



Combating online  
Hate Speech by  
engaging online mEdia

**Online hate speech patterns in  
media platforms' comments  
sections:  
Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy**



symplexis



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## Combating online HAtE Speech by engaging online mEdia (C.HA.S.E.)

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## Part A





## Foreword

"Combating online hate speech by engaging online media" (C.H.A.S.E.) is an EU-funded initiative that tries to address the problem of hate speech based on gender and gender identity that is rampant on the internet and contributes to discrimination and violence. The initiative has been launched in five European countries: Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, and Italy.

Within the framework of the project, the collaborators from Cyprus (Center for Social Innovation), France (European Center for Human Rights), Greece (Symplexis), and Italy (CESIE European Center of Studies and Initiatives) undertook field research in the comments sections of prominent online media to discern patterns of misogynistic and transphobic hate speech. A variety of research methodologies, primarily qualitative content and visual analysis, were employed innovatively, adhering to a research strategy formulated by Symplexis. The study was carried out while guaranteeing the anonymity of online users who provided the comments analyzed in this research. Furthermore, the analyzed comments were publicly made and are accessible to any online user.

The findings from the present research are valuable, particularly for online media managers and moderators seeking to enhance the safety and inclusivity of their comment sections, as well as for experts and professionals focused on detecting, preventing, and combating online misogyny and transphobia.





## Executive summary

An analysis of Facebook comments from the four most popular news media pages in Cyprus shows serious problems with gender and gender identity. The analysis shows that misogynistic and transphobic tendencies are common in online hate speech. These remarks reinforce negative stereotypes and minimize people's lived experiences by trivializing important topics like gender identity, gender-based violence, and societal worth. Transphobic language makes fun of non-binary identities, while misogynistic remarks frequently objectify women by reducing their roles to sexualized subjects. These forms of hate speech reinforce a culture of disdain and exclusion by expressing emotional resistance to changing gender norms. The phenomenon, which characterizes online hate speech against women and LGBTQI+ communities, is rooted in patriarchal beliefs and traditional religious values.

In France, hate speech against women and LGBTQI+ people is a significant societal issue, particularly in the digital space. Women are often targeted by sexist comments, physical appearance attacks, and comments aimed at reducing them to traditional roles. Misogynist attacks can include threats of violence, online sexual harassment, and degrading comments about their intelligence or skills. LGBTQI+ people face hate speech that stigmatizes, marginalizes, or calls for violence, particularly targeting transgender individuals. Online hate speech amplifies homophobia and transphobia, reinforcing isolation and insecurity, and impacting mental well-being and access to safe spaces. To combat hate speech, strict legal measures, awareness raising, and education campaigns are needed.

Online hate speech trends that reinforce sexist and misogynist stereotypes and prejudices against women and transgender people are an alarming problem in the Facebook pages of Greek online media as well. Transphobic slurs, jokes, and intentional misgendering are examples of content that targets transgender individuals as well as the LGBTQI+ community as a whole. Users can employ techniques to avoid monitoring and reporting online comments, which frequently include both textual and non-textual elements. Many abusive remarks that incite violence, hatred, or discrimination against others based on gender or gender identity are classified as hate speech by the Council of Europe. The key to a long-lasting and significant solution is still preventing hate speech through awareness-raising, education, and the fight against prejudice and stereotypes.





Finally in Italy, online hate speech in the country's media is marked by transphobic and gender-based language, primarily misgendering and derogatory language aimed at transgender individuals. This societal problem reinforces harmful stereotypes and dehumanizes marginalized groups. Transphobic hate speech denies the validity of transgender identities, often reducing individuals to their biological traits. The persistence of misogynistic attitudes and criticism towards gender equality undermines traditional gender roles, revealing a fear of losing patriarchal structures. The findings highlight a societal environment where individuals face hostility and ridicule for expressing their true selves, contributing to feelings of isolation and marginalization within the LGBTQI+ community.





## Part B: Research Findings







## *“Online hate speech patterns in Cypriot media comments’ sections”,*

by Paschalia Leventi

### Introduction

The main research objective of this chapter is to **identify and analyze** patterns of misogynist and transphobic hate speech language in online media comments. These comments may contain various forms of **explicit** and **implicit** misogynist and transphobic language, revealing the **nature** of online hate speech across a spectrum from **subtle** (soft) to **overt** (hard) expressions.

These objectives guide the research toward understanding not only the **existence**, but also the **nature**, **context**, and **impact** of online hate speech. This holistic approach enables a comprehensive identification of online misogynist and transphobic hate speech, going **beyond the words** to uncover deeper patterns, **ways of expression and meanings**—critical insights for shaping future steps to combat these phenomena.

For the purposes of this research, the key concepts examined in this chapter include the identification of online **hate speech** with reference to **gender** and **gender identity**. These concepts serve as essential frameworks for understanding their connection to the broader issues of **misogyny** and **transphobia**, which are often strongly expressed in online environments.

- Misogynistic<sup>1</sup> hate speech targets individuals based on their **gender**, particularly women and reinforces harmful stereotypes about femininity and women's roles in society. This can include direct insults, degrading remarks and the perpetuation of gender-based violence or discrimination through language.
- Transphobic<sup>2</sup> hate speech specifically targets individuals based on their gender identity, particularly those who are transgender or non-binary and others who challenge societal expectations related to their assigned gender at birth and do not adhere to traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Gender of Equality Unit. (2016). Background Note on Sexist Hate Speech. Council of Europe

<sup>2</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. (2024). *Transphobia*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1383>



gender norms. This can also be expressed online via derogatory comments that deny the legitimacy of someone's gender identity.

- Hate Speech<sup>3</sup>: Offensive discourse aimed at individuals or groups based on inherent characteristics such as race, religion, or **gender, gender identity** can undermine social harmony and threaten community cohesion.
- Gender<sup>4</sup>: Social attributes associated with being female and male.
- Gender Identity<sup>5</sup>: How one sees themselves; it may or may not identify with sex assigned at birth.

For the aforementioned concepts to be examined, content analysis of text and visual comments is applied.

Content analysis<sup>6</sup> is a research method commonly utilised in sociology to examine and interpret various forms of communication, including written texts, audio recordings, images, and videos. This approach involves **systematically analysing and categorising content to uncover patterns, themes, and deeper meanings** related to social phenomena within broader social contexts. Therefore, through the utilisation of content analysis, researchers can gain valuable insights into social constructs, cultural values, and the ways individuals and groups communicate and create meaning, as reflected in text and visual expressions. For the current research, content analysis is deployed to explore individuals' social perceptions and understandings on two primary themes of misogyny and transphobia, via comments referring to and targeting gender and gender identity.

Content analysis has a broad range of applications across various fields, with its implementation varying depending on the type of content being examined. For the current research, both **text content analysis** and **visual content analysis** are employed, with a primary focus on textual content analysis and a brief overview on visual content analysis. Both methods were employed to conduct thorough content analysis, uncovering meanings across

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2024). *What is hate speech?* Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech>

<sup>4</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. (2024). *Gender*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1046>

<sup>5</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. (2024). *Gender Identity*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1049>

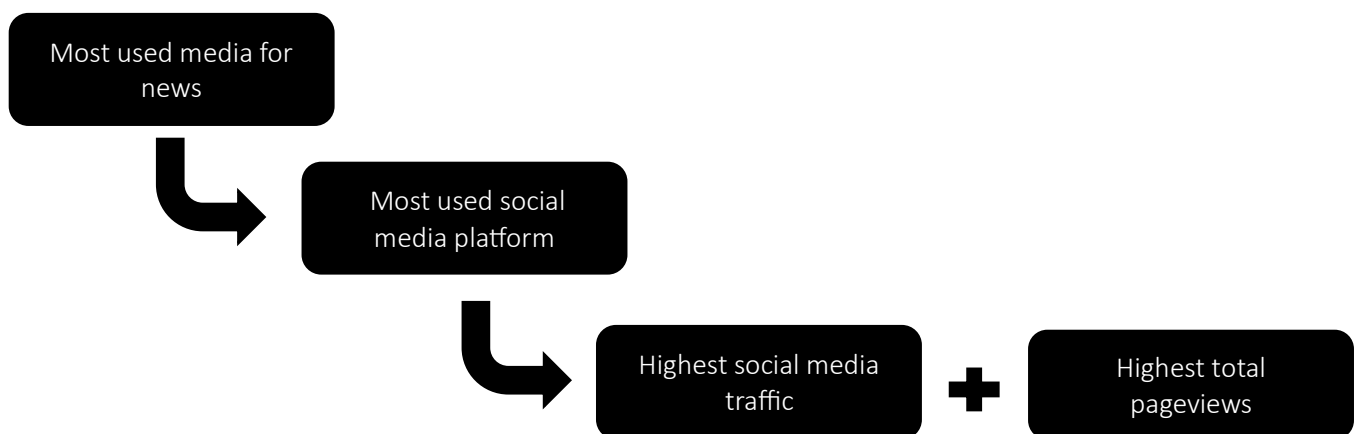
<sup>6</sup> Easy Sociology. (2023). *Understanding Content Analysis in Sociology*. Available at: <https://easysociology.com/research-methods/understanding-content-analysis-in-sociology/#:~:text=Content%20analysis%20is%20a%20research,%2C%20themes%2C%20and%20underlying%20meanings>



different forms of expression, aiming to deepen understanding of societal expressions related to misogyny and transphobia.

- Text content analysis: Systematically examining written language, focusing on content, structure, and framework of the language used to draw social meanings.
- **Visual content analysis**<sup>7</sup>: Analysis of visual material, focusing on elements such as colour, symbols, portrayal and composition to comprehend the messages communicated via visual representations and draw social understanding.

The media selection criteria and sampling frame for Cyprus, were based on the popularity of the media platform for news consumption, the popularity of the type of media used that supports public comments in both written and visual format, the popularity in accordance with social media traffic and the pageviews as per online news media member.



