

**Intellectual Output:** O1

**Intellectual Output Title:** European Report: Common Forms of Hate  
Speech ONLINE (Social Media) and OFFLINE  
(Face to Face Communication) (Consortium  
Countries)

**Activity title:** A8\_Analysis of the National Reports and  
Composition of a Consolidated European  
Report



**Erasmus+**

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## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
MATE project	5
Intellectual Output 1	6
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>8</b>
Desk Research Method	8
Focus group Method	8
Survey Method	8
<b>RESULTS OVERVIEW</b>	<b>9</b>
Desk research results	11
Focus group results	17
Austria	19
Cyprus	19
France	21
Greece	22
Spain	22
Sweden	23
Survey main results	24
Austria	31
Cyprus	32
France	33
Greece	34
Spain	35
Sweden	36
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>38</b>
Austria	38
Cyprus	40
Greece	41
France	42
Spain	43
Sweden	44

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
Austria	47
Cyprus	48
Greece	49
France	49
Spain	51
Sweden	52
<b>FINAL THOUGHTS</b>	53

## Table of Figures

<b>Figure 1: Total population and foreigners by status and consortium country (2017)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Figure 2: Social media platforms analysed for the desk research (by consortium country)</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Figure 3: Participants in MATE focus groups (by consortium country and origin: locals vs immigrant background)</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 4: Participants in MATE focus groups by gender and origin</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Figure 5: Participants in MATE survey by country, origin (EU vs non-EU) and gender</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Figure 6: Participants in MATE survey by gender and origin (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Figure 7: Have you ever been victim of hate speech or express it yourself against others? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 8: What aspect of your identity you felt was being targeted? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 9: What aspect of your victim's identity did you target? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Figure 10: What do you think was the real intention of the person who expressed hate speech against you? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Figure 11: What was your real intention? Why did you do it? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Figure 12: Is hate speech sanctioned by law in your country of residence/studies? (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Figure 13: Attitudes towards punishment of hate speech (Only valid answers)</b>	<b>31</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### MATE project

The 2018-2020 Erasmus+ project "MATE - An innovative, Student-Centered Approach to Intercultural Skills Acquisition for Students and Young Migrant" aims to develop a holistic and innovative methodology to acquire intercultural competences and to promote cultural awareness among higher education students of local and migrant background, combining learning, experiential and networking activities. MATE expects to assist young migrants to acquire social capital, in the form of social networks, relationships and personal connections. It also tries to recognise and battle different forms of hate speech. In fact, the project will support young migrants and locals to launch low-budget and effective awareness raising campaigns to combat discrimination, hate speech and to promote respect and diversity.

The project is carried out by a consortium of seven institutions from six different EU countries: the Austrian FH Joanneum Gesellschaft MBH (FH), the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), the French Eurocircle Association, the Greek Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), the Spanish University of Alicante (UA), the Swedish Folkuniversitetet Kursverksamheten vid Lunds Universitetet (FU), and it is coordinated by the Cyprus Mediterranean Management Center Limited (MMC).

The need for this project to be implemented transnationally is due to the rise of anti-immigration political parties and hate speech affecting all EU, thus European actions are required, preferably with the capacity of transferability. The latter can only be achieved through projects with a comparative view, such as MATE. The consortium is diverse, facilitating the development of transversal activities and materials, which will be publicly available long after the completion of the project.

In order to achieve MATE's objectives, the consortium addresses six different Intellectual Outputs (IO): IO1 'European Report on common forms of hate speech online (Social media) and offline (face to face communication)'; IO2 'Intercultural skills assessment online tool'; IO3 'Report Racism: Curriculum and

Methodological Guide'; IO4 'Methodological guide for the MATE facilitators'; IO5 'Producing Awareness Campaigns Guide' and IO6 'MATE online platform'. This report summarises the results of the first IO on common forms of hate speech in the consortium countries after the research every partner implemented in three successive phases: a desk research, a focus group and a survey.

## **Intellectual Output 1**

The first IO relates to the development of intercultural skills Online and Offline. The project offers a holistic approach to intercultural skills acquisition by HE students in the consortium countries and beyond. For this purpose, the first step carried out is an identification of common forms of anti-migrant discourses and hate speech in the countries of the consortium which includes desk research and field research (focus groups and survey).

The main aim of this IO is to assess the existing situation within the partnership countries as regards to the spread of racist/hate frames and discourses through social media. In the course of this IO, relevant content from social media was included in order to record forms (especially disguised) of racist and xenophobic rhetorics and to recognize and compare the different forms and transformations of hate speech in each partner country

The objective of this IO is not merely to perform a research on anti-migrant discourses and hate-speech, but also to facilitate the next five IOs mentioned above. Since after the research, the consortium will be aware of the forms, including the disguised ones, that hate speech and such discourse undertake in the partner countries, they will be able to:

- Produce more targeted, and thus more effective training material for the activities of the "Report Racism" workshops (IO3), the MATEvents (IO4), the Awareness Campaign Guides as a Learning Tool (IO5).
- Design more targeted and more effective dissemination activities and produce dissemination materials that will be focused and targeted.
- Ensure that the project's online presence (social media, website, platform) will be relevant and effective

This IO has been designed with replicability in mind, as it can be replicated into different contexts. More specifically, the questionnaire and focus group interview guide for identifying disguised forms of hate speech and racist rhetoric in social media will offer themselves for transferability and most importantly, the methodology used for this IO will be described in detail and will be available from the online installation/replication guide (IO5) and the project website.

The impact of this IO is twofold:

- On the one hand, it facilitates, as explained earlier, the next project activities, and in this way it benefits the participants in those activities (short - term).
- On the other, it is an attempt to record forms of hate speech in the countries of the consortium, which are characterised by diversity, in a scientific manner. And it responds to various calls, both by scholars and the EU to recognise forms of hate-speech, especially disguised and hidden in the media. The results of this research (IO1) will be made publicly available through the platform (IO6) for interested EU citizens, third countries nationals, migrants, policy makers, scholars, and other stakeholders, and special efforts will be made for their availability for the years to come after the completion of the project.

Regarding the innovative aspect of this IO, it can be summarised in the following points:

- It combines a need of the project, with a general need in the EU for more scientific evidence on hate speech, especially disguised, as is made clear through the "Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law".
- It distinguishes between ONLINE and OFFLINE forms of hate speech

This is not to say that this research will be the first such research to be undertaken in the EU, but as media are evolving rapidly, new scientific evidence is always welcome and beneficial for relevant stakeholders, and especially, policy-makers.

## METHOD

This report summarises the results of the research on common forms of hate speech and anti-immigration discourse in the consortium countries. A triangulation method was adopted following three successive research steps: a desk research, a focus group and a survey.

### Desk Research Method

For this activity, partners conducted an analysis aiming at identifying common forms (including disguised forms) of anti-immigrants hate speech in social media platforms most frequently used by students, as well as during face to face communication. First, we examined social media contents posted by some of the main political parties from different ideological background, including their youth organisations. Some social media influencers and students-oriented websites and forums were studied as well. Second, we searched for offline expressions of the phenomena, analysing news stories, public speeches, street images, slogans and graffiti related to our topic.

### Focus group Method

In order to understand in depth the different forms anti-migrant hate speech undertakes in the consortium countries, we took into due consideration the views of the key stakeholders of the project, namely local and migrant students. For this reason, we conducted several focus groups in order to identify their views and perceptions on hate speech in social media and in face-to-face communication. To implement the focus groups interviews, partners were to disseminate the activity among students using different channels of communication, including social media, email lists, universities virtual platforms and direct communication. The focus groups were facilitated by experienced researchers.

### Survey Method

The survey aiming at identifying the perceptions, stances and attitudes of students both of local and migrant background towards different forms of hate speech online as well as offline, was prepared in



line with the most recent developments in social media research, in order for it to be as relevant and updated as possible. Many of the items included in the questionnaire were based on the preliminary results of the focus groups. Once translated into the national languages of the partners, the questionnaire was disseminated online, as this facilitates easy access to young persons.

