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Media and Information Literacy: Combating Hate Speech in the Digital Age

Issue Brief

Introduction

The contemporary media and information landscape is characterized by unprecedented levels of connectivity and content availability largely driven by the rapid expansion of online media services. However, global challenges such as violence, climate crisis and economic disparities – combined with a sense of insecurity – are increasingly reflected and amplified in the digital space. These dynamics have contributed to alarmingly high levels of hate speech and harmful content, further exacerbating geopolitical tensions and social instability worldwide¹.

Hate speech has become increasingly pervasive in the public sphere. Its spread is reinforced by a range of interconnected challenges, including the misuse of personal data, unregulated automated online content moderation, the deterioration of information integrity, and an increasingly polarized climate marked by distrust and intolerance. In this context, safeguarding the integrity of public media and information ecosystems is critical to protecting diversity, social cohesion, and democratic values.

As the United Nations specialized agency for media freedom, education and cultural diversity, UNESCO recognizes Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a key component of comprehensive responses to hate speech. MIL addresses both the structural drivers and the societal impacts of harmful content. Central to these efforts is the development of skills that enable citizens to access, analyse, critically evaluate, and create information, empowering them to make informed decisions and engage in public discourse.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO commissioned this issue brief to support policymakers, educators, civil society, and other stakeholders in designing effective and context-sensitive MIL responses to hate speech in a rapidly evolving technological environment. The brief situates MIL within the broader challenges posed by the accelerated spread of harmful content online, often amplified by discrimination, extremism, and declining respect for human rights. Recognizing the powerful role of (social) media in shaping perceptions, beliefs, and behaviour, it underscores the need for coordinated, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral approaches. Strengthening MIL, alongside professional and ethical media standards, is essential to addressing the root causes of hate speech and building long-term societal resilience, grounded in human rights, the rule of law, pluralism, tolerance, and peace.

¹ Harmful content, in a wider sense, relates to content that may cause distress, is abusive or incites hatred or encourages, promotes or provides instructions for an act of serious violence against person(s), usually on the basis of characteristics of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, etc.

1

Hate speech – Old enemy, new techniques

1.1 Alarming levels of hate speech dissemination

Language, as old as human history, is the foundation of social interaction and collective life. At the same time, the use of language to influence beliefs and behaviour through propaganda, lies, disinformation, hate speech, and other forms of manipulative or harmful communication has been a persistent feature of human societies.

Hate speech encompasses a wide spectrum of expression. It ranges from forms of speech that may be legally protected but socially harmful to, in certain cases, advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. The latter falls outside the protection of the right to freedom of expression under international human rights law. Distinguishing between these categories is often complex, as it may be equally challenging to differentiate hate speech from other forms of expressions that remain protected under the right to freedom of expression². This complexity reflects the importance of national and local legal contexts, cultural specificities, and societal dynamics, and helps explain the absence of a universally agreed definition of hate speech.

Speech that incites violence or hatred can have severe real-life consequences. By appealing to powerful human emotions – especially fear, anger, and perceived threat³ – hate speech can shape attitudes and behaviour, especially among individuals and communities in vulnerable situation. In this context, Media and Information Literacy initiatives play a critical role. By strengthening the ability to understand, contextualize, and critically evaluate media environments and content, MIL contributes to reducing the harmful impact of the rapid spread of hate speech, particularly through grassroots engagement.

While hateful and harmful language has historically proliferated alongside the developments of different forms of media – including print media, radio, and television – the emergence of the internet has fundamentally transformed its scale, speed, and reach. Although online media services have enabled unprecedented opportunities for communication and participation, they have also introduced significant societal risks. New and emerging technologies are increasingly misused to amplify content designed to disrupt social cohesion, undermine democratic institutions, and normalize hostility and exclusion.

² Although there is no universal definition of hate speech, a valuable source of reference can be found in UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which provide a unified framework for the United Nations to address the issue globally, which defines hate speech as: “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.” (available at: <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech>). Also, the UN Rabat Plan of Action refers to: “the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.” (available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/outcome-documents/rabat-plan-action>)

³ Amira Ghenai, Zeinab Noorian, Hadiseh Moradisani, Parya Abadeh, Caroline Erentzen, Fattane Zarrinkalam, Exploring hate speech dynamics: The emotional, linguistic, and thematic impact on social media users

According to a recent UNESCO publication, a significant proportion of internet users report encountering disinformation and hate speech on social media, which is identified as the platform where such content is most prevalent.⁴

Despite the lack of full transparency regarding its content moderation policies and practices, Meta reported removing 346 million pieces of content in the third quarter of 2024, including material related to hate speech, bullying, and harassment. Following announcements regarding the termination of fact-checking programs, it is estimated that Meta's billions of users may be exposed to increased levels of hate speech and other harmful content.⁵

The contemporary global media ecosystem is increasingly characterized by a state of information disorder. Algorithmic content curation systems prioritize engagement and visibility, often reinforcing echo chambers and accelerating the circulation of harmful narratives including hate speech. Limited media pluralism, combined with the prevalence of closed online communications applications, further facilitates the unchecked spread of such content. These dynamics are compounded by political and social instability, growing polarization, and the deliberate exploitation of disinformation and hate based narratives for political or economic gain.