According to the above filtering method applied, the most popular media for news access, as reported by the **Flash Eurobarometer survey; Media and News Survey 2023**,<sup>8</sup> is social media platforms (70%) with Facebook being the most used (77%) and having approximately 823,5 thousand users in early 2024.<sup>9</sup> Regarding online news media, news media

<sup>7</sup> Ledin, P. and Machin, D. (2018). Doing visual analysis: From theory to practice. pp. 1–14. Sage Publisher

<sup>8</sup> European Union. (2023). *Media & News Survey 2023*. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153>

<sup>9</sup> DATAREPORTAL. (2024). *Digital 2024: Cyprus*. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-cyprus>



platforms with the highest social media traffic and the total pageviews, as recorded by the **Cyprus organisation of internet publishers (KOEΔ)**,<sup>10</sup> include:

1. Cyprustimes.com
2. Alphanews.live
3. Tothemaonline.com
4. Sigmalive.com

Member	Total pageviews	Social Media Traffic
Cyprustimes.com	8,813,017	30.53%
Alphanews.live	4,174,836	16.25%
Tothemaonline.com	4,173,702	34.96%
Sigmalive.com <sup>11</sup>	2,800,000	n/a

The research period included a sample of a two-month period, focusing on article posts from online news media pages on Facebook. The months chosen were between **May 2024-June 2024** (a total of 61 days with multiple daily posts). This timeframe was intentionally selected due to several National and European events that were expected to increase public engagement in the comments section, with a particular focus on gender and gender identity. Key events included the **National pre-election period (May) and elections period (June) with the participation of candidates, the Eurovision Song Contest 2024 (May) and Pride Month (June)**. Throughout these two months, the researcher focused on the comments sections of the four online news media Facebook pages, collecting data by identifying comments for content analysis.

### Main findings – patterns of online hate speech in Greek media platforms' comments sections

The **scope of the content analysis**, as mentioned above, is the identification and analysis of patterns of misogynistic and transphobic hate speech found in comments on online

<sup>10</sup> KOEΔ. (2024). Στατιστικά Μελών. Available at:

<https://www.copa.com.cy/%ce%bc%ce%ad%ce%bb%ce%b7/%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b1%cf%84%ce%b9%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ac-%20%ce%bc%ce%b5%ce%bb%cf%8e%ce%bd/>

<sup>11</sup> Similarweb. (2024). Sigmalive.com. Available at:

<https://www.similarweb.com/website/sigmalive.com/#ranking>



news media articles posted on Facebook. Therefore, the **selected data sources** include the Facebook pages of news outlets, with the **unit of analysis** being the comments under the posts of news articles shared on Facebook. More specifically, the focus is placed on the **phrases/words/sentences/ symbols and emojis** identified in the comments section of the relevant posts. The comments can display various forms of explicit and implicit language, illustrating the spectrum of online hate speech from subtle (soft) to overt (hard) expressions.

**The identified comments primarily exhibit soft hate speech**, which may be attributed to the internal monitoring systems used to detect and remove more severe hate speech on Facebook news media pages. For instance, Alpha Cyprus, a key partner in the CHASE project, actively monitors and deletes hate speech comments manually. If users repeatedly post hateful content, they risk being blocked from the platform. This proactive approach likely contributes to the prevalence of less open-hate speech in the comments.

The current **key concepts**, of gender and gender identity, explored in the comments section, are crucial for understanding the broader context of misogynistic and transphobic hate speech in online spaces.

The **pull of articles** selected from the four most popular Facebook news media pages covers a range of national updates from May to June 2024, focusing on economic, social, educational, environmental and political issues. Key topics include the Cyprus problem, national police matters, sports and international news, particularly updates from Greece.

The **detected patterns** in comments across all four news pages appeared prominently in posts related to religion (particularly around Orthodox Easter), Eurovision and migration, all showing significant hatred. Eurovision posts saw the largest surge of comments, with a clear tone of hostility. Comments on migration-related posts were also marked by explicit hatred. There was engagement in sociopolitical discussions, including EU elections, as well as showbiz posts, which were frequently shared. In contrast, posts addressing femicide, violence against women, and abuse had limited or no hate speech comments at all.

Most hate speech comments on **gender** were found in **election posts**, while those on **gender identity** were primarily identified in Eurovision-related content, with few appearing in pride posts. It is important to note that pride posts were significantly fewer than Eurovision posts. Overall, there were **more comments related to gender identity**, largely due to the visibility of Eurovision and Pride Month. Both events generated a high volume of comments,



mostly expressing hatred, much of which was categorised as ‘soft’, indicating more indirect forms of hostility.

**Common patterns** in gender and gender identity comments reveal a phenomenon of **repetition**, indicating persistent biases and emotional intensity. The repeated use of **specific words, symbols, question marks, or emojis** suggests attempts to **mock and devalue** serious issues, reinforcing stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Such patterns provide insight into underlying sentiments that contribute to online hate speech dynamics, specifically in misogynistic and transphobic discourse. This demonstrates how repetition reinforces negative stereotypes and biases in online spaces, reflecting broader societal issues.

Some examples identified include the repetition of:

- angry, laughing or vomit emojis, often appearing in sequences of three or more, or as combinations presented in a patterned manner—either one after the other or with one type appearing multiple times before the other
- 2-3 questions in a row, each featuring multiple question marks
- use of full stops between sentences or words
- single words accompanied by exclamation marks.

The repeated patterns, identified and examined, are further **coded and classified into implication categories**. Such classifications capture explicit statements and go **beyond the explicit statement** to reveal the implied or suggested meanings within the content, identifying indirect forms of communication that may not be immediately clear but convey important underlying messages. Implication categories appear in different formats-text, emojis, gifs, symbols- and comments can show the intersectionality of these implication categories. Implication categories identified in posts:

- **Insult:** Language that directly or indirectly demeans or attacks someone, often with offensive terms or personal attacks.
- **Irony:** Statements that convey a meaning opposite to their literal interpretation, often used sarcastically to mock or undermine.
- **Purposely Misspelling:** Deliberate alteration of spelling, often to ridicule or diminish the seriousness of a topic, person, or group. This tactic may involve replacing letters with symbols, still making the insult clear to readers, and ensuring the negative sentiment reaches its intended target.



- **Characteristic:** Assigning specific, often negative characteristics to an individual or group, often leading to oversimplified or biased views.
- **Religious-Double Meaning:** Use of religious language or references with hidden or double meanings, often employed to insinuate criticism frustration, or hostility towards gender or gender identity issues under a veil of religious justification and/or common national phrases.

The two tables below present the comments identified, separately presenting textual context and visual context, clearly identifying the implication category and strategic orientation of each comment. Strategic orientation presents an understanding of the intentions and broader implications behind the comments as presented.

Textual context further categorised in accordance with strategic orientation:

Comments content	Post identified	Implication category	Strategic orientation
<b>Direct Insults:</b>			
μαλ@&@\$/ μαλάκας	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Purposely Misspelling, Insult	Curse words/swear words; Diminish the seriousness of the language while still clearly conveying a derogatory opinion, reinforcing negative attitudes, insulting tone, aggressive and derogatory language, this expression reflects a deep-seated hostility and contributes to the overall atmosphere of mockery, demeaning and dismissive messages. Reinforcement of negative stereotypes associated with gender diversity.
πουστράκια	Eurovision	Characteristic, Insult	
α....α μας/ Αρχιδ...ία της λούλλας / Σρα αρτζ... μας/ sta papargia mas/ στα αρχιδια μας/*χ:μας	Eurovision  Pride	Purposely Misspelling, Insult	
Γεροπουτανοβιζιον/ P@@stovision	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult, Purposely Misspelling,	
To shisto pou sas efkale	Pride	Insult	



Na sou xeso mesa sto mano poustra	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult	
Ekatantisen I Eurovision gay fest...aisixtir...	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult	
<b>Pronounce irony:</b>			
To nemo? Opos TO aggouraki? Je TO repanaki as poume??	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Irony, Insult	Capital letters emphasise the rejection of gender identity issues, while repetitive questions contain indirect sexual references to the LGBTQI+ community, making them offensive. This language dismisses the addressed person, expressing contempt and mocking their significance in the conversation surrounding gender identity.
Ποιος σε γαμεί ρε ρα ρο	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult, Irony	
<b>Mockery:</b>			
Δυο μέτρα λεβέντης	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Irony	This expression typically suggests that someone is pretending to be admirable or noble while possibly exhibiting behavior contrary to that characterisation, questioning winner's authenticity and 'manhood', further mocking gender identity issues.
Oute agori oute koritsi???? Eipan einai pragma?? Afou TO einai ousiastiko...OMG pion...	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Irony	Ironic statements that trivialise serious discussions about gender and the experiences of non-binary individuals. This language perpetuates misogynistic and transphobic stereotypes, framing gender identity as something absurd or invalid. Ironic statements can further insult both women and LGBTQI+ individuals; It underestimates the natural biological processes and experiences of transgender individuals, implying that such occurrences are abnormal or unacceptable in society. Rhetorical questions further emphasise disdain, suggesting that the existence of such experiences threatens traditional gender norms. This kind of language reinforces misogynistic and transphobic attitudes, framing gender identity as a source of confusion.



