

# Addressing hate speech through education

A guide for policy-makers



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# Countering hate speech through education

Hate speech is spreading faster and further than ever before as a result of social media user growth and the rise of populism. Both online and offline, hate speech targets people and groups based on who they are. It has the potential to ignite and fuel violence, spawn violent extremist ideologies, including atrocity crimes and genocide. It discriminates and infringes on individual and collective human rights, and undermines social cohesion.

Education can play a central role in countering hateful narratives and the emergence of group-targeted violence. Educational responses to hate speech and all forms of hateful communication include:

- Training teachers and learners on the values and practices related to being respectful global and digital citizens;
- Adopting pedagogical and whole-school approaches to strengthening social and emotional learning;
- Revising and reviewing curricula and educational materials to make them culturally responsive and to include content that identifies hate speech and promotes the right to freedom of expression;

This policy guide developed by UNESCO and the United Nations' Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect explores these educational responses and provides guidance and recommendations to policy-makers on how to strengthen education systems to counter hate speech.

1,628,281

**pieces of content  
deemed to violate  
Twitter's hate speech  
policy were removed  
between July and  
December 2020.**



**unesco**

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed."*

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### UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



### The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect established in 2005, reports directly to the Secretary-General. The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide is mandated to raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of genocide, alert the Secretary-General, and through him the Security Council, where there is a risk of genocide, and to advocate and mobilize for appropriate action. The Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect leads the conceptual, political, institutional, and operational development of the Responsibility to Protect principle and works under the overall guidance of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The Office collects information, conducts assessments of situations worldwide and alerts the Secretary-General, and other relevant actors, to the risk of atrocity crimes, as well as their incitement. The Office also undertakes training and provides technical assistance to promote a greater understanding of the causes and dynamics of atrocity crimes as well as enhance the capacity of the United Nations, Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society to prevent atrocity crimes and develop effective means of response when they occur. Since 2019, the Office is also the UN focal point coordinating implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.



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# Foreword

This publication presents the first policy guidance developed by the United Nations' Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) and UNESCO to address hate speech through education. Hate speech is a centuries-old problem of acute concern that has gained new levels of traction globally as a result of the digital turn and rise of populism. Today, hatred is thriving, both online and offline, infringing on the individual and collective human rights and undermining social cohesion.

Hate speech has the potential to incite violence and discrimination. It has emerged as a tool of choice for the prejudiced seeking to discriminate against, exclude and harm others that they perceive as different. It has spawned violent extremist ideologies and instigated atrocity crimes, including genocide.

The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech provides a framework to better coordinate global action to counter the phenomenon. As the problem is complex, the responses need to be versatile and education has a central role to play in helping to effectively address the root causes of hate speech and build the capacity of learners to oppose it by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to counter the hateful narratives that they are confronted with, whether online or offline.

Countering hate speech does not mean to limit the freedom to speak. On the contrary, it should mean striving to encourage, foster and protect freedom of expression as a universal human right, ensuring that measures to safeguard individuals and groups from

being targeted do nothing to curb access to that right. Education can help to strike this difficult balance by empowering teachers and educators to foster an appreciation of human rights, promote respect for diversity and cultivate active and responsible citizenship.

This policy guide seeks to provide guidance and recommendations on how better to frame, develop and implement education policies to address the problem.

It builds on UNESCO's programmes on global citizenship education and incorporates elements reflecting the Organization's longstanding commitment to human rights education and education to prevent violent extremism, antisemitism and racism, as well as to the development of media and information literacy skills. It further builds on the work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, as the United Nations focal point on Hate Speech in implementing the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action, and on UNESCO and the Office's programmes to integrate genocide and atrocity prevention into education.

The publication is the direct outcome of the October 2021 Global Education Ministers Conference on addressing hate speech through education convened by the United Nations Secretary-General and organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. The ministerial conference set out key recommendations to strengthen education policy and pave the way towards more effective long-term preventive strategies



to mitigate the impacts of hate speech. This policy guide translates them into concrete approaches and practices.

It is our hope that the guide will assist policy-makers in strengthening the educational dimension in national policy frameworks and action plans to address hate speech and enhance the roles of professionals



**Alice Wairimu Nderitu**

United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General  
on the Prevention of Genocide

on the ground. We also hope that it inspires holistic policy-making approaches that foster a hate-free climate, respectful of differences and supportive of human rights in communities and digital environments, whether online or offline, allowing persons of all backgrounds and identities to live free from fear and discrimination.



**Stefania Giannini**

Assistant Director-General  
for Education, UNESCO



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**Note:** This policy guide draws on previous UNESCO guidelines on the prevention of violent extremism through education (2017) and addressing antisemitism through education (2018), as well as the UNESCO publication *Countering Online Hate Speech* (2015). The policy guide is informed by the outcomes of the UNESCO and OSAPG expert meeting on countering hate speech, held in May 2020<sup>1</sup>, as well as the conclusions of the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Addressing hate speech through education, held in October 2021<sup>2</sup>. The guide further builds on existing resources developed by UNESCO's Education and Communication and Information Sectors on global citizenship education, media and information literacy and the promotion of freedom of expression.

1 [Education as a tool for prevention: addressing and countering hate speech, Expert meeting \(13-18 May 2020\)](#)

2 [Addressing Hate Speech Through Education, Multi-stakeholder Online Forum \(30 September – 1 October 2021\)](#)

# Executive summary

Hate speech is a virulent form of discrimination that targets and undermines the human rights of persons and peoples based on their –presumed – identity and serves as a driver of populist narratives and violent extremist ideologies. In view of the increasing prevalence of hate speech, online and offline, it is imperative that local, regional and national governments and international organizations prioritize the development of effective strategies to counter it while maintaining a balance with the fundamental human right to freedom of expression.

The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, launched in 2019, calls for a coordinated, system-wide response to the upsurge in harmful discourse, online and offline, and for education to be leveraged “as a tool for addressing and countering” the phenomenon.

Indeed, the effectiveness of the approaches needs the development of comprehensive strategies focused not only on mitigation and response but also on prevention, addressing the root causes of hate speech through interventions at every level of education, in both formal and non-formal settings, from preprimary and early childhood to higher education, in vocational education and through lifelong learning opportunities.

Addressing hate speech through education implies strengthening the capacity of education systems, including institutions and educators, to provide safe and inclusive learning environments that are free from hate and prejudice, respectful of human rights and supportive of diverse cultures, identities and beliefs. It requires a transversal, learnercentred approach to actively address all forms of intolerance, discrimination and hate, including harassment and violence while simultaneously paving the way for justice and equity through promoting global citizenship education.

This guide offers concrete recommendations for policy-makers to address hate speech and mitigate the impacts on those targeted through strategies focusing on, inter alia, the curricula and textbooks, the pedagogy, teacher education, the management of educational institutions and partnerships. A combined approach of systematic, simultaneous interventions across all those areas is key to effectively addressing hate speech and making societies more resilient to dehumanizing expressions of hate.



## Key recommendations

- 1. Prioritize the issue of hate speech and take action to counter it with concrete implementation plans, including policy frameworks and budgetary allocations.**  
.....
- 2. Integrate efforts to counter hate speech into existing education sector initiatives to provide for a holistic approach to the issue.**  
.....
- 3. Ensure that strategies to address hate speech uphold the right to freedom of expression.**  
.....
- 4. Establish and implement clear guidelines and mechanisms to support individuals and groups targeted by hate speech in educational settings, including clear reporting mechanisms and norms for compliance.**  
.....
- 5. Incorporate into formal curriculum educational activities to address the root causes of hate speech, paying particular attention to historical and contemporary inequities.**  
.....
- 6. Create and continuously update curricula on media and information literacy and digital citizenship.**  
.....
- 7. Include in curricula educational activities to strengthen skills in critical thinking, social and emotional learning, intercultural dialogue and global citizenship to foster the necessary prosocial behavioural change to counter hate speech and promote inclusiveness and diversity.**  
.....
- 8. Encourage extracurricular activities that conduce to critical thinking and intercultural dialogue and can contribute to an inclusive environment.**  
.....
- 9. Develop and implement mechanisms to encourage and enable schools to ensure that the learning climate in the classroom is safe, respectful and inclusive, to become models of diversity and inclusiveness and to cultivate a whole-of-school approach for efforts to address hate speech.**  
.....
- 10. Provide educators and school leaders with in-service training to equip them with new educational approaches to respond to and counter hate speech in their daily activities and interactions with students.**  
.....
- 11. Build the resilience of education systems through an integrated effort including family and community outreach and multi-stakeholder partnership.**  
.....
- 12. Establish criteria to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of interventions to address hate speech.**  
.....

# 1. Introduction

**Addressing the challenge of hate speech is a pressing problem for societies around the world. Recent advances in information technology, online communications and mass media have markedly changed the pace and reach of its spread.<sup>3</sup> Across the globe, we have witnessed an alarming increase in the proliferation and impacts of hate speech directed at individuals and groups.**

Hate speech undermines human rights and social cohesion, challenges the safety and security of the members of targeted groups and democratic societies and reduces the potential for equitable life experiences in multi-ethnic and multicultural communities.<sup>4</sup>

These developments pose a direct threat to the achievement of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore imperative that local, regional and national governments and international organizations address the proliferation of hate speech. Countering hate speech after it has occurred is not enough: it has to be prevented by tackling the root causes through education. Strategies to moderate and reduce its spread call for the support of investment in educational approaches that raise the awareness and strengthen the resilience of the learners that might encounter it.

In that light, this publication aims to shift the discourse on hate speech from an almost exclusive focus on correction through surveillance and monitoring towards that of addressing the problem through education. Such an approach is consistent with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, launched in 2019, which stresses the need to tackle the root causes and drivers while mitigating its impacts. It is also consistent with UNESCO's efforts to improve the relevance and capacity of education systems to address global challenges to peace, justice, human rights, gender equity, pluralism, respect for diversity and democracy.

## Purpose of the publication

This publication should not be seen as just another set of guidelines to foist on already overburdened education systems; nor should it be understood as in any way advocating for censorship and erasure. Rather, it aims to show how hate speech can be addressed as part of a mission to strengthen the inclusiveness of communities and nations and strive for the broader goal of fostering comprehensive societal resilience in the face of hateful ideologies, violent extremism and atrocity crimes<sup>6</sup> while upholding and promoting freedom of expression. This is challenging work and the purpose of this guide is to provide Member States with policy guidance on

<sup>3</sup> See Gagliardone et al. (2015). Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231>

<sup>4</sup> For examples and analysis, see Banaji and Bhat (2022), Carlson (2021), Sobieraj (2022) and Udupa et al. (2021).

<sup>5</sup> This guide incorporates and expands upon the content of a number of previous United Nations reports addressing various aspects and challenges related to hate speech and freedom of expression. All the relevant reports and resources are listed in the references section of this guide.

<sup>6</sup> The term "atrocity crimes", in this guide, refers to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as defined under international law.

addressing hate speech within and through education, proposing specific measures and examples of good practices and lessons learned at the national and regional levels in regard to media and information literacy and global citizenship education.

The guide offers advice for system-wide responses to hate speech through education and the guidance includes strategies to strengthen national policy-making; to improve teacher training and provide for in-service teacher development; and to review curricula and textbooks, offer pedagogical support and improve the general atmosphere in schools. It also outlines how policy-makers can complement formal education strategies and action plans to strengthen educational responses to hate speech in those areas by building partnerships with civil society and the private sector. While the guide speaks to global audiences, its recommendations may be adapted to and incorporated into regional and national frameworks where possible and relevant.

This policy guide encourages policy-makers to integrate a new way of thinking about hate speech throughout education. Addressing hate speech is not a task confined to a single

specific subject. It is embedded in the drive to protect and preserve human rights for all and, in that light, education systems should consider the imperative requirement to combat hate speech as part of a broader set of contexts covering both formal and non-formal education.

## Key themes and structure

The guide divides into four main parts. The first provides background information on education as a strategy to address hate speech; the second reviews the definitions, root causes, contextual challenges and tensions between national and international legal frameworks; the third explores responses to hate speech, detailing the role of education systems and educational and pedagogical practices and discussing the role of education policy, pedagogy and classroom practices, curricula and textbooks, school leadership and management and partnerships; and the fourth suggests strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of education policies and practices in addressing hate speech, concluding with a selection of additional recommended resources that might be helpful.

## 2. Background

### Why education

Action to counter hate speech is often considered through the lens of moderation and regulatory frameworks, with a particular focus on content removal and social media “deplatforming” or opposition to those measures based on claims of unfair censorship.<sup>7</sup> There are debates under way within and among countries on the appropriate policies, how practically to enforce rules or laws, such as antitrust laws, to regulate communications and related aspects and the implementation of strategies to hold Internet companies or social media platforms to account when violence is fomented or planned on their sites. Those discussions, although essential, sometimes offer only immediate or short-term responses to the problem of hateful expression and regulatory strategies must be carefully considered in the light of the chilling effect that restrictive laws have had on democracy in some parts of the world, particularly where legislation is not fully aligned with international human rights law. There is also a wide range of non-regulatory strategies to address hate speech and curb its production, circulation (in both online and offline spaces) and impacts, particularly in the social and educational spheres.<sup>8</sup>

Hate speech, as detailed throughout this guide, can create unsafe and inequitable living and learning environments in a variety of ways. In formal school settings, hateful rhetoric may manifest in formal curricula and textbooks, in classroom engagements exchanges between

teachers and students, among peers during lessons, in school corridors, cafeterias or at extracurricular clubs, athletics events and during other activities. Hateful rhetoric may also permeate informal and nonformal learning environments – such as Scouting clubs, extramural sports teams and children’s and adult recreational activities – and instructional settings outside school, community based choirs and orchestras, art lessons, tutoring sessions, book clubs and so on.

Hate speech is not, of course, a problem solely for education systems. Equally, education cannot be seen as the only solution as opposed to one essential part of a wider, multisectoral approach encompassing prevention, mitigation, and efforts to counter the problem within wider-ranging policies related to security, human rights and non-discrimination.

Hateful language dehumanizes, threatens, and may incite hostility, discrimination, bullying or other forms of violence against victims in a wide variety of private and public settings, both online and offline. It can also exacerbate or reinforce persistent inequalities and discrimination. Hate speech can be particularly dangerous in times of tension, conflict and crisis – it fuel violent extremism and, in the most serious cases, be a precursor of – or trigger for – hate crimes and other atrocities. Education must be seen as part of the response to a wider call for longterm, preventive investment to address the problem by building systemic resilience to hateful discourse and

<sup>7</sup> For a fuller discussion, see “Conclusion: policing speech in a centralizing Internet” in Kaye (2019, pp. 112–126).

<sup>8</sup> See UNESCO (2021). *Addressing hate speech on social media: contemporary challenges*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379177>.

strengthening appreciation of human rights as a basis for more peaceful and inclusive societies.