In recent decades, online environments have emerged in which hate speech and extremism are not only tolerated but actively cultivated. These spaces enable the formation of transnational networks that normalize aggression, dehumanization, and violence. While such dynamics are not unprecedented in human history, their contemporary manifestations are distinguished by their unprecedented speed, scale, and global reach.⁶ As noted by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres “...*hate speech has been a precursor to atrocity crimes, including genocide...*”⁷. Numerous real-life examples continue to demonstrate how hate speech, particularly when combined with disinformation, can lead to stigmatization, discrimination and large-scale violence.⁸

During the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and conspiracy theories about the origins and spread of the virus fuelled a surge of hate speech targeting people of Asian descent. Online narratives portrayed them as carriers of disease or responsible for the outbreak, normalizing racist slurs and hostile behaviour in public spaces. This stigmatizing language translated into real-world discrimination, with people of Asian descent facing verbal abuse, harassment, and physical attacks across multiple countries. As highlighted in a OHCHR report, the spread of misinformation and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes during the pandemic directly contributed to xenophobia, exclusion and violence against communities wrongly blamed for the crisis.⁹

1.2 Limitations of the right to freedom of expression

The primary normative framework for addressing hate speech is international human rights law¹⁰, within which the right to freedom of expression occupies a central position. This framework, reflected in universal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as in regional human rights systems, provides the internationally recognized basis for policy alignment. At the same time, its preservation must remain free from undue censorship or arbitrary control.

As a human right, freedom of expression gives rise to corresponding obligations for States to respect, protect, and fulfil its enjoyment, alongside the right to equality and non-discrimination. However, this right is not absolute.

⁴ UNESCO/IPSOS Survey on the impact of online disinformation and hate speech, September 2023, available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-11/unesco-ipsos-online-disinformation-hate-speech.pdf>

⁵ A. Fowler, Geoffrey (with research by Will Oremus and Andrea Jiménez), 277 million more harmful posts could flood Facebook and Instagram, study says, 25 February, 2025, Tech Brief, The Washington Post, available at:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/25/meta-facebook-instagram-hate-speech/>

⁶ Far-Right Lone-Actor Terrorist Attacks and Violent Extremist use of File-Sharing Platforms, The Terrorist Content Analytics Platform, available at: <https://terrorismanalytics.org/research-news/Bratislava-analysis>

⁷ Launch of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action against Hate Speech, Designating Special Adviser on Genocide Prevention as Focal Point, 18 June 2019, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2019/pi2264.doc.htm>

⁸ United Nations, Understanding Hate speech, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-and-real-harm>

⁹ OHCHR, Racial discrimination in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf

¹⁰ An unexhaustive list of relevant texts can be found in the Annex to this Issue brief.

Under international human rights law, it may be subject to restrictions that are provided for by law and that pursue legitimate aims, provided such restrictions are necessary and proportionate in a democratic society. Measures to combat hate speech and other forms of discriminatory expressions may fall within this category.

Expression that contains or can reasonably be perceived by its audience as containing incitement to hatred, violence and discrimination, does not necessarily benefit from the protections afforded to freedom of expression.

In legal terms, hate speech has been described as “one of the limits which should never be overstepped in the exercise of freedom of expression.”¹¹ At the same time, it is well established that content which may “offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population¹²” does not necessarily fall outside the scope of protected speech, provided it does not amount to incitement to hatred or violence. Advocacy for freedom of expression therefore cannot be interpreted as granting blanket protection to all forms of expression, a misconception sometimes invoked to shield harmful speech from accountability.

During the summer of 2024, more than a dozen individuals were arrested in the United Kingdom for inciting racial hatred on social media in connection with the so-called “Southport riots”. These events were fuelled by misinformation and anti-immigration narratives, following a tragic mass stabbing of three young girls in the city of Southport. Those convicted were found to have used social media to call for violence, including attacks on migrants and the burning of a hotel housing refugees and asylum seekers. In one case, an individual posted messages about participating in a riot and shared a derogatory meme about migrants in a local Facebook group dedicated to protests, alongside footage of himself making racist gestures and shouting racist comments. Individuals associated with counter-protests were also sentenced for incitement, including for posting an address to a gathered crowd while stating that members of the “far-right” should have their throats cut¹³, underscoring the need for consistent and impartial application of legal standards, irrespective of political or ideological affiliation.

Hate speech poses a serious risk to the fundamental rights of others, including the rights to human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination. Beyond criminal liability, hate speech may also give rise to civil

or administrative consequences, including proceedings before media regulatory authorities or electoral bodies, particularly in cases involving media outlets or political actors.

Steady increase of incidents of displacements, looting and even deaths have been reported in South Africa. UN experts cited campaigns such as Operation Dudula - initiated by a group from a faction within the Put South Africans First movement - which popularized anti-immigrant messaging on social media. This campaign reportedly acted as a catalyst for real-world violence, including violent protests, arson, and loss of life.¹⁴

Hate speech cases must be assessed on individual basis, ensuring that any restrictions to the right to freedom of expression are provided for by law¹⁰, pursue one or more legitimate aims, and are strictly necessary and proportionate in a democratic society. Measures must therefore be proportionate to the objective pursued. The UN Rabat Plan of Action¹⁵ provides authoritative guidance for assessing the severity of expression and the threshold for prohibition, including by examining the content and

purpose of the speech and the broader societal context. It sets out criteria to determine the level of harm and the justification for restrictions, including: (i) the social and political context in which the expression occurred; (ii) the identity and status of the speaker; (iii) the intent of the speaker; (iv) the content and form of the expression; (v) the extent of dissemination; and (vi) the likelihood and imminence of violence, discrimination, or hostility occurring as a direct consequence of the expression.¹⁶

¹¹ Consider, for example, the interpretation of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Zimman vs France*, 2022, available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-222103%22%5D%7D>

¹² See reference to European Court of Human Rights decision of *Handyside v. the United Kingdom* in 1976 (and subsequent decisions), available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-57499%22%5D%7D>

¹³ Comerford, Ruth, Men jailed for encouraging unrest on social media, 9 August 2024, BBC, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy76dxkppjjo>

¹⁴ United Nations, Human Rights, “South Africa ‘on the precipice of explosive xenophobic violence’, UN experts warn”, 15 July 2022, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122612>

¹⁵ The Rabat Action Plan, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomofexpression/articles19-20/pages/index.aspx>

¹⁶ Ibid.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram and X are frequently used by private users and informal online networks to spread false claims portraying refugees or migrants as criminals or security threats, particularly in communities experiencing large arrivals of displaced people. According to UNHCR, campaigns of misinformation, disinformation, and toxic narratives online have contributed to increased xenophobia, negative stereotyping, and hostility toward refugees and migrants, creating “protection risks” for displaced and stateless communities.¹⁷

1.3. Hate speech and Artificial Intelligence

Recently published UNESCO policy paper “AI and the Holocaust: rewriting history? The impact of artificial intelligence on understanding the Holocaust”¹⁸, noted examples of AI enabling bad actors to distort Holocaust-related content in order to spread antisemitism. These included the creation of fabricated testimonies, and the alteration of historical records, including through the use of deepfake images and audio content generated by artificial intelligence. The paper called for urgent action by governments, tech companies and educators, including the acceleration of the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI¹⁹, adopted in 2021 as the first global standard-setting instrument in this field.