Non-repani-ary	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult, Irony	
Α έτον ήβραμεν τον	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Irony	
Ο πρώτος άνδρας που του ήρθε περίοδος!! Σε τη κοινωνία ζούμε?	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult, Irony	
<b>Emotions:</b>			
ΑΙΣΧΟΣ/ ΑΙΣΧΟΣ! ΑΙΣΧΟΣ! ΑΙΣΧΟΣ!/ ΑΙΣΧΟΣ...	Eurovision	Insult	This language reflects a strong emotional response, likely indicative of disapproval toward aspects of the event, such as performances or the representation of gender identities reinforcing negative attitudes towards transgender individuals and highlighting societal resistance to evolving norms around gender expression.
Αηδία!!!	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Insult	
<b>Religious Reference:</b>			
Για όνομα του θεού/ ο theos pion/ Κύριε ελέησον πλέον.	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision Pride	Religious- Double Meaning	Words and phrases commonly used in different contexts; in non-religious related contexts, they may imply frustration or disbelief, using religious references to express disapproval or critique regarding a situation; against moral values, discriminating gender identity.
Lambro na sas kapsei/Για αυτό θα ρίξει φωτιά να μας κάψει ο Θεός!!/ En giafto pout ha mas kapsei o Theos.../ Ρίξε Θεέ μου φωτιά να μας κάψει	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision  Pride	Religious- Double Meaning	
Πατρίς Θρησκεία Οικογένεια! Άντρας Γυναίκα και παιδιά. Οτιδήποτε άλλο ΕΙΝΑΙ ΠΑΡΑ ΦΥΣΙΝ είτε σας αρέσει είτε δεν σας αρέσει	Pride	Characteristic, Religious- Double Meaning:	

Για όνομα του θεού/ ο theos pion/ Κύριε ελέησον πλέον.	Eurovision-winner of Pride	Religious- Double Meaning	
<b>Irritation:</b>			
Orea paradigmata gia ta mora mas	Pride	Insult	Anger, non-acceptance and frustration exposure, all showing unacceptance of LGBTQI+ communities and gender identity issues. Forced distinguishment of communities to 'us' and 'them', projected as pushy and threatening. Comments project distance to be created, further revealing transphobic behaviours.
Μα ποια ελευθερία ρε δικτάτορες Φτου στα μούτρα σας και όχι στα δικά μας.	Pride	Insult	
Α ενώ τους άλλους όλους τα δικαιώματα τους δεν καταπατούνται με τον ένα ή τον άλλο τρόπο;/ Έχουμε πιο λίγα δικαιώματα από εσάς	Pride	Irony	
Εσείς τι εσεβαστήκατε?	Pride	Irony, Insult	
Πολύ αέρα τους έχουν δώσει...σε λίγο θα μας λένε ότι εμείς είμαστε το λάθος	Pride	Irony, Insult	
Ο κόλος δικός σας, αλλά μην προκαλείται	Pride	Irony, Insult	
Υπερφανία είναι μια eutixismeni fysiologiki oikogenia!! Ta afysika pragmata k dikaiwmata tous, as ta kratoun gia to spiti tous!!	Pride	Insult	
Το ανώμαλο δεν θα γίνει ποτέ	Pride	Insult, Religious-	

φυσιολογικό όσο και αν χτυπιούνται ντυμένοι γυναίκες. Υπάρχει μόνο άντρας γυναίκα. Τίποτα άλλο		Double Meaning	
<b>Characterisation:</b>			
Ψυχοπαθής ψυχάλας	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Characteristic	Offensive characterisation of non-conforming identities, reflecting a dismissive attitude towards diverse expressions of gender and sexuality, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and perpetuating societal biases against marginalised communities.
Κανίβαλος	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Characteristic	
Ανώμαλο/ Oti logis anomalia	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Characteristic	
Τσίρκο	Eurovision-winner of Eurovision	Characteristic	
<b>Misogynism:</b>			
Kala ekane	Gender based violence-physical harm	Insult	Trivialising the serious issue of gender-based violence and reinforcing harmful attitudes toward victims. It perpetuates a culture that minimises women's experiences with violence, reflecting misogynistic views.
Asfalia viasmou exoun oi kopelles?	Gender based violence	Irony, Insult	Ironically questions the safety and well-being of women in the context of gender-based violence, contradictory to each other in regards to reality, dismissing the severity of gender-based violence.
Έτσι μπράβο Και καλά η σεξουαλική παρενόχληση. Σε λίγο καιρό θα κυνηγάτε τους άντρες αλλά θα σας κάθονται οι φιλεναδίτσες σας οι πολύχρωμες. νούμερα	Gender based violence	Irony, Insult	Reinforces misogynistic stereotypes by implying that women's concerns about harassment are exaggerated, interested in such behaviours by persecuting men and further insults the LGBTQI+ community.

Τάχα μου πως δεν ήθελε	Showbiz-women celebrities	Irony	Indirectly assuming women's intention, disbelief regarding someone's stated feelings.
Άλλος πάνω	Showbiz-celebrity personal life update	Insult, Irony	Indirect sexual reference, implying women's behaviour.
ΕΝΑ ΚΑΚΟΜΑΘΗΜΕΝΟ ΚΟΡΙΤΣΑΚΙ	Elections -woman candidate	Insult	Patronising and dismissive attitude towards women's participation in politics. These statements underestimate women's roles and perpetuate stereotypes that undermine their capabilities, reinforcing a cultural narrative that belittles women's ambitions and contributions in the public sphere.
Πρόσεχε να μην σπάσεις κανένα νύχι	Elections -woman candidate	Irony	
Στο μόνιμα ροζ συννεφάκι..	Elections-women candidate	Insult	
Ξαναβάλτε όταν είναι χωρίς εσώρουχα/ Θέλω να δω από κοντά αν της ταιριάζουν/ γιατί δεν τα έβγαλε όλα/ μπαίνεις?/ θα φάει πολλά γκολ	Showbiz-women celebrities	Insult	Inappropriate comments, women presented as sexual subjects, reflecting misogyny by reinforcing the idea that women's worth is tied to their physical appearance, perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Visual context:

Form	Post identified	Content	Implication category	Strategic orientation
Emoji	Eurovision	Laughing and crying emoji; presented 3 in a row	Irony	Mocking tone, potentially trivialising the seriousness of discussions around gender identity. Combining humour with ridicule, may express disbelief and degrade the significance of gender identity and the experiences of individuals who identify as such.
Emoji	Eurovision	Green sick emojis; 3 in a row + vomiting emojis; 3 in a row	Insult	Disgust or rejection; These symbols, when used in a repetitive pattern, intensify the negative sentiment, demeaning the event or the participant, related to themes of

				gender identity or LGBTQ+ and representation within Eurovision.
Emoji	Showbiz-gay couple marriage	Angry emojis reactions	Insult	Negative sentiment, interpreted as an insult or rejection of the idea of same-sex marriage, directly related to gender identity issues.
Emoji	Elections-women candidate	Vomiting emojis	Insult	Strong negative sentiment, suggesting rejection of women in leadership positions/politics, reflecting misogynistic attitudes.
Gif	Pride	Steady image; Condom image with the statement 'give your dad (hand giving condom image) we don't want another mistake'	Insult	Offensive and disrespectful message; It insults LGBTQ+ individuals, suggesting their existence is a 'mistake' and reinforces negative stereotypes in a dismissive and harmful way, showing disapproval towards LGBTQ+ individuals.
Gif	Eurovision	Steady image; cow with a statement 'If you're confused about gender.. Try milking a bull.. You'll learn real quick.'	Insult Irony	It is meant to mock the concept of gender identity, using a reductive and invalid analogy to undermine LGBTQ+ experiences. It conveys a dismissive and offensive message. The comment suggests that gender should adhere strictly to biological functions, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, wrong information on definitions and undermines gender diversity.
Gif	Eurovision	Steady image; 3 big cucumbers	Insult	Undermining the subject, indirect sexual reference; The cucumbers can be interpreted as an innuendo, reinforcing degrading stereotypes and making light of serious discussions surrounding gender identity, sexuality, or LGBTQ+ representation.
Gif	Eurovision	Steady image; priest with fake middle finger shown with a	Insult	Undermining the subject, indirect sexual reference. The combination of a religious image and inappropriate language degrades the subject matter, disrespecting both religion and gender identity.

		statement 'Αγαπιε..Βαζελ ινη'		
Gif	Showbiz- woman celebrity	Steady image; a bed with cats with a statement 'SEND NUDES'	Insult	Provocative and offensive message It objectifies the woman, reducing her worth to a sexual request and making light of serious issues like inappropriate demands faced by women, especially in public spaces, reflecting misogynistic behaviours.
Gif	Elections- women candidate	Baby laughing	Irony	Dismissive attitude towards the credibility of statements shared by a woman, implying that the topic is not worthy of serious consideration. The humorous imagery contrasts sharply with the gravity of the subject matter, potentially undermining the message of empowerment or equality for women candidates.

Using all comments above, whilst focusing on the content, tone, underlying sentiments of **textual** content detected and analysed; we can draw a comprehensive analysis:

**Transphobia:** The analyses reveal significant patterns in the expression of transphobia through online gender-based hate speech. The use of curse words and aggressive language diminishes the seriousness of offensive comments, reinforcing negative attitudes toward gender identity diversity while fostering an atmosphere of mockery and contempt, also projected via direct characteristics. Capital letters and repetitive questions emphasise a rejection of gender identity, with indirect sexual references that insult individuals within the LGBTQI+ community. Additionally, ironic statements trivialise serious discussions about gender, framing LGBTQI+ identities as absurd and perpetuating stereotypes that undermine the validity of transgender experiences. Religious targeted comments also present the LGBTQI+ community as abnormal, unusual and unwanted due to possible societal harm. This language reflects strong emotional responses, highlighting societal resistance to evolving norms surrounding gender expression. Overall, the combination of anger, dismissiveness and mockery in these online comments perpetuates transphobic attitudes, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and creating a culture that marginalises diverse identities.

**Misogynism:** The comments analyses reveal significant patterns in public discourse regarding gender-based violence, and women's roles. A notable trend is the trivialisation of gender-based violence, which perpetuates harmful stereotypes and diminishes women's



experiences. This is evident in misogynistic comments that patronise women's political and social participation and objectify them as sexual subjects, undermining their contributions and patronising their ambitions. The widespread manifestation of misogyny in online hate speech erodes gender equality and fosters a hostile atmosphere for marginalised groups.