Strengthening educational responses requires a resilient system in which exclusionary rhetoric and hate speech are less likely to take root and where resilient learners are less likely to be persuaded by hateful discourse. This is at the heart of the Education 2030 Agenda and efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7, which touches on the social, moral and humanistic purposes of education.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, all learners, in particular youth, deserve inclusive and equitable quality education that respects and promotes human rights while ensuring empowerment through dialogue with a view to fostering a shared sense of humanity. The crucial countering of hate speech through education requires a multifaceted, integrated approach with emphasis on, inter alia, education for peace and global citizenship (target 4.7), intercultural education, the prevention of violent extremism through education, the strengthening of the rule of law through education and education about violent pasts, including Holocaust and genocide education.<sup>9</sup>

Addressing hate speech through education means strengthening the capacity of education systems, including institutions and educators, to provide safe and inclusive, hate-free learning environments that are respectful of human rights and supportive of diverse cultures, beliefs and racial, religious, sexual and gender identities. This requires an approach that actively tackles all forms of intolerance and discrimination and seeks to ensure justice and equity while working

to combat hate, harassment and violence. It involves strategies to educate learners of all ages about hate speech in ways that highlight the links between verbal attacks and physical violence, the role of hate speech in violent extremist narratives and the potential of hateful propaganda to fuel violence, conflict and atrocity crimes. That includes providing learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be critical thinkers and a capacity for intercultural dialogue that will help them to recognize and reject dehumanizing propaganda or disinformation. It also includes bolstering resilience to hate speech by enabling the learner to navigate online environments safely and responsibly.

Ultimately, the goal is for each community to have safe, inclusive and respectful living and learning environments where everyone feels that they belong, are respected, have a sense of purpose and can interact with others across dividing lines with tolerance, compassion, patience, empathy and a collaborative spirit. Educators and learners need to cultivate the ability to strike a balance between what may, at times, seem contradictory goals, such as acquiring the skills to demonstrate a capacity for both self-reliance and collaborative teamwork or committing themselves to adhere to the rules and policies while remaining critical thinkers and advocates for change. The task of addressing hate speech must be integrated into broader educational contexts and missions to ensure that educators and learners are committed not only to the legal or institutional regulations but also to the community's shared moral, ethical and cultural values.

<sup>9</sup> Such approaches are in line with UNESCO's work on global citizenship education, which aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to become active contributors to more peaceful, sustainable and inclusive societies, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7. Examples of genocides include the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the Srebrenica genocide.



In that sense, addressing hate speech is not just a technical task to be integrated into the academic learning process but part of the broader socialization processes of education as it relates to community building, the formation of identities and diversity.

## Hate speech and freedom of expression

The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech places special emphasis on the role of education as a tool to address hate speech while emphasizing the need to protect and promote the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The challenge of addressing hate speech is particularly complex when it has an impact on the parallel need to foster freedom of expression as a fundamental human right protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other human rights conventions.<sup>10</sup> International standards on the protection of freedoms of opinion and expression cover, among other things, criticism or speech that is offensive, disturbing, demeaning or shocking but do not permit restrictions to be imposed solely on the basis of a comment that has caused a particular individual or identity-based group to take offence. The complications stemming from the need to simultaneously respect two fundamental sets of human rights – freedom of expression and the right to live in dignity and personal security – are at the heart of the challenges faced by Governments in seeking to address hate speech.<sup>11</sup> Accusations of hate speech may also be used to limit freedom of expression or as an excuse to clamp down on the activities of human rights defenders and journalists. Governments must pursue

preventative educational strategies that address the growing problem of hate speech while simultaneously striving to safeguard freedom of expression.

This raises special challenges for educators, who often lack adequate training in a range of issues related to hate and violence, including bullying prevention and unintentional violence. Educators need support as they learn to strike a balance between teaching the norms and rights related to freedom of expression – a pedagogical component that is essential to learning, critical debate, classroom dialogue and conversations with teachers – and simultaneously protecting the learner from hate speech. While education systems cannot allow staff, learners or curricula to spread prejudice, hateful slurs and disinformation, nor should they advocate for censorship as a rule.

Hate speech does, in fact, limit the freedom of expression of those targeted when they do not feel safe to express themselves freely in environments where they face hateful language or narratives; this is true of both offline educational environments and the online sphere. Addressing hate speech is therefore in itself an act to support freedom of expression.

Public messaging on educational efforts to address hate speech can be used to underscore the importance of freedom of expression as one of the most essential rights for children and young people to learn during their education while simultaneously explaining how and why hateful language goes against universal values. It is possible – and necessary – to simultaneously protect free speech and condemn hate speech.

<sup>10</sup> See Tsesis (2002, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO outlines the difference between hate speech and free speech in the following explainer video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JirA4suOdXI>

## Understanding the potential role of education systems in fomenting hate

Educational institutions have often been the agents of homogenization for individual nations and regions, as learners are required to learn a common language, follow a common curriculum and adhere to a shared set of national norms and values. In some cases, education systems have also been instrumentalized to serve as accelerators of hateful ideologies and promote political indoctrination, propaganda, censorship and segregation, with their curricula and teaching practices used actively to spread state-sponsored propaganda and to instil biases to prejudice the learner. That potentially harmful role needs to be acknowledged in the policies and practices aiming to foster more inclusive education systems free from hate speech and discrimination.

The lived experience of learners in terms of diversity and the fair and equitable treatment of all members of a school community – from the teachers, students and parents to the cleaning and cafeteria staff and security guards – shapes what they know, what they think and how they act. Students are keen observers of the hierarchies of exclusion and inclusion across the educational staff, for example, or the extent to which diversity is or is not reflected in a school or university's leadership. Policies and practices across educational environments – from the hiring processes through linguistic segregation to school names and mascots and the choice of artwork, celebrations, field trips and guest speakers – all send signals to learners and the wider community that can either challenge or reinforce longstanding inequality and silences in representation. Every school's decision-making culture has a potential impact on the subsequent decisions of learners to produce, share or disseminate hateful language and dehumanizing propaganda.



# 3. Decoding hate speech: root causes, challenges and consequences

## 3.1 Defining hate speech

There is no legal or commonly agreed international definition of hate speech, which creates a significant obstacle to efforts to address the phenomenon and characterizations of what is “hateful” are controversial, disputed and often emotionally charged. Within the context of this guide – and as defined by the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech – the term “hate speech” is understood to refer to any kind of spoken or written communication or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language about a person or group on the basis of who they are – particularly historically vulnerable, “minoritized” groups targeted because of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, ancestry, gender or other forms of identity.<sup>12</sup> Hate speech is demeaning, divisive and often rooted in – while also generating – intolerance and contempt.

The task of defining hate speech is further complicated by the existence of several related terms, some of which are used throughout this guide, such as:

- Disinformation: false information that is spread deliberately to cause harm or to intentionally misinform. A misinformed public may unwittingly further the spread of messages with false content;
- Misinformation: false information that is shared without deliberately intending to cause harm or manipulate;
- Malinformation: facts deployed out of context or in ways intended to manipulate or mislead;
- Propaganda: false, biased or misleading information that is intended to deceive, manipulate or persuade people to adopt a particular political or ideological viewpoint.<sup>13</sup>

## Aims and impacts of hate speech

Hate speech is propagated for a wide range of reasons, such as in a deliberate attempt to polarize, divide, antagonize and terrify a population or the members of specifically targeted groups. It can also result from undereducation and underlying societal racism, misogyny, discrimination or animosity toward sexual and religious minorities. The impacts of hate speech, too, can vary tremendously, depending in part on who is spreading or refusing to condemn it. Hate speech has

<sup>12</sup> See the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (May 2019), available at: <https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml>. See also *United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech: detailed guidance on implementation for United Nations field presences*, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3889286?ln=en>. For a detailed typology of hateful content, see table 1.1. in Banaji and Bhat (2022, p. 21).

<sup>13</sup> For more detailed definitions, see Buchanan (2020), Lock and Ludolph (2019) and United Kingdom (2019).

been a factor in all manner of atrocities committed globally, from pogroms and genocides to lynchings.<sup>14</sup> The impacts of hate speech vary also according to the dynamics of power. When elected officials, school leaders, teachers, parents, caregivers, athletics coaches or other community members remain silent in the face of rising levels of hate speech, it is often interpreted as indifference, which can exacerbate the harm caused to the targets of hate speech; in some cases, the officials ignite the fire and fan the flames of hatred. The various issues related to the aims and impacts must be taken into account in responding to hate speech.

## Forms of hate speech

Hate speech can be communicated in a wide range of oral, written and visual forms: from the spoken and printed word in statements, speeches, news reports, blogs and texts through still and moving images, video memes and drawings to sounds, songs and more.<sup>15</sup> It can be expressed in hand signals and other nonverbal gestures. It may appear in the form of misinformation and disinformation disseminated by traditional print and broadcast media and via new digital media from social media and messaging platforms, multiplayer video and virtual reality gaming and gaming server sites and personal and group blog pages to anonymized encrypted file-sharing sites. It can also spread via community meetings and through the iconography on flyers and posters, in graffiti, on banners and bumper stickers and in insignia patches or coded graphics on clothing and merchandise.

New technologies are transforming not only the means of delivering, disseminating and gaining access to hate speech but also its content and political influence. As digital fora increasingly become the arenas for free expression, the information and communications technology sector, in filtering and moderating online content, is playing an increasingly critical – and global – role in effectively determining what appears in the public space. Technology is a powerful tool not only to promote but also to challenge hate speech through the dissemination of alternative narratives and counter-speech.

## Root causes of hate speech

The root causes of hate speech are complex and embedded in local, national and world history as well as contemporary dynamics of power, exclusion and discrimination against the members of racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual and other identity groups. It is not possible to point to a single cause or formula that has led to the increase in hate speech, but the sets of dynamics leading to its increased proliferation are clear to see.

Hate speech is exacerbated by the rise of populist nationalism and xenophobia in election campaign speeches and the perceived legitimization of hateful rhetoric when politicians, religious leaders and the mainstream media produce and circulate disinformation, propaganda, racist and xenophobic ideas or conspiracy theories directed towards a particular group of people.<sup>16</sup> There are clear connecting lines between the mainstreaming of hate speech and the likelihood of physical violence against targeted individuals and groups. The opposite is also

<sup>14</sup> See Banaji and Bhat (2022)

<sup>15</sup> See Miller-Idriss (2022) and Thorleifsson (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Piazza, James (2020). When politicians use hate speech, political violence increases. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/when-politicians-use-hate-speech-political-violence-increases-146640>

true: when political and media leaders unite to challenge, debunk and counter it, hate speech may subside.

Ultimately, hate speech is rooted in prejudice and a lack of appreciation of diversity, cultural differences and diverging opinions. Those attitudes and stances are learned and can be unlearned.

## The consequences of hate speech

The consequences of unfettered growth in hate speech and hateful expression are multilayered. Hate speech often precedes acts of violence directed against targeted groups and individuals, posing a direct security threat; it dehumanizes people, infringes on their human rights and exposes them to psychological distress; and depending on its scope, scale and level of institutionalization, it can have a significant impact on living and learning climates in ways that serve to undermine social cohesion. For those reasons, policy-makers must make a long-term commitment to addressing hate speech, starting in the education sector.

Hate speech serves both to bond in-group members and to divide them from out-group members. As a form of communication that divides “us” from “them”, it often establishes an existential threat from “the other” that can incite a harmful reaction that is, in turn, couched in terms that depict it as the heroic defence or protection of one’s own group. Narratives spreading ideas about “purity” and “pollution”, for example, can be the precursors of violent action against the dehumanized

“other”, creating fertile ground for violence to thrive and paving the way for violent extremism. That connection between hate speech and incitement to violence, bias and discriminatory acts is well-documented.

Hate speech, therefore, is dangerous. There are ample historical case studies to demonstrate how it has been linked to the incitement and commission of atrocity crimes – against the Jews in Europe, the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Yazidi in Iraq and the Rohingya in Myanmar, to name but a few. Hate speech should be considered a red flag, a warning sign on the path to genocide and other atrocity crimes, as detailed in the United Nations’ Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.<sup>17</sup> While not every individual instance of hate speech results in such extreme forms of violence, acts of violence that target individuals or groups because of their identity – including assault, murder and acts of violent extremism – rarely occur without hatred and discrimination having first been seeded through the systematic, widespread dissemination of hate speech and hateful expression. As noted by the United Nations’ Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on minority issues: “hate crimes rarely occur without prior stigmatization and dehumanization of targeted groups and incitement to hate incidents”.<sup>18</sup> Hate speech is used to foment anger, mobilize violence and dehumanize others that are deemed a threat. In view of the well-documented connection between hate speech and violence, combatting expressions of hatred should be considered a critical component of prevention and intervention strategies to reduce targeted violence and radical extremism.

<sup>17</sup> See the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A tool for prevention (2014), available at: [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3\\_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, Human Rights Council (2015). Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák. 5 January. A/HRC/9/13. Available at: [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/28/64](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/28/64)

Even when it does not result in violent outcomes, hate speech still affects communities and, in particular, education systems in ways that are serious enough to warrant serious policy work to reduce its creation and circulation. That is especially true for the education sector because hate speech and hateful expression undermine the ability of education systems to ensure a safe, respectful and equitable learning environment. Hate speech upholds and reinforces systemic injustices and inequities and has negative impacts on the individuals and group members targeted who experience multiple forms of trauma; hate speech makes them feel dehumanized, silenced and threatened, hence unsafe and fearful, in ways that have demonstrated disparities in their levels of educational achievement and rates of retention or non-completion.

Regarding the educators, it is difficult for them to challenge and dismantle the ideologies into which they have been socialized throughout

their lives. At the same time, those that are unconscious of their deepseated biases and prejudices or who ignore hate speech – either because they themselves are complicit in the ideology that has given rise to it or feel that they lack the skills to cope with it adequately, or even because they belong to the targeted groups and are fearful of provoking more personalized attacks – can give the impression of sanctioning or being indifferent to the hatred. This, as mentioned earlier, can add to the harm to the victims by making them feel afraid in their own neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools and prompting them to change how they go about their daily life in ways that amount to a violation of their right to equal enjoyment of public accommodations and access to education. Addressing hate speech is therefore crucial to upholding human rights and ensuring the creation and maintenance of safe and respectful learning environments to foster social inclusion and equity in education.

## 3.2 Who determines the boundaries of hate speech?

The question of who determines the boundaries of hate speech is complicated. While there is no legally agreed definition of hate speech, as discussed above (3.1 Defining hate speech), there are regulations in place in different national and regional contexts that help to determine the boundaries in a given place or nation; there are also international standards and frameworks across a variety of human rights agreements and multilateral treaties that specify whether and how hate speech can be restricted; and there are special online content regulations stemming both from the technology companies and from national or regional regulations to protect the privacy of individuals. Each of those sets of regulations provide guidance on the boundaries of hate speech and whether and how to restrict it.