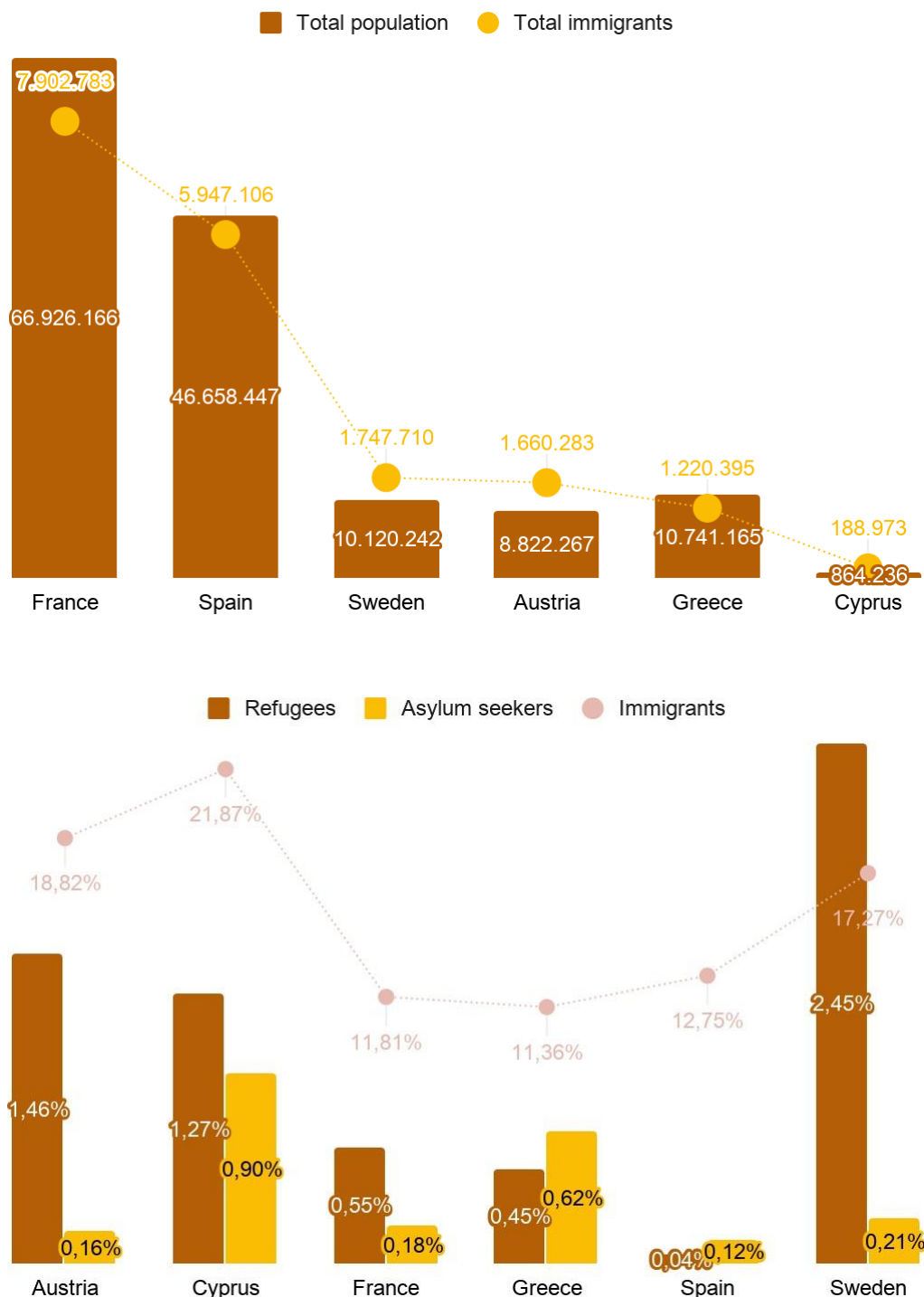
## **RESULTS OVERVIEW**

In general terms, many similarities have been found between these countries regarding the recent evolution, forms, extension and perception of hate speech according to this first intellectual output research. Yet, significant differences have been also noticed due to evident disparities between these EU territories, such as their cultural, historical, demographic and geographic particularities and their economic and political specific conjuncture as well.

That is the reason why despite the fact that this report is providing a “standardised” image on the topic under study, special caution needs to be taken when it comes to analyse and compare immigration and derived phenomena between such different countries. Despite using a similar language register, definitions and epistemology, from a point of view, it is considerably unlike how MATE target population experience, perceive and define hate speech in Sweden with its 10M inhabitants and 1.74M immigrants, than how they do it in France where 67M people live and almost 8M immigrants, or in Cyprus with 860.000 inhabitant and home to less than 190.000 immigrants (see Figures 1).

In order to preserve the specificity of each partner in MATE project, a synthesis of the results of the focus groups’ interviews and surveys are provided by country.

**Figure 1: Total population and foreigners by status and consortium country (2017)**



Source: Own chart using data of United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2017)

## Desk research results

Each partner country has its own particularities, thus, historical, cultural and political motivations behind hate speech vary considerably from one to another. Nevertheless, the aggregated results of this research show similar traits regarding the main forms hate speech undertakes. To start with, a general common point shared by all partners during their respective desk research, is that offline manifestations of hate speech are neither easy nor abundant to track as it happens with online forms.

Human characteristics and behaviours rooted in the concepts of ethnocentrism and otherness, xenophobia and racism, ignorance, hate and fear towards the Other, the different, are examples of common traits shared by explicit hate speech offenders regardless of their origin or nationality; different country, different language, same message. The implicit and disguised forms of hate speech highlighted by the consortium countries adopt a wide range of expressions in face-to-face communication as well as in social media. “Us” vs “Them” seems to be one of the key parameters to identify hate speech discourses, either in its explicit forms or disguised behind political correctness towards the “enemies of the nation” who stole *our* benefits and jobs, and threaten *our* national identity and *our* future; mainly immigrants, “lefties”, LGBT members and feminists.

The Catalan independence conflict in Spain or the Cyprus Issue are good examples to illustrate how hate speech adopts systematically the above mentioned parameter, long before either of the two countries started receiving international immigration in its modern conception. Without regard to moral and historical motivations or inclination to any side, these political conflicts represent the main arena for hate speech, bringing to the fore ethnocentric and nationalistic perspectives as noted in the Cypriot National Report.

*“Us refers to those Cypriots who acknowledge “occupation”, who consider themselves Greeks in the broad sense of the term, descendants of the Ancient Greece and Alexander the Great and who perceive the idea of the federation as “turkification”. “Them” refers to those who are ready to reconcile towards a viable solution to the Cyprus problem and who opt for a Cypriot identity and culture”.*

Similar divisive principle can be applied to the “Immigration Issue” either in Cyprus, in France, in Greece, in Austria, in Spain or in Sweden. In fact, “Turkisation”, “Invasion” or “Islamisation” are different words with a similar meaning, used by hate speech offenders to instigate national identity

and to spread fear and hatred, against the *others*, legitimating their discrimination regardless of their legal and administrative status; whether they are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, foreigners are targeted alike by “hate speakers”, exceptions are made for the wealthiest among them. Far right leaders are aware of the power of divisiveness essentially during tough economic crisis. Lacking of constructive political programmes, their propaganda focuses on anti-immigration discourse, which is made up of simplistic argumentations, negative emotions, generalisations and stereotypes.

#### Main forms of offline hate speech

Offline expression of hate speech were not easy to identify and to register. Only few substantial evidence were found to support anti-immigrant discourse in face-to-face communication. All of them transmit stereotypical images and ideas about certain groups of foreigners according to each country. Walls messages asking immigrants to go back to their “homes”, describing them as criminals, thieves or rapists; a few street incidents or verbal assaults against people with a foreign appearance, because of the colour of their skin, darker than the common native, or because of the clothing, mainly the headscarf among Muslim women. Some messages pro-Nazi Era in Austria; others against “Romanian Mafiosi” in Cyprus; “Moros (North Africans) get out!” or “Assassins” from Spain; immigrants “it’s time to go home” in Sweden are some examples.

#### Main forms of hate speech online

The aggregated results show a concentration of online content spreading hate speech and anti-immigration discourse in publications in social media of extreme right-wing political parties, as well as in websites and influencers posts with similar ideological background. There were no significant evidence of hate speech posted on social media neither by representatives of the left or extreme left political parties nor among students online platforms.

Indeed, during the last few years, extreme right-wing parties have gained a wide popular sympathy all over Europe. A key factor in their success is without any doubt their opportunistic use of social media. Taking advantage of the severe impact the financial crisis had in popular social classes, they spread

fear and social alarm against immigrants, through fake news, stereotyped images, criminalisation and psychological manipulation.

A remarkable lack of empathy and humanitarian sensitivity among these political parties' strategists is worth to highlight giving that their anti-immigration discourse has raised concurrently with the worsening of the political and social situation in some Arab countries and the civil war in Syria. During the years following the explosion of the Arab Spring, many Syrian families among other nationalities had to flee their country seeking asylum after having gone through horrible experiences.

As Figure 2 shows, a total of 59 sources were analysed for this desk research: 24 political parties, 16 students-oriented websites and 19 influencers.

**Figure 2: Social media platforms analysed for the desk research (by consortium country)**

Consortium Country	Political party	Students Website	Influencers	
Austria	Ring Freiheitlicher Studenten	Students Association for Sustainability in Graz	Influencer Students Life	
	Sozialistische Linkspartei	Incoming Exchange Student 2018/2019	Michael Buchinger	
	Junge Grüne Österreich	AIESEC Austria	Robert Misik	
	Steirische Volkspartei	Global Students Forum		
Cyprus	EDON, affiliated to AKEL (left-wing party)	Studentlife.com.cy	Konstantinos Pittakas	
	NEDISY, affiliated to Dimokratikos Synagermos (right-wing)	AEGEE Cyprus	Anastasios Angelides	
	EDEK Youth, affiliated to EDEK (centre-left)		Marinos Nomikos	
	ELAM (extreme right-wing)		Iakovos Mina	
			Antonis Alexopoulos	
			Constantinos Constantinou	
	Jeunes communistes (left-wing)	UNEF	Aldreius	

Greece	Aristeri Enotita - ArEn (left-wing)	Foititika nea	Mairy Sinatsaki
	Eniaia Anexartiti Aristeri Kinisi – EAAK(extreme left-wing)	Campus.gr	Nikos Moutsinas
	Dimokratiki Ananeotiki Protoporia– Nea Dimokratiki Foititiki Kinisi – DAP-NDFK (right-wing)		
Spain	VOX (extreme right-wing)	Universidad Complutense: Foro deAlumnos para Alumnos	Un Tío Blanco y Hetero
	Partido Popular PP (right-wing)	Delegación de Alumnos de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad deAlicante	Alvaro Ojeda
	Partido Socialista Obrero EspañolPSOE (left-wing)		
	Anticapitalistas (extreme left-wing)		
Sweden	Social Democratic (centre-left)	studyinsweden.se	Anna Nystrom
	Moderate (centre-right to right-wing)	blogs.studyinsweden.se	Kenza Zouten
	Sweden Demokrats (right-wing to far-right)	Sweden for Global Health	Christoffer Collin
	Centre Left Party (centre-left)	Uppsala universitet	Angelika Blick
	Christian Democrats (centre-right)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 political parties</b>	<b>16 students websites</b>	<b>19 influencers</b>
France	Jeunes Radicaux (extreme left-wing)	Solidaires Etudiant-e-s	Tatiana Ventose
	Les Jeunes Républicains (right-wing)		
	Génération Nation (extreme right-wing)		

The abundance of hate speech on the Internet in comparison to offline forms is mainly due to the fact of anonymity. “Too many of them”, “a threat to our security and demography”, “taking advantage of our social benefits”, “we have to pay for them” or “send them back”, are some of the ideas appearing in some of the studied political parties social media. However, the followers of far-right leaders on Facebook or Twitter can post excessively racist comments hiding behind the mask of anonymity. Examining the social media of the third political force in Spain, VOX, shows a dramatic spread of explicit hate speech against immigrants; comparing them often with “animals”, “terrorists”, “criminals” and “parasites”).

Nevertheless, students who have participated in MATE focus groups and those who have responded to MATE surveys showed a different perception: according to their own experience, there is more hate speech in real-life situations than in social media.



## Focus group results

As Figure 3 shows, a total of 108 people attended the activity, with more females than males and more locals than foreigners. Participants of foreign background from outside the EU represented less than a quarter of the focus groups (Figure 4).