Particular attention has been drawn to developments related to Artificial Intelligence (AI). By mimicking human behaviour and simulating human intelligence, AI systems raise concerns about the growing influence of narratives created by, or amplified through, powerful Generative AI tools., This is especially relevant in digital environments where content that generates higher engagement also generates greater revenue, and where engagement is often driven by the exploitation of strong human emotions

such as fear, concern and uncertainty.

It should also be borne in mind that AI systems, particularly in their early stages, can make mistakes, misinterpret facts, or fabricate responses when reliable information is lacking. More importantly, AI systems can be deliberately trained or prompted using hate speech propaganda, or other harmful inputs, resulting in outputs that reinforce discriminatory or misleading narratives.²⁰

In May 2024, a video of a real-life historical event from 1939, showing a speech given by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler at the beginning of the Second World War, was altered using artificial intelligence. In the manipulated video, Hitler delivers antisemitic remarks in English. Shared by a “far-right” conspiracy influencer on the platform X, the video quickly accumulated 15 million views.²¹

¹⁷ UNHCR, Countering toxic narratives about refugees and migrants, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5df9f0417.pdf>

¹⁸ UNESCO's policy paper “AI and the Holocaust: rewriting history? The impact of artificial intelligence on understanding the Holocaust”, published jointly with the World Jewish Congress to mark the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390211>

¹⁹ UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence>

²⁰ As Prof. Harari argues: “AI has gained some remarkable abilities to manipulate and generate language ... In a political battle for minds and hearts, intimacy is the most efficient weapon, and AI has just gained the ability to mass-produce intimate relationships with millions of people.” Available at: <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2023/04/28/ya-aval-noah-harari-argues-that-ai-has-hacked-the-operating-system-of-human-civilisation>

²¹ Karadeglija, Anja, AI-powered hate content is on the rise, experts say, Last Updated: May 26, 2024, The Canadian Press, available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ai-hate-content-1.7215369>

2

Media and Information Literacy – grass-root responses to contemporary challenges

2.1 Responding to challenges

Many initiatives are currently being undertaken at national, supranational and international level to respond to growing concerns related to the accelerated spread

and severe impact of hate speech and harmful content. These efforts seek to ensure that much-needed measures to curb these dangerous trends do not inadvertently lead to excessive digital restrictions²².

Legislative and regulatory responses – European framework

MIL is widely recognized as a crucial component in countering hate speech and advancing democratic practices. This recognition is reflected in a substantial body of legislative and regulatory instruments, including the 2018 EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive²³, the Digital Services Act²⁴, and the European Media Freedom Act²⁵. Considered an essential skill for citizens of all ages, the promotion of media literacy and the adoption of measures to strengthen such skills are requirement for EU Member States. These measures aim to enhance citizens' critical thinking and their ability to navigate the digital media environment more effectively.

Under newer regulatory frameworks, the largest online platforms, including search engines and social media services, are now subject to legal obligations. At the national levels, the adoption of online safety legislations and regulations increasingly emphasize “safety by design” features and duty of care. These approaches require digital technology companies to take greater responsibility for user safety and to tackle harm caused by content or activity on their services.

Legislative and regulatory responses to combat hate speech provide an important framework for addressing hate speech. However, reliance on sanctioning tools alone is not sufficient to address the root causes of hate speech or its impact on individuals and communities.

These impacts include the mental and emotional dimensions of human experience, as well as deeper social and political divisions, historical grievances, economic inequalities, violence, and exclusion.

²² Council of Europe publication: „Media regulatory authorities and media pluralism - Regional publication“, May 2021, p.9, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/media-regulatory-authorities-and-media-pluralism-final-for-online-1506/1680a2eb1d>

²³ EU Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>

²⁴ The Digital Services Act, available at:

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act_en

²⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) (Text with EEA relevance), available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1083>

This is where MIL initiatives assume a central role and should be recognized as a core component of broader strategies to tackle hate speech, since media and information literacy is described as being “*concerned with citizens’ engagement with communication and content forms (information, entertainment, advertising, misinformation and disinformation, etc.), and how people manage their interaction so as to distinguish and determine their engagements with information and other types of content... for desired outcomes in their personal, social, political, economic, and cultural lives*”²⁶. The importance of MIL programs, designed to reinforce individuals’ ability to critically understand and evaluate content across diverse media platforms, is recognized in a wide range of international and national legislative frameworks, recommendations and guidelines.²⁷ MIL is also increasingly being used as a toolkit to address a range of media-related issues, such as countering disinformation and hate speech, managing online safety and security, and facilitating democratic engagement.

In addition, many media regulators now have statutory responsibilities in relation to MIL as a result of new legislation or have chosen to take action on MIL in line with international guidelines and recommendations.

In the context of efforts to counter hate speech, MIL skills can help individuals to:

- recognize hate speech and harmful content, as well as the negative impact such content can have on individuals and on society;
- better understand the information infrastructure and the reasons why they may be exposed to particular narratives;
- identify and reflect on biases, both within the content they encounter and within their own perspectives;
- reject unverified information, biased narratives and stereotypes by applying skills related to accuracy checking, source evaluation and information verification.