Across the globe, however, the issue of whether and how to prohibit hate speech is a matter that gives rise to considerable disagreement and contestation, with significant variations across regional and national contexts. Most international standards recognize that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression is not absolute and may be subject to certain justified restrictions. International human rights frameworks

tend to limit the definition of hate speech to expressions that incite violence, discrimination or hostility in order to safeguard the free flow of information and prevent the suppression of speech so as not to constrain the right to free expression.<sup>19</sup> Inciteful speech is very dangerous as it explicitly and deliberately aims to trigger discrimination, violence, terrorism or atrocity crimes. The international standards that provide guidance on this point include those set out in Article 3 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951) and Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which specifies that States must prohibit by law any propaganda for war or “advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence”. Some international standards and multilateral treaties call for restrictions on hateful expression even if it does not include incitement to violence or discrimination. Article 19.3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that freedom of speech may be limited if provided by law and if necessary and proportionate to respect the rights or reputation of others or protect national security, public order or public health or morals. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination specifies the need for restrictions on expressions that share ideas on the superiority or inferiority of people “distinguished by race”.

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion of the subject, see UNESCO (2021). Education as a tool for prevention: addressing and countering hate speech. ED-2021/WS/3 (p. 9). Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379146>

## BOX 1 – Legal frameworks

At the global level, alongside the non-binding Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** follows up on the right to freedom of expression (Article 19) with a prohibition of any advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (Article 20). Articles 19 and 20 also place limitations on restricting freedom of expression – those restrictions can “only be such as are provided by law and are necessary: (a) [f]or respect of the rights or reputations of others;” and “(b) [f]or the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals”. According to UNESCO’s “**three-part test**” on the legitimate limits to freedom of expression, any restrictions must follow the principles of (1) legality, that is clearly expressed and prescribed by law; (2) legitimacy, that is implemented to protect the human rights of others; and (3) necessity and proportionality, that is reasonably suited to the situation in question. UNESCO provides details on the three-part test in an explainer video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg8fvthPDag>

Complementing those principles, the **Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence** proposes a “six-part threshold test” to justify restrictions on freedom of expression, taking into consideration the social and political context, the status of the speaker, the intent to incite antagonism, the content of the speech, the extent to which it is disseminated and the likelihood of it being harmful.

Also prominent in regard to hate speech is the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**, which outlines a stricter clause than Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as it does not require evidence of intent or the “advocacy of hatred” and includes dissemination in the list of punishable practices.

Other instruments relevant to this include the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality developed by the human rights organization ARTICLE 19 based on discussions with United Nations officials and experts from academia and civil society, provide interpretive guidance on the relevant articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and seek to deter actors from abusing Article 20, in particular, by specifying the issues surrounding “incitement” as well as what constitutes “discrimination”, “hostility” and “violence”.



In other settings, such as in the private sector, definitions of hate speech are even more specific and complicated. Technology platforms and social media companies, for example, advance their own definitions based on user conduct policies that allow for deplatforming or content moderation based on violations of their terms of service.<sup>20</sup>

While international instruments, national policies and private regulations might provide some guidance on the boundaries of hate speech, there is no universal agreement across national and international frameworks on where to draw the line. Each country – as well as each technology company and social media platform – has its own regulations, legal guidelines and legislative frameworks to demarcate illegal hate speech and the various ways of protecting free speech. These are often deeply contextual and linked to the country's history or experience of hatred, genocide and violence against specific minority or historically excluded groups. In many European countries, specific legal rules on antisemitism or Holocaust denial, for example, are an outgrowth of the historical experience and legacy of that genocide against the Jewish people.<sup>21</sup> Germany, for example, has even banned content that is not tied to probable violence, such as the swastika or other symbols and codes directly linked to the National Socialism movement. In the United States of America, on the other hand, restrictions can only be considered in relation to a “clear and present danger”.

In spite of the variations, every country exists within the global system of international human rights frameworks that establish

and safeguard the rights related to freedom of expression and freedom from harm and discrimination.

The detailed guidance for United Nations field presences on implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech covers and suggests possible responses to three levels of hate speech: top level, intermediate level and bottom level.<sup>22</sup> As mentioned above, the severest – or toplevel – forms of hate speech are prohibited under international law as defined by Article 20.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. An expression advocating incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is deemed severe enough to amount to a criminal offence when it fulfils all the criteria in the six-part threshold test set out in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Intermediate forms of hate speech may be prohibited under international law even if they do not reach the abovementioned threshold of incitement in specific circumstances. The least severe – or bottomlevel – forms of hate speech cannot be subject to legal restrictions under international law, including expressions that are offensive, shocking or disturbing, that condone or deny historical events, that are blasphemous and that can be classed as disinformation, misinformation or malinformation.

<sup>20</sup> For more on those treaties and international standards, see Gagliardone et. al (2015).

<sup>21</sup> Holocaust denial has been denounced by the international community by United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/250, adopted on 20 January 2022. In Europe, more than 25 countries have passed laws against Holocaust denial.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed guidance for United Nations field presences on implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech available at: [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20PoA%20on%20Hate%20Speech\\_Guidance%20on%20Addressing%20in%20field.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20PoA%20on%20Hate%20Speech_Guidance%20on%20Addressing%20in%20field.pdf)

## Three levels of hate speech under the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action

Level	Definition and examples	Legal response
<b>Top level</b>	Hate speech that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and fulfils all the criteria of the six-part threshold test, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incitement to genocide and other violations of international law</li> <li>• Incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence</li> <li>• Incitement to racial discrimination</li> </ul>	Must be prohibited under international law
<b>Intermediate level</b>	Hate speech that does not reach the threshold of incitement, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats of violence</li> <li>• Harassment motivated by bias</li> </ul>	May only be restricted if it fulfils the three-part test of Article 19 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>Bottom level</b>	The least severe forms of hate speech, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressions that are offensive, shocking or disturbing</li> <li>• Condonation or denial of historical events</li> <li>• Blasphemous speech</li> <li>• Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation</li> </ul>	Should not be prohibited, even if offensive, but that should still be addressed through non-legal measures

### 3.3 Contextual challenges

The global rise of hate speech is part of a broader set of context-specific challenges, including declines in social cohesion and trust in democratic institutions, rising authoritarianism and support for political violence.<sup>23</sup> The past few years have seen a rise in levels of alienation and engagement in extremism, especially among youth;<sup>24</sup> the circulation of disinformation and conspiracy theories whose

virulence has contributed to a dismantling of democratic norms and erosion of trust in scientific expertise. Governments and other institutions across the globe;<sup>25</sup> and the rise in violent extremism has been met in many places with increasingly militarized responses, which may further increase the anxieties of societies already on edge and grieving due to a global pandemic. These issues affect everyone across the whole of society, including teachers and educational staff, learners and their families and the wider community, and further

<sup>23</sup> See Borkowska and Laurence (2021), Cooley and Nexon (2022), Kleinfeld (2021), Sturm and Albrecht (2021) and Wiggins (2020).

<sup>24</sup> See Adam-Troian et al. (2021), Harvey (2018) and Millerdriss (2022).

<sup>25</sup> See Bennet and Livingston (2018).

burden education systems with demands to enhance information literacy and responsibility in the digital world, to promote citizenship education and the rule of law and to reinforce respect for scientific evidence, among others.

## The intersectional context of hateful communication

Countering hate speech is part of a broader set of challenges related to intolerance and discrimination that also need addressing but which include a range of structural and systemic forms of inequity, such as residential or school segregation, different legal rights and the informal and unconscious biases experienced in terms of employment and educational performance and attainment, among others. Hate speech may be challenged and refuted by various actors, including political, religious and community leaders, educators, mentors, sports coaches and human rights defenders. Those actors can actively respond to the instigators or speakers and counter the hateful messages while standing up for and ensuring the protection of targeted groups.

Educational responses to hate speech and all forms of hateful communication must be based on an understanding of – and preparations to address – the intersectionality of hatred and hate crime.<sup>26</sup> While oppression and subordination might be considered “along a single categorical axis”,<sup>27</sup> the different forms and modes of hateful communication, discrimination and violence are interlinked. It is

important, therefore, to take into account the complex nature of identity and unsettle such “singular” understandings.

Some people experience more hatred and discrimination towards them than others in their everyday lives due to characteristics such as their physical appearance, race, gender or sexuality,<sup>28</sup> but those living at the “intersection” of different identities bear the brunt and the heaviest burden in the face of hateful dehumanization, discrimination and any ensuing violence. When a Muslim person of colour also belongs to an indigenous group and presents as transgender and/or non-binary, for example, it is unfortunately one of the strongest predictors of that person being the target, recipient and/or subject of sustained and widespread hateful communication.<sup>29</sup>

Hateful communication and attempts to dehumanize might take the form of microaggressions or systematic discrimination and violence. The term “misogynoir” is now widely used to refer to the dehumanizing and disrespectful treatment of black women and girls or “femme-presenting” gay men and boys or non-binary individuals in media representations and online communications.<sup>30</sup> The targeting of black, Muslim and indigenous women, non-binary persons and femme-presenting men of colour with dehumanizing hate speech from childhood to adulthood – and as individuals and groups – can have long-standing systemic consequences: issues as diverse as slow response times in the courts;<sup>31</sup> humiliation at the hands of

<sup>26</sup> See Page et al. (2019) and Hill Collins and Bilge (2020).

<sup>27</sup> See Crenshaw (1989, p. 140)

<sup>28</sup> See Duncan (2018)

<sup>29</sup> See Banaji and Bhat (2022)

<sup>30</sup> For more on the term “misogynoir”, see Bailey (2021). The term “femme-presenting” is used to describe a homosexual male identifying as feminine – physically, mentally or emotionally – and expressing that identity through a more feminine demeanour, style or choice of clothing. <https://www.swarthmore.edu/lgbtq/terminology>

<sup>31</sup> Crenshaw (1989)

law enforcement officials;<sup>32</sup> slow or subpar treatment in health care facilities; and humiliating treatment, neglect and bullying on the part of education professionals, which may lead to lower results in standardized tests and a disregard for complaints of harassment.<sup>33</sup>

Hate speech can also take the form of repeated attempts to sexualize and devalue the intellectual capacities of certain groups. Rape threats and the threat of other forms of sexual humiliation and violence are used both to control and to elicit sexual favours from young people both by other young people and by adult figures within the family and in community settings, including by religious figures. Many young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (or questioning) people of colour whose families are embedded in a religious community have suffered the multiple psychological wounds of exclusion due to homophobic, religious, racial or gender-specific hatred from childhood; and the lack of recognition of the weight of those experiences has enduring consequences for their mental health and a profound impact on their educational performance and learning experience. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the various forms of hate speech influenced by gender norms in schools, including bullying, result in a loss of interest, lack of concentration and inability to study, hence falling grades and disrupted studies, even leading students to drop out of school and leaving them with limited access to university and fewer employment opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

Such forms of hate speech and discrimination infringe on the human rights of those targeted, including freedom of expression. Advocates of social justice and equality, even those championing causes unrelated to their identity, for example, are far more likely to be targeted if they also belong to a group or community facing discrimination and violence in a local or national context.

While women members of parliament in the United Kingdom are disproportionately the targets of misogyny, for example, the black and/or Muslim women members speaking out on behalf of working-class communities, people of colour or migrants find themselves more repeatedly the targets of hate crime and discriminatory speech than their white male or female colleagues. In Brazil, to take another important example, the women participating in public life as teachers, politicians, journalists, fact checkers, priests, activists and/or medics bear the multiple burdens of hatred and violence aimed at various aspects of their identity; women of indigenous or African descent who are also lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (or questioning), when advocating for marginalized groups, are constantly at risk of being the targets of hateful communication, violent assaults or even assassins.<sup>35</sup> Men and boys, too, are often the targets and recipients of hateful material that misrepresents and belittles them for their political, sexual and/or private lives and faith. However, the burden of intersectionality borne by women and gender non-conforming persons is clearly greater in that they are also attacked in hateful ways by cisgender and heterosexual men and women within their

32 Open Doors (2021)

33 Ahmed (2021)

34 UNESCO (2020). *School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): a human rights violation and a threat to inclusive and equitable quality education for all*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374509?2=null&queryId=17735336-ba7f-45eb-a6d2-f8df82c3f155>

35 Lauris and Hashizume (2020).

own communities when they appear to have transgressed some religious or secular moral code.<sup>36</sup>

## BOX 2 – Online harassment against women journalists

Women journalists are especially vulnerable to online violence and hate speech. A UNESCO study from 2021 found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of surveyed female journalists from 125 countries had experienced online violence. It also showed racism, religious bigotry, sectarianism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia to intersect with misogyny and sexism to produce significantly heightened exposure and deeper impacts for women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination concurrently. Black, indigenous, Jewish, Arab and lesbian women journalists participating in the study had experienced both the highest rates and the most severe impacts of online violence.

**i** Learn more at: UNESCO (2021). *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223>

## The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated issues related to hate speech in a variety of ways, especially in the education system. Teachers, school leaders, education policy-makers and learners all had to grapple with the broader societal, economic and health impacts that everyone faced at the height of the pandemic. In addition to grieving the loss of loved ones, learners and teachers experienced stress and anxiety over the possibility of transmission in the classroom or other school settings. Masking policies became politicized, leading to increased polarization and even violent attacks on teachers and school officials, and the proliferation of pandemic-related disinformation and conspiracy theories, along with antisemitic, anti-Muslim, anti-black and anti-Asian propaganda and hatred, resulted in a significant uptick in hate crimes against minority groups.<sup>37</sup> All those impacts have affected education systems and their communities of learners and teachers.

The pandemic also compelled education systems to switch, at very short notice, to virtual learning platforms. The massive shift of millions of learners across the globe to online learning environments – or no formal schooling at all, especially in places with limited access to the Internet and mobile devices – created additional challenges in relation to the spread of hate speech.<sup>38</sup> People around the world began spending unprecedented amounts of time online as they became isolated from their normal social networks, sports teams and in-person activities.

<sup>36</sup> Mkhize et al. (2010) and Perry (2014).

<sup>37</sup> Anti-Defamation League (2020), Kayaoglu (2020) and Yellow Horse et al. (2021).

<sup>38</sup> Such as the disruptions to online teaching and learning caused by “zoombombing” – the sharing of inappropriate or harmful content during classes and lectures – cases of which increased significantly with the shift from face-to-face to virtual teaching and learning in the first few months of the pandemic, mostly at the secondary and higher education levels. See Ling, Chen, Utkucan Balci, Jeremy Blackburn and Gianluca Stringhini (2021). *A First Look at Zoombombing*. Available at <https://seclab.bu.edu/people/gianluca/papers/zoombombing-oakland2021.pdf>

## Online and offline worlds

The online environment and the implications of expanding connectivity have created significant needs in terms of policies and practices to protect human dignity and freedom of expression. It is critical to acknowledge that learners and staff spend as much of their lives in the digital world as they do in the physical world. Many learners enter the classroom having already experienced hate speech and harassment in online spaces – as victims and targets, consumers or readers, producers, perpetrators and disseminators. The spread of hateful expression in youth-oriented spaces, such as online gaming and meme-sharing sites and video-based social media platforms, is of particular concern in this regard. Notably, social media algorithms and artificial intelligence-powered platforms more broadly play an essential role in the spread of hate speech, both by expanding the multimedia formats that communicate hate speech and by significantly aiding the viral spread and dissemination of hate speech. Artificial intelligence algorithms have the capacity to embed biases or hate speech in data labelling and data-based decision-making and content recommendations and to generate hate-oriented information echo chambers. Individual teachers or educators have absolutely no control over such matters, but they do need to be aware of how information architecture-related aspects affect hate speech in the lives of learners.