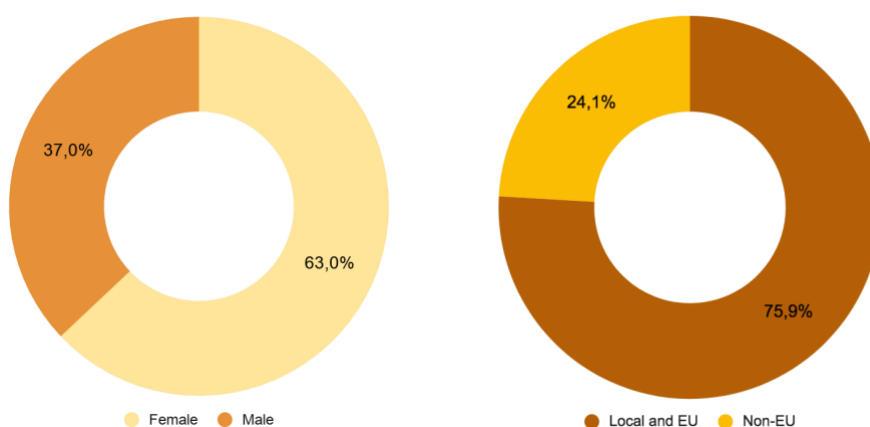
**Figure 3: Participants in MATE focus groups (by consortium country and origin: locals vs immigrant background)**

			Austria	Cyprus	France	Greece	Spain	Sweden	Total	
Origin	Local		6	10	9	10	8	1	44	
			30,0%	50,0%	42,9%	47,6%	72,7%	6,7%	40,7%	
	Foreign Background	Total	14	10	12	11	3	14	64	
			70,0%	50,0%	57,1%	52,4%	27,3%	93,3%	59,3%	
		EU	10	4	8	10	1	5	38	
			71,4%	40,0%	66,7%	90,9%	33,3%	35,7%	59,4%	
		Non-EU	4	6	4	1	2	9	26	
			28,6%	60,0%	33,3%	9,1%	66,7%	64,3%	40,6%	
Total			20	20	21	21	11	15	108	
			100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
Gender			Female	12	8	13	17	8	10	68
				60,0%	40,0%	61,9%	81,0%	72,7%	66,7%	63,0%
			Male	8	12	8	4	3	5	40
				40,0%	60,0%	38,1%	19,0%	27,3%	33,3%	37,0%
			Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>108</b>
	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The participation in these focus groups of more students from third countries outside the EU and Europe in general as well as those of Roma background, would have been of great value giving that physical appearance, religious or spiritual orientation, in addition to cultural and linguistic background represent some of the main characteristics often targeted by “hate speakers”.

**Figure 4: Participants in MATE focus groups by gender and origin**



Regardless of their origin, most participants in the focus groups, although unable to provide any exhaustive definition of hate speech, they were aware of its existence and had an idea about its meaning. Additionally, they showed interest in the topic and the debates were thought provoking. The following paragraphs summarise the results of the focus groups interviews by partner country.

### **Austria**

Insults based on skin colour, political attitude or sexuality, calls for violence against certain population groups in the comment columns of social media - hatred can hit everyone on the Internet. The main question was, where does freedom of expression end and where does hate speech begin? Where do your rights end and another's begin? And by inciting hate, how does that benefit any of us? The transitions between the real and the virtual are fluent today.

Hatred is omnipresent and arrived in the digital age. Digitisation is progressing and making life easier for us in many areas. Communication becomes simpler and more efficient, knowledge is quickly available. However, there are also negative aspects: Hate speech is one of those that currently poses new challenges to democracy. Often politicians or parties adopt the ideas of the extremes in their own propaganda and election campaigns (especially the right wing parties in Styria/Austria and as a result there are more and more "poisoned" debates and hatred becomes a "habit").

The absolute freedom in the net has led to a certain form of lack of boundaries. Additionally, anonymity facilitates insults, baiting and slander. Furthermore, there is a clear tendency in hate speech against Muslims and fugitives marked by public discourses in Austria. Finally, politicians are called upon to enshrine appropriate measures in law with the aim of raising the status quo on the subject of online hate speech in Styria.

### **Cyprus**

Most participants defined hate speech as offensive behaviour rooted in a stereotyped perception of inferiority toward others. The offensive behaviour can be based on sexual orientation, religion,

ethnicity, class, etc. While racism on the basis of race came up as the most frequent type of discrimination, it was argued that ‘racism toward the poor’ (class racism) is equally important, and sometimes it tends to overcome racial and other discriminations. For example, it was fervently argued that one may be gay or black, but if he/she has a lot of money, it is unlikely that he/she will experience racist behaviour.

Additionally, students think that hate speech based on gender, sexual orientation and physical abilities are also very common. Finally, participants emphasized the case of hate speech based on Physical appearance. It was argued that there is a tendency to treat dark people suspiciously. The opposite stands for blonde and white people. In their opinion, this is odd, as Cypriots tend to have dark colours.

According to the participants, hate speech is mainly motivated by a false sense of superiority, and in some cases because of insecurity and life disappointment. Lack of proper education, a racist family environment and the media are seen as the main factors that tend to cultivate and legitimize hate speech.

Hate speech is mainly provoked by a stereotyped perception of inferiority toward others. Insecurity, media stereotypes, lack of proper education, a racist family environment are other significant factors as well.

For the participants, offline hate speech is much more important than online. Online hate speech is not that harmful; basically, it degrades the person who is writing such comments. Eventually the community will alienate these people. Nevertheless, both types are important and need to be dealt with through legal provisions.

To combat hate speech, participants suggest the following measures:

- Internet control of speech
- Include relevant courses in school and university curricula
- Families play a crucial role (different opinions between teaching through talking and hitting when kids do not conform)
- Public disgrace – “name and shame”.

The majority of the participants think that parents and teachers should teach children from early on to be tolerant toward differences. Although the majority of students see immigrants positive and condemn incidents of hate speech, however some of them draw a distinction between hate speech (as a verbal act which expresses offensive discourses) and hate speech that promotes physical violence. That said, most of them believe that hate speech punishments should have an educational character rather than be treated as typical indictable acts.

Regarding online hate speech, it was argued that governments should apply an online control system that would forbid specific words. For example, the word immigrant should not be accompanied by a negative word.

Another participant disagreed with the absolute control that Facebook tries to apply in order to combat hate speech because it restricts freedom of speech. Everyone should write what he/she believes and the state should punish those who express hate speech by fines.

## **France**

Among the participants, there were no radical or discriminatory opinions or students that admitted having been victim of hate speech themselves. This seems not to be representative for the situation in France in general, as they all have at least observed discriminatory behaviour and feel very concerned by the topic.

Participants agree that the main reasons for anti-migrant hate speech are fear, misinformation through media and politics, a lack of education and a lack of general economic well-being of the population. Hate speech is an emotional and violent expression of intolerance and fear. Hate speech is also used as a political instrument to create fear and misinformation. Unawareness and false news flourish in an online and offline environment lacking profound exchange and discussion. For these reasons the main measures to be taken against hate speech are the improvement of education and the design of public space fostering exchange.

## Greece

The participants were not well informed concerning the proportion of the immigrants who live in the country. Even those who read the news on a daily basis, did not know the percentages of refugees/migrants live in Greece. They believe that the news focus more on other issues.

The majority of local students declared that they had interaction with refugees and migrants in their lives.

The majority of the participants have witnessed racist behaviors towards migrants and refugees. Also, they believe that the citizens of their countries are less tolerant towards the newcomers comparing the long term residents.

The participants believe that Hate speech cannot be easily defined. They did not only give a general definition of hate speech, but also focused on the ways it is disseminated.

As regards the reasons motivating hate speech, they named:

- Family and friends
- Lack of education
- Poor legal and constitutional framework
- Financial crisis
- Disinformation on social media
- Media agenda
- Bad experiences with immigrants

To cope with hate speech the participants suggested that we should act collectively as a society and governments should take actions, like implement laws, change the curriculum, relocate the immigrants from camps and ghettos.

## Spain

Participants agreed that anti-immigrant hate speech in Spain is a fact and that some of the key reasons behind it are ignorance, mass media propaganda and extreme right wing leaders discourse. The comparison between hate-speech in different countries and the link between anti-immigration and machismo discourse arose an interesting debate between the participants, showing typical ideological

prejudices even among these involved and educated young students. Participants' suggestions on how to fight hate speech were diverse but focused on education while most of them rejected legal punishment.

However, during the meeting, we had the impression that the participants were not sufficiently familiarized with the topic of hate speech and anti-immigrant discourse. In general terms, some of the testimonies and opinions regarding these phenomena either on social media or face to face were trivial; others were thoughtful and needed a deeper analysis.

Like in other public forums, political correctness seemed to restrict the opinions of the participants. The fact that the moderator was an immigrant himself could have also influenced such behaviour among the local students. Regarding the students with immigrant background, many factors could have influenced the nature and amount of personal experiences related to hate speech they expressed during the interview.

It was also revealing that the only female participant wearing a hijab has not expressed (or has refrained from expressing) any negative personal experience as an immigrant or has not witnessed any hate-speech or anti-immigration discourse neither face to face neither on social media.

## **Sweden**

All the respondents have heard about the term 'hate speech'. There were different kinds of definitions, more and less accurate. The most common thought was that hate speech is negative expressions or statements toward immigrants, based on common stereotypes. More than half of the participants have witnessed hate speech either towards them or their friends/acquaintances.

Hate speech was stated to be very common in the period of EU elections. Especially it is widespread on the Internet and social media, where people often leave comments under fake or unanimous accounts. Hate speech was experienced directly or personally by none of the respondents. Some of them, however, noticed the different attitude towards them as immigrants. For example, many students noticed that Swedish people are not making friends or hang out so often with immigrant students as they could.

The following reasons motivate hate speech:

- People's tendency to be putting labels on everyone
- Fear factor
- Need to blame somebody
- Agenda setting by media
- The 'alternative' media are promoting statistics based on race
- 'Alternative' media position hate speech as good and smart way of thinking
- Protectionism of people, insecure about their identity

Respondents suggested the following measures to cope with hate speech:

- Introduce regulations on social media and political campaigns
- Introduce boundaries for freedom of speech
- Propaganda must be tackled
- Integration into society must be more efficient
- Shift from us and them and redefine national identity
- Confront hate speech in public when it happens
- Introduce more commitment from local people (not much promoting integration, cultural dialogue from students) make students more active politically in this issue
- Raising awareness about what hate speech is
- Take individual responsibility
- Influencers can play a vital role on social media
- Education. Children can be taught what kind of words are used to express hate towards others
- Refugees have to be also taught about hate speech
- Media can work with it better: highlighting better sides of refugees
- Social media have to work with hate speech more closely. They should be editing

## Survey main results

As Figure 5 shows, 756 people participated in the survey, 79 among them skipped the origin and gender questions. Regardless of these 10% of non-answers, the composition by origin and gender shows -with the exception of France- a domination of female participants and -with the exception of Sweden- a low participation of students from outside the EU (Figure 6).