## General conclusions

The content analysis of comments on Facebook articles from the four most popular news media pages in Cyprus reveals significant issues related to gender and gender identity. This analysis highlights the prevalence of online hate speech, underscored by persistent patterns of misogyny and transphobia within these online environments. Comments showed trivialised critical issues such as gender identity, gender-based violence, societal worth and belonging, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, and diminishing the lived experiences of individuals. Misogynistic comments frequently objectify women, reducing their roles in society to sexualised subjects, which extends a hostile online and offline environment for women.

Similarly, transphobic language employs aggressive tones and indirect sexual references that mock and delegitimise non-binary identities, framing them as absurd or abnormal. Both forms of hate speech reflect strong emotional resistance to evolving gender norms, perpetuating a culture of contempt and exclusion. The harmful interplay of anger, dismissiveness, and mockery evident in these online comments fosters negative attitudes that marginalise diverse identities. Online gender and gender identity hate speech, both textual and visual, portrays women and LGBTQI+ individuals as devalued sexualised subjects.

This phenomenon stems from patriarchal beliefs about what constitutes normality and social standing, with traditional religious values further strengthening these harmful perspectives. Such comments reflect deeply embedded misogynistic and transphobic attitudes within online environments, ultimately defining the nature of online hate speech against women and LGBTQI+ communities.



# “Online hate speech patterns in French media comments sections”, by Kofi Busumsi

## Introduction

The anonymity offered by the internet allows hate speech to circulate freely, discriminating against women and LGBTQIA+ people. The internet is currently witnessing a phenomenon of masculinism that tends to establish a social order that opposes the emancipation of women and LGBTQIA+ people. While macho masculinist discourse advocating male superiority (hetero cis-gender) has always existed, such discourse has become increasingly widespread with the advent of the internet and social networks, as the digital world has enabled them to refocus, strengthen and find a global echo for their hate speech.

Our aim here is to identify the forms that hate speech against women and LGBT communities can take, and to find out what they have in common so that they can be classified and codified.

To do this, we used comments on posts from four very popular media outlets in France, namely the news platforms Cnews and France Info and the social networks Twitter and Instagram. These media are very popular in France and are consulted by millions of French people every day. France Info, one of France's public service media, stands out for its continuous news service via radio, TV and digital platforms. As a publicly-funded medium, it retains its independence and is highly credible in the eyes of its French listeners.

Instagram plays a central role in digital communication in France. Widely used by young and old alike, as well as by brands, it is a central communication tool in France.

X, formerly Twitter, is the 7th most popular network in France, used for sharing information and interaction between its subscribers. CNews is the leading all-news channel in France, accounting for around 3% of the French audience.

Our study period was the summer of 2024. This is an intense period in France, marked as it is by two major events. The far-right party came out on top in the 1st round of legislative elections and the Summer Olympics were held in Paris. The arrival of the far right, known for





its conservative and identitarian ideas, led to an upsurge in sexist and homophobic discourse on social networks.

Following DJ Barabara Butch's performance at the opening ceremony of the Olympics, a number of sexist, homophobic, and transphobic hate messages poured onto the internet. We have therefore selected hate messages that we have categorised according to whether they are hard or soft, and drawn out the concepts common to these message types, which we will analyse below.

### Main findings – patterns of online hate speech in Greek media platforms' comments sections

The opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games was the scene of an outpouring of hate speech online following DJ Barbara Butch's performance with the Dragqueens. With DJ Barabara Butch surrounded by Drag queens, Internet users interpreted the painting as a representation of Leonardo da Vinci's Saint Seina, with the DJ playing Jesus and the Drag queens as his apostles. This interpretation gave rise to some terribly violent homophobic comments about the DJ and the organisers of the ceremony.

On "France Info", in an article on its website entitled: "Opening ceremony: "There have been worldwide repercussions, so hatred is arriving exponentially", says DJ Barbara Butch after her complaint about cyber harassment",<sup>12</sup> a number of homophobic comments followed. These included

- *"A painting highlighting the LGBT community is fine, but why associate it with a parody of the Last Supper? Without this deliberately hurtful allusion, the painting would have been perceived differently. As far as discrimination by the Church is concerned, I think that efforts need to be made on both sides to try and understand each other, and there are associations working on this (like D&J LGBT+ for example). The Church is open to all people (I can assure you!) without distinction but remains very 'staunch' on its principles"*<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>12</sup> FranceInfo (2024 August 04). Cérémonie d'ouverture : "Il y a eu une répercussion mondiale, donc la haine arrive de manière exponentielle", confie la DJ Barbara Butch après sa plainte pour cyberharcèlement. Available at: [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/les-jeux-olympiques/paris-2024/ceremonie-d-ouverture-il-y-a-eu-une-repercussion-mondiale-donc-la-haine-arrive-de-maniere-exponentielle-confie-la-dj-barbara-butch-apres-sa-plainte-pour-cyberharcèlement\\_6705933.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/les-jeux-olympiques/paris-2024/ceremonie-d-ouverture-il-y-a-eu-une-repercussion-mondiale-donc-la-haine-arrive-de-maniere-exponentielle-confie-la-dj-barbara-butch-apres-sa-plainte-pour-cyberharcèlement_6705933.html)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



- *"Too much wokism, Parisianism, Macronist gratuitous provocations..."*,<sup>14</sup>
- *"Never understood people who want to put forward their ideology, which the planet rejects, and who do not assume the backlash"*.<sup>15</sup>

On the DJ's Twitter (X) account:

- *"Fat, ugly, probably trans-lesbian, trying to offend the only religion that would accept her and on top of that, offended by anyone else that likes virtues in the society and in the family"*,<sup>16</sup>
- *"You have insulted billions of Christians, ruined the Olympics and traumatized the world! I hope you receive all the hate you deserve. You're nothing but an ugly beached whale and 10 times as ugly on the inside, and with those insides, that's alot of ugly!!!"*,<sup>17</sup>
- *"What a distinguish pig (three puking emoticons)"*,<sup>18</sup>

In response, another post answered:

- *"Don't insult pig, beautiful and intelligent animal"*,<sup>19</sup>
- *"You aren't just a fat fucking pig, you are ugly too. Cry it out"*,<sup>20</sup>
- *"Christ Jesus loves you. Turn from your fleshy desires and turn to him. Only he will give you the peace and love, you seek"*,<sup>21</sup>

On Instagram:

- *"Next time you play, I'll take a knife"*,<sup>22</sup>
- *"We see a faggot, a drag queen, you want blood you're gonna get blood"*,<sup>23</sup>
- *"She's making fun of a religion and she's surprised it's pissing people off. If you can make fun of a religion, you can make fun of her too"*,<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> See relevant post and comments at:

<https://x.com/kaysermathilda/status/1821469068508987857?s=48&t=h2Y-JC6GsBaIY0TEizXaaQI>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> See relevant post and comments at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C-ITD7-J4WM/?igsh=anBoYmEwamw1YnYw>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> See relevant post and comments at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C-DbtsctyuR/?igsh=MXJrZTZwcjVrODZmaA%3D%3D>



- *"May God have mercy on these people, Jesus Christ forgive them so that you may be disowned before the father",<sup>25</sup>*
- *"God is not mocked Wait".<sup>26</sup>*

The following **concepts** were identified:

- **The concept of morality and religion:** Hate speech here wants to pose a case of religious conscience. These speeches want to condemn homosexuality and trans identity, based on religion, and demonstrate that LGBT people are in sin and must be judged and condemned by stigmatizing them. The Christian has to condemn sin and bring the sinner back to the right path. These people therefore justify their hate speech by an act of purity.
- **The concept of dehumanization:** In hate speech, trans and LGBTQIA+ people are described as "abnormal," "sick" or "unnatural." This type of discourse seeks to marginalize them by presenting them as different and inferior. The aim of this concept is not to empathize with them.
- **The concept of Sexual Shaming:** By attacking women's physique and appearance, or mocking the sexual orientations of LGBTQIA+ people, this type of hate speech seeks to humiliate them.
- **The concept of objectification and sexualization:** women are often reduced to sexual objects or judged primarily on their physical appearance, which dehumanizes them. Comments, even when they appear "complimentary," are degrading and reinforce sexist stereotypes.
- **The concept of violence and rape threats:** Threats of rape or physical violence against women, particularly those who speak out publicly or take positions perceived as opposed to certain groups. This concept is designed to degrade women and make them appear weak, to be used at will.
- **The concept of professional discrediting:** Women are often attacked for their competence or expertise, particularly in fields traditionally dominated by men, with comments implying that they don't deserve their place. In the case of DJ Butch, if she had been a male DJ and if instead of drag queens there had been men, this surely wouldn't have raised as much of an uproar as it does when she's a woman.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid



- **The denial of legitimacy:** LGBTQ+ people are often accused of “pretending” to be who they are, especially transgender people, who are sometimes accused of wanting to “deceive” others about their identity.
- **The concept of emphasis on “dangerousness” for children:** A particularly toxic and common discourse is to portray LGBTQ+ people as a threat to children, associating them with criminal acts such as pedophilia, a classic technique for dehumanizing and justifying violence. This concept comes close to the concept of religion, as it's also a way of wanting to show LGBT people as “outlaws” - those who are not on the straight and narrow and who represent a threat to society, and so it's the duty of homophobes to denounce them to preserve children's future.
- **The concept of organized harassment:** To give themselves the strength to organize themselves to collectively harass a person, whether a woman or a member of the LGBTQ+ community, this concept enables them to get together on the Internet to harass their victim. This type of online harassment often aims to silence victims or push them off public platforms.
- **The concept of conspiracy theories:** Women and LGBTQ+ people are sometimes accused of being part of “conspiracies” to destabilize traditional values, destroy the family or promote specific ideologies, such as “radical feminism” or “LGBT propaganda.”