Hate speech is also affected by the ability of online users to use pseudonyms, hold multiple accounts under different names and use encrypted and anonymizing applications, all of which have helped to fuel hate and harassment by individuals who feel protected by the cloak of anonymity. That, however, should

not obscure the fact that individuals alone are not responsible for the production and circulation of hate speech. The massive growth in paid political disinformation driven by large, powerful and well-established political blocks in countries across the globe – which have utilized and circulated hate speech and dehumanizing images to gain political points or votes – has been a tremendously important factor in the rise of hate speech.<sup>39</sup>

Much of the problem takes place on social media and technology platforms whose algorithms often give prominence to salacious or violent content to tempt more people to click – partly because a large number of clicks can translate into more advertising and greater financial rewards. Such systems can increase the circulation of hate speech such that more self-regulation and moderation will be required, leading to a constant risk of exposure to widely circulated disinformation, propaganda, conspiracy theories and hate. Equally, the consequences of expressions of hate online compared to offline are often amplified – a single comment can reach and do harm to many more recipients than the sender might be aware of – and algorithms programmed to reward engagement on social media can favour the spread of polarizing and hateful expressions over that of those that are not.

It follows, then, that there is an increasing need to teach the technology and digital citizenship skills associated with the prevention of hate speech. Moreover, the persistent failure of the technology sector to proactively engage with – or seek sufficiently to grasp – the dynamics of racism, misogyny and other power structures undoubtedly exacerbated the problem of the spread of coordinated hate online during the COVID19 pandemic. The coordinated attacks against black and brown-skinned professors

<sup>39</sup> See Banaji and Bhat (2021) and Miller-Idriss (2022).

in the United States and United Kingdom as they taught online could have been prevented with “default” settings, for example, had the platform designers been more mindful of the risks of open engagement – the subsequent hate and harassment.

In educational settings where learners learn in a virtual environment, visual expressions of hate are having a significantly new impact for the educators, giving them new problems to grapple with in their communications with students on learning management system and other online platforms: being able to identify the latest symbols and codes in the visual language of hate speech so as to know what to look out for in the students’ emojis and avatars and in the background in their virtual classrooms, which is often difficult given the speed at which it is evolving in the online world, for example; or being subjected to “zoombombing”<sup>40</sup> and other forms of virtual harassment.

No educational environment exists in a vacuum, of course, and what happens in the classroom in an online setting can be influenced by the role of the learners’ and

educators’ families and communities in the production and dissemination of hate speech in their everyday lives in the offline, “real-life”, world. Some learners live and go to school in very homogenous neighbourhoods where they are not exposed to any meaningful degree to differences and diversity. Some may be growing up in homes where their family life does not reflect the values that schools are trying to impart, and some communities will be hostile to schoolbased efforts to address hate speech, especially if any of those efforts are perceived to be akin to censorship or indoctrination. It is critical, therefore, to ensure that efforts to address hate speech are embedded within a clear commitment to the protection of freedom of expression and to prepare the educators to deal with the preconceptions that the learners may bring to their learning environment.

**All these issues make the  
work all the more urgent, hence  
crucial, and challenging.**

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40 See <https://seclab.bu.edu/people/gianluca/papers/zoombombing-oakland2021.pdf>

## 4. Addressing hate speech through education

Addressing hate speech through education requires a multisectoral, whole-of-society, approach that relies on strategies to mitigate and minimize the impacts on targeted individuals and groups at every level of formal, non-formal and informal education – from early childhood through higher education to lifelong learning. This section of the guide focuses on specific policy-making strategies and guidance on:

- Curricula and textbooks
- Training and guidance for educators
- Institutions and leadership
- Partnerships

Education policy-makers have a key role to play in all those areas, such as in formulating and supporting programmes based on compliance with the rules, policies and legal guidelines; promoting educators to teach learners about the root causes of hate speech and instilling into him/her the values and practices to be a respectful global and digital citizen. This also calls for a focus on pre-service and in-service media and information literacy training for teachers in formal and non-formal settings, together with pedagogical and whole school approaches to strengthening social and emotional learning, among others. Simultaneously addressing hate speech across all the above-listed areas would help to build

the resilience of education systems to hateful, dehumanizing, expressions, with a particular focus on rooting out the causes.

**This calls for reform of teacher education, professional development and in-service training programme; curricular reform and the revision of textbooks; investment to improve school culture and climates; and the engagement of families and communities.**

The need for more comprehensive educational responses to hate speech is clear, and learners and teachers are keen to play their part. Research from Norway, for example, shows a strong desire among young people to learn more about hate speech and how to react to it at school. At the same time, educators lack clarity as to the meaning of “Internet safety” and the nature of the broader “empowerment” dimension of citizenship education.<sup>41</sup> Education systems, formal and non-formal teachers, school leaders and learners all need the appropriate guidance, curricula, training and school climate to consistently counter hate speech in an integrated, holistic way.

It is critical not just to create new training and learning tools and materials but also to continually review, revise and refine those already in use. At the very minimum, this should involve a review of textbooks and other curricular materials at the national, regional and local levels to remove harmful stereotypes

<sup>41</sup> The Democracy, Equality, Learning and Mobilisation for Future Citizens (DEMOCIT) project of Oslo Metropolitan University conducts research on the political efficacy of youth and their participation as role models, peer influencers and active citizens striving for positive change in society. <https://www.oslomet.no/en/research/research-projects/democit>



and promote equality, diversity, inclusiveness and nondiscrimination. It is not only what is written into the textbooks and curriculum that matters, however, as what is missing is just as important. In other words, what is ignored matters as much as what is taught in order to shape the learners' learning and address their ignorance of a given subject; that goes for any academic subject, whether and however students recognize the harmful stereotypes or hateful content. If learners perceive or experience silence in the face of hate, they will often interpret it as indifference or acquiescence. Inaction can enhance the harm.

Lastly, it is critical to encourage the participatory engagement of learners and their wider communities. Research shows peer influence to be a powerful tool: young people are mostly influenced by their peers. For children and youth to understand and deal with hate speech, they should be involved in a joint effort to develop the relevant initiatives, programmes and tools. Strengthening the capacity of young people to be positive influencers and advocates in their communities is crucial to the effectiveness of efforts to address hate speech.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the need for strategies in the major areas elaborated in this guide, there are broader needs to be met within and across education systems to ensure the effectiveness of the policies and practices to address and combat hate speech through education, such as the need for:

- effective anti-discrimination policies and strategies;
- better reporting mechanisms at the local, national and global levels;

- improved responses by social media companies in terms of, inter alia, content moderation, support for the moderators traumatized by the experience and greater transparency in deplatforming practices;
- further research on the nature and spread of hate speech and the effectiveness of the responses and mitigation measures implemented by various stakeholders, including in the education sector.

The following subsections highlight the priority needs to be considered in efforts to address hate speech through education across the key policy areas related to curricula, teaching, school leadership and family and community environments.

## 4.1 Educational approaches and practices to address hate speech

**Education can offer multiple opportunities to address the root causes of hate speech and sensitize learners of all ages to the forms and consequences of harmful rhetoric online and offline. This subsection of the guide outlines the education frameworks and pedagogical strategies needed to build resilience to hate speech and ensure that education systems are inclusive and free from discrimination, hatred and violence, spanning the fields of cognitive, behavioural and social and emotional development.**

<sup>42</sup> Albert Bandura, in his social learning theory, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling and imitating the behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of "significant others" and how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour. For further information, see <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/geqaf/annexes/technical-notes/most-influential-theories-learning>

## Teaching about hate speech


Teaching the history of hate speech, with a focus on the root causes, forms, effects and impacts of the phenomenon, and placing it in a wider, historical and contemporary context is a key component of educational approaches to combating it. In their learning experience, the learners should engage from the outset in an inquiry that can help them to unpack the root causes of hate and understand history of racism, misogyny and other kinds of discrimination and persecution. They need to be able to decode the cultural messaging, stereotypes and coded signals used to convey hate in the traditional and new social media, in textbooks and curricula, political speeches and so on, and to relay what they learn to their local communities – at school and in their neighbourhoods, towns, cities, nations and regions. This includes helping students and staff to become sensitized to harmful rhetoric and deal with their own personal biases, prejudices and feelings of hate. It also includes raising awareness of the dangers and real-life consequences of hate speech as seen throughout history. Learners must develop a better understanding of the phenomenon, engage with the materials alerting people to – or “prebunking” – xenophobic and hateful disinformation, propaganda and conspiracy theories and work to prevent hateful attitudes and behaviours. Those efforts can usefully be integrated into existing curricular, pedagogical, goals related to history education, global citizenship education and social and emotional learning. They must also be carefully contextualized so that learners are able to understand the forms of hate speech that are most relevant in their communities and wider society.

### BOX 3 – Prebunking conspiracy theories

To support educators in addressing conspiracy theories, UNESCO has developed a resource giving them insight into the nature and characteristics of conspiracy theories and preparing them both to prebunk and debunk the narratives with their learners. The document, entitled “Addressing conspiracy theories: what teachers need to know” provides an overview of strategies and classroom practices to guide teachers in helping the learner to identify, deconstruct and dismiss conspiracy theories and in leading classroom discussions on the topic, including with learners who already believe in those theories.

 Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381958>

The above resource builds on the **#ThinkBeforeSharing campaign**, launched by UNESCO and the European Commission in 2020 in response to the rise of conspiracy theories during the COVID19 pandemic and implemented in partnership with the World Jewish Congress. The campaign includes 10 educational infographics available in 10 languages.

 Learn more at <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/thinkbeforesharing>

Alerting learners to the existence of – or “prebunking” – potentially harmful or misleading content has proven to be effective in strengthening their resilience to hate speech, disinformation and conspiracy theories. Research in psychology has shown that presenting learners with small amounts of well-framed and curated misleading content can render them less susceptible and better

able to identify and dismiss content of a similar nature encountered outside their educational settings.<sup>43</sup> That approach can help to sensitize learners to the manipulatory techniques and underlying prejudices of common forms of hate speech and disinformation, similarly to administering a vaccine. Effective “inoculation” requires the adequate training and preparation of educators in order to avoid any adverse side effects.

Teaching about hate speech also means cultivating an understanding in the learner of what is and what is not protected by the right to freedom of expression – hence a clearer grasp of one’s rights and responsibilities, both online and offline.<sup>44</sup>


## Addressing inequities

Educational approaches to addressing the most severe forms of hate speech will not work unless they take into consideration national and regional legacies in terms of historical and contemporary inequities and inequalities, violent pasts and involvement in atrocity crimes.<sup>45</sup> This means having, among other things, to facilitate uncomfortable conversations about social inequality or exploitation in a given society in an effort to educate and inoculate learners and educational staff against hate speech. That effort must include an open discussion of issues related to power and privilege, and strategies to improve social inclusiveness and diversity across all levels of society. It should also involve considered approaches to unravel historically grown grievances and address the trauma and stigmatization caused by a violent past.

## BOX 4 – Teaching about violent pasts in Argentina

Argentina’s “education and memory programme”, established by the Ministry of Education in 2005, develops guidance, training programmes and resources for educators to teach about the country’s recent past and, at the same time, contribute to the construction of democratic citizenship, respect for human rights and a national identity in learners.

The education and memory programme focuses on three thematic issues related to violent pasts at the national, regional and global levels: the military dictatorship in Argentina, the conflict in the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and the Holocaust (or Shoah, the genocide of the Jewish people) and other twentieth-century genocides.

 Learn more at <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/programas-educativos/programa-educacion-y-memoria>

Comprehensive teaching and learning about historical and contemporary inequities should cover in particular the causes and consequences of violence, conflicts and human rights violations, their legacies and the development of strategies for a critical examination of related public discourses.

Experience in the field of Holocaust and genocide education has shown learning about violent pasts and atrocity crimes to have the potential to sensitize the learner to contemporary forms of discrimination and increase

43 University of Cambridge (2021). ‘Pre-bunk’ tactics reduce public susceptibility to COVID-19 conspiracies and falsehoods, study finds, 12 May. Available at <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/pre-bunk-tactics-reduce-public-susceptibility-to-covid-19-conspiracies-and-falsehoods-study-finds>

44 UNESCO (2013), Freedom of expression toolkit: a guide for students, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000218618?posInSet=1&queryId=df202fc2-1b31-43ad-b9b8-d8559ddb760b>

45 Banaji and Bhat (2022). See also the Difficult Dialogues National Resources Center model at <https://www.difficultdialogues.org/about>

their understanding of the processes that lead societies to genocide.<sup>46</sup> Such education can include studying the underlying antisemitic and racist National Socialist ideology that led to the crimes perpetrated by Germany's Nazi regime and its collaborators; the content and delivery of the propaganda; the attitude of local populations to – and their participation in – the killings; and the reactions of the international community.<sup>47</sup> It should also capture the reality of contemporary forms of discrimination as manifested in hate speech – including racist, antisemitic, anti-Muslim, xenophobic, sexist and anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (or questioning) discourses – through examining the power structures and wider ramifications for the realization of human rights. Related content may be incorporated into civic education or social science curricula or taught in the framework of interventions in human rights and peace education.

Educating about historical and contemporary inequities and inequalities is the starting point for discussions that will help learners to untangle the disparate stereotypes and kinds of discrimination that they observe; see why they, too, might be vulnerable to some of the same; and develop their dialogue skills and ability to coexist and work together across differences in productive ways.

## Enhancing social and emotional skills

An educational approach to countering hate speech calls for a focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) to enable learners to recognize their strengths and develop the skills to manage stress and negative emotions, solve problems effectively and hence enhance their self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-assertion. On the one hand, such skills are an asset when confronting hate speech – there is evidence of learners who are more aware of their emotions, values, strengths and weaknesses and have a positive self-concept being likely to respond more successfully to challenges such as hate speech.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, SEL can also help to prevent hate speech by enabling learners to regulate their emotions, control their impulses and engage in safe, ethical and responsible behaviour; to cultivate perspective-taking; negotiate conflicts constructively; acknowledge the strengths of others and work with them to solve problems; develop kindness and compassion; empathize with others, including those from other social and cultural contexts, and to stand up for their rights.<sup>49</sup> Those abilities may be developed through skills-based, experiential, collaborative and participatory approaches, making use of case studies and real life scenarios, and through critical pedagogy and strategies, such as discussions, role play, drama or cooperative learning in small groups.