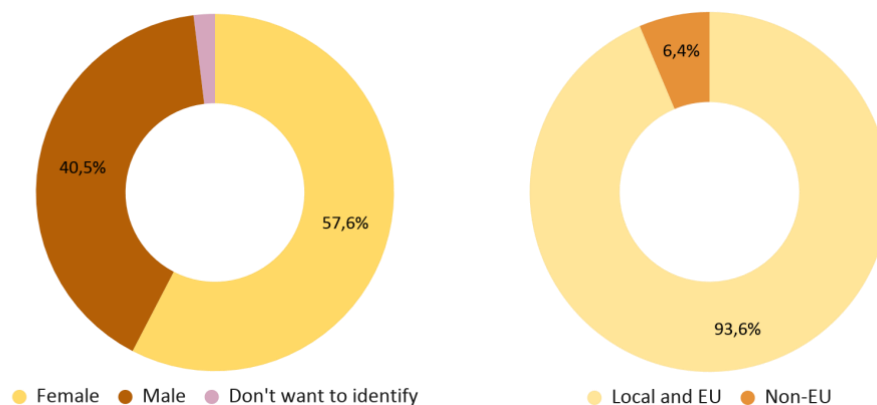
**Figure 5: Participants in MATE survey by country, origin (EU vs non-EU) and gender**

		Austria	Cyprus	France	Greece	Spain	Sweden	Total
Origin	EU	54	188	95	196	54	47	634
		93,1%	84,7%	79,2%	87,5%	75,0%	78,3%	83,9%
	Non-EU	1	11	11	2	6	12	43
		1,7%	5,0%	9,2%	0,9%	8,3%	20,0%	5,7%
	No answer	3	23	14	26	12	1	79
		5,2%	10,4%	11,7%	11,6%	16,7%	1,7%	10,4%
Total		58	222	120	224	72	60	756
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Gender	Female	35	110	35	132	45	33	390
		60,3%	49,5%	29,2%	58,9%	62,5%	55,0%	51,6%
	Male	20	86	70	60	14	24	274
		34,5%	38,7%	58,3%	26,8%	19,4%	40,0%	36,2%
	Don't want to define	0	3	1	6	1	2	13
		0,0%	1,4%	0,8%	2,7%	1,4%	3,3%	1,7%
	No answer	3	23	14	26	12	1	79
		5,2%	10,4%	11,7%	11,6%	16,7%	1,7%	10,4%
Total		58	222	120	224	72	60	756
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

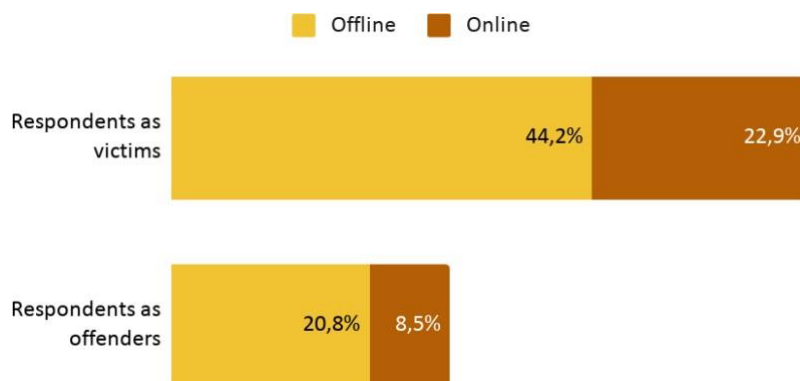
Such small percentage of third countries representation in the survey sample influences the interpretation of the corresponding results. The opinion of immigrant students from other cultures, preferably those with the most representative and ethnically distinctive characteristics, would have been of great value to the analysis of the nature, forms and dimensions of the topic of our interest.

**Figure 6: Participants in MATE survey by gender and origin (Only valid answers)**



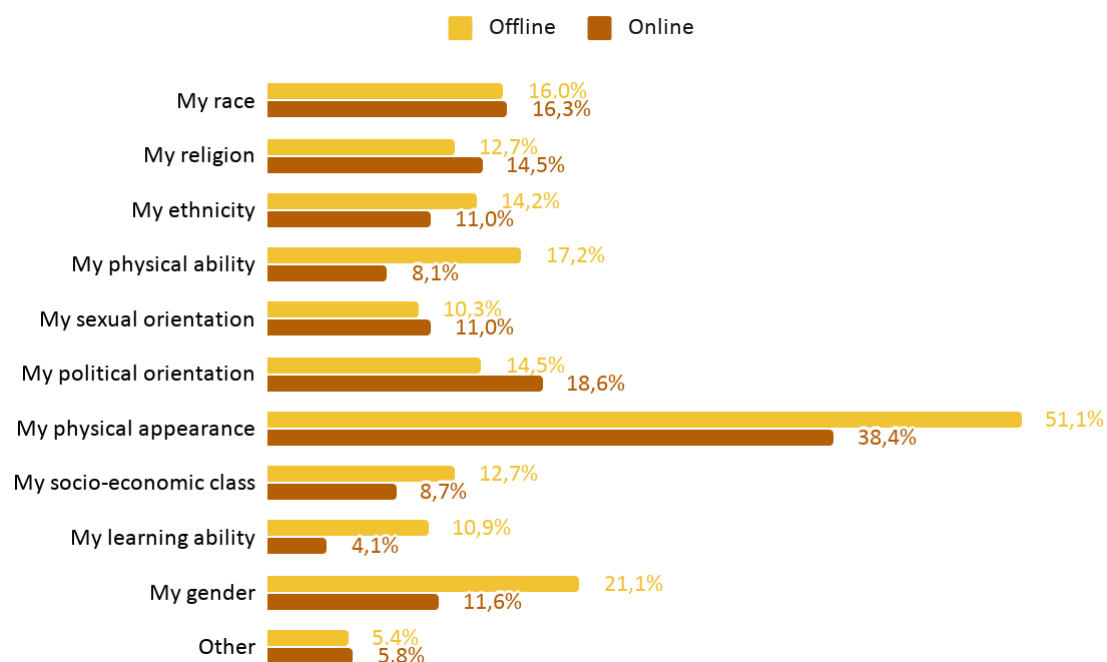
According to the surveys data, people are far more likely to be attacked by “hate speakers” in real-life situations than in social media (44.2% vs 22.9%). Similar observation is valid when the offenders are some of the respondents themselves (20.8% offline vs 8.5% online). This is quite interesting as the Greek colleagues pointed out, since online hate speech is increasingly gaining more attention among scholars and media experts, relegating face-to-face incidents to a secondary position (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Have you ever been victim of hate speech or express it yourself against others? (Only valid answers)**

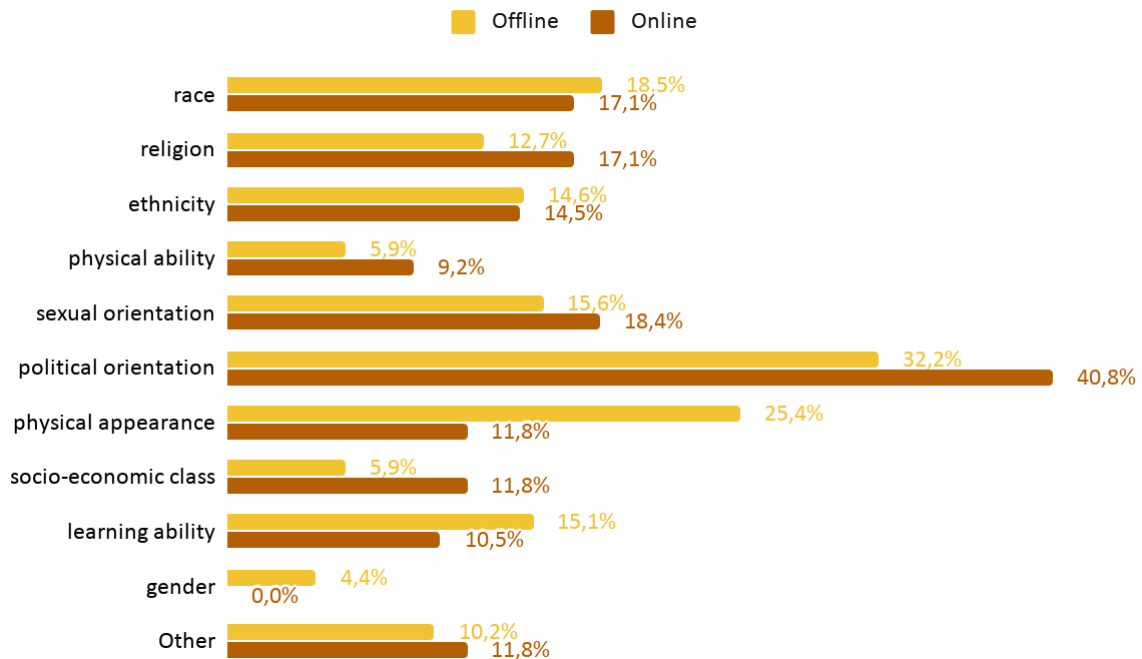


Regardless of the immigration status and whether the message was transmitted online or it or offline, physical appearance seems to be the main target of hate speech according to the participants of the six surveys (Figure 8). However, when the respondents are the ones expressing hate speech, their main target is the political orientation of the victim (Figure 9).

