disputes/objecting-website-content

STEP 3:

Writing your complaint or report

You have collected the evidence and read and understood what you can complain about. Here are some useful tips on how to write your complaint:

Be factual – state the facts of the case – cover your 5Ws: what happened, where and when, who did it and why you find it offensive. Attach your evidence (print screen and URL link).

Be specific – do not assume that people reading your report will understand why something is offensive to you. They may be living and working in another part of the world and even speak a different language. Explain the reasons why you find the content you are reporting to be hateful and offensive and link it to specific sections of their terms of service and/or community guidelines.

Be clear – do not give into your emotions. Imagine the person reading your complaint—they need the facts and probably have a short period of time to deal with your report. So give them the facts and be clear about what you want them to do with regards to the offensive content you are reporting.

Be realistic – make sure that you ask them to do something that they are actually able and permitted to do according to their stated rules or the law.

Be safe – seek advice of support groups that might have already dealt with similar issues in reporting. You can copy them into your correspondence when reporting. Communicating directly with those who posted offensive material, especially if the content is on a hate group page or website, or if you received a direct email, is not advisable as this may lead to targeting and bullying. If you decide to communicate directly with the authors of hate speech, make sure your personal information is protected and consider using a separate email account.

STEP 4:

Reporting online hate speech to the law enforcement agencies

You can report the hate speech incident to the police and ask them to investigate it to the extent that the incident you are reporting is subject to national hate crime laws.

The LIGHT ON Project Toolkit gives you an idea of what to expect from law enforcement agencies when reporting hate speech and hate crime. Have a look at our website: www.lighton-project.eu

In some countries, law enforcement provides accessible ways to report hate speech and hate crime online, such as the True Vision website in the UK. You can also call your local police station and report it directly to them.

You can contact a support organization in your country and ask for help in reporting online hate speech to the police.

STEP 5:

Share, Mobilize and Organize

It is important to remember, especially if you are personally affected by the online hate speech that you are reporting, that you are not alone and you don't have to do this on your own.

First, talk to your family and friends, your parents and teachers if you are underage, or your colleagues at work, and share your experience and concerns with them, since they can provide support, information and advice on how to proceed.

Secondly, seek support from experts working in those support organizations. It is very likely that they have already dealt with similar cases and will know what to do, what to expect and how to do it better.

Thirdly, your friends and family as well as support organizations can help you mobilize others to report the content and organize a public action and campaign to have it removed and to make a change in the Terms of Service (as we have seen in the example of Facebook and gender-based hate posts earlier). It is crucial not to suffer in silence and it is equally important to spread the word about unacceptable hate speech online, raise awareness, take and demand action and create a new online subculture that has zero tolerance for any form of hate speech.

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Where to get Information and Support

Organizations that can provide information and support in reporting hate speech online:

LIGHT ON project: www.lighton-project.eu

No Hate Speech Movement: www.nohatespeechmovement.org

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Legal measures to combat racism and intolerance in the member States of the Council of Europe: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/legal_research/national_legal_measures/

Stop Racism and Hate Collective in Canada: www.stopracism.ca

The Online Hate Prevention Institute in Australia: www.ohpi.org.au

Anti-Defamation League in the US: www.adl.org

Online Hate Reporting Websites

International Association of Internet Hotlines – INHOPE: www.inhope.org

The International Network Against Cyber Hate – INACH: www.inach.net