AMeLiE²⁸, a 2-year Erasmus+ KA2 Project, brings together a consortium of partners from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Romania. The project addresses the issue of online hate speech and focuses on innovative practices in the digital age and social inclusion in order to tackle the negative effects of hate speech. Its main objective is to use social networking ICT tools, together with peer learning and crowdsourcing techniques, to train school communities on how to address online hate speech. This includes training teachers and representatives of school communities and families; providing advanced media literacy skills and implementing tested good practices based on the principle of co-construction of the training pathway by learners at all levels. The project also aims to create a community that generates active grassroots proposals and solutions through constant exchange and sharing.

By implementing various activities and providing a useful depository of relevant documentation, the project emphasizes the importance of social inclusion and the positive use of online spaces to build more tolerant, fairer, and respectful societies. As noted by the project partners, this is why “*AMeLiE addresses the issue of online hate-speech, which has become particularly evident thanks to its current diffusion and popularity on social media, that is where young people have more easily access.*”²⁹

2.2 Cooperation platforms

The current state of play regarding the challenges posed by hate speech is complex and difficult. The threat to society arising from hate speech is both urgent and deeply intricate, and it would be a mistake to assume that it can be resolved quickly or simply through technological solutions or the development of new skills or knowledge

alone. Previously identified social, economic, and political factors must be taken into account, particularly in contexts where people’s legitimate fears and concerns are deliberately and maliciously exploited through targeted, harmful communications. This dynamic has been documented in UN analyses examining how disinformation and manipulative narratives exploit social anxieties to fuel division and hostility³⁰.

²⁶ UNESCO, Media & Information Literacy Curriculum for Educators & Learners, 2021, available at:

https://www.unesco.org/mil4teachers/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2023/10/Part_1_CI%20MIL_CURRICULUM.pdf

²⁷ While the full listing of relevant material is too vast to mention in this format, the following references are provided as illustrative of emphasizing the importance of MIL programs for the purpose of reinforcing the individuals’ ability to critically understand and evaluate content across diverse media, e.g.: UNESCO “[Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines](#)”, Council of Europe [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#); Chapman, Martina, Rokša-Zubčević, Asja, “[A report for the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media exploring how Media Freedom Literacy can be fostered across the OSCE region](#)”.

²⁸ AMeLiE project, available at: <https://www.amelioproject.eu/#about>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UN Secretary-General, Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19 Related Hate Speech, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3863213?v=pdf>

Even when such messaging falls short of the legal definition of hate speech, it can nevertheless have a profoundly destructive impact on society.

By supporting citizens in assessing information flow, and in particular by strengthening their ability to critically assess the information they receive through various communications channels, MIL programmes help individuals to distinguish between accurate and unbiased information and various forms and tactics of dis/mis/malinformation and hate speech. In doing so, MIL initiatives enable citizens to “make sense” of the world around them. This, in turn, contributes to addressing some of the root causes of hate speech, including social and political divisions grounded in histories of violence, discrimination, and economic inequalities.

MIL provides a sustainable model for empowering individuals to change behaviour over the long-term. With the objective of reinforcing media diversity and preventing the spread of hate speech - particularly during election periods, when disinformation and incitement to hatred for electoral purposes are often widespread - it is therefore of pivotal importance to ensure adequate support for MIL related initiatives. Such efforts should be

further strengthened through national, regional, and international cooperation.

A move towards more comprehensive cooperative platforms is required, since the challenges described above, and responses to them, fall within the responsibility of a wide range of stakeholders. These include governments, regulators, journalists and media professionals, online platforms, political and religious leaders, civil society organisations, teachers, and academics, among others. Well-designed cooperative structures can contribute effectively to a range of necessary actions, including: (i) the adoption and updating of legislation, regulation, and standard-setting instruments (ii) and the reinforcement of self-regulation, co-regulation, and regulation; (iii) the expansion of media and information literacy activities; and (iv) the strengthening of media standards.

Existing networks and alliances operating at different levels and across sectors already play important roles in combating hate speech within their respective mandates. These initiatives would benefit from stronger interconnectedness and coordination, in order to maximise impact and avoid duplication of efforts.³¹

UNESCO-led initiatives, including the Global Media and Information Literacy Alliance³² and the Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue University Network (MILID)³³ aim to reposition MIL globally by strengthening strategic partnerships, deepening the overall MIL strategy, and generating research that can inform policy development. Their work focuses in particular on research, education, and participation, including in the context of intercultural dialogue.

2.3 Integration of MIL into school curricula

There are three widely acknowledged and equally important facts regarding hate speech: (i) There is no universal definition of hate speech; (ii) National and local contexts are crucial and (iii) Hate speech may fall outside the protection afforded by the right to freedom of expression. Consequently, balancing freedom of expression with its legitimate restrictions in cases involving hate speech is a complex and sensitive task.

Compounding this challenge is the fact that citizens are

often not equipped with the level of legal or conceptual expertise required to make such assessments. As a result, some may identify hate speech where it does not exist, while others may seek to shield harmful expressions under the protections associated with freedom of expression.

Considering that (a) educational systems are responsible not only for academic learning but also for promoting social cohesion and equality; (b) high levels of hate speech and harmful content are present online; and (c) younger generations are deeply embedded in the use of

³¹ Although not fully integrating proposed cooperative structures, some examples of similar levels of engagement can, for instance, be seen in the European Union's [High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime](#), established in 2016 to foster in-depth expert discussions on issues common to the fight against hate speech and hate crime, facilitate the exchange and dissemination of good practices and foster dedicated thematic discussions on specific forms of hatred and ways to channel effective responses on the ground. This High Level Group produced, inter alia, the [2022 Key guiding principles on cooperation between law enforcement authorities and civil society organisations](#), providing guiding principles related to e.g., hate crime reporting and data collection, hate crime training and hate crime victim support, emphasizing the need to establish a culture of trust and transparency ensure broad representation and inclusive participation share data collection methodologies, etc.