**Figure 8: What aspect of your identity you felt was being targeted? (Only valid answers)**

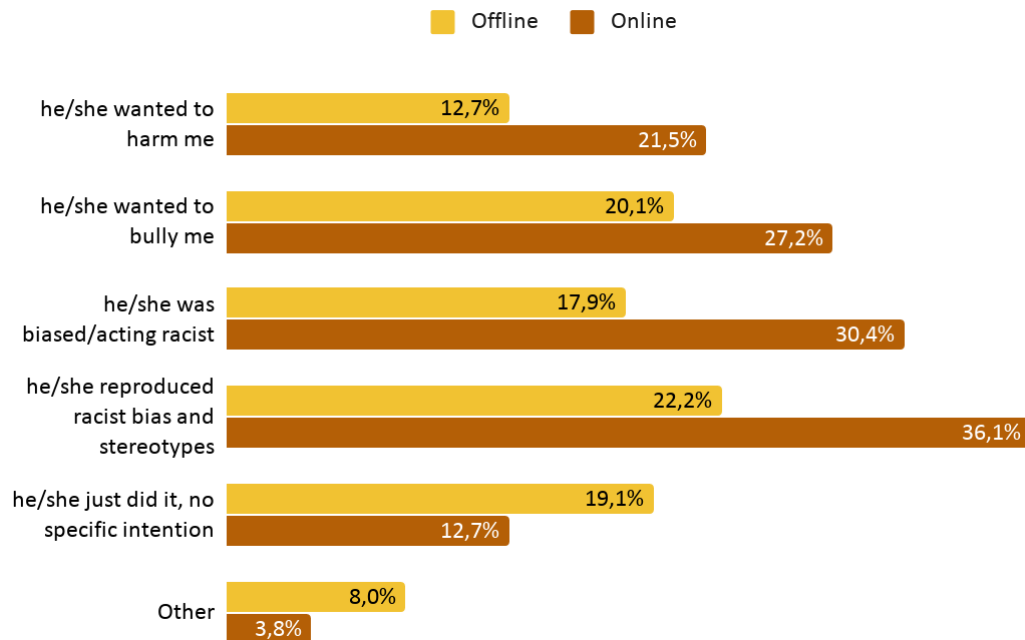


**Figure 9: What aspect of your victim's identity did you target? (Only valid answers)**



Even if offenders' motivations are diverse according to hate speech recipient, they all follow a similar pattern regardless of the channel they use to transmit their message (Figure 10). 'Reproducing racist bias and stereotypes', 'being biased or acting racist', 'bullying' and 'harming' seem to be the main intentions behind the attacks they have received.

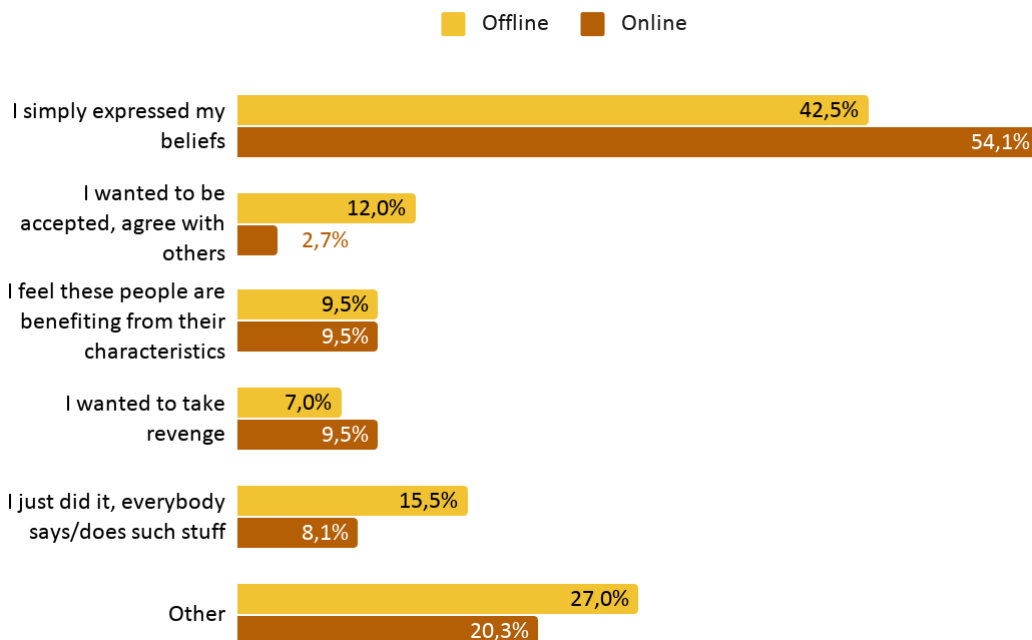
**Figure 10: What do you think was the real intention of the person who expressed hate speech against you? (Only valid answers)**



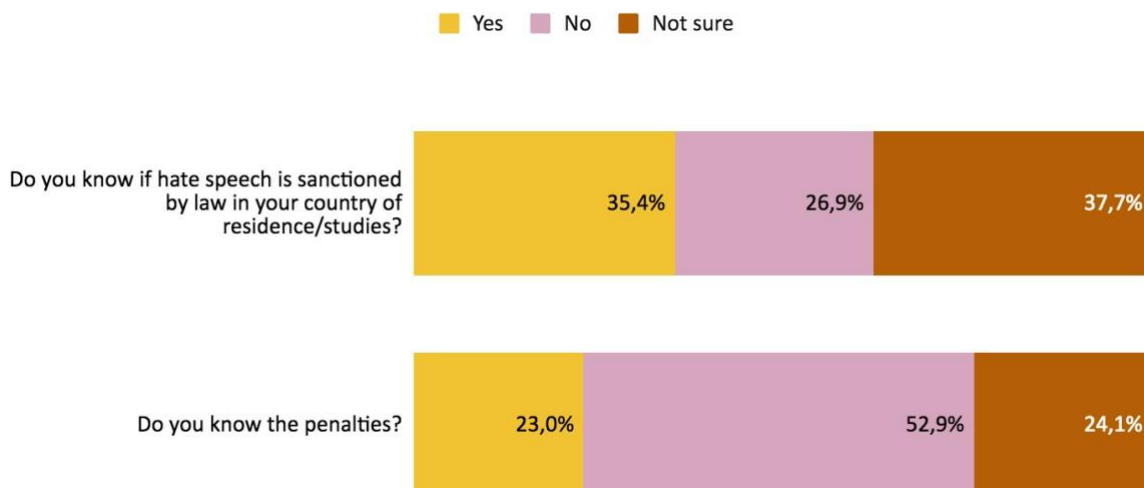
Things change significantly when it comes to ask for a reason those among respondents who themselves recognise having produced hate speech. A ‘I was simply expressing my beliefs’ was by far the response of the majority of offenders among survey participants (Figure 11).

Now, talking punishment, near two thirds of participants did not know or were not sure whether or not hate speech was sanctioned in their country or country residence. Among those who did know, less than a quarter was aware of the penalties (Figure 12).

**Figure 11: What was your real intention? Why did you do it? (Only valid answers)**

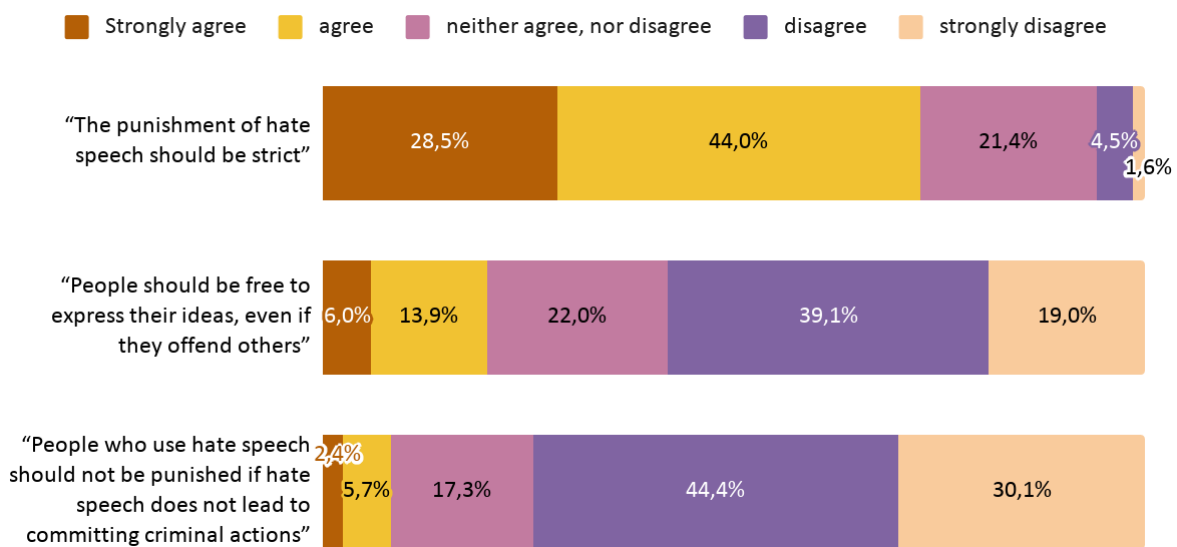


**Figure 12: Is hate speech sanctioned by law in your country of residence/studies? (Only valid answers)**



Punishing “hate speakers” had a generalised consensus. More than 7 out of every 10 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “the punishment of hate speech should be strict”. Such strong position find another support when it comes to discuss hate speech as intrinsic to the right of free expression. Near to six out of ten disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fact that people should be free to express their ideas even if they offend others, and three quarters of participants think the same regarding the statement “people who use hate speech should not be punished if hate speech does not lead to committing criminal actions” (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Attitudes towards punishment of hate speech (Only valid answers)**



The following paragraphs summarise the survey findings by partner country.

## Austria

The respondents of the Austrian survey provided a diversity of definitions to hate speech, nevertheless most participants defined it as any communication that disparages a person or a group on the basis of some characteristic such as race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristics.

Survey data show that participants are more likely to be affected by hate speech offline than online. Regardless of forms and channels, almost 2 out of 10 participants claim having suffered a hate speech attack. Whether it was online or offline, they were attacked mainly because of their political orientation, their physical appearance as well as their race and physical ability. The main intentions behind such attacks were bullying or reproducing racist bias and stereotypes.

Most respondents deny having reproduced hate speech themselves against others (68% have never made an offline hate speech against anyone, online it's even 90%). Those who did, acknowledge that learning ability, religion, political and sexual orientation were their main reasons.

Online attacks were usually made by a comment to a post on their own site or in order to express their opinion or just for no reason (because everyone is doing it). Offline attacks by respondents were specifically directed against people of different ethnicity or political orientation, with the intention of simply expressing one's beliefs or being accepted, or joining the opinion of others.

A significant 60% of respondents to the Austrian survey were positive about whether they knew or not that hate speech was legally sanctioned by law in their home country or country of residence. 30 % were not sure. However, only 27% were familiar with the penalties, the majority (around 60%) had no idea about the penalties defined by the Austrian Government. Nearly half of the participants in the survey agreed on a strict punishment of hate speech. Even more agreed that they should also be punished, even if their hate speech does not lead to criminal acts. When the question was raised whether one is allowed to express one's opinion/ideas freely, even if they offend others, there were different answers: over 10% agree, 20% were neutral, 54% disagreed and 14% absolutely disagreed with the statement.