Curricular interventions facilitating the development of social and emotional skills through focused experiential learning, as well as the infusion of SEL into academic subjects, need to be complemented by a safe, caring,

<sup>46</sup> Such as the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Srebrenica genocide and the Holocaust.

<sup>47</sup> For more on how education about the Holocaust can advance global citizenship see: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261969>. A UNESCO policy guide on education about the Holocaust and genocide prevention see: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248071?17=null&queryId=34201766-924d-4c9b-b02b-6187fff2b196>

<sup>48</sup> Durlak et al. (2011); Gavine et al. (2016); Hahn et al. (2006); and Jones et al. (2014)


<sup>49</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2021).

inclusive and collaborative classroom climate and pedagogies that favour collaborative – in contrast to competitive – learning, culturally responsive pedagogy and inclusive practices, “student voice and choice” and constructive conflict resolution; learned skills are then reinforced through role modelling by teachers and peers and opportunities to apply them in learning and social activities. Such a climate promotes a sense of belonging, connectedness, collaboration and respect among classroom members, with little space for hate speech.

The promotion of social and emotional competencies is not to be restricted to the classroom context but made be part of daily activities throughout the school system. Histories of discrimination and violence must be explained and taught, such as through role play, reading and making comic strips, oral stories, theatre plays and easy to follow narratives to combat the hate that has developed among different groups of teachers and students in different parts of the world. As school pupils near the end of their elementary or primary education, they can be exposed to more complex ideas that must encompass the hierarchy of hate and supremacist thinking. School-wide expectations and norms, such as connectedness, openness to diversity, mutual respect and understanding, collaboration and compassion, informed by policies and rules developed collaboratively by the whole school community, would help to promote a climate where all members of the school feel safe, respected, recognized, supported, connected and included. This involves giving pupils and staff a strong, representative voice at the school and working with agencies and professionals to provide adequate support to the victims of hate speech. In such a climate, respect, collaboration, empathy, openness and compassion are woven into the fabric of the overall school system, making it difficult for hate speech to thrive.


## BOX 5 – The SELMA Toolkit

The SELMA Toolkit, funded by the European Commission, provides over one hundred adaptable resources that educators can use to address hate speech with children and youth. It consists of four pathways tailored to the teachers’ prior knowledge of the topic and the age of the learners. Themes include “what is hate speech?”; “why is there hate speech out there?”; “how does hate speech make me feel?”; “what is my role and what can I do?”; “how can I influence my people?”; “how can we effect change in our community?”; and “changing the world”. Pathway 3 is specifically for teachers with little experience or training in SEL, making use of a systemic social and emotional learning programme developed by Yale University, based on developing five key competences: recognizing, understanding, labelling, expressing and regulating (RULER). The first activities seek to provide learners with the keys to building an emotional vocabulary and to match that new vocabulary to abstract examples of hate speech. This is followed by an exploration of how particular images and messages make the learner feel and how their reaction is influenced by their personality and cultural context. Learners then reflect on how assumptions are made based on personality and stereotypes, which is followed by emotional regulation activities. Pathway 3 concludes with media analysis activities to enable the learner to apply the skills developed in the previous exercises to examples of online hate speech.

 Learn more at <https://hackinghate.eu/toolkit/>

## BOX 6 – Stand Up Speak Out

Stand Up Speak Out is an online SEL programme developed by the Government of Malta to enable children and youth aged 12 to 16 years to address hate speech at school, outside school and online. Through experiential interactive sessions, they are provided with opportunities to discuss various scenarios while identifying solutions in response to hate speech situations. Activities include understanding what hate speech is; distinguishing between different types of intimidation; identifying and discussing the actions of the perpetrators' in the light of their behaviour; outlining the various skills needed to help victims and bystanders to stand up to hate speech; and raising awareness of the various professions that can provide support.

 Learn more at <https://youth.gov.mt/our-agency/stand-up-speak-out/>

## Promoting inclusive attitudes

Inclusive, equitable societies provide less fertile ground for hateful speech to thrive. Learners need educational approaches that emphasize attitudes and values of tolerance, non-discrimination, inclusiveness and support for diversity, and educators and learners alike need to develop the capacity to recognize and confront hate speech and navigate difficult conversations. Inclusive attitudes and tolerance towards others, along with a celebration of pluralism and diversity, are crucial to the ability to recognize and respond to hate and injustice. Programmes that support global citizenship education and promote intercultural dialogue

can help to develop in the learner the necessary knowledge and competence to embrace differences and engage respectfully in a diverse society.<sup>50</sup>

To that end, it is imperative to present learners with positive examples through, inter alia, inclusive and diverse educational materials; culturally responsive curricula adapted to their needs; a learner-centred approach in which educators acknowledge differences in their capacity and abilities; a classroom climate that is supportive and welcoming to all learners, regardless of their background and individual needs; and inclusive extracurricular activities.

Part of the challenge is that school environments do not exist in a vacuum. Educators need to help learners to develop a way to process and move back and forth between their online and offline worlds – including their communities, neighbourhoods, sports teams and families. Many schools and other educational settings do not adequately consider what the learners are experiencing in their online worlds, either in a formal learning setting or at home. In learning environments, for example, teachers may send learners online to do research without understanding the risk of their being exposed to disinformation there, or have them engage in participatory games online without being aware of the high volume of misogyny and racism that people are likely to encounter there. Learners need to understand how to engage critically as well as ethically online and to be aware of the relationship between their online engagement and experiences offline.

<sup>50</sup> UNESCO defines competence in intercultural dialogue as “having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures”. See UNESCO (2013). *Intercultural competences: conceptual and operational framework*. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219768>



## Promoting media and information literacy skills and digital citizenship

Hate speech does not boil down to rhetoric alone. While individual pieces of content may be considered hateful and cause harm in more localized ways, the broader phenomenon concerns information ecosystems and how content is produced, circulated and consumed. The issue is particularly acute in the online space, where social media platforms and other digital products have driven the emergence of new modes of interaction and community formation. Learners need to develop the skills for critical thinking, dialogue, media literacy and digital citizenship to be equipped for the fast pace of life in the information age.

Media and information literacy and digital citizenship education provide tools that are crucial to addressing hate speech in long term – as a means of not only “inoculating” the learner against future trends but also enabling them to challenge and redress the current dynamics of hate online. Media and information literacy can equip learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand the social context of media and digital platforms, to critically evaluate their content and to make informed decisions as users and producers of content.<sup>51</sup> To build the learners’ capacity in digital citizenship and resilience to online hate speech, education systems must strive to incorporate media and information literacy and global citizenship education into their curricula. Digital citizenship education involves preparing learners to find, gain access to, use and create information effectively and to navigate online and digital environments safely and responsibly. It also involves learning about one’s own rights in digital spaces and

how to engage with other users and the content in an active, critical, sensitive and ethical manner.<sup>52</sup>

As a baseline, media and information literacy interventions should enable learners to gain the competence to become more resilient to harmful false information, polarizing rhetoric, cyberbullying and harassment and hate speech, which involves helping them to unpack the “architecture” of digital platforms and services determining how they interpret and ultimately respond to information about the world around them. Learners should also be sensitized to the other elements of online use that often serve to compound the impacts of hate speech and, where possible, shown how to mitigate their effects – elements such as disinformation and misinformation, filter bubbles, echo chambers and biased media, to name but a few (see the annotated list of key terminology appended to this guide (appendix 1)).

Learners need training to develop a comprehensive set of regularly updated media and information literacy and critical thinking skills to help them to recognize the persuasive tactics commonly used to spread conspiracy theories and other forms of disinformation, such as fearmongering and scapegoating. Such training has proven successful in reducing susceptibility to and support for hate speech. Evidence from inoculation-style educational interventions, which work to prevent people from being persuaded by harmful content before they encounter it, shows that learners can be taught to recognize and resist propaganda, conspiracy theories and disinformation in ways that weaken their support for

51 UNESCO (2021). *Media and information literate citizens: think critically, click wisely!*. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377068>

52 UNESCO (2022). *Addressing hate speech: educational responses*. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382290>

exclusionary and violent extremist ideas.<sup>53</sup> This is essential to the creation of safe and respectful online communities.

Media literacy and digital communications skills will not suffice unless paired with education to prepare learners to become socially responsible digital citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the online world. Effective digital citizens can positively influence societies through digital participation and agency that empowers them to constructively counter hate speech through their own online engagement – such as the creation of an online petition. In addition, learners can be encouraged to engage as digital citizens in seeking to positively influence society through inclusive and peaceful narratives online. Such efforts can be integrated into existing digital literacy curricula, as well as into history, social science and other academic curricula. Research has demonstrated that media and information literacy, to effectively counter hate speech, needs to be taught in the context of education in humanitarian and political literacy rather than as a set of skills taught separately from historical and contemporary contexts.<sup>54</sup>

## Improving skills in critical thinking

Efforts to address hate speech require a commitment to teaching skills in critical thinking, including through approaches that help teachers, educators and learners to understand the distinction between free speech and hate speech and spot the line between diverse opinions and disinformation or propaganda. Educators must be committed to supporting a wide range of ideological and political ideas in classroom discussions and in the viewpoints shared and imparted. Enquiry-based learning requires them to provide evidence for – or justification of – their assertions or opinions, to engage with ideas that challenge their own and to allow the learner to grapple with ambiguity and alternative ideas.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, there are clear limits to assertions that are rooted in false claims or disinformation. It is especially important that teachers be equipped with the skills to recognize disinformation and to intervene when it is introduced by learners or colleagues. Not all statements are fully equal: if a learner makes an assertion that is fully untrue in a class discussion, even something as simple as “ $2 + 2 = 7$ ”, the teacher should not allow the false claim to stand uncorrected; one way to correct it could be to ask the person to justify the claim or, if not, accept that it is untrue. The same goes for assertions that spread propaganda or are rooted in pseudoscience or claims debunked for want of evidence. Students need to learn how to understand errors in reasoning, to make strong arguments and to weigh up multiple perspectives. This is necessary to ensure that they are prepared to engage in life, both online and offline,

53 See Braddock (2022) and Braddock et al. (2022). See also the explanation of psychological inoculation in Golberg, B. (2021). Psychological inoculation: new techniques for fighting online extremism. *Medium*, 24 June. Available at: <https://medium.com/jigsaw/psychological-inoculation-new-techniques-for-fighting-online-extremism-b156e439af23>. See also the Cambridge Social Decision-Making Laboratory’s analysis of a UNESCO inoculation campaign: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/pre-bunk-tactics-reduce-public-susceptibility-to-covid-19-conspiracies-and-falsehoods-study-finds>

54 See Banaji and Bhat (2022)

55 Roth (2019, p. 122).



in ways that foster digital citizenship and civic engagement, in-person and online, and that are rooted in a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of group membership and how to have a critical dialogue and respectfully disagree within a context of mutual understanding, even when the viewpoints differ.

## **Improving the learners' actions and behavioural choices**

Enhanced knowledge and awareness and improved digital literacy and critical thinking skills will only be effective at addressing hate speech if learners also choose to change their behaviour. Teachers and educators can encourage change in both attitudes and behaviours in ways that will enhance the reporting of hate speech and empower their learners and colleagues to confront and challenge it directly. Educational approaches must serve not only to inform and equip learners with specific skills, but also to empower them to act as responsible digital citizens who are aware of their rights and able to engage respectfully with others online, to know how to report and confront hate speech and to appreciate – and actively promote – freedom of expression. Learners need to feel empowered and be encouraged to engage as positive influencers among their peers. Cohesive, inclusive societies require citizens

and community members to engage with others with empathy, kindness, compassion, trust and forgiveness and to approach interactions from an antiracist and nondiscriminatory position. In that light, it is crucial that educational approaches aim to build resilience to hate speech not only in the individual learner but also in inclusive systems where there is less fertile ground for expressions of hate.

To counter the hateful communications aiming to do harm to particular groups through the legitimization of discriminatory, dehumanizing and/or violent acts against them needs their intersectional nature to be acknowledged, discussed, destigmatized and taught about in a manner that is accessible to the learner, even at an early age. Young children can understand the notion of unfairness and bullying, and many of them experience it. Learners need to see their teachers, leaders and other adults setting an example in their efforts to combat hate speech in interactions with all staff and learners across the community; and they need opportunities to put the values well and truly into practice in their daily lives at school. This will empower learners to act as positive influencers in ways that can create a “feedback loop” for home–school cooperation and engagement with parents, families, caregivers and the wider community.

## BOX 7 – Reflecting on gender perceptions and behaviour

Behavioural choices are deeply rooted in social and gender norms. Successful school-based programmes that address gender stereotypes have encouraged young men to critically examine social norms and gender inequalities as well as gender-based violence. Some of those programmes focus particularly on the dismantling of traditional constructions of masculinity, the costs of restrictive forms of masculinity and the benefits of masculinity that respects gender equality.

The Breaking the Man Code programme, implemented by the Australian social enterprise Tomorrow Man, includes two-hour experimental workshops where adolescent boys examine the risks associated with negative norms of masculinity and try to make a break with them. The various activities encourage them to talk about their emotions with a view to building their resilience, selfconfidence and peer connectedness. Tomorrow Man also implements a more extensive programme for adolescent boys with six modules aimed at building their emotional intelligence and their own versions of masculinity.

**i** Learn more at <https://www.tomorrowman.com.au/>

The WEM Joven project, launched in Costa Rica in 2012 by non-governmental organization Instituto WEM, aims provide young men with emotional support and assistance in building positive models of masculinity. Group discussions address anger management, violence, relationships with other men, family and couple relationships, communication, machismo and paternity.

**i** Learn more at <https://institutowemcr.com/> (in Spanish only)

## 4.2 Strategies to address hate speech in and through education

### 4.2.1 Education policies

#### Prioritizing the issue

The first task for policy-makers seeking to address hate speech effectively through education is to establish the issue as a matter of national and global priority. All too often, efforts to deal with hate speech are delegated to local authorities or solely to the private sector. Any attempt to address hate speech must begin with clear and unequivocal support and prioritization of the issue at the highest levels of policy and educational practice – in ways that assert the dual protection of defending freedom of expression and combatting the hate speech. Establishing the need to combat hate speech as a matter of national and global priority requires acknowledgement of the fact that countering hate speech effectively is a matter not only of compliance and enforcement by means of legal restrictions or codes of conduct, but also of incorporating that goal into broader school and community initiatives to address the roots of racism, dehumanization and hate.

Clear messaging from national and regional policy-makers and political leaders is essential and will help to convey the idea that countering hate speech is a lifelong process of developing the capacity to recognize hate and confront it in meaningful ways throughout life, while engaging productively with others, in spite of differences, with empathy and mutual respect. Educational approaches are most effective at the early stage of addressing the root causes and are contingent on community support, the commitment of the teachers, school leaders and policy-makers who agree

to prioritize the issue and their capacity to recognize hate speech for the dangerous form of expression that it is and to respond accordingly. Further, while educational responses can help, fully combatting the phenomenon will require the broader community's commitment to stemming its creation, production and dissemination. Establishing hate speech as a priority issue will signal the need for strategies that target informal learning settings, including online, in order to reach people who are no longer in the formal education system and did not grow up with social media, who may need particular kinds of support to strengthen their media, digital and information literacy.