³² UNESCO MIL Alliance, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/alliance>

³³ UNESCO MILID network, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/milid-network>

digital services and communications tools; it is of critical importance to ensure the full integration of MIL into national school curricula.

As reflected in the commitments of the UN Pact for the Future, and in contribution to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³⁴, including good health and well-being and quality education (SDGs 3 and 4), emphasis is placed on coordinated action. This includes the commitment *“to promote information integrity, tolerance and respect in the digital space, as well as to protect the integrity of democratic processes; strengthen[ing] international cooperation to address the challenge of misinformation and disinformation and hate speech online and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with international law.”*³⁵ These commitments further include the design and rollout of digital media and information literacy curricula *“to ensure that all users have the skills and knowledge to safely and critically interact with content and with information providers and to enhance resilience against the harmful impacts of misinformation and disinformation.”*³⁶

Curriculum development in this area presents significant challenges, particularly in light of rapid technological change and ongoing debates regarding appropriate pedagogical approaches. The dynamic and evolving nature of MIL makes it difficult to integrate into formal education systems, as curriculum updates and teacher training can take so long that learning materials risk becoming outdated before reaching students.

It is therefore essential to address these challenges proactively by ensuring access to high quality training opportunities and learning resources that are regularly updated in response to emerging needs.

Cooperation is particularly important in this context and requires sustained collaboration between education authorities, academic institutions, MIL practitioners, and experts in artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. Such cooperation is essential to ensure the relevance, quality, and sustainability of MIL education.

Outside formal education systems, it is also important to recognize that individuals’ media literacy needs vary significantly and change over time, depending on personal circumstances, life stages, social norms, technological developments, and legislative changes. UNESCO’s approach to education as a lifelong learning process therefore extends naturally to Media and Information Literacy, for which no one-size-fits-all model can adequately address diverse and evolving needs. International best practices emphasize a ‘cradle to grave’³⁷ approach to MIL, anchored in multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral delivery models that provide appropriate support throughout the life course³⁸.

In that regard, the UN Pact for the Future further recognizes the need to *“establish and support national digital skills strategies, adapt teacher training and education curricula and provide for adult training programmes for the digital age”*.³⁹

The Global Forum of Networks (GFN)⁴⁰ provides a collaborative space for dialogue among international regulatory authorities, enabling the exchange of good practices in the governance of digital platforms based on a human rights approach. This initiative is representative of UNESCO’s multistakeholder approach to the governance of digital platforms, as reflected in the “Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms⁴¹,” developed as part of the “Internet for Trust initiative⁴²”.

³⁴ UN Sustainable Development Goals, available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

³⁵ UN Pact for the Future, Information Integrity, available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Media Literacy and Education in Finland - Finland Toolbox, available at: <https://toolbox.finland.fi/life-society/media-literacy-and-education-in-finland/>

³⁸ UNESCO Guidance, Council of Europe Recommendations, Platform for Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and others.

³⁹ UN Pact for the Future, Digital literacy, skills and capacities, available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf

⁴⁰ Global Forum of Networks, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-trust/building-network-networks>

⁴¹ UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms, Safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information through a multistakeholder approach, available at:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387339/PDF/387339eng.pdf.multi>

⁴² <https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-conference?hub=71542>

2.4 Journalism and hate speech

The role of journalists in the dissemination of hate speech is significant, especially in the context of so-called “traditional” media such as television and radio. Whether journalists, anchors, and media owners contribute to spread of hateful statements, or remain within the boundaries of the right to freedom of expression, is central to assessing responsibility for the amplification of hate speech. This challenge is especially acute in situations such as live broadcasts of political rallies or major public events, where speakers may use hateful, derogatory, or discriminatory language.

Hate speech in the media is most effectively addressed through adherence to professional codes of conduct,

including principles of integrity, independence, and ethical reporting. These standards should be reinforced by the consistent promotion of clear, accessible narratives that explain the dangers posed by hate speech and harmful content to societies and humanity more broadly.

Recognizing the media’s unique position in advancing MIL, UNESCO has produced *‘Media and Information Literacy in Journalism: A Handbook for Journalists and Journalism Educators.’*⁴³ Media outlets and journalists are well placed to promote MIL, since both the media and MIL efforts share common objectives to “*respect people’s autonomy and critical sense...pursue truth and verification of information...promote public conversation, dialogue, and seek understanding among people; and defend pluralism and diversity, without censorship of any kind.*”⁴⁴

UNESCO’s *Covering Hate Speech: A Guide for Journalists* further explains what may constitute hate speech, the harm it can cause, and the way in which it operates. The guide also outlines how media gatekeepers and other actors can address hate speech responsibly. Emphasizing the importance of understanding what may qualify as hate speech, the guide offers practical guidance for journalists on positioning their work in accordance “*with the international human rights approaches for striking the right balance between freedom of expression and the right to dignity, equality and non-discrimination.*”⁴⁵

The relationship between media output and its audience, particularly the element of trust, has been increasingly strained in an era marked by extreme polarization, concentration of media ownership, and competition with online content. Rebuilding trust in journalism, especially accountability-driven and investigative reporting, is therefore critical. In this regard, MIL-related activities that promote media freedom can empower citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers, both online and offline. This includes an appreciation of information pluralism, as well as the critical evaluation and ethical production of media information content.⁴⁶

2.5. Measuring effectiveness of MIL initiatives

Direct engagement with individuals and communities is a defining feature of many and contribute to their recognition as effective tools for building resilience to hate speech and harmful content.