## **Cyprus**

For participants in the Cypriot survey, hate speech is predominantly defined as racist behavior attempting to derogate other people due to identity traits. Half of the respondents have already experienced hate speech; 7 out of 10 of foreign participants.

Although there was much discussion lately about the extent of hate speech taking place online, our



findings suggest that hate speech is more frequent in real life. About one fourth of the respondents claim having suffered hate speech incidents online, while the respective percentage offline was double. Their physical appearance was the most targeted trait of hate speech both offline and online.

Regarding the 27% of the respondents who admitted having used hate speech against other people, declare having done so as expression of their own beliefs.

As for hate speech punishment, the majority (68%) agrees or strongly agrees that the “punishment of hate speech should be strict”.

Gender did not prove to be a factor triggering hate speech offline, but the opposite was found in the online environment. Male students were found to be attacked more frequently than females. Income on the other hand, seems to have an effect on how the respondents behave especially offline. The findings show that as the income increases, so does the percentage of students who admit to have used hate speech against others.

## **France**

Almost all participants in the French focus group spoke about hate speech as something bad and pointless, describing it as violent discourse, unhealthy and discriminatory, disgusting, stupid, useless, mean and shameful, which intention is to harm and/or to put someone or a group of person down.

Just as in the Austrian and the Cypriot cases, hate speech in France seems clearly more common offline than online. In both cases, attacks on physical features were the most common form of hate speech. Attacks on gender and race were also pointed out. Also in both cases, the main reasons participants think they were victims of hate speeches are connected to the belief that the person wanted to harm and/or bully them. Gratuitous words with no specific intentions are also mentioned.

Only few participants acknowledge having themselves offended other people using hate speech. Their offline attacks targeted mainly others’ political beliefs and physical features while religious beliefs, socio-economic aspects, education level and sexual orientation were mostly online targets.

More than half of the participants knew that hate speech was sanctioned by law, however, most of them did not know or were not sure of the penalties defined by the French law. In this regard, a strong majority think that the punishment of hate speech must be strict even if the action does not lead to criminal actions.

As for the conflict between hate speech and freedom of expression, the answers were very mixed: fifth of the respondents prioritised freedom of speech despite its hateful content; 37% were against such assertion; 12% did not express any opinion. The debate about free speech is very important in France; Are people really free to express themselves? The survey results show that even if a person is, they shouldn't offend others. Communication skills are essential in order to speak freely without harming people.

### **Greece**

All participants in the Greek survey treated hate speech as something bad. Various definitions were given but the majority of them used similar words like: prejudice, bullying, fear, propaganda, crime, unworthiness, disrespect, oral actions, social groups, etc.

Like in the previous consortium countries, hate speech seems to be more common offline than online. People's physical appearance is once again the most targeted aspect; ethnicity and origin being the least.

More than a quarter of the respondents claimed to be aware that hate speech was illegal in their country of residence/studies but only 1 out of four of those declared to know the sentences for such offense. The majority of respondents were for a strict punishment of hate speech offenders, prioritising the rights of the victims above freedom of speech. As for the statement "people who use hate speech should not be punished if hate speech does not lead to committing criminal action", more than three quarters of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed.

As far as gender is concerned, online hate experience seems identical between men and women. The results change when it comes to face-to-face hate speech experience; in this case, men seem to be

more likely to be attacked but also to be the offenders.

Moving to the income, this factor appears to have mixed effect on how the respondents behave online and offline. It seems however that there is a possible positive relation between income and receiving online hate speech. In other words, the more income one earns, the more probable for him to be victim of hate speech, as well as offender.

Finally we were unable to investigate the effect of ethnicity on hate speech experiences since almost all the participants were from Greece.

## **Spain**

Despite the variety of definitions respondents to MATE survey provided, there were at the same time multiple similarities giving that more than 90% of the responses highlighted crucial aspects of hate speech. Summarising these responses we can formulate the following general definition of hate speech:

“Opinions, words and expressions attacking, insulting and humiliating certain group of people according to their origin, sexual orientation or physical appearance. The objective would be to promote hatred, mockery, disdain, fear and violence against these people, motivated by ignorance, misinformation and intolerance.”

Once more, data show that hate speech has far more offline victims than online, targeting mainly the physical appearance of the victim in both cases. Sexual orientation, political orientation and gender were also frequently mentioned by respondents.

A significant 30% of the participants recognized having, themselves, subjected someone else to hate speech offline, mainly because of the political orientation of their victims, but also because of their ethnicity (22%) and race (17%). On the contrary to the expected, only 4.5% of the participants have expressed hate speech on social media.

Regarding punishment against hate speech, almost a third of the respondents claim they knew if hate speech was legally sanctioned in Spain, however 80% of them did not know what was the

correspondent penalty. To the following question stating that the punishment for hate speech should be strict, 67% agreed or strongly agreed, 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed to the fact that people should be allowed to express their ideas even if they offend others and a higher percentage (72%) showed no sympathy towards those who use hate speech even if their behaviour does not lead to the commission of criminal acts.

According to the survey, males are far more exposed to offline hate speech than females. Women on the other hand, receive a little bit more online hate speech than men. Regarding the origin of the victims, the survey shows that among respondents from outside the EU, up to two thirds confirm having been attacked offline, while none of them have received any hate speech in social media. Participants from the EU state having received hate speech offline in 47% of the cases, 27% online.

As for the income, those earning 500€ per month or less seem to be more vulnerable to exposition to hate speech.

## **Sweden**

The majority of the definitions of hate speech given were correct. In terms of ontological status of the definitions provided, many respondents claimed that hate speech was not just 'rhetoric', 'speech', or 'words', but also 'attitude', 'opinion', 'insult', 'negative expression'. This means that many respondents realize that hate speech implies multiple ways of expression, not just on a verbal level. It can be expressed nonverbally, or even on the attitude 'meta'-communication level through 'politically correct' discourse.

Semantically, the most definitions given reflect the concept of discrimination in different forms, emphasising a number of targets and biases for hate speech. In particular, the definitions mention racial and ethnic hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, nationalism, religion, disability, immigrants, minorities, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as other different forms of identity.

Less than 40% reported they had been subjected to offline hate speech. The objects of hate speech targeted were gender and physical appearance followed by religion and race. Regarding online hate

speech on social networks, less number of respondents (below 30%) replied they were subjected to it. Appearance, religion and race were indicated as main characteristics targeted. The intentions of the offenders in both cases were said to be mainly wanting to hurt or bully, especially in online platforms, and acting racist and/or following racial prejudices and stereotypes.

More than 50% of the respondents did not know if hate speech was sanctioned in Sweden; 40% responded correctly ('yes'), while rest 10% gave a negative answer. No participant knew what the penalty was. Three quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the penalty for hate speech should be strict. Only 15% agreed with the statement that "people should be allowed to express their ideas even if they offend others" while 70% were against letting without punishment a hate speaker even if they do not lead to the commission of criminal acts.

The data collected from 60 respondents seems to be non-representative when it comes to identifying correlations between socio-demographic data and the answers provided. Therefore, this data was not analysed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The number and diversity of origins of the students involved in MATE project, whether as participants in the focus groups interviews or as respondents to the survey questions, do not seem sufficient to draw exhaustive conclusions about the forms, channels and dimensions of hate speech and anti-immigration discourse in the studied societies. As we mentioned above, it will have been of great value to have count on a proportionally far more participation of students from third countries, especially from where most so-called “economic immigrants” in Europe come from.

Regardless of these limitations however and keeping in mind that there is no intention to extrapolate the findings out of the context of MATE project and its target population -tertiary students of local and foreign background-, the results of the quantitative phase of this study, combined with the desk research carried out in every partner country, shed light on the issue of hate speech and how young students perceive it and experience it.

The following paragraphs summarise the conclusions and recommendations of each partner country.

### Austria

The so-called social media are often enough quite antisocial: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like not only spread false rumours and other fake news; the channels are also used to spread extremist world views and flooded with hatred. Neither hate speech nor radicalization are completely new phenomena. But their manifestations and consequences have arisen in the course of the past decades - not least due to the changes in the growing role of the internet. The combination of (supposedly) anonymity and the absence of moderating influences could be a playground for hate speech on social media.

Given the steadily growing body of social media content, the amount of online hate speech is also increasing. The Internet has a great potential in terms of diversity of opinion, access to information, communication and participation. This involves danger: contemptuous hatreds, racist insult,

inhumane hate speech or calls for violence in online world were increasingly perceived. Besides, this leads to a higher number of documented cases.

With regard to the framing and publishing of our thoughts, the internet / social media has caused lasting changes, which enable a less screened and more intense participation of the individual in public debates. The various channels of social media make it possible, not only technically but also content-wise, that is possible to intervene not only in the online versions of traditional media but also in online forums of net-based media. The astoundingly excessive use of aggression and the intended instrumentalization of power to influence public opinion making in this context is a central component of the current media discourse. In the face of an alleviated combination and mixing of personal and public space, the questioning of each individual's intimacy comes into force.

As for the research findings, generally speaking, the anti-migrant speeches in Austrian social media were mostly linked to economic subjects like unemployment and different living conditions. In this context, escalation, polarization, and fomenting the "fear the neighbour" are preferred strategies by using bitter remarks: "we do not need muslim feasts", all migrants are criminals; we do not need asylums...". A lot of hateful postings can be found on facebook pages of right wing parties; almost all purport the concept of "homeland" = Tradition versus Migration. Many comments include sexually abusive words against female migrants, such as 'whore', 'bitch' or 'bitch' as well as references to their (alleged) sexual behaviour, which is also known as 'slut shaming'. Furthermore, insults as well as the call for violence against groups due to personal characteristics, such as ethnic origin, gender or sexuality are main statements on social media. Furthermore, the expressiveness of emojis independent from the linguistic context underlined and intensified the intention of users to spread hate against migrants and other minorities. This means, social media do not only consist of text but also include images, video and audio content. Such non-textual content is also regularly commented on, and therefore becomes part of the discourse of a hate speech utterance. Among hateful user posts visual context plays a major role.

In offline hate speeches the victims are injured immediately by the content. For instance, the hate speech on racism in public meetings might motivate other racists to initiate harassment, intimidation,

violence and so on.