## General conclusions

Hate speech against women and LGBT people takes many forms and represents a major societal problem, particularly in the digital space. Women are often the victims of sexist comments, attacks on their physical appearance, or remarks aimed at reducing them to traditional roles. This type of discourse often aims to intimidate and control women, perpetuating gender stereotypes. Misogynist attacks can include threats of violence, online sexual harassment, and degrading comments about their intelligence or skills, particularly in professional and political spaces.

LGBT people, hate speech often focuses on their sexual orientation or gender identity, with comments that stigmatize, marginalize, or call for violence. Transgender people are particularly targeted by speeches denying their identity and, in some cases, advocating discriminatory actions against them. Homophobia and transphobia are amplified in online hate speech, often fueled by extremist groups or individuals who seek to perpetuate rigid



norms of gender and sexuality. These discourses reinforce isolation and feelings of insecurity among those concerned, impacting their mental well-being and access to safe spaces.

Strategies to combat such hate speech must include strict legal measures, such as making digital platforms responsible for detecting and removing hate content, as well as awareness raising and education campaigns. Gender equality and respect for gender identities must be at the heart of educational programs to create a more inclusive society.



## *“Online hate speech patterns in Greek media comments’ sections”,* by Thanasis Theofilopoulos

### Introduction

An important component of the C.H.A.S.E. project’s research is the identification of online hate speech patterns in the online media comments section in the participating countries. To do so, I adopted and implemented a combination of qualitative content and visual analysis approach, following the provisions of the research protocol developed in the framework of the project.

According to the research protocol, partners had to choose the first 3 or 4 more popular online media in the country, based on recent published data. The four most popular - in terms of visits - Greek Media were selected based on data for 2023 from the Reuters Institute.<sup>27</sup> These data are Newsbomb.gr (“weekly use” 22%, “at least three days per week” 9%), Dikaiologitika.gr (“weekly use” 22%, “at least three days per week” 11%), In.gr (“weekly use” 22%, “at least three days per week” 11%) and Proto Thema online (“weekly use” 20, “at least three days per week” 10%). These media are considered to be mainstream news media, covering almost all kinds of topics (politics, financial news, world news, etc.).

Three of the aforementioned online media – namely Newsbomb.gr, Dikaiologitika.gr, and In.gr - do not have comment sections on their websites – only “Proto Thema” does. On the other hand, all of them maintain their own Facebook pages which are continuously updated with new posts, every day. To keep an equally balanced research approach, my research focused entirely on the comments section under posts of the chosen four media on their official Facebook pages.<sup>28</sup>

My research was conducted for posts made in June and July 2024, starting immediately after the finalization of the project’s research protocol (May 2024). June is also celebrated – in many countries, including Greece - as LGBTQI+ Pride month, with major LGBTQI+ events

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<sup>27</sup> Kalogeropoulos, A. (2024 June 17). Digital News Report 2024 “Greece”. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/greece>

<sup>28</sup> These are: [www.facebook.com/newsbombgr](https://www.facebook.com/newsbombgr), [www.facebook.com/dikaiologitika](https://www.facebook.com/dikaiologitika), [www.facebook.com/www.in.gr](https://www.facebook.com/www.in.gr) and [www.protothema.gr](https://www.protothema.gr)



(pride) taking place. This also means that the number of relevant posts is increased. The research consisted of the following 6 steps:

- Step 1: Online research via keywords in selected media's social media accounts search bar to identify posts covering gender and/or gender identity-related themes (2 main categories predetermined by the researcher). These keywords were "LGBTQI+", "LGBT", "femicide/-s", "patriarchy", "sexism", "transphobia", "domestic violence", "gender-based violence", "misogyny" and "misogynist", "trans", "pride", "euro pride", "woman", "gender" and "of gender", "gender identity", "wedding", "adoption", "parents", "family", "pregnant" and "pregnancy", "abortion/s".
- Step 2: Thematic content analysis of the posts – identify more specific themes/topics covered by the posts and divide them into new categories (categories formed based on the data collected during step 1)
- Step 3: Further code and classify textual comments of the aforementioned posts into two main categories: comments with sexist<sup>29</sup>/misogynist<sup>30</sup> content and comments with anti-LGBTQI/transphobic<sup>31</sup> content (categories predetermined by the researcher). Selection and collection of the comments took place manually.

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<sup>29</sup> For this research, I adopt the following definition provided by CoE:

"sexism is:

Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of:

- i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or
- ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or
- iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or
- iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or

v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes"(in Council Of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on preventing and combating sexism. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168093b26a>).

<sup>30</sup> Misogyny refers to "hatred or contempt for women" (in APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d.) "misogyny. Available at: <https://dictionary.apa.org/misogyny>). Moreover, this term "is derived from the Ancient Greek word *mīsoḡuniā*" which means hatred towards women. Misogyny has taken shape in multiple forms such as male privilege, patriarchy, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification" (in Srivastava K, Chaudhury S, Bhat PS, Sahu S. Misogyny, feminism, and sexual harassment. *Ind Psychiatry J*. 2017 Jul-Dec;26(2):111-113. doi: 10.4103/ipj.ipj\_32\_18. PMID: 30089955; PMCID: PMC6058438).

<sup>31</sup> Transphobia refers to "cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and aggressive behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear, and/or hatred directed against individuals or groups who do not conform to, or who transgress societal gender expectations and norms. Transphobia particularly affects individuals whose lived gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender role assigned to them at birth, and it manifests itself in various ways, e.g., as direct physical violence, transphobic speech and insulting, discriminatory media coverage, and social exclusion. Transphobia also includes institutionalised forms of discrimination such as

- Step 4: Further divide/categorize textual comments based on their target group and message/meaning (categories formed based on the data collected during step 4)
- Step 5: Code and classify non-textual comments into types/forms and then meaning and target group
- Step 6: Identify which of the comments of misogynist/sexist and/or transphobic content may also consist of hate speech based on the definition provided by CoE.<sup>32</sup>

## Main findings – patterns of online hate speech in Greek media platforms' comments sections

The initial thematic analysis of posts during the examined period and entirely based on research with keywords (Steps 1 and 2) resulted in the identification of the following themes or topics covered:

- **Gender-related themes**

- Cases and statistics of gender-based violence against women (except for femicides).
- Cases of domestic violence against men.
- Cases of Femicide.
- Media coverage of GBV incidents.
- Motherhood and gender roles.
- Promoting the idea of inequality against men.
- Policies, legislation, measures, court decisions, and women's rights.
- Public figures, celebrities, politicians, etc., and women's rights.
- Women in politics and power positions and their agendas/policies.
- GBV and sexism against women in politics.

criminalisation, pathologisation, or stigmatisation of non-conforming gender identities and gender expressions” (in Yurinova, N. (2023) *Trans Media Guide: A community-informed, inclusive guide for journalists, editors & content creators*. TGEU, p. 38. Available at: <https://www.tgeu.org/files/uploads/2023/11/TGEU-Trans-Media-Guide-EN.pdf>).

<sup>32</sup> For this research I also adopt the definition provided by CoE, according to which “hate speech is understood 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 such as “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation” (in Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/#\[%22CoEIdentifier%22:\[%220900001680a67955%22\],%22sort%22:\[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\]\]\).](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:%220900001680a67955%22,%22sort%22:%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22}})





- Sexism in media content.
- Marriage, parenthood, or divorce of (cis/straight) women who are public figures, celebrities, etc.
- Feminism and the feminist movement.
- GBV and gender equality in sports and sports events.
- Women spending time, having fun, living alone without men.
- Marriage, adoption, pregnancy, and intimate relationships in homosexual couples.
- **Gender identity-related themes**
  - Gender affirmation.
  - Policies, legislation, measures, court decisions, and LGBTQI+ human rights.
  - Shelters, support services, and applications for LGBTQI+ people.
  - LGBTQI+ public figures, celebrities, politicians, etc., and their personal lives.
  - Domestic violence against LGBTQI+ people.
  - Trans people in sports and sports events.
  - Pride and Europride Festivals and events.
  - “Family pride” events.
  - Public figures, celebrities, politicians, etc., and LGBTQI+ rights.
  - Trans people and suicide.
  - Trans “agenda”.
  - Trans people on TV.
  - Trans people in beauty contests.
  - LGBTQI+ travelers in Greece – tourist policy.

The next steps (3 and 4) included the classification of comments into two main categories: sexist and misogynist content and transphobic and/or -broader – anti-LGBTQI+ content. Then, identify/classify the comments into subcategories falling under the aforementioned main categories, based on their meaning. The results of this coding and classification process are the following:

- **Message/meaning categories of sexist and/or misogynist comments**
  - Reproduction of sexist stereotypes and prejudices against women e.g. regarding their gender roles, the criteria by which they are choosing their husbands/partners, etc.
  - Victim blaming and secondary victimization of women who are GBV survivors.



- Indirect justification of femicide or GBV against women who are GBV survivors (e.g. by questioning the victim's behavior towards the perpetrator).
- Downgrading the extent of violence against women.
- "Not all men" type comments as a defense against opinions and data supporting that women are much more often than men GBV victims.
- Keeping equal distances from both the male perpetrator and the female victim.
- Questioning the reliability of testimonies of women who are GBV survivors.
- Making fun of GBV incidents against women.
- Deprioritizing addressing GBV against women.
- Mocking women who are accused of violence against their husbands as fearful, making negative comments about their appearance, or presenting the incident as part of a sexual act between a dominant wife and a submissive husband.
- Malicious reversal/alteration (to ridicule them) of terms related to women's rights and anti-GBV slogans.
- Promoting the idea of gender inequality against men.
- Conspiracy theories regarding the real purpose of anti-GBV tools such as the "panic button".
- Fall or loss of moral values and wide moral corruption in the world and/or in the country because of feminism, women's rights and independence against gender roles and patriarchy, etc.
- Sexist/mockingly comments about the appearance of public figures, politicians, etc.
- Stereotypes and prejudices about the safety, well-being, and rights of children that are raised by homosexual couples e.g.
- Refusing body integrity and women's rights e.g. abortion rights.
- Promoting traditional/nuclear family and heteronormativity.
- "Fear" and "awareness" for children's rights, safety well-being for growing up from parents of the same gender.
- Masculinity and "traditional"/"nuclear" families are under threat in Greece because of homosexual couples and LGB people raising children - especially compared with the supposed threat of neighboring countries that have high birth rates.