### **Integration with existing policies and educational initiatives, in alignment with national curricula**

Educational approaches to combat hate speech will not work unless they are integrated into national policies and government-led strategies that clearly prioritize the issue and devote the necessary resources, attention and time to addressing it while clearly emphasizing the need for those approaches. National-level attention will help to raise public awareness of the role of education in combatting hate speech and to provide practical guidance to local and regional educators as they work to weigh up the balance between hate speech and free speech in the light of national legislation and specific restrictions on the freedom to express extremist views, including through the use of symbols.

Policy-makers can help to advance integrated strategies that encourage the framing of approaches to combat hate speech within existing educational priorities and in line with their countries' commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to global citizenship education, antiracist education

and the promotion of gender equality. To be effective, those strategies must include the integration into educational approaches of a range of actions to foster responsible digital and global citizenship, to strengthen media and information literacy and to promote freedom of expression and a culture of nondiscrimination.

The question of how and where to integrate efforts to counter hate speech into both formal and nonformal education is key and the answers will be context-specific. In some systems, there are already provisions to mandate schools and/or colleges to provide media and information literacy or digital communications education in subjects such as "citizenship", "civic education", "personal, social and health education", "general studies", "life skills" or "personal, social and emotional development" – those subjects may offer the most logical point of entry for introducing anti-hate speech modules and activities and relieving staff of the burden of having to accommodate new material. At the same time, a holistic, cross-curricular, approach would help to make clear how various elements can be integrated with other subjects, such as science, history, languages, art and religious studies. By encouraging and supporting teachers to engage with efforts to counter hate speech in their specialist fields, policy-makers may enhance the outcomes therein and show the relevance of addressing the issue to all aspects of life and learning.

Addressing and countering hate speech through and within education requires a cross-curricular effort, including in media and information literacy and digital communications education, to improve knowledge and awareness of the history of hate and atrocity crimes at the national and global levels, and to foster positive attitudes towards – and behaviours in reaction to – diversity, difference and social equity and inclusion.

## BOX 8 – Online media literacy strategy in the United Kingdom

In 2021, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport of the Government of the United Kingdom published a three-year “online media literacy strategy” to provide organizations involved in media literacy activities with more coordinated, wide-reaching and high-quality support. The strategy focuses on improving the evaluation, funding and coordination of outreach to hard-to-reach audiences and vulnerable users with a view to building their resilience to misinformation and disinformation.

**i** Learn more at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1004233/DCMS\\_Media\\_Literacy\\_Report\\_Roll\\_Out\\_Accessible\\_PDF.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004233/DCMS_Media_Literacy_Report_Roll_Out_Accessible_PDF.pdf)

### Including and supporting targeted individuals and groups

Hate speech must be addressed at all levels through a holistic, whole-of-society, approach in strong coordination with the members of groups that are targets of hate. This is a key area where education systems can work to integrate into inschool educational initiatives the values of indigenous communities to ensure that efforts to prevent and address hate speech are locally rooted rather than externally imposed, while remaining in line with the international standards protecting human rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

Combatting hate speech also involves teaching about the dynamics that caused past instances of genocide or other atrocity crimes and the role in those dynamics of identity-based hate speech, discrimination and dehumanization; the acknowledgement of past injustices and

crimes; and a critical examination of how that history has been narrated, remembered and dealt with at school and in the public space. Learners, educational staff, leaders and communities need enhanced knowledge of hate speech; guidance on effective prevention strategies to reduce its production and dissemination; improved strategies to counter its circulation and spread; and support to reduce and mitigate its impact on targeted groups. Responses to incidents of hate speech need to centre on the needs of the individuals and groups targeted; while a focus on holding the perpetrators of hate to account is important, it should not be at the expense of solidarity with and expressions of support for the individuals most affected.

The development and enforcement of long and medium-term policies to combat hate speech, including intersectional forms across gender, race and religious identities and boundaries, and to succour and protection to its primary targets, must be a multi-stakeholder effort including, in addition to the police and other law enforcement officials, teachers and other professionals, such as social workers, youth workers, counsellors, nurses and doctors; lawyers, court judges, public officials and politicians; and business and industry, in particular the technology producers and digital platform owners, all of whom can contribute by adhering to their own codes of conduct and antibullying policies.

### Establishing clear standards of compliance and reporting mechanisms

Education systems need to teach learners how the spread of hate speech stems ties in with legal rights of access and universal human rights to equality and non-discrimination. Schools, in addressing hate speech, should therefore teach about compliance and the standards for systems, individuals and communities. Education systems

need to establish and work within national and regional human rights-based legal frameworks, with school guidelines and rules, codes of conduct, together with policies to ensure compliance, in accordance with the obligations of digital citizenship, with standards of behaviour and community values. Education systems play a critical role in helping to establish those standards and values, in socializing and teaching learners, as well as staff and the broader community, the importance of compliance with institutional rules and regulations and the law, including civil and human rights law.

That is the context in which learners can learn the duties and responsibilities of digital and global citizenship and what it means to be a “good” citizen, online and offline, as well as the strategies for digital protection from harm, harassment and invasions of privacy. Here too, education systems should develop policies and practices to promote equity, access and safety, conducting regular threat assessments and responding to hate speech in ways that focus not only on holding the perpetrators to account, but also on solidarity with the victims. Education systems need to have and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of clear and transparent mechanisms for reporting incidents of hate and ensuring compliance in the learning community with the rules and policies rooted both in a broad understanding and knowledge of them and in empathy with and respect for fellow members of that community.

## Policy-makers should

- ✓ Include educational responses and preventive strategies in national action plans on hate speech with a view to leveraging the power of education to strengthen resilience to harmful rhetoric and disinformation and ensure that education systems themselves do not promote or disseminate prejudice and hate; and within that context
- ✓ Invest in context-relevant, targeted, preventive educational programmes on violent extremism, racism, antisemitism and other forms of intolerance;
- ✓ Invest in digital citizenship education that teaches learners about their rights and responsibilities online, helps them to engage with other users in an active, sensitive and ethical manner and encourages them to participate in digital communities and movements seeking to counter hate speech online and offline;
- ✓ Promote education on human rights and the rule of law that addresses the complex nexus between combatting hate speech and upholding freedom of expression and that raises awareness of how illegitimate violations diverge from legally permitted limitations;
- ✓ Link efforts to address hate speech to national media and information literacy policies and strategies, in line with the UNESCO policy and strategy guidelines,<sup>56</sup> to teach learners to critically evaluate and fact-check information and media sources and identify hateful narratives.

<sup>56</sup> See UNESCO (2013). *Media and information literacy policy and strategy guidelines*. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225606>


## 4.2.2 Education media and curricula


### Introducing formal curricula on hate speech

Educational strategies to effectively counter hate speech must ensure formal curricula include content knowledge focused explicitly on hate speech and on the right to freedom of expression. Those curricula should include a textbook section or curricular units to teach the learner how to detect, identify, report and counter the various forms of hate speech. Courses could be subject specific or cross-disciplinary: digital and information literacy, human rights and citizenship education; history, social studies and civics; religion and ethics; languages and the visual arts; and social and emotional learning. Hate speech units can be integrated into existing global citizenship and human rights education curricula, with new curricular units and direct instruction to teach about the root causes of hate speech and its consequences based on case studies of historical violence, atrocity crimes, discrimination and other harmful manifestations of hate.

### BOX 9 – Good practices: citizenship education in Norway

The European Wergeland Centre in Norway, in partnership with the commemoration and learning centre at Utøya and the 22 July Centre, and with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Science, provides a comprehensive national programme for young people, teachers and other educators to learn to stand up to discrimination, hate speech and extremism through the use of tools and strategies based on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, taking the terror attacks of 22 July 2011 in Oslo and Utøya as its starting point. The 22 July and Citizenship programme has developed resources and tools for teachers and students that are designed to engage young people in addressing such issues as security, artificial intelligence, hate speech and equality. One of the tools, a video game called *Oslo 2084*, taps into a massive potential audience of young gamers – the 79% of children aged 11–14 and 72% of youth aged 15–24 are reported to have played such games on a regular basis in 2021<sup>57</sup> – with a view to increasing their creative involvement in addressing human rights dilemmas from a young people's perspective.

 For more on the work of the European Wergeland Centre, see <https://theewc.org/>

 On the Utøya commemoration and learning centre, see <https://demokratiwerkstedet.no/international/>

<sup>57</sup> See Interactive Software Federation of Europe (2022). Video games – a force for good. Available at <https://www.isfe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/FINAL-ISFE-EGDFKey-Facts-from-2021-about-Europe-video-games-sector-web.pdf>, “Key facts from 2021”

## Reviewing existing curricula and textbook content to remove stereotypes, bias and language that could fuel hate speech

Reviewing the curricula to remove harmful biased content and include teaching about past atrocity crimes is a practice requiring strong national leadership to be embedded in broader policies on gender, racial, ethnic and religious equality as part of a “curriculum decolonization” effort. Regular audits should be conducted to assess the ways in which stereotypes may be reinforced or introduced into teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, and the teams of reviewers must be inclusive and diverse, with the broad representation of women, indigenous peoples and historically marginalized religious or ethnic groups; where atrocity crimes have been committed, the victims and survivors, too, should be consulted and represented in the process; and all those taking part must be given an equal voice and have their concerns heard and responded to. Further, awareness of the need to avoid stereotypes and bias must be raised throughout the revision and redrafting of curricular materials, from the recruitment – and in the contracts, scope of work and terms of reference – of the reviewers and drafters, who must take note of that need and ensure that the language is balanced and inclusive.

Pre-service and in-service teachers, too, need to be involved in the curriculum and textbook review process, as well as in the development of new resources and guidance, so that the new materials introduced is apt to be put to effective use by educators in their teaching.

### BOX 10 – Good practices: antiracism education in Australia

In Australia, the antiracism education programmes of the department of education of the state of New South Wales, which are fit for purpose in all Australian schools, develop resources to support teachers in the delivery of that education in the classroom, even at pre-school level, with lesson ideas, activities and stimulus material designed to help them to build the foundation knowledge and skills needed to counter racism, prejudice and discrimination, and makes those resources available to them, together with a set of computer-based activities, via a dedicated website.

For further information, see <https://racismnoway.com.au/>

### BOX 11 – Good practices: genocide education in Rwanda

In Rwanda, the Education Board and the Ministry of Education have integrated genocide studies in the curricula of its primary, secondary and higher education institutions. The curriculum, developed in 2008, incorporated the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, in which moderate Hutus and others who opposed the genocide were also killed, while emphasizing the unifying and inclusive qualities of nationality, citizenship and patriotism, instead of ethnicity. In this way, focus is put on a collective identity as Rwandan rather than Hutu or Tutsi.

For further information, see <https://en.unesco.org/news/interview-educating-about-genocide-against-tutsi-rwanda-25-years-later>



## Policy-makers should

- ✓ Integrate into national global citizenship education curricula, among others, programmes developed to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of hate speech and to prepare the learner to identify and reject hateful and violent extremist ideologies. Such programmes, hand-in-hand with training for the educators, could touch upon topics such as local violent pasts and the history of the Holocaust and other genocides and atrocity crimes;<sup>58</sup>
- ✓ Invest in the advancement of key skills for addressing hate speech through programmes integrated into national curricula in educational fields such as social and emotional learning, media and information literacy and digital citizenship;
- ✓ Review the curricula and teaching materials to ensure that they are free from stereotypes and biased language and inclusive of diverse perspectives. Teaching materials should place emphasis on shared values and human rights with a view to fostering a sense of unity while embracing diversity;
- ✓ Support the development of materials and pedagogies that are inclusive of ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, ensuring that the education provided is supportive of students in their identity-building and sense of belonging to a group that shares a common humanity.

## 4.2.3 Capacity-building for teachers – guidance and training

### Building the capacity of teachers to address hate speech.

Education systems need to devote significant attention to capacity-building for teachers, with initial and in-service training to be able to address and counter hate speech surrounding issues causing controversy and divisiveness in society. Some may lack the knowledge, expertise and self-confidence to manage a class and create a safe space for discussion of the subject. Teachers and all educators need training to facilitate challenging dialogue on divisive issues in ways that rupture community cohesion. Managing difficult conversations is a core skill for the creation of safe inclusive learning environments in which learners can engage with empathy and solidarity and learn from the experience of others.

<sup>58</sup> Including the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the Srebrenica genocide.



## BOX 12 – Engaging youth for social cohesion in southern Asia

In response to the increasing levels of polarization, social tensions and divisive communication, both online and offline, in South Asia, UNESCO's New Delhi Office launched a regional series of workshops for 350 community youth leaders and representatives of youth organizations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The series aimed to build the capacities of youth leaders to support socio-emotional resilience within their communities, in turn reinforcing social cohesion and intercultural dialogue as essential foundations for sustainable peace. Following the training, the youth leaders were supported to utilize the approaches within their own communities and contexts.

**i** For further information, see <https://mgiep.unesco.org/article/launch-of-a-new-regional-workshop-series-to-drive-social-cohesion-in-south-asia>

Tools and training courses should help educators practice dialogue and share with peers their experience in preventing and responding to hate speech while promoting freedom of expression. Moreover, those tools and training courses should offer concrete advice, with examples, on how to respond to hate speech in a school setting. Integrating the humanities into lessons on contemporary and historical atrocity crimes – through the use of poetry, novels and stories from the survivors, victims and witnesses – has been shown to help learners to engage in critical social and emotional learning about difficult pasts. Educators can also organize field trips and visits to memorials, human rights museums or other commemorative sites as a strategy for hands-on learning and observation.

Teachers also need adequate access to information and guidance to guarantee a critical mass of understanding among educational staff, along with centralized resources outlining key emerging trends online to which educators may not have natural exposure, such as the disinformation gaining traction on social media; new “dogwhistle” terminology or iconography used to express hateful ideas; the growing popularity of a particular platform or application among the young; a rise in reported incidents of hate and harassment; or the recruitment tactics of a violent extremist movement. The development of such materials could be undertaken by sector experts and/or commissioned by a ministry of education and should be viewed as reference guides for those leading interventions in this area.

## BOX 13 – Good practices: addressing racism in New Zealand

A key example of teacher capacity-building can be seen in New Zealand where, since late 2018, the Teaching Council has been collaborating on an initiative to “create conversations around racism in Aotearoa [“land of the long white cloud”, the Maori name for New Zealand]”. As the professional body for all the country’s teachers, the Teaching Council supports efforts to ensure that teachers have a safe and productive environment in which to lead those conversations. The Unteach Racism project, which aims to support teachers in identifying, confronting and dismantling racism in education, recognizes that racism is learned and can therefore be unlearned and acknowledges the unique expertise and ability of teachers to address the challenge and inspire others to do likewise.