Since MIL activities typically follow a bottom-up approach, they align well with vertical enforcement and governance structures that inform decision-making related to hate speech. By complementing such enforcement mechanisms, MIL initiatives empower individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to make informed and objective assessment of content, thereby strengthening societal resilience to hate speech and harmful content.

Well-designed MIL actions also help raise awareness of existing protection mechanisms, how individuals can engage with them, and what outcomes can reasonably be expected. In this way, MIL initiatives support citizens in exercising their rights more effectively and engaging constructively with relevant institutions.

MIL initiatives can further contribute to the development of campaigns against stereotypes, propaganda and hate speech, with the aim of achieving what is often described as “immunization by information” or the development of democratic “mental antibodies”.

⁴³ UNESCO Media and information literacy in journalism: a handbook for journalists and journalism educators - UNESCO Digital Library, 2019, available at:

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ UNESCO, *Covering Hate Speech, A Guide for Journalists*, available at:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000392378>

⁴⁶ Chapman, Martina, Rokša-Zubčević, Asja, “A report for the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media exploring how Media Freedom Literacy can be fostered across the OSCE region”, April 2024, available at:

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/0/569418.pdf>

This refers to the creation of a healthy information environment that makes effective use of the affordances of digital media, including findability, accessibility, and prominence. Such an environment can function as a form of protection against distorted or harmful perceptions of reality, helping to reinforce democratic values and principles.⁴⁷ At the same time, these preventive functions of MIL must be firmly grounded in a human rights-based approach, ensuring that measures reinforce individual agency and freedom of expression, and do not risk legitimizing censorship or manipulation.

However, monitoring and evaluating MIL initiatives remain a complex but essential task. To better understand which approaches are more effective, and which interventions achieve meaningful results, it is necessary to systematically assess the impact of MIL projects aimed at countering hate speech. It should be acknowledged that MIL initiatives do not always produce immediate results in terms of behavioural changes, which is why it is very important to include internal or external evaluations and impact measurements elements within the scope of projects, particularly in the form of e.g., time distance follow-ups.

Although internal and external evaluations can be resource-intensive, they should not be overlooked. Evaluation processes support more effective project

planning, help define realistic objectives and outcomes, and generate valuable data that can inform future initiatives. Where possible, evaluation findings should be shared to contribute to collective learning and the continuous improvement of MIL strategies.

Tackling both the symptoms and root causes of hate speech ultimately requires influencing human behaviour, which is inherently difficult to measure. In this context, it is essential to draw on established and effective approaches from behavioural science and psychology, in addition to earlier mentioned structured evaluation and measurement steps. MIL initiatives should therefore take into account the emotional dimensions of hate speech and its impact on individuals, and incorporate clear, accessible narratives that support rational engagement and critical reflection.⁴⁸

To conclude, it should be emphasized that in efforts to counter hate speech and its potential to incite violence and harm, citizens represent the first line of defence. Understanding how information can be weaponized and misused, and developing the ability to navigate media and information environments critically, are essential in responding to contemporary crisis.⁴⁹ Sustained, adequately resourced, and coordinated prioritization of MIL initiatives must therefore form a central part of responses today's global challenges.

A UN study, which used artificial intelligence tools and data analysis, examined public profiles and pages on Facebook and Twitter in Costa Rica, during the period from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023. It revealed a 50% increase in hate speech and discrimination on social networks in Costa Rica over the period analysed.⁵⁰ Subsequently, Costa Rica developed the region's first national strategy against online hate speech and discrimination, with support from the United Nations. This comprehensive strategy encompasses measures to halt the spread of online hate, including assigning institutional responsibilities, monitoring impacts, and implementing interventions across digital platforms. It includes monitoring, prevention, early response mechanisms, accountability, empowering targets, rehabilitation, and counter-narratives, embedding core MIL orientations in an approach aligned with the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech⁵¹ as a response to *"trends of growing xenophobia, racism and intolerance, violent misogyny, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim hatred around the world."*⁵²

⁴⁷ Šošić, Bojan, Rokša – Zubčević, Asja, "Quality journalism vs hate speech", available at:

<https://www.krug99.ba/kvalitetno-novinarstvo-vs-govor-mrznje/>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jolls, Tessa, "Building Resiliency: Media Literacy as a Strategic Defense Strategy for the Transatlantic", Center for Media Literacy's (CML), 23 September, 2022, available at: <https://gicid.unizar.es/wp-content/uploads/Building-Resiliency-Media-Literacy-as-a-Strategic-Defense-Strategy-for-the-Transatlantic.pdf>

⁵⁰ UNESCO, The UN urges Costa Rica to strengthen citizenship values and respect on social media through a national strategy against hate speech and discrimination, 3 July, 2023, available at:

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/un-urges-costa-rica-strengthen-citizenship-values-and-respect-social-media-through-national-strategy>

⁵¹ The UN Strategy and Plan of Action, Hate Speech, available at:

<https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/un-strategy-and-plan-of-action-on-hate-speech>

⁵² United Nations, Human Rights, 1 October 2023, available at:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1141692>

3

Recommendations

Hate speech is a complex phenomenon, and countering it requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach. All relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to work towards the shared objective of reaffirming respect for human rights, while ensuring strong, coherent, and coordinated responses that are adapted to address contemporary instability effectively.

Given the multi-faceted and often ambiguous nature of hate speech, particularly within the broader category of harmful content, MIL plays a key role in raising awareness of its manifestations and consequences. Innovative, comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and out-of-the-box approaches should be encouraged, further explored, and translated into practical solutions.⁵³ These efforts align with, and should reinforce, the actions outlined in the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, including its commitment to freedom of expression, MIL, and

intercultural dialogue.

It should be noted that these recommendations are intended for policymakers, educators, civil society actors, and other stakeholders, and have been structured to fit the format of a short issue brief. Nevertheless, sustained efforts should be mandated in order to develop further actionable guidance over time. All recommended actions must adhere to the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, cooperation, and professionalism. Particular attention should be paid to amplifying narratives that clearly and accessibly articulate the societal dangers posed by hate speech and harmful content. Above all, sufficient, reliable, coordinated, and long-term technical, financial, and human resources should be allocated to initiatives aimed at enhancing citizen's resilience to hate speech.