- **Message/meaning categories of transphobic (including comments targeting the entire LGBTQI+ community)**
  - Transphobic “jokes” (e.g. against trans women and their sex characteristics and/or making fun of gender affirmation and self-identification).
  - Transphobic false claims regarding the promotion of trans agenda.
  - Making fun of trans identity and gender affirmation.
  - Deliberate misgendering of trans people with the purpose of ridiculing the trans person.
  - Use of inappropriate terminology namely “third gender” when referring to trans people or identities.
  - Promoting the gender binary / the idea that there are only two genders.
  - Conspiracy theories - sometimes including anti-elitism and claims about LGBTQI+ “lobbies” and “dictatorship” - for the promotion of concepts such as the “third gender” and/or implementation of a secret LGBTQI+ agenda for world domination and a new world order.
  - Sexualization of LGBTQI+ identities - comparing or relating them with sex work because of their LGBTQI+ identity.
  - Fall or loss of moral values and wide moral corruption in the world and/or in the country because of LGBTQI+ people, policies, or human rights.
  - Reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices against LGBTQI+ identities, presenting them as mental illness and unnatural behavior/condition and/or relating them with mental health issues.
  - Claims about the promotion or “propaganda” of a woke agenda in favor of LGBTQI+ people / anti-genderism.
  - Criticizing the police and/or judicial authorities for prosecuting people committing acts against LGBTQI+ human rights.
  - Criticizing the media for presenting/analyzing in a positive way LGBTQI+ related topics (e.g. homosexual couples, pride events etc.) and/or promoting LGBTQI+ human rights / accusing media for a relative propaganda in favor of LGBTQI+ people
  - Supporting counter-demonstrations against LGBTQI+ prides.



- Deliberate misgendering, body-shaming, using homo/transphobic slurs, and in general making fun of other people – including government and political officials - because they supported LGBTQI+ people, human rights or related events.
- De-prioritizing LGBTQI+ related issues.
- Congratulating/supporting public figures, celebrities, etc. who speak against LGBTQI+ human rights.
- Accusing LGBTQI+ public figures of financial motivations behind their LGBTQI+ identity and/or coming out.
- Expressing support for extreme right parties and/or candidates because of their anti-LGBTQI+ stance and agenda.

The majority of the comments collected and analyzed were textual ones, varying from single words to whole paragraphs. The rest of them were non-textual comments classified (Step 5) into six main categories based on their type/form and then further coded and classified based on their meaning and target group:

- **Emoticons:** emoticons depicting objects as sexual symbols e.g. use of cucumber, hot dogs, and eggplants, in a sexist/misogynist or transphobic/anti-LGBTQI context; clown emoticons to make fun of LGBTQI+ people; emoticons puking or open palm (=insulting gesture in Greece) to express disgust or humiliate LGBTQI+ people; Laughing emoticons to make fun of women GBBV survivors or question their experience/testimony
- **Moving GIFS:** moving GIFS depicting male cartoon characters kissing in the mouth in order to make fun of LGBTQI+ people; moving GIFS depicting objects as sexual symbols e.g. use of sausages as penises dancing symbolizing sexual activity in a slut-shaming context; moving GIFS depicting people or animals puking or laughing, in order to humiliate and insult LGBTQI+ people; moving GIFS with men with stereotypically “feminine” characteristics and/or dressed in “women's” clothes” to make fun of LGBTQI+ people; moving GIFS depicting public figures, politicians and celebrities known for their anti-LGBTQI+ policies e.g. Vladimir Putin; moving GIFS showing people doing activities symbolizing sexual activity in a slut-shaming context e.g. a woman eating sausages; moving GIF spitting showing people spitting on the camera in an anti-LGBTQI+ context; moving GIFS depicting a carnival again in an anti-LGBTQI+ context; moving GIF of a person clapping his/her hands, thus approving a domestic homophobic violence incident; moving GIFS showing donuts as homophobic innuendo.



- **Pictures of all kinds:** pictures with people making obscene gestures in an anti-LGBTQI+ context; pictures with penises symbolizing the sexual/erotic past of a woman in a sexist and slut-shaming context; pictures with objects or creatures symbolizing a part of the body e.g. pussycat as the vagina or human relations e.g. a deer symbolizing cuckold husbands/partners in an insulting and/or sexist/stereotypical context; pictures depicting a swastika formed by rainbows in an anti-LGBTQI+ context; hate pictures e.g. somebody stepping on a rainbow flag; pictures with altered sex scenes to promote gender stereotypes and slut shaming e.g. a woman making oral sex to men who instead of penises, they have credit cards between their legs; pictures of politicians known for their anti-LGBTQI+ agenda with the purpose to encourage the implementation of similar policies.
- **Memes:** include memes with anagrammed curse words against women or LGBTQI+ people; memes from movies with actual dialogues that include e.g. homophobic slurs.
- **Screenshots from other online users' social media accounts:** screenshots of men dressed as women to make fun of LGBTQI+ people.
- **Links to other sources:** links leading to excerpts (YouTube videos) from movies, tv-shows, etc. with homo/transphobic slurs or links with excerpts (YouTube videos) from “men’s rights” awareness videos, questioning the fact that GBV mainly affects women.

In some cases, comments include text as well as or even more of the aforementioned objects, links, and files.

In addition to the aforementioned categories about meaning and target group, additional ones were also developed during the research analysis. The latter could be possibly identified as **hate speech**, according to the definition provided by CoE because they “incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination”<sup>33</sup> against other people because of their gender or gender identity. These categories of online misogynist and transphobic hate speech based on their meaning/message and target group include the following textual comments:

- **Comments that include threats, inciting (sexual) violence against women.** Examples include “Give me your address – I want to come to console you” or “I will make you “bleat””.

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<sup>33</sup> See previous footnote.



- **Comments that incite hatred against women, via misogynist and slut shaming slurs.** Examples include “You are a nice whore”, “ [You are] A first-class whore”. Such comments are often submitted concerning the appearance of a woman, their (supposed) lifestyle, (supposed) sexual activity and/or criteria according to which they choose their life partners.
- **Comments that incite discrimination (including social exclusion and in general violation of human rights) against trans people, because of their gender identity (and/or against LGBTQI+ people in general).** Examples of such comments include “put them behind bars”, “marginalize them”, “in old times, they used to take some like them to Spinalogka island [=Greek island that used to be a leper colony] for free vacation”, “ALL THESE ABNORMALITIES MUST BE FORBIDDEN!!!”, “put everybody into a mental hospital so that maybe they get saved – at least – from their psychological problems”.
- **Comments that directly incite violence against trans people, because of their gender identity (and/or against LGBTQI+ people in general).** Examples of such comments include “They need to have yogurts thrown at them!”, “don’t you have rotten eggs? Throw them at them!”, “get lost perverted and disgusting - in Ancient Greece, you would be thrown at the pit with the lions!”, “put them in concrete to get saved from them – you garbage!”, “throw tar and feathers at them!”, “Faggots and transvestites... Come one, let’s prepare the ovens [=meaning the crematoria burning bodies in Nazi concentration camps]”, “We will put the Muslims [=prejudice according to which Muslims are all against LGBTQI+ people] to settle the matter”, “Kill them all”, “a bullet [=gunshot] to the head”, “You need to be whipped”, “Ashes [=meaning burn them]”.
- **Comments that directly incite violence against politicians who have voted for LGBTQI+ human rights.** An example of such a comment is “Those who allowed them to have children are unacceptable and need to be hanged”.
- **Comments that directly incite hatred against trans people because of their gender identity (and/or against LGBTQI+ people in general)** e.g. by dehumanizing them, wishing their death, using homo/transphobic slurs, or medicalizing LGBTQI+ identities. Examples of such comments include calling them animals or “zombies”, celebrating the suicide of trans persons with comments such as “one freak less”, “she [=the trans woman who committed suicide] must become an example!!! The rest [=trans people] must jump



[=suicide]!!” or “at least a man/person did not die”, calling them as mentally “ill” and “abnormalities” with “unnatural” identities and/or behaviors and, finally calling them “transvestites” and “faggots”.

- **Comments including threats and indirect incitement to violence against trans people,** because of their gender identity (**and/or against LGBTQI+ people in general**). An example is “They are happy for the moment... nature and society correct all such degenerative phenomena when their time comes!!!”, “[watching pictures of LGBTQI+ people in a media’s post] it is easy to conduct a profiling to track them down when things change”, “I want to see where their high hill shoes will get inside them [=their bodies] when the time comes!!!”.
- **Comments indirectly justifying discrimination against trans people** because of their gender identity (**and/or against LGBTQI+ people in general**), **by supporting current politicians because of the anti-LGBTQI+ agenda and policy**. Examples of such comments include “We must follow France [=text combined with a picture of a far-right French politician Marin Le Pen]”.