**i** For more on Unteach Racism, see <https://www.unteachracism.nz/about-un-teach-racism.html>

## Protection, support and training

Formal education must prepare teachers to address hate speech from early childhood education level, which requires capacity-building for hate speech prevention in formal and non-formal settings. Classroom teachers need initial and inservice training to equip them with a wide array of skills and competencies, as well as knowledge of the root causes of hate speech and the mechanisms, pedagogies and tools to address them. Teachers also need access to the tools and training to understand the consequences of hate speech, how it relates to freedom of expression and how to incorporate the learners' experience – what they are exposed to and where, including online – into the teaching and learning processes.

Teachers also need the space and training to develop social and emotional learning skills in their learners through experiential, collaborative, inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogies. The outcomes of that training have to model and mirror those that one hopes to see among the learners, such as their engagement with social and emotional learning and opportunities for them to work on their own biases and improve their capacity to engage with difficult pasts and challenging material. Teachers need support to develop those social and emotional learning skills in ways that enable them to build a caring relationship with the learners, to be open to diverse cultural contexts and situations, to engage in collaborative practices with learners, colleagues and parents and to resolve conflicts constructively.

Lastly, teachers need to be equipped with the specific skills and information to help them to recognize the warning signs of their learners or colleagues being exposed to hate speech. Those signs might include the emergence in class discussions of “us versus them” thinking or ideas about the superiority or inferiority of various groups, for example, and may presage further radicalization that can result in dehumanization, moral disengagement and support for – or active engagement in – political violence. Teachers also need specific skills in digital and media and information literacy. Many educators feel too ill-equipped or lacking in confidence to deliver activities to tackle online harms. For some, the current technologies did not exist when they themselves were learners or trainees or have evolved beyond recognition; others worry about not being credible messengers on the subject, especially in the eyes of the young; and still more of them have never undergone any media and information literacy – or even basic e-safety – training themselves and are therefore relatively unfamiliar with the concepts and terminology.

An ability to better recognize the problem at an early stage, identify online harms and utilize the technology corresponds to one specific type of skills-based capacity-building. However, teachers and staff – along with the learners – also need support to build strategies and approaches to ensure the pedagogical and interpersonal interactions to effectively respond to and counter hate speech when it occurs in – or directly affects – educational environments. That includes giving them time and the adequate resources, tools and training, with imagined scenarios and sample responses, dialogue practice and practical advice to recognize, deescalate and respond in the moment to incidents of stereotyping, dehumanizing assumptions, exclusionary expressions, abusive and hateful speech,

bullying or harassment and violence. Teachers need the learning materials and concrete suggestions, with examples, on how to respond to hate speech in all its various forms. School leaders, meanwhile, can encourage collaborative learning and teamwork among teachers as an effective means of peer-to-peer capacity-building to address hate speech.

Teachers and staff – along with the learners – also need support when they become the targets of hate or harassment, including online. In addition to knowing how to effect pedagogical responses to hate when they encounter it in class or at school and in other learning environments, teachers have to be prepared for the possibility of they themselves being on the receiving end of expressions of hate on the part of learners, parents, colleagues or the wider community. School leaders and education policy-makers must consider the responsibility of institutions towards their employees in terms of assessing not only threats to their safety but also the emotional and psychological toll of exposure to hate – that toll is all the greater for teachers that are members of an historically excluded, or “minoritized” group, for they are more likely to receive the most hate messages.

**Teachers and staff need  
policies and processes to protect  
and support them  
when they are targeted.**

### **Policy-makers should**

- ✓ Support teacher training institutions in developing preservice and inservice courses to help educators to address hate speech in and through education by means of, inter alia, awareness-raising, classroom interventions and pedagogies aimed at strengthening learners’ resistance to hateful narratives. That includes making it standard policy and practice to integrate social and emotional learning with media and information literacy in all formal teacher training curricula;
- ✓ Provide teachers with guidance on how to engage confidentially with the learner when confronted with hate speech, whether directly in the classroom or in the wider educational setting or community. That includes strengthening the capacity to teach about hate speech, to address the underlying prejudices and to manage the related classroom discussions.

## 4.2.4 Strengthening institutional resilience to hate speech

### Whole-school and learner-centred approaches

Confronting hate speech is not a task to delegate to a single teacher. It requires educational institutions at every level – primary, secondary and university – to develop structures, strategies and routines to address hate speech, implement them in school policy and communicate them broadly. Addressing hate speech through education, to be effective, requires approaches to ensure its integration with multiple academic subject areas across multiple formal and non-formal curricula, from preschool to higher education and life-long learning, as well as whole-school approaches to policy-making, interrelations, celebrations, sporting events and other extracurricular activities. It requires a combination of skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that a person learns over time – as a learner or teacher, or a citizen and a resident of the community. School leaders are well-positioned to implement integrated, whole-school approaches to bring teachers from different disciplines together to create school-wide programmes to address hate speech through, inter alia, school assemblies, events and guest speakers. Prevention and counteraction strategies alike should be based on the institution's educational mandate. Educational institutions, in responding to an incident of hate must not only offer support to those targeted by it but also to consider the well-being of all learners and the learning environment as a whole.

Emphasis when building the programmes should be placed on applied learning and approaches that offer real-world scenarios and foster peer-to-peer learning and interactivity wherever possible. While the immediate intended outcomes may centre on developing

the knowledge, skills and competences to identify misinformation and disinformation, check sources and explain the laws in regard to free speech, that should not be the ultimate goal. Ideally, interventions should contribute to attitudinal and behavioural change, which is not a given – when civic behaviour is both defined and enacted in the online space, achieving that long-term goal will require more experiential learning and support. Educators should consider how more traditional curricula or means of delivery can be extended through digital civic action projects, for example, or student-led campaigns, intergenerational workshops and even state–citizen consultations where learners propose ways in which to mitigate and counter hate based on their experience.

### Creating safe, respectful, inclusive and engaging learning environments

Addressing hate speech is not just a matter of better recognition of the problem and greater accountability. It requires the creation of environments where hate cannot possibly thrive; and creating a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment, which is a core part of the school mandate, requires hate speech to be addressed. On the other hand, educational approaches to countering hate speech will only work if curricular and pedagogical efforts form part of a broader commitment to creating and sustaining safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments. That includes helping teachers and other staff to understand the push and pull factors that lead people towards hateful rhetoric and developing preventive strategies to counteract them by fostering feelings of belonging, inclusiveness, purpose, meaning and engagement. Learners need learning environments and communities that are characterized by positive goals and values in regard to social cohesion, respect for

diversity, connectedness, a sense of belonging, mutual respect, collaboration and peaceful coexistence. There must be pathways to healing from the impacts of harmful episodes in ways that bring justice, restore trust and rebuild resilience rather than foment suspicion and cause further harm.

### **BOX 14 – Good practices: developing respectful school environments in Brazil**

The Respeitar é Preciso project in Brazil was developed by the Instituto Vladimir Herzog, in close collaboration with the Municipal Secretariat of Education and the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship of the state of São Paulo, with the aim of disseminating human rights education and promoting mutual respect, respect for diversity and safe learning environments in public schools. Through face-to-face and online training courses – supported by materials developed by the Institute on themes such as human rights education for all ages, respect at school, diversity and discrimination, respect and humiliation, democracy at school and conflict mediation – the project reaches out to educators and whole school communities in São Paulo and, more recently, in the city of Goiana in the state of Pernambuco. The São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of Education recognized the courses in 2018, guaranteeing career points for trainees, and the project has reached educators, teachers and students in more than 1,500 schools.

**i** Learn more at <https://respeitarepreciso.org.br/> (in Portuguese only).

In many nations, that work can include drawing on indigenous positive models – religious models of compassion, empathy, kindness or forgiveness, for example, where such traditions are locally resonant – with a view to integrating approaches to countering hate speech with local perceptions and values. This can be helpful in preventing global and international standards and ideas from being perceived as imposed relics of colonialist or imperialist systems that are divorced from local realities. It is essential to ensure that such approaches pay careful attention to the needs of learners from historically excluded, minoritized, religious and ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples, and that local and indigenous models, rather than imposing a unilateral view, are integrated as models of inclusivity.

School cultures need to develop a culture of trust, inclusiveness and support for all learners through fostering a climate of belonging and acceptance.<sup>59</sup> Such approaches run counter to the many traditional school cultures that promote competitiveness, exclusiveness, hierarchies, rankings and academic achievement over all else. Systems that promote values of success and failure or competition and achievement tend to foster environments conducive to poor social and emotional learning, bullying and exclusion in ways that can create more fertile ground for hate speech and hateful expressions to thrive. An inclusive school climates proactively addresses issues of marginalization, exclusion, discrimination and injustice in ways that make it easier for learners and staff to recognize and reject hate speech. Schools can and should model equitable learning environments where learners are not just told what is right but demonstrate and live it in their everyday lives. The school environments that succeed

59 See Malafaia et al. (2018).

in those areas are those that foster trust, engender feelings of safety and facilitate an emotional connection with fellow learners, teachers and other school staff, which serves to build resilience and support for learners in the face of the challenges that they may encounter.

Safe and inclusive learning environments will thrive best in educational settings that offer learners a sense of control and purpose, mutual respect and an inclusive embrace of diversity and multicultural education. The focus here should be on open exchange and respect. Research has demonstrated the value of experiential, project-based, student-centred, participatory and collaborative pedagogies, in both online and offline formats, in fostering emotional and social learning. It includes a whole-school approach, cross-curricular commitment and the promotion of an inclusive school climate that fosters a sense of belonging for all. That means looking not just for resilient individuals but also for resiliencebuilding systems. Focusing on individual resilience puts too much pressure and responsibility on the learner for him or her to thrive in an inequitable or inhospitable environment. The focus should instead be on creating resilience-building systems and school learning environments where it is more difficult for hate speech to thrive.

## Emphasizing holistic school cultures that encourage diversity and inclusivity

Efforts here will require an emphasis on, *inter alia*, improving social cohesion and equity in and through education. Learners are keen observers of how well their communities and societies deal with differences and whether they allow for and encourage complex dialogue, including across dividing lines. The question is what kinds of broader learning, classroom and school cultures are learners immersed in? Are they ostracized and shamed for their mistakes or are they supported when they make a mistake, express feelings of insecurity or uncertainty and experiment with new ideas and concepts?<sup>60</sup>

The whole-school approach, with the full involvement of all school community actors both within the building's walls and beyond, is very effective in addressing hate speech.

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<sup>60</sup> For resources and further reading in this area, see the reports and publications of the European Unionfunded CATCH-EyouU project on educating critical citizens, available at <https://zenodo.org/record/2671572#.YisRwS-I10s>. See also Banaji and Mejias (2021) and Mejias and Banaji (2019), and the keynote presentation on the broader work of schools in promoting civic education that undermines hate speech given by Isabel Menezes at the 2020 meeting of the European Educational Research Association. That presentation, entitled "On the significance of connecting and dissenting for political education: an ecological-situated view of schools as communities within communities", is available at <https://eera-ecer.de/previous-ecers/ecer-2020-glasgow/programme/ecer-keynotes/isabel-menezes/>.

## BOX 15 – Good practices: integrating refugee students in Greece

In Greece, which is one of the main ports for refugees arriving in Europe, the national Schools for All project aims to integrate refugee students into Greek schools through a whole-school approach. With the support of the Ministry of Education, principals and teachers are trained to create safe and inclusive schools and classrooms where refugees are welcomed into a learning environment providing quality education for all. Through inservice training and support, the project equips educators with the tools, skills and confidence to manage controversy and deal with issues of intolerance, discrimination, racism and hate speech at school and in the local community. Throughout the school year, teams of school staff are mentored and assisted by experienced trainers in the development and implementation of action plans designed by them in accordance with their respective needs.

**i** For further information, see <https://theewc.org/projects/integration-of-refugee-children-in-greek-schools/>

Learners absorb a range of lessons from their educational environment, many of which go well beyond what learn in formal teaching. They observe patterns of exclusion and inclusivity and the hierarchies of power across the educational and support staff, for example, as well as whether and how diversity is reflected in the school leadership. Schools where there is a model culture of inclusive diversity as a lived practice will regularly evaluate existing policies and practices, including in regard to their recruitment and hiring processes, the use of the school name

and mascot, the choice of holiday celebrations, field trips or guest speakers and school-wide events. Each of those choices adds to the steady stream of signals sent out to learners and their families and communities to indicate what is valued and whether and how “hierarchies of inequality” or silences in terms of representation are challenged or unquestioningly replicated.

## Integrating school-based efforts with family and community outreach

Such issues cannot be tackled in a vacuum. To be effective, efforts to address hate speech at school must be longterm, systematic, comprehensive, based on the school’s real needs, anchored in everyday practice and driven by the school itself. Where possible, families and communities should be drawn into conversations about how to tackle discrimination, prejudice and hate. Strategies and routines to respond to hate speech should be implemented in school policy and communicated to the wider school community – including parents, carers, youth workers and volunteers working with children, among others – rather than remain the sole responsibility of the individual teacher. Parents need to be included, have a representative voice at the school and be given the opportunity to forge a close working relationship with it and with the wider community. This is especially true in the case of parents from marginalized, minority backgrounds who are more likely to be the targets of hate; they, in particular, should be encouraged to engage with school efforts to address hate speech. Where discrimination, prejudice and hate are inflowing from the wider community, schools must be empowered – both legally and practically equipped – to teach children alternative strategies to understand and build solidarity and empathy with fellow pupils.



## Policy-makers should


- ✓ Create supportive structures and guidance for a whole-school approach to fostering tolerance, inclusiveness and opportunities for dialogue and exchange outside of formal learning in order to strengthen resistance to hate and prejudice, including through extracurricular activities such as sports, artistic and cultural activities and community service;
- ✓ Strengthen the capacity of educational institutions, directors and managers to introduce antidiscrimination policies, mentoring and support programmes and assessment tools for addressing and preventing hate speech, including through whole community approaches that reach beyond the confines of their institutions;
- ✓ Ensure that education systems and institutions uphold freedom of expression while showing respect for conflicting and competing ideas and opinions.

## 4.2.5 Building partnerships

Education systems cannot succeed in achieving these tasks on their own. National, regional and local governments can partner with civil society, youth organizations, technology and social media companies and other private-sector entities and work in collaboration with them in ways that prevent, address and counter hate speech and disinformation while promoting freedom of expression. A number of organizations that have established partnerships to combat hate speech and hate crimes against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (or questioning) community in southern Africa, for example, are working through the education sector to incorporate a sexual diversity component into curricula and assisting teachers in enhancing their knowledge related to sexual orientation.<sup>61</sup>

### BOX 16 – Good practices: learning about diversity in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Anna Frank Foundation offers interactive online lessons on diversity and discrimination through an online tool called “Stories that Move”, which is available in seven languages and based on the true stories and experiences of young people. Meanwhile, the foundation is also running an educational debate programme in Amsterdam in which young people create their own films about the dilemmas in their communities, including that of hate speech.