Recommendation 1 – Advancing interdisciplinary cross-sectoral cooperative structures

- Establishing and strengthening cooperative structures among relevant stakeholders, including governing institutions, regulatory authorities, education systems, media organizations and journalists, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors.
- Ensuring that these cooperative structures are adequately resourced and function as a nexus of existing or emerging networks and alliances. These structures would be tasked with developing policy recommendations, maintaining repositories of good practices, coordination and facilitation of ideas, mandates and initiatives, avoidance of duplications, coordinating and facilitating ideas, mandates, and initiatives, avoiding duplication of efforts, and supporting the coordinated provision of human, technical and financial resources. This includes providing technical assistance to identify and support effective MIL initiatives that contribute to building resilience to hate speech and harmful content.
- Facilitating “network of networks” in order to reinforce the development, evaluation, refinement, and rollout of educational and other programs and initiatives aimed at building long-term resilience to hate speech and harmful content.
- Investing in the production of counter-narratives and in responding to hate speech with facts, reason, and inclusive narratives, as one of the core empowerment elements of MIL. This includes emphasizing quality media production, public interest journalism, integrity, professionalism, ethical standards, and the development and delivery of tailored messaging and practical support for diverse audiences over sustained periods of time.

⁵³ Inspirational ideas can be found, in for example, Damian Tambini's “new “social contract” between “citizens, state and media”. Damian Tambini, „Media Freedom“, Polity, 2021. p.164. (p. 164)

Recommendation 2 – Research and evidence-based initiatives

- Cultivating new and innovative ideas in the field of media and information literacy, with a particular focus on combating hate speech, through sustained support for relevant research and evidence-gathering initiatives.
- Reinforcing the production of evidence-based publications that provide legal and contextual insights into the concepts related to hate speech and other harmful content. Such publications should be organized by world regions and include relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks related to the right to freedom of expression and its permissible limitations, and identification of relevant institutions. This should also include support for academic research and evidence-based initiatives related to the transparency of algorithmic and other digital platform functionalities, as well as research on hate speech and harmful content, in order to help inform the development of MIL educational materials.
- Developing a multilingual glossary of relevant terms, alongside practical materials such as booklets or leaflet outlining key “dos and don'ts” can Further support these efforts.
- Supporting evidence-based research enables MIL practitioners to access insights and data on effective methods for engaging audiences and building resilience to hate speech and harmful content. While such information is often available, it can be difficult to locate and navigate, particularly for citizens, given that relevant resources are frequently presented in complex legal or technical formats.
- When operating at the community level and engaging directly with diverse groups, MIL initiatives should integrate research and evidence into the scope of their activities. This should be done through educational, accessible, and easy-to-navigate training formats that translate complex findings into practical learning tools.

Recommendation 3 – MIL educational curricula

- Designing MIL educational programs and curricula in order to equip individuals, including both students and teachers, with the skills and knowledge to recognize and counter discriminatory narratives. This includes raising awareness of: (i) the nature, legal distinctions, and impact of hate speech and harmful content; (ii) the way in which hate speech exploits human emotional vulnerabilities, and the negative psychological consequences of exposure to hateful and harmful content; (iii) the roles and mandates of relevant institutions and the protection mechanisms available for citizens; (iv) the importance, scope and limitations of the right to freedom of expression; (v) how the use of data, algorithms and AI interacts with personal biases to amplify narratives and increase susceptibility to harmful content; (vi) the historical context of periods marked by heightened prevalence of hate speech and its evolving forms and real-life consequences; and (vii) the promotion of counter narratives as an effective response to harmful and hateful messaging.
- Ensuring that MIL curricula promote a meaningful, comprehensive, and up-to-date understanding of how media systems function, enabling teachers, students, and life-long learners to keep pace with rapid technological developments. In particular, schools must foster “a safe and inclusive environment free from all forms of hatred and discrimination, efforts made by educators in the classroom must be reflected in all aspects of school life, including policies, extracurricular activities, sports, and social and cultural events.”⁵⁴
- Establishing and reinforcing appropriate institutional frameworks for MIL education in order to support coherent and structured learning pathways. Such frameworks help to maintain and enhance educational quality and alignment across different educational levels and life-long learning contexts. They are also essential to ensuring the sustainability of MIL programmes, moving beyond the limitations of short-term or ad hoc projects, and enabling systemic and lasting impact. Building strong foundations for MIL curricula enables them to become an integral part of the cultural fabric of society, providing a sustainable defence against on the risks posed by hate speech.

⁵⁴ UNESCO Addressing hate speech through education, June 2025, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/what-you-need-know-about-new-guide-addressing-hate-speech-through-education?hub=70287>

- Educational curricula should be grounded in research and collaboration, drawing on evidence generated through research initiatives and cooperation structures outlined in Recommendation No. 2. While primarily focused on formal educational systems, such curricula should also support lifelong learning approaches, taking into account evolving technological developments as well as changes in perceptions, behaviours, and age-related vulnerabilities.

Recommendation 4 – Measuring impact

- Taking steps to address the inherent challenges associated with measuring the impact and long-term effects of MIL initiatives, including difficulties in assessing skills acquisition and the financial and human resource costs involved in evaluating, behavioural change over extended periods. These steps include, for example, the development and application of appropriate evaluation practices, primarily aimed at improving the effectiveness of interventions. A range of evaluation frameworks already exists, and sufficient resources should be allocated to identifying and applying those most suitable for specific MIL action.
- Clearly articulating the intended impact of MIL projects, setting realistic objectives, and facilitating both qualitative and quantitative evaluation and impact measurement. These processes should take into account the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of content production and dissemination, as well as the hanging perceptions and effects of hate speech and harmful content. Most importantly, lessons learned from evaluations and impact assessments should be systematically used and shared to inform future planning, actions and strategies.