Finally, to prevent and combat online hate speech more effectively, it is worth mentioning the multiple ways by which online users can – more or less easily – avoid tracking and reports against their abusive online comments. These ways were identified during the current research and include:

- Anagramming of slur words, including homo/transphobic and misogynist ones.
- Strategically removing letters from a slur or curse word, while ensuring that the word is understood by the readers e.g. “as...le”
- Strategically replacing letters of a word with other symbols or emoticons, while ensuring that the readers understand the word, e.g. “whor#”
- Strategically replacing letters of a word with other letters thus creating a word that does not exist, yet the word is understood by the readers as a slur e.g. “taggot” instead of “faggot”
- Use of “Greeklish” (writing in Greek but with Latin letter characters) for misogynist or homo/transphobic comments
- Use of exclamations and single words that are not slurs etc. but are used in insulting, discriminatory ways e.g. “puke”.



- Use of neutral words to describe people in homo/transphobic way e.g. calling gay men as “girls”
- Reversed terms or slogans to promote sexism e.g. “toxic matriarchy” (instead of “toxic masculinity”) or “no man alone” (“instead of no woman alone”).
- Extended use of metaphors and ironies that do not include slurs, curse words, etc. For example, an online user making fun of a woman’s (supposed) lack of sexual activity, used the phrase “Have you let your field lie fallow?”. Another online user slut shaming a woman ironically said “She is a keeper / a woman to start a family together”. Another online user who wanted to make fun of trans people and the gender affirmation process used the phrase “He/she wanted to self-identify as a dove”.

The above remarks and examples underline how complex and challenging it may be to track down and remove abusive content from the internet and the need for highly sophisticated tools and methods to address the phenomenon. On the other hand, no matter how sophisticated the tools and methods we may have or acquire in the future, combatting the root (social) causes of misogyny, sexism, and transphobia will always be the most effective preventive measure.

## General conclusions

The research highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the online hate speech patterns in Greek media platforms to promote inclusivity and respect for women and all trans people.

Online content often perpetuates sexist and misogynist stereotypes and prejudices against women, victimizing them and diminishing the severity of violence against them. Transphobic content, on the other hand, may target trans people in particular or the entire LGBTQI+ community in general, including transphobic “jokes” and deliberate misgendering. The research analysis reveals that online comments often contain textual and non-textual elements or a combination of them. Besides nontextual comments, online users can use various strategies to avoid tracking and reporting against them, such as anagramming slur words, strategically removing letters from slurs or curse words, replacing letters with other symbols or emoticons, using “Greeklish” for misogynist or homo/transphobic comments, using exclamations and single words that are not slurs but are used in insulting, discriminatory





ways, using neutral words to describe people in homo/transphobic ways, reversed terms or slogans to promote sexism, and using extended use of metaphors and ironies that do not include slurs, curse words, etc.

Additionally, the Council of Europe's definition of hate speech identifies many of these abusive comments as hate speech, as they incite and promote violence, hatred, or discrimination against others based on their gender or gender identity. Examples of such hate speech include sexual violence threats against women, misogynist, and slut shaming slurs, direct incitement of violence, and discrimination against trans people in particular and/or against all LGBTQI+ people in general, along with homo/transphobic slurs, dehumanization and medicalization of their identities.

Prevalent patriarchal, sexist, and transphobic stereotypes and prejudices deeply root online hate speech based on gender and gender identity, as well as online sexism and transphobia in a broader context. The phenomenon has already taken alarming proportions, given the prevalence and extent of abusive comments in a limited number of media examined in a short period. The research results suggest the need for more advanced methods and tools to track and remove abusive online content. However, prevention through education, awareness, and combating stereotypes and prejudices, which are the root causes, remains the key to a lasting and meaningful solution.



## *“Online hate speech patterns in Italian media comments’ sections”,*

by Luciano Cortese

### Introduction

This research is part of a broader project result aimed at understanding and addressing online **hate speech based on gender and gender identity**. Its primary objective is to identify and classify patterns of hate speech that emerge in **online media platforms**, specifically focusing on the **Italian context**. By examining these patterns, the research intends to highlight trends, and insight into the profiles of individuals who propagate such speech, and offer recommendations to better detect and counter these harmful behaviors useful for a collection of needs analysis on the issue. Ultimately, the goal is to support public awareness campaigns and offer a clearer understanding of the dynamics underlying online gender-based hate speech.

The research methodology involved **content analysis of online media platforms**, focusing on **textual comments posted by users in response to news articles**. **Facebook and X** were selected as the primary platforms due to their open format, which facilitates public discussion, and their widespread use among diverse age groups. These platforms are known to encourage engagement through features such as likes, shares, and public comment threads, which allow users to express opinions in a relatively unmoderated space. Content analysis was chosen as the most effective method for examining the rhetoric and language used in these comments. By focusing on the **wording, message, and rhetoric**, it was possible to classify hate speech into distinct categories and identify recurrent themes. The analysis also considered **intersectionality**, looking at how gender-based hate speech intersected with **other forms of discrimination**, such as racism, to produce more nuanced expressions of online hate.

The media outlets chosen for the study were the leading Italian newspapers and their social media pages. Examples include newspapers such as **La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera, Libero, Il Post, Fanpage, TgCom24**, etc. These media organizations were selected because of their **widespread reach** and their **tendency to cover** not only major news events



but also **gossip, entertainment, and soft news**. This broad coverage attracts a diverse audience, often leading to a wide array of public comments and discussions on various topics.

A key reason for selecting these outlets was their ability to spark controversy and provoke public engagement. In their pursuit of higher interaction metrics – such as likes, shares, and comments – these outlets often use **provocative headlines or sensationalist framing, which can polarize public opinion**. For example, news articles related to **gender or gender identity are often framed in ways that emphasize controversy or moral panic, triggering strong emotional responses from readers**. This approach frequently results in heated debates in the comment sections, where discussions can quickly devolve into personal attacks, insults, and hate speech.

The research focused on **comments made in response to articles related to gender and gender identity published between July and August 2024**. This period was chosen because of the heightened **public discourse on these topics during the 2024 Summer Olympics in France, where issues surrounding gender identity in sports became a focal point**.

Additionally, several other news events during this time contributed to the discussion, providing a rich pool of comments to analyze. Through this systematic approach, the research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of online hate speech in Italy, with a particular focus on how gender and gender identity are used as targets for discrimination.

### Main findings – patterns of online hate speech in Greek media platforms' comments sections

In analyzing online hate speech related to gender and gender identity within Italian media social platforms, it became evident that the speech encountered diverges from the classical legal definitions of hate speech. While the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe defines hate speech as communication that “[...] **incites, promotes, spreads, or justifies violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group of persons** [...]”,<sup>34</sup> much of the discourse analyzed in the Italian context does not strictly meet this standard. Instead, the

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<sup>34</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate Speech. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:%5B%220900001680a67955%22%5D,%22sort%22:%5B%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22%5D%7D%7D}](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:%5B%220900001680a67955%22%5D,%22sort%22:%5B%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22%5D%7D%7D)



majority of comments fall under what we could term **“soft hate speech” – insults and offensive remarks that denigrate individuals based on their gender or identity, without directly inciting violence or committing legally actionable acts of discrimination.**

These “soft” hate speech comments typically aim to **diminish or dismiss the identities or experiences of non-binary, transgender, or intersex individuals, as well as to challenge the concept of gender equality.** The rhetoric is often subtle, hiding underlying bias and discrimination under the guise of **legitimate criticism or opinion.** For instance, rather than openly calling for violence, commenters might resort to **derogatory humor, mockery, or sarcastic commentary** aimed at invalidating the experiences of marginalized groups.

This type of speech, while not necessarily illegal, creates a hostile online environment. It fosters division and perpetuates stereotypes and societal stigmas, making it difficult to engage safely in public discourse.

To categorize the hate speech encountered, several recurring patterns were identified and classified into distinct categories based on the type of language used, the target audience, and the rhetorical techniques employed. These patterns provide insight into the profiles of those who engage in hate speech, revealing common themes and motivations behind their statements.

- **Transphobic hate:** This category includes comments that express **skepticism or outright rejection of transgender identities and rights.** Commonly, these comments contain derisive or denigrating language that dismisses the existence or validity of transgender individuals. Some users employ phrases that suggest these identities are a “fad” or “delusion”, often accompanied by mockery. This reflects a deep-seated discomfort with **gender diversity** and an **adherence to traditional binary understandings of gender.** Though not overtly violent, these comments contribute to a hostile discourse that undermines the social acceptance of gender diversity.
- **Denigration of feminist movements and women’s rights:** A significant portion of the hate speech focused on attacking feminist movements and women advocating for equal rights. These comments often take on a **misogynistic tone,** suggesting that **efforts toward gender equality are unnecessary or even harmful.** Particularly troubling is the fact that many of these **offensive comments came from women themselves,** reflecting **internalized misogyny** and a rejection of the feminist agenda. This speaks to a broader societal issue where patriarchal values remain deeply ingrained, influencing public discourse on gender equality.