 For more on the Stories that Move tool see <https://www.annefrank.org/en/education/product/33/stories-that-move/>

<sup>61</sup> See the report of the International Law and Policy Institute entitled “Evaluation of the Rights of LGBTI Youth and non-discrimination in Southern Africa”, and the work of the Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund at <https://saii.no/english/>.



Academic and research partnerships, too, are critical. Education policy-makers need to foster and sustain close collaboration with researchers and research institutes when establishing policies and interventions related to hate speech. Such partnerships can help to evaluate and assess the impacts and effectiveness of new policies in bringing about attitudinal and behavioural change, and can assist in the consideration of and responses to the latest trends in scientific evidence and practice to ensure that approaches are evidence-based and backed by rigorous research.

Internet companies can play a particular role by devoting time and resources to the establishment of safe monitoring, deamplifying or deplatforming policies on their respective platforms and contributing to broader educational efforts to address and counter hate speech, including by investing in educational tools and curricula that enable learners to recognize and respond to disinformation. To ensure the transparency and applicability of research findings, however, it is essential to ensure independent funding and better data access for academic research on hate speech and the role of technology and Internet companies.

Other corporate and civil society actors must also be at the table in developing a holistic, whole-of-society, approach to addressing and countering hate speech through education, particularly where its expression and spread are already problematic, such as in sports teams and stadiums, retailing and the music industry. Private sector initiatives, such as Chefs Stopping AAPI, have demonstrated

how local communities can rally round in support of specialist efforts to raise awareness of – and put a stop to – expressions of racism and racist violence.<sup>62</sup> Among the examples of counter-hate programmes launched globally, the “Racism. It Stops With Me” campaign – a national initiative developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in partnership with a number of other bodies – provides tools and resources to help people and organizations to learn about racism and oppose it through action for positive change.<sup>63</sup> The renewed focus on racial equality arising from the Black Lives Matter protests and COVID19 pandemic-related racism has prompted people and organizations to learn more, to respond effectively to incidents and to initiate actions for positive change. Similar initiatives are needed in a variety of areas of the private and corporate sector. Unions, local employers and small businesses, as well as religious and faith-based institutions and other community organizations may enjoy higher levels of trust among local populations when it comes to engaging adults outside formal schooling.

Lastly, while the context of hate speech may differ depending on the country, the production and circulation of hate speech is clearly a global phenomenon, so educational efforts to counter it, too, must rely on significant and sustained global collaboration. That means working at the global level with cross-sectoral international and regional organizations and non-profit associations, among others.

62 For more information on the Chefs Stopping AAPI Hate initiative, see <https://www.chefsstoppingaapihate.com>

63 For more on the “Racism. It stops with me” campaign, see <https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/>

## Policy-makers should

- ✓ Provide resources and financial support to civil society organizations engaged in addressing and countering hate speech;
- ✓ Encourage the development of prevention through education strategies in national hate speech action plans and guidelines aimed at non-State actors, including civil society and the private sector;
- ✓ Strengthen synergies between government, civil society and the private sector when developing hate speech mitigation strategies and initiatives, educational initiatives included;
- ✓ Ensure youth participation in related consultations and implementation efforts;
- ✓ Assist youth organizations in integrating media and information literacy learning into their policies and strategies as a standard part of their operations, and empower young people as media and information literacy peer educators and co-leaders, both online and offline;
- ✓ Provide resources and training for capacity-building in civil society organizations, documentation and information centres and museums that promote education on violent pasts and the origins of violence and hate. Provide schools and universities with the resources and training to work with such institutions in strengthening opportunities for extracurricular learning about hate speech and its harmful consequences.

## 4.3 Assessing the impact: evaluating educational initiatives to address hate speech

The policies and strategies of educational approaches to addressing hate speech must be implemented carefully with plans to measure their impact and effectiveness. Points of guidance for national, regional and local education systems to consider in this regard include the following.

A new educational approach should be piloted, wherever possible, in a small-scale setting and carefully evaluated through continuous assessment in the course of implementing the new strategies or initiatives and evaluation of their outcomes. Measures of success must be based not only on quantitative data, such as the numbers of people trained and schools with new curriculum, but also qualitative indicators of attitudinal and behavioural change among learners, staff and school leaders. In other words, the success of an intervention should also be assessed in the light of whether there has been a decline in sympathy and support for hate groups, for example, and in the willingness to share or defend propaganda or other hateful content discriminating against groups or individuals based on their identity.

Impact assessments could be developed in partnership with local researchers and/or college and university faculties and disseminated at a national or regional level. Pilot interventions, such as to introduce content addressing hate speech into school curricula, could be designed to include pretest and posttest evaluations to gauge the participants' self reported attitudes and beliefs about the groups or individuals targeted, or their understanding of hate speech and its root

causes and national protections for – and limitations to – freedom of expression and opinion protections and their limitations in any legislative or institutional context and educational setting.

It is important to note that the success of evaluations of statistical significance requires specific training to ensure the requisite skills in evaluation design, measurement and data analysis.

Impact assessment approaches should also be designed to include experimental or quasiexperimental research – with focus groups, interviews and participant observation – to understand and assess the perspectives and experiences of learners, teachers, administrators, parents and members of the wider community, with the results of a pilot classroom or whole-school intervention compared against a comparable setting.

Mixed-method approaches combining qualitative and quantitative data collection will produce robust data to assess the impact of interventions and how well they are received by the wider community. It will require sound and reliable assessment criteria developed by local, regional and state educators in partnership with, inter alia, local academics, university researchers and think tanks. Successful pilot interventions could then be scaled up to the regional and national levels with a measure of confidence in their potential impact.

## Policy-makers should

- ✓ Test new educational approaches to addressing hate speech by piloting programmes and practices within local audiences prior to wider implementation;
- ✓ Identify clear parameters to measure the success of education policies and programmes in addressing hate speech through monitoring and evaluation, with clear baselines and realistic yet ambitious targets;
- ✓ Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation incorporates a variety of perspectives and adequately captures the diversity of the target group(s);
- ✓ Consider mixed-method approaches combining qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies for robust results.

# Appendices

## Appendix I

### Key terminology<sup>64</sup>

<b>Disinformation:</b>	False or wrong information or content deliberately created to deceive or give an inaccurate understanding of an issue. Often presented as fact-based but in reality is intentionally false. Shared deliberately, with intent to do harm or misinform.
<b>Misinformation:</b>	False information shared unintentionally, without intent to harm, but with potentially equally negative consequences. Can mislead peers and colleagues, increase confusion on issues, create divisions in and between groups and communities and, in extreme cases, put lives in danger. Misinformation is disinformation unwittingly shared as fact by a misinformed public.
<b>Malinformation:</b>	Facts deployed out of context with intent to manipulate or mislead.
<b>Propaganda:</b>	False, biased or misleading information used intentionally to deceive, manipulate or persuade people to believe in a political or ideological viewpoint.
<b>Filter bubble:</b>	Occurs when content is suggested to online users based on previous Internet habits, personal data and interactions. A product of algorithms and other technology working to create the most personalized experiences for the user. In spite of the clear upsides to an “individualized web”, this can, over time, isolate users from viewpoints or interests that differ to their own, which can, in the long term, limit their understanding of complex topics or events and reduce empathy with and dialogue between different groups.
<b>Echo chamber:</b>	Social space in which ideas, opinions and beliefs are reinforced by repetition within a closed group. Can occur on both mainstream and more “fringe” or “alttech” platforms.
<b>Monetized clickbait:</b>	Sensational, incendiary or emotionally manipulative content designed to drive traffic to a website and, in turn, generate advertising or other revenue for the site host.

<sup>64</sup> These definitions are adapted from a variety of sources and online reports and from the definitions used by the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University. We recommend Lock and Ludolph (2019) for further reading on types of online propaganda and disinformation. Available under CC-BY NC 4.0.

**Biased media:**

Media showing favouritism or prejudice towards a particular opinion in content presented, in often loaded or emotive language, as “fact”. Biased content, whether positive or negative, can adopt a “black-and-white” and overstated “heroes-and-villains” framing of stories that appeal to the reader’s emotions rather than encouraging them to think critically. With pronounced media silos forming in many countries and markets, the ability to distinguish neutral reporting, such as “breaking news”, from “oped” pieces and features is key.

**“Us versus them” grouping:**

Divides the world into positively viewed or victimized in-groups (us) and negatively viewed or stereotyped out-groups (them), based on a wide range of characteristics, such as race, religion, gender, class, nationality and political views. Divisions can also be based on which sports teams people support, their musical tastes or the video games that they play (sometimes referred to online as “fan culture”).

### Summary of the conclusions of the Chairpersons of the Global Education Ministers Conference on addressing hate speech through education

In June 2019, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, launched a strategy to enhance the United Nations response to the global phenomenon of hate speech. As part of the implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, the Secretary-General invited UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) to convene a Global Education Ministers Conference on addressing hate speech through education, held online on 26 October 2021. The recommendations for the way forward are outlined below, as prepared by the two Chairpersons of the Conference Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, and H.E. Mr Hage Geingob, President of Namibia.

1. On 26 October 2021, the international community, including heads of State and ministers of education, came together for the virtual Global Education Ministers Conference on addressing hate speech through education organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. The meeting, convened by the Secretary-General, welcomed the conclusions of the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Addressing Hate Speech through Education, held on 30 September and 1 October 2021.
2. We, the Chairpersons, remain concerned by the alarming rise in hate speech directed at people and specific target groups across the world, menacing human rights and social stability, exacerbating conflict and

tensions, contributing to serious human rights violations, including atrocity crimes, and threatening the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also recognize that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, hateful content, dis/misinformation and conspiracy theories have swept across the globe, aggravating pre-existing biases, harmful stereotypes, intolerance and discrimination. Addressing and countering hate speech effectively requires a holistic approach that looks at tackling both its root causes and impact.

3. In accordance with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which places specific emphasis on the role of education in addressing hate speech, the participants acknowledge the transformative power of education as a fundamental tool to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech, and to promote peaceful, inclusive and just societies for all, in line with the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.
4. In accordance with the Conference's deliberations, and taking into account local contexts, capacities and available resources, we, the Chairpersons, recommend that education authorities prioritize:
  - (a) the implementation of specific educational interventions aimed at explicitly addressing hate speech at all levels of education, with a lifelong learning perspective. Embedded in the frameworks of global citizenship

and human rights education, those educational responses must promote, protect and uphold international human rights norms and standards and pursue the social, moral and humanistic purposes of education, which are at the core of the Education 2030 Agenda. That includes providing learners with the necessary skills and competencies to think critically, take an intersectional approach to discrimination and challenge hateful narratives and those who promote them;

**(b)** the design and implementation of policies to develop digital citizenship skills, paying proper attention to social and emotional learning, which enable learners to find, access, use, create and freely exchange information, while navigating the online environment safely and responsibly. In that respect, it is important to place special emphasis on media and information literacy, with a view to strengthening the resilience of learners and their capacity to recognize and counter disinformation, violent extremist views and conspiracy theories aiming to incite hatred towards specific people and groups, including women and youth;

**(c)** the provision of adequate professional development and training for teachers and school leaders at all levels of education, through an approach that combats discrimination in all its forms and acknowledges and addresses biases and stereotypes. This entails developing capacities to carry out gender and age-responsive interventions for victims of hate speech and for those disseminating and/or are at risk of disseminating hateful and dangerous content, online and offline;

**(d)** addressing hate speech through cross-curricula interventions and through encouraging pedagogies and approaches that foster diversity and multiple perspectives as well as developing extracurricular activities. That entails addressing the root causes of intolerance and discrimination, increasing the understanding of intersectionalities and underscoring the relations between hate speech, discrimination, violence and atrocity crimes. Furthermore, hateful, discriminatory and exclusionary narratives should be removed from curricula, textbooks and all educational resources;

**(e)** enhancing multi-sectoral cooperation by building partnerships with all relevant stakeholders through a whole-of-society approach to addressing and countering hate speech through education. This includes social, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and engaging representatives of people and groups targeted by hate speech, but also ministries and relevant public authorities, civil society, including human rights defenders in all their diversity, community-based organizations, mental health and social service providers, academic institutions, new and traditional media and Internet companies, judicial stakeholders, sports entities, religious and community leaders and faith-based and cultural organizations, youth and intergovernmental organizations.

**5.** As a way forward, we, the Chairpersons, commit to the principles and policy priorities set forth in these conclusions and encourage you, ministers of education, to take the lead in taking forward and implementing these commitments at the national and regional levels. This entails the

development of contextualized national and regional roadmaps for effective implementation, through an inclusive and participatory consultative process with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, with a particular focus on the meaningful participation of people and groups who are marginalized, vulnerable and/or targeted by hate speech.

**6.** We, the Chairpersons, therefore invite:

- UNESCO, as the lead United Nations agency for education, communication and information,
- the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, as the lead United Nations entity

for the prevention of atrocity crimes and the United Nations systemwide focal point on hate speech and the implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech,

- the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the lead United Nations entity on human rights, as well as
- the United Nations Department of Global Communications, as the lead United Nations entity on communication,

to support and follow up the implementation of these global commitments in cooperation with Member States and all relevant stakeholders.

**i** For further information, see <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-hate-speech-through-education-global-education-ministers-conference>



## Further resources

- [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, United Nations, 2019](#)
- [Addressing hate speech: educational responses, UNESCO, 2022](#)
- [Addressing conspiracy theories: what teachers need to know, UNESCO 2022](#)
- [Addressing Hate Speech Through Education, Multi-stakeholder Online Forum: 30 September – 1 October 2021, UNESCO, 2022](#)
- [Addressing hate speech on social media: contemporary challenges, UNESCO, 2021](#)
- [Education as a tool for prevention: addressing and countering hate speech, Expert meeting: 13-18 May 2020, UNESCO, 2021](#)
- [Media and information literate citizens: think critically, click wisely!, UNESCO 2021](#)
- [Letting the sun shine in: transparency and accountability in the digital age, UNESCO, 2021](#)
- [United Nations guidance note on addressing and countering covid-19 related hate speech, United Nations, 2020](#)
- [Countering online hate speech, UNESCO, 2015](#)

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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON  
GENOCIDE PREVENTION AND THE  
RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

# Addressing hate speech through education

## A guide for policy-makers

This guide for policy-makers developed by the United Nations' Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) and UNESCO provides specific strategies and approaches to address hate speech within and through education. Countering harmful, discriminatory and violent narratives in the form of xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other types of intolerance, whether online or offline, requires interventions at every level of education, in both formal and non-formal settings. This guide offers concrete recommendations, good practices and lessons learned on how to combat hate speech and provide safe and respectful learning environments, as well as the broader goal of fostering inclusive societies.