The results of the focus group interviews emphasize, that in terms of hate speech, the Internet shows its negative potential. At present, approaches are being developed both regionally and internationally to counter this phenomenon because word-based hatred influences not only those directly affected, but also the way public debates are conducted and thus entire societies and their collective decision-making processes.

The rapid spread of hate speech on the Internet and the lack of effectiveness of existing self-regulation processes brings the state of law to the scene, which is primarily responsible for the implementation of human rights. Hence, when is an opinion worthy of legal protection and when do the interests of third parties, who became the target of a verbal attack, predominate? It is precisely the question of how to deal with the limits of freedom of expression that requires a differentiated examination of the subject of hatred on the Internet. Local integration measures often achieve better outcomes than overly centralised ones. They particularly have a potential to create a genuine dialogue between the groups to be integrated and the local population, helping the parties to get to know each other and be part of their own solution.

## **Cyprus**

Cyprus seems to reflect dominant contemporary trends documented in the western world. Hate speech is a common phenomenon, especially in the offline reality. In fact, students tend to consider offline hate speech as a more important form of racism and discrimination compared to hate speech instances taking place online. Unsurprisingly, hate speech is very often targeting the race and ethnicity of people. Racist discourses against foreign people are used by the proponents of the far-right as arguments for solving economic problems and national sovereignty. But generally speaking, foreign people are more frequently victims of hate speech.

Beyond racial discrimination, the results indicate that the physical appearance of a young person is very often the object of hate speech. In fact, this finding prevailed both in the focus group study and the survey. Apparently, a person's looks have become a primary issue of socialization; unless one's



physical appearance conforms to dominant norms and standards, this may put him/her in a lot of trouble. The second finding deserving attention regards “racism against the poor”. It was well-emphasized in the focus group study that a third-country national (commonly a victim of hate speech) would be ok if he/she was of upper economic status. The survey results also confirmed this finding. Additionally, there seems to be a growing trend towards silencing people of different views and opinions. Hate speech targeting the political orientation of students emerged as a dominant form of hate speech, especially online. Finally, gender and income seem to influence instances of hate speech. Contrary to common perceptions male students proved more frequent victims of hate speech compared to female students. Regarding the income factor, it turns out that more affluent students are more likely to exert hate speech.

## **Greece**

Greece is a country who accepts a lot of migrants and refugees. Although the majority of them see Greece as an intermediate country, in their attempt to reach the countries of the North Europe, the circumstances force them to stay in Greece for long time periods.

Starting with the definition of hate speech the results of our study indicate that Greek students believe that it is not easy to be defined. It is regarded as a form of discriminatory oral or written expression. They included any expression (oral, symbolic, written) that promotes hatred and execration for something different from us. Thoroughly, assaulting an identity (nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability) that is theoretically inferior to our own identity. In addition, they included the media perspective, namely the speech, the images, the audiovisual media used to stigmatize and marginalize some social groups.

One of the major findings of the survey is that hate speech in Greece is more present offline in comparison to the general belief that social media is promoting hate speech. It is worth noting that the consulted social media did not provide any important hate speech data.

In the case of face to face communication, we identified seven evidence of hate speech (Greek citizenship and the integration of migrants, refugees and minorities and the racist stereotypes as they

can be found in sports and in public spaces). The survey indicates that offline hate speech is constructed on the dipole “we” versus “them”. The Greeks are described as lawful citizens who are committed to their country and have suffered during the economic crisis. The refugees, migrants and the minorities in general, who constitute the out-group, are characterized as criminals, illegal aliens who invaded to “our” land and stole the benefits from the Greeks. As regards the reasons motivating hate speech, the study identified the following: family and friends, lack of education, poor legal and constitutional framework, financial crisis, disinformation on social media, media agenda, and bad experiences with immigrants.

The survey identified that the gender is a significant parameter in expressing and also experiencing hate speech in both online and offline environments. On the other hand the parameter income provides us with some mixed results. It seems that more wealthy students are more likely to be recipients of hate speech and also more unlikely to express hate speech. But this is only evident in online and not in offline communication.

## **France**

Anti-migrant hate speech expresses itself as a linguistic act of identity building and protecting. In a violent manner a duality between two abstract groups is created: we vs. them, French patriot vs. migrant. Most of these hateful expressions are appearing in the context of economic, social or cultural topics and often create false causalities between events. Using generalisations, simplifications, exaggerations and insults, they open a gap between “us” and “the other”, insisting on difference and creating a power relation that puts the speaker in the strong position.

Among the participants in the two focus groups, there were no radical or discriminatory opinions or students that admitted having been victim of hate speech themselves. This seems not to be representative for the situation in France in general, as they all have at least observed discriminatory behaviour and feel very concerned by the topic.

Participants agree that the main reasons for anti-migrant hate speech are fear, misinformation through media and politics, a lack of education and a lack of general economic well-being of the

population. Hate speech is an emotional and violent expression of intolerance and fear. Hate speech is also used as a political instrument to create fear and misinformation. Unawareness and false news flourish in an online and offline environment lacking profound exchange and discussion. For these reasons the main measures to be taken against hate speech are the improvement of education and the design of public space fostering exchange.

Among the participants, there were no radical or discriminatory answers also. However, it seems that the definition of hate speech is not particularly clear even though they got the general idea. There are also not aware about the legal sanctions of hate speech.

Freedom of speech is a polarised subject: most of our participants think that hate speech is a way of expressing some beliefs. The intention to harm and/or bully is also mentioned as one of the main reasons for hate speech. For our participants, the most common forms of hate speech are mostly about physical features and political beliefs. Gender, race and education level are also mentioned.

## **Spain**

Giving the global and regional political tendencies, the recent rise of the extreme right wing in Spain was expected. Indeed, examining social media of official political parties shows a dramatic spread of explicit hate speech against immigration widely expressed mainly by the followers of the far right leaders; including immigrants among the “most dangerous enemies of the country”, alongside with Catalan pro-independence movement, feminists and lefties, and often comparing theme with “animals”, “terrorists”, “rapists”, “criminals” and “parasites”.

This analysis not only demonstrates how politically polarised Spanish society is and how easy it is to manipulate the public opinion nowadays, but also shows the urgent need to finding effective strategies to fight hate-speech and ideological radicalisation of young European citizens.

Although Spain, compared to other European countries, is still has a low percentage of citizens with foreign background , hate speech is rapidly spreading and becoming a normalised component of daily social interactions. Many research and news articles have reported evidences on racism and discrimination practices in Spain. School segregation according to ethnicity and geographic origin or

football supporters' slogans against black players are some of the most relevant examples. The evidences reported in this analysis do not show, however, the real dimension of Face-to-Face hate speech.

Regarding the focus group meeting, participants agreed that anti-immigrant hate speech in Spain is a fact and that some of the key reasons behind it are ignorance, mass media propaganda and extreme right wing leaders discourse. The comparison between hate-speech in different countries and the link between anti-immigration and machismo discourses arose an interesting debate between participants, showing typical ideological prejudices even among some of these involved and educated young students: "In Morocco there is no hate speech against sub-Saharan immigrants" (MB student); "Hate speech nowadays is more against men than against women" (Local female student); "Romanian Roma community live a luxurious life, [they own] luxurious houses." (Romanian student).

Participants' suggestions on how to fight hate speech were diverse but focused on education while most of them rejected legal restrictions. However, during the meeting, we had the impression that participants were not sufficiently familiarized with the topic of hate speech and anti-immigrant discourse. In general terms, some of the testimonies and opinions regarding these phenomena either on social media or face to face were trivial; others were thoughtful and needed a deepest analysis.

We also had the impression that political correctness seemed to restrict the opinions of the participants. The fact that the moderator was an immigrant himself could have also influenced such behaviour among local students. Regarding those with immigrant background, many factors could have influenced the nature of personal experiences they expressed during the interview. There were only three, all women having grown up in Spain: one having been born in Spain, a second having emigrated to Spain at the age of three and the third one, with a Caucasian appearance, having arrived at the age of ten. It was also revealing that the only participant wearing a hijab has not expressed (or has refrained from expressing) any negative personal experience as an immigrant or has not witnessed any hate-speech or anti-immigration discourse neither face to face neither on social media.

As for the survey, two main differences to highlight in comparison to the focus group results. First, the definitions of hate speech provided by a significant part of the respondents were sophisticated and

precise. Second, a wide majority of respondents support legal punishment against hate speech. It is also to mention that the small number of immigrant students who have participated in the survey did not help providing a faithful idea about their personal experience and own perception of hate speech in Spain.

### Sweden

The research showed that the evidences of separation between immigrants and Swedish are still present in the society. Many hate speech examples studied in the online resources was related to economic struggles of the country. The negative comments based on pure racism was not found online in the studied sources. The comments were not common and were found only in the pages of far-right political party and right wing politician social page. At the same time during the research, we found comments protecting immigrants and arguing fake news related to the negative picture of the immigration. Such tendency may mean that generally, Swedish society is open and friendly toward refugees but more work should be done in awareness raising and educating. We must out resources in explaining that current socioeconomic issues are not related to refugees, and that crimes committed by some of the immigrants cannot be reason to give negative opinion regarding immigrants in general. The common work in awareness rising may significantly improve the view of immigrant by hosting society and increase the effectivity of integration.

Within the desk research, after the analysis of many resources of offline interaction, no hate speech was found in public speeches, face-to-face discussions, meetings, conferences. Generally, people in Sweden try to analyse the situation and open to people of other nationalities. Followed by long research only one example of offline hate speech against immigrants was found. The online hate speech is probably more frequent, as more examples of it was found. This may be connected with control of Swedish community over such incidents, while online hate speech is more difficult to regulate. One can see that the tendency of hate speech against immigrants both online and offline has the same source, which is populist far right wing political forces.

During the focus groups all of the respondents have heard about the term ‘hate speech’. The most common thought was that hate speech is negative expressions or statements toward immigrants,

based on common stereotypes. More than half of the respondents have witnessed hate speech either towards them or their friends/ acquaintances. Although, the hate speech was experienced directly or personally by none of the respondents. Some of them, however, noticed the different attitude towards them as immigrants. For example many students noticed that Swedish people are not making friends or hang out so often with immigrant students as they could.