Recommendation 5 – Critical thinking in the use of AI tools

- Highlighting the significant limitations of artificial intelligence and automated tools in detecting hate speech and harmful content. As scholars have noted, such tools suffer from “*the lack of human understandability, and interpretability of their inner workings.*”⁵⁵ AI-based systems are therefore not well suited to assessing complex or borderline content, particularly where hate speech and harmful content take sophisticated forms or are rooted in specific national or local contexts that require human judgment.
- At the same time, the development of complementary digital tools for MIL, such as AI-driven fact-checking systems and e-learning platforms, can provide valuable support when used alongside other measures to counter hate speech or harmful content.
- Priority should be given to solutions that empower users and strengthen media and information literacy by providing clear and user-friendly information to help people better understand AI-based products, services, and tools⁵⁶.
- In the context of the growing prevalence of generative AI-driven content, MIL education and awareness-raising initiatives should be emphasized, “*allowing individuals to critically examine and engage with the media they encounter and arm themselves with the knowledge needed to navigate this new world of generative AI.*”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ngueajio, Mikel K., Aryal, Saurav, Atemkeng, Marcellin, Washington, Gloria, Rawat, Danda, Decoding Fake News and Hate Speech: A Survey of Explainable AI Techniques, ACM Computing Surveys, Volume 57, Issue 7

Article No.: 169, Pages 1 – 37, ⁵⁴ UNESCO Addressing hate speech through education, June 2025, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/what-you-need-know-about-new-guide-addressing-hate-speech-through-education?hub=70287>

⁵⁶ UNESCO Towards user empowerment: a multistakeholder action plan for integrating media and information literacy on digital platforms; companion document, July 2025, available at:

⁵⁷ UNESCO, “Your opinion doesn’t matter, anyway”, Exposing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in an Era of Generative AI”, 2023, ISBN 978-92-3-100631-9.

Annex: Non-exhaustive list of UN-based reference documentation regarding the right to freedom of expression, hate speech and media and information literacy

Right to freedom of expression and hate speech

- [Charter](#) of the United Nations, 1945
- [Convention](#) on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948
- Universal [Declaration](#) of Human Rights, 10 December 1948
- The International [Convention](#) on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965
- International [Covenant](#) on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966
- [Convention](#) on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979
- The Rome [Statute](#) of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998
- [General recommendation](#) of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination n°35 on combatting racist hate speech, 26 September 2013
- General Assembly [Document](#) A/73/L.55 on Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, 12 December 2018
- General Assembly [Resolution](#) A/RES/73/328 on Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech 25 July 2019
- General Assembly [Resolution](#) A/RES/75/309 on Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech, 22 July 2021
- General Assembly [Document](#) A/76/L.30 on Holocaust denial, 13 January 2022
- Security Council [Resolution](#) 2686 (2023), 14 June 2023
- General Assembly [Resolution](#) A/RES/77/318 on Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech, 2 August 2023
- [Guiding Principles](#) on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, 2011
- Rabat [Plan of Action](#) on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, 11 January 2013
- [Framework](#) of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, 2014
- [Plan of Action](#) for religious leaders and actors, 2017
- UN [Strategy and plan of action](#) on hate speech, launched by the Secretary-General in June 2019
- [Strategy and Plan of action](#) on hate speech: detailed guidance on implementation for UN field presences, September 2020
- [Engaging](#) Religious Actors to counter hate speech, prevent incitement to violence, and build peaceful and inclusive societies, 2021
- UN [guidance](#) note on gender based hate speech, 2021
- UNESCO [Guide](#): Addressing hate speech through education: a guide for policy-makers, 2023

Media and Information Literacy

- UN General Assembly [Resolution](#) A/RES/75/267 Global Media and Information Literacy Week
- General Conference [Resolution](#) Global Media and Information Literacy Week
- [Evaluation](#) of UNESCO's work in the thematic area of media and information literacy
- Belgrade [Recommendations](#) on Draft Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Guidelines
- Riga [Recommendations](#) on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape
- Fez [Declaration](#) on Media and Information Literacy
- The Prague [Declaration](#): "Towards an Information Literate Society"

- Abuja [Declaration](#) on Global Financing for Media and Information Literacy: An imperative to fight against disinformation and build trust, 29 October 2022
- UNESCO [Guidelines](#) for the governance of digital platforms: safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information through a multi-stakeholder approach
- UNESCO Media and information literacy: [policy and strategy guidelines](#)
- Non-exhaustive [List](#) of UNESCO Media and information literacy resources

Summary

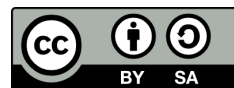
In today's rapidly evolving digital environment, hate speech has emerged as a growing challenge to social cohesion, democratic dialogue and human rights. This issue brief examines the role of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a powerful tool for prevention, resilience and critical engagement with online content. Drawing on UNESCO's human-rights-based approach, it offers analysis, practical insights and forward-looking recommendations for policymakers, educators, journalists and civil society. By highlighting interdisciplinary cooperation and lifelong learning, the publication underscores how strengthening citizens' critical thinking can help build more inclusive, pluralistic and resilient information ecosystems.

This issue brief is part of UNESCO's wider series of publications on hate speech, developed in collaboration with the Education Sector, and represents a contribution led by UNESCO's Communication and Information (CI) Sector, bringing a distinct Media and Information Literacy (MIL) perspective to the series. Positioned within ongoing international efforts linked to the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, the series explores practical pathways for prevention, education and cross-sectoral cooperation. By advancing MIL as a forward-looking policy and educational framework, this publication complements earlier contributions while offering targeted guidance for stakeholders working to strengthen democratic resilience in digital environments.

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