- **Intersectionality:** Another key pattern identified involved **intersectional hate speech**, where gender identity **overlapped** with **other forms of discrimination**, such as **racism** or **homophobia**, to name a few. For example, transgender individuals of color were frequently targeted with comments that combined racist insults with transphobic rhetoric. This reveals the complexity of online hate, as **individuals belonging to multiple marginalized groups face multiple discrimination**. These comments serve to dehumanize individuals on multiple fronts, stripping them of their dignity both as gender-diverse individuals and as members of other minority communities.
- **“Soft” hate speech and polarization:** In the context of Italian online media platforms, the discourse surrounding gender and gender identity is marked by a sharp **polarization**, often reflecting deeper political divides. One of the most prominent drivers of this polarization is the reflection of **current political dynamics** in Italy, particularly the **influence of conservative and far-right ideologies**. The discourse frequently echoes the sentiments of individuals who support the current far-right government. For these individuals, **the rise of non-binary, transgender, and intersex identities**, as well as movements advocating for gender equality and inclusivity, is seen as a **direct threat to traditional European cultural values**. These values, often linked to **Christianity and patriarchal structures**, are presented as being undermined by what they refer to as **“woke ideology”**.<sup>35</sup> The term “woke”, borrowed from international political discourse, is often used **pejoratively** in this context to describe progressive, inclusive social movements that challenge established norms. For many commenters who align with conservative ideologies, these movements are viewed as an overreach, **an attempt to impose what they perceive as radical changes that could destabilize long-standing cultural and religious frameworks**. This sense of threat appears to legitimize, in their view, derogatory comments and soft hate speech as a form of resistance to what they perceive as cultural erosion. As a result, the polarizing rhetoric is further entrenched, with one side defending traditional values and the other advocating for inclusivity and equal rights.
- **Role of the Media in Amplifying Hate Speech:** In this context, the role of media platforms cannot be ignored. The communication strategies of these newspapers significantly influenced the tone and nature of the online discourse. Right-wing news outlets tend to employ **provocative and overstated language**, often skewing facts or presenting information

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<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Careers (n.d.). What Does “Woke” Mean? Available at: <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/what-does-woke-mean/>



in a misleading way to spark controversy. This type of reporting serves to **incite anger or indignation among their readership**, prompting users to respond with harsh, often offensive comments. These outlets appear to use this strategy deliberately, capitalizing on the heightened emotional responses that such content generates to increase engagement metrics, such as likes and shares. The initial framing of the news in such a manner already sets the tone for divisive, often hate-filled discussions in the comment sections. On the other hand, left-leaning news outlets, while less overtly offensive in their language, also contribute to the polarized discourse. Their approach tends to focus on sharing news with **provocative or “sensitive” headlines, designed to spark reactions from their audience**. Though the intention may not be to directly incite hate, the result is often similar – users with **differing ideologies respond strongly**, leading to heated arguments that frequently include insults and denigration of minority groups. This practice highlights a concerning shift in mainstream journalism, where the focus on generating engagement and fostering discussion outweighs the responsibility to provide balanced, neutral reporting. The result is that **Italian mainstream news media**, while ostensibly presenting the news, **are contributing to an online environment where hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric can flourish**. This trend marks a departure from traditional journalistic values of **impartiality and neutrality**. Instead, the current media landscape seems more akin to an open forum for debate, **where the goal is less about providing factual information and more about encouraging polarized discussions that drive user interaction**.

The following **patterns of online hate speech in Italian media platforms’ comment’s sections** have been identified:

### **1. Transphobic comments.**

Transphobic comments targeting boxing athlete Imane Khelif:

Typical comments:

- *“There’s nothing feminine about her – movements, muscles, and attitude are like a male athlete.”*
- *“It’s a man; he should compete with men. If there’s any doubt, he can’t compete because there’s no trans category”.*
- *“No comment, it’s a man”.*
- *“She’s a woman in a man’s body; obviously, she always wins”.*



- *"The Algerian fag has XY chromosomes, so he's a man".*

**Pattern description:** This category of comments falls under **misgendering** — denying or refusing to acknowledge someone's gender identity, particularly when the individual in question is intersex or transgender. The offensive nature of this discourse lies in the assumption that a person with certain **physical or biological traits** cannot be considered feminine, thus forcing a masculine identity upon them.

**Why it constitutes hate speech?** These comments promote discrimination based on gender and sexual identity by perpetuating the notion that intersex or transgender individuals are not "legitimate" in female contexts. They deny people the right to self-determine and be recognized for their authentic identity, stigmatizing them. The discourse fosters marginalization and dehumanization, implying that those who do not fit traditional biological categories are inferior or socially unacceptable.

## 2. Political and ideological polarization: "Woke ideology" and attacks on the left

Typical comments:

- *"The woke agenda wants them to win the Olympics".*
- *"An insult to women! And feminists are either silent or on her side".*
- *"No!! They're neither male nor female!! Let them go parade at the gay pride! These pseudo-Olympics are worse than Hitler's!!"*
- *"I think it's time for another world war. The only way to rid ourselves of this trash subculture".*

**Pattern description:** These comments reflect deep political polarization, often linked to the rhetoric of the so-called "**woke ideology**", used pejoratively to describe social movements advocating inclusivity and equality. This discourse frames progress in **LGBTQIA+ rights as a threat to social order and traditional, conservative values, particularly those tied to "tradition" and "patriarchy"**.

**Why it constitutes hate speech?** This type of speech encourages division and fuels disdain for anyone supporting the rights of gender minorities. Characterizing "woke culture" as a destabilizing enemy implicitly justifies discrimination against those associated with it, promoting a hostile attitude toward anyone perceived as different. Additionally, using terms like "trash" and invoking world wars amplifies intolerance, creating a dangerous, antagonistic environment.



### 3. Sexist and misogynistic violence.

Typical comments:

- *“Why don’t they pull her shorts down and show if she’s a man or woman?”*
- *“If the system doesn’t change, I hope a male boxer like Tyson self-identifies as female and truly beats him up”.*
- *“When a woman with a dick meets a woman with a pussy, the woman with the pussy is a dead woman”.*
- *“Seeing a woman beaten and humiliated by a man in the ring is gender madness.”*

**Pattern description:** This category of comments is characterized by extreme **sexist and misogynistic violence**, promoting the idea that **women, particularly transgender or intersex women, cannot have an equal role in sports or society**. There is a clear emphasis on physical and moral degradation of women, especially those perceived as a "threat" to men or as societal aberrations.

**Why it constitutes hate speech?** This type of discourse incites **gender-based violence, promoting the notion that violence against transgender or intersex women is legitimate or justified**. Through explicit sexual insinuations, this language not only denigrates gender identity but fosters a culture in which the female body is reduced to an object of control, violence, and disdain.

### 4. Dehumanization and ridicule of gender identity.

Typical comments:

- *“Khelif is shaving... wait a second”.*
- *“The garbage truck is coming to load her up and dump her in the pit”.*
- *“Judging by her facial hair, you can see how extremely feminine she is”.*
- *“All this nonsense about intersex. Intersex my ass. You’ve had enough of this crap. It’s XY. It’s a MAN”.*

**Pattern description:** These comments focus on **dehumanization and ridicule** of Khelif’s gender identity. Derision, such as referencing her facial hair or comparing her to garbage, is used to deny her humanity, portraying her as a "joke" or an object to be eliminated.

**Why it constitutes hate speech?** Ridicule and dehumanization are powerful tools of social alienation. These comments dehumanize intersex or transgender individuals, denying





their dignity as human beings and promoting the idea that they are "objects" to be laughed at or discarded. This contributes to creating a hostile and discriminatory environment, justifying inhumane or violent treatment.

## 5. Sexism and misogyny

Comments related to cases of femicide and rape highlighted elements of hate speech and how they relate to gender-based violence:

- ***Victim blaming***

The comment *"sometimes they look for it"* exemplifies **victim blaming**, a common phenomenon in discussions about sexual violence. This statement **shifts the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim**, suggesting that **women are at fault for their own victimization based on their behavior or choices**.

- ***Dehumanizing language and sexual objectification***

The phrase *"was looking for fresh meat"* reduces the woman to a **mere object of sexual desire**, implying that she was actively seeking out male attention and therefore somehow responsible for her fate. This dehumanizing language reinforces the idea that **women's value is tied to their sexuality**, which can normalize attitudes that condone violence against them.

- ***Minimization of violence***

The statement *"these women first give themselves to dogs and pigs, then cry out about violence"* nullifies the severity of rapes and reinforces a misogynistic view that **women are responsible for the violence they experience**. This kind of rhetoric diminishes the emotional and physical impact of violence against women and perpetuates harmful stereotypes about female sexuality.

## 6. Gendered hate in cultural critique

The comments regarding the Olympic opening ceremony included several instances of gender-based and gender identity-based hate speech, reflecting a troubling resistance to diverse expressions of identity. For example, the remark *"with these events, they really show they are 'different'"* exemplifies a tendency to **stigmatize individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms**, framing them as inherently less acceptable. Additionally, expressions such as *"very ugly, offensive, blasphemous"* and *"a crazy joke like in Fantozzi"*



diminish and mock artistic expressions that challenge cultural and religious values. Such language not only dismisses valid forms of self-expression but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes that equate non-normative gender identities with vulgarity and immorality.

Moreover, the statement *“even my dear homosexual friends are ashamed of this abomination”* reflects **internalized homophobia**, further promoting negative perceptions of LGBTQIA+ identities. This attitude fosters an environment of **shame and exclusion**, reinforcing **societal stigmas against those who embrace diverse gender identities**. Comments labeling the performance as *“shabby and pathetic exhibitionism”* reinforce derogatory stereotypes that diminish the legitimacy of non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality. Additionally, language that condemns the situation as a product of *“a rotten, violent, and profoundly ignorant culture”* signals a broad rejection of diversity, fostering hostility towards individuals challenging traditional values.

## General conclusions

The analysis of online hate speech surrounding gender and gender identity in Italian media reveals a deeply concerning landscape marked by entrenched transphobic and gender-based hate speech. This form of discourse, characterized primarily by misgendering and derogatory language aimed at transgender individuals, highlights a pervasive societal problem. The fact that such sentiments persist in contemporary discourse signals a troubling **refusal to acknowledge and respect diverse gender identities**, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that dehumanize marginalized groups.

Transphobic hate speech manifests itself through comments that **deny the validity of transgender identities**, often reducing individuals to their biological traits while disregarding their lived experiences.

Moreover, the persistence of misogynistic attitudes intertwined with transphobia is particularly alarming. The harsh criticism directed at gender equality suggests that efforts toward inclusivity **undermine traditional gender roles**, revealing an underlying **fear of losing patriarchal structures in the face of progressive movements advocating for equality**.

The implications of these findings are grave. They underscore a societal environment where individuals face hostility and ridicule for expressing their true selves, contributing to feelings of **isolation and marginalization within the LGBTQIA+ community**. Furthermore, it



highlights the urgent need for collective action to confront these attitudes and promote a culture of acceptance and inclusivity.