The online surveying showed quite contradicting results from the focus groups in terms of the ratio of offline and online hate speech. Almost 40% reported they had been subjected to offline hate speech. The objects of hate speech targeted were gender and appearance (more than 60% cases), followed by religion and race. The motivation for hate speech split quite evenly between wanting to hurt or bully and being biased, acting racist and/or following racial prejudices and stereotypes.

As for online hate speech on social networks, just around 30% of the survey respondents replied they were subjected to it. Appearance, religion and race were indicated as main characteristics targeted.

The prevailing channel (more than 80%) used for hate speech was a comment on a post on a group's page / account, but single cases of commenting on personal post were also reported. The intentions for hate speech were said to be mainly (more than 80%) acting racist and/or following racial prejudices and stereotypes.

The contradiction in results between focus groups and online survey is determined by the format of the research and in case of focus groups, were defined by particular people participated and the particular communication situation of the focus group that had a place to be. As the focus group aimed at getting the qualitative data, and the questionnaire - the quantitative one, we will consider that online hate speech is more widespread than offline one.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Austria

The focus of training tools to encourage young people should be on strengthening individual diversity competence by implementing cooperation-promoting or solution-oriented diversity measures in one's own everyday life. Knowledge of social and cultural diversity and about current legal standards on equality, anti-discrimination and security in digital environments should be included. With the help of practical tools e.g. coaching methods they are able to act professional in challenging situations.

Possible contents of the training tool:

- Media competence as a key qualification
- Intercultural Communication and Conflict Management
- Intercultural Communication and Conflict Management

#### Other Comments:

The research on that topic in Austria shows that the legal situation against massive verbal violence on the net is just as if we were in the second or third year of the Internet age which means that those affected by hatred on the net have virtually no legal means to defend themselves. The reason why the legal situation regarding hatred on the net is so lame, even though active women and minorities fight with it every day on the net, is certainly connected with the fact that "only" these groups are affected anyway. At the beginning of 2019, plans were announced in Austria for "de-anonymisation" on the Internet. Users should therefore register on online platforms with first and last names. The fact that experts and affected persons objected that verbal sexualised assaults and hatred on the net happen very well and often under clear names and that a "de-anonymisation" does not help the affected persons at all, and certainly not at all a legal tool - no matter how. Maybe a better understanding of how the ecology of online hate evolves could create more effective intervention policies.



## **Cyprus**

First of all, young people seem to not be fully aware of the consequences of hate speech; therefore, the development of tools which can familiarize students with the diversity of hate speech and negative effects of hate speech on people's development and socialization are deemed important. The focus groups showed that often young people tend to be tolerant towards hate speech; they tend to see it as "bad behavior that should be fixed" instead of a criminal act that needs to be punished. This issue is associated with a low awareness of the deep and negative effects of hate speech on people's lives.

Second, the students should be trained to develop intercultural competence. Emphasis should be given: 1) on the notion of "respect"; valuing other cultures); openness (withholding judgement); curiosity (viewing difference as a learning opportunity); discovery (tolerance for ambiguity) and 2) skills; listening, observing, evaluating using patience and perseverance; viewing the world from others' perspectives.

Thirdly, tools to raise awareness regarding the multiple and diverse forms of hate speech are needed. Although the focus groups revealed racism toward the poor to be a dominant and common form of discrimination and hate speech, this dimension did not come up in the definitions provided by the respondents (at least those who gave definition mentioning the origin of the racist behavior). Additionally, when students were asked to provide definitions of hate speech, the majority of answers defined hate speech as racist behaviour targeting identity traits, such as race, gender, sexual orientation and religion. Interestingly enough, racism and discrimination targeting three of the most common forms of hate speech identified in the research (socio-economic status, appearance and political orientation) did not come up in the definitions provided by the respondents.



## **Greece**

The problem of hate speech requires a combination of actions that will raise awareness on this issue. Those actions should be implemented by various stakeholders and on various levels. Next some of those actions are briefly presented.

**Media:** the media should focus on the problem and educate the general public on the issue and the ways to deal with it.

**Universities:** they should educate their students on the issue. This can be achieved by conducting workshops on the issue where students will experience offline and online hate speech and will learn how to deal with it. Also elective courses that address the problem can be offered in the form of free elective courses.

**NGOs:** They can also engage in similar activities with the universities but will focus on the general population.

**Governments:** they should take actions on their own targeted on increasing awareness on the issue but also support (financial and other) actions taken by other stakeholders. Also they can legislate stricter laws that will tackle the problem of hate speech.

## **France**

Based on the results of the focus groups, we recommend finding a strategy to reach students that are directly concerned by discriminatory and excluding behaviour. As we were not able to reach these students by our call for participation for the focus groups, we must find a way to reach them for the next phases of the project in order to have more impact and a bigger variety of opinions and experiences.

We also agree with the participants saying that civil society actions can only have a real long-term impact if there is also a reaction on political level. Therefore we recommend inviting political representatives to the multiplier events and on other occasions and to report regularly on the measures taken and its impact on student life.

Other Comments:

Discussions for an amendment of the French law should start during the current presidential mandate and it was also a topic during the citizens consultations organised by the French president at the beginning of the year.

With the evolution of the media and information dissemination networks, the law is no longer appropriate for suppressing hate speech. The law of 29 July 1881 on the freedom of the press, inspired by the revolutionary ideal, was primarily intended initially to preserve the freedom of expression. The law still relies today on a procedural regime derogating from common law. It thus hampers the use of rapid trial procedures. It provides for complex procedural rules, imposes a shortened prescription and prohibits the issuance of a warrant of arrest or arrest to ensure the execution of sanctions pronounced. Since 1881, the means of expression, the vectors of thought diffusion, have in fact considerably evolved, calling into question the equilibrium to which the law had come. In the age of the Internet and social networks, the freedom of expression does not lack means of diffusion of the opinions but of rules allowing punishing effectively the abuses. The new means of communication make it easy for everyone, alone and sometimes anonymously, to become an author of publications without taking responsibility for them. This massive and almost instantaneous dissemination of racist or anti-Semitic expressions, combined with the weakness of the current legal means to counteract them, leads to a dangerous banalisation of the evil.

## **Spain**

Hate speech in Spain is not something new. The country was one of the latest European territories to transit from a dictatorial and fascist regime to democracy in 1978. However residues of that era are still present. Forty years later, the ideological heirs of the dictator Francisco Franco are back to the House of Commons, to City Councils and regional governments. Third political force in Spain, VOX's popularity is amount to millions of Spaniards. People are accepting, adopting and spreading the harsh message of the far right with hate speech as key motivation. The fear and hatred VOX's leaders have been diffusing during the last few years alongside with the disguised racist message of other "moderated" political forces are now reaping the benefits.

Keeping in mind the European context where the extreme right is getting more popularity thanks to hate speech and anti-immigration discourse, it seems necessary to implement participative and action oriented projects on the topic targeting different social categories. Young local and migrant students in the case of MATE, other projects on intercultural competencies could target social workers, civil servants and families from popular social classes living in vulnerable urban areas and sensitive multicultural neighbourhoods; where the extreme right is gaining power exponentially.

Indeed, participants in the focus group emphasised the importance of education as a key measure to tackle anti-immigrant hate speech. They recognise their own lack of multicultural education and the necessity of educating the society in general and children particularly on freedom of speech, cultural diversity and basic human rights. Legal surveillance would not be appropriate in our digital era and would contradict the freedom of speech human right. We endorse such positions and believe that education on diversity would be the main strategy to counteract and mitigate hatred against immigrants in its different ways of expression.

For this FC meeting, unfortunately, we failed to attract and select a more diverse group of students in order to collect multiple points of view and differentiated personal experiences regarding the FC topic. As a result, we could not reach significant and specific conclusions on online and face-to-face hate speech. For the next FC, being aware of the limitations of this first experience, we will take into account the timing and make some changes on the FC dissemination strategy.

From the survey we have been able to contrast and compare the results of the focus group obtaining interesting data that we can improve in quantity and quality by reformulating certain questions and enlarging the universe of the survey and the size of the sample.

### Sweden

Recommendations based on the focus group conclusions and according to the project purpose:

- Project products (anti-racism workshops, the training course) must include findings, discovered in the focus groups
- The project products must include modules on media literacy and cross-cultural communication
- Both locals and migrants should be addressed, differently
- Recommendations on measures to cope with hate speech, suggested at the focus groups, should be further developed
- Specific cultural national context (including motivation for hate speech and national cultural characteristics that 'slow down' integration) should be taken into account while developing project products

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Hate speech is causing real struggles in European societies nowadays. Despite the huge disparities between the consortium countries, whether in economic, demographic, political, historical or cultural terms, this research shows significant similarities regarding the mechanisms, forms and extension of hate speech according to three sources of information:

- the desk research every partner carried out with the analysis of street and offline evidences as well as the content of social media of 59 sources including political organisations, students forums and websites and influencers posts and videos;
- the opinion of 108 focus groups students of local and foreign background and;
- the data collected from a survey responded by 756 young students of local and foreign background as well.

During this research, MATE partners have gathered evidence of anti-immigrant discourse in city walls and public places, surfed the Net looking for offensive posts and comments on political parties and influencers social media as well as in students-oriented websites. MATE partners have analysed these contents and made comparisons between countries. The Internet appears to be an ideal platform for anonym “hate speakers” but also for well-known ones, especially far-right political leaders and their followers. They use it extensively to spread hate against the “enemies of the nation” such as homosexuals, political opponents and immigrants. Fake news, stereotyped images and simplistic generalisations are effective tools to spread fear and social alarm in order to deepen divisiveness in society growing the ideal arena for manifestations of radical ethnocentrism and otherness. Indeed, hate speech and anti-immigration discourse can be identified through the basic parameter “Us”, as the Good, versus “Them”, as the Devil.

**Watching and analysing young students of local and foreign background discussing hate speech during the focus groups activity, showed the importance of educating future generations in cultural diversity and intercultural competences. Students passion for social peace and equality, their empathy, their strong position against racism and their critical sense need a theoretical framework and practical tools to be empowered and to resist the obscure forces of hate.**

Finally, the results of MATE's survey displayed interesting and wide variety of data on the topic. Many results coincide with the findings of the research desk and the focus groups, however, some contradictions showed up as well. According to the survey data, online hate speech is not the most dominant form; respondents, instead, claimed having suffered or produced more hateful discourses in real-life situations than on social media. Another noteworthy data appeared around whether hate speech should be punished by law or should be accepted and defended as free speech. And these are some of the reasons why is so important to involve young people in decisive social issues like hate speech: they are the solution.