COMPARATIVE REPORT

LIFE Consortium
(2024-2025)

Comparative Report

On the national reports of online monitoring of Hateful Discriminatory Discourse (HDD) during 2024 and 2025

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

This report presents consolidated national monitoring of Hate and Harmful Discriminatory Discourse (HDD) across Albania, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Tunisia for 2024–2025. It examines the digital environment, legal frameworks, and institutional responses, drawing on quantitative data, case documentation, and youth focus-group insights. Findings reveal that HDD online is escalating and increasingly normalized, with youth both highly exposed and central to counterspeech and literacy initiatives.

HDD in all five countries originates in interconnected mainstream and social media ecosystems. Television talk shows, political commentary, and influencer content frequently trigger online cascades through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and news portals. TikTok's influence notably increased in 2025, especially among youth, while platform accountability remains inconsistent.

Across the five partner countries, the consortium identified **over 100 cases** of Hate and Harmful Discriminatory Discourse (HDD) between 2024 and 2025. These cases illustrate the diverse forms and persistent nature of online hate while highlighting both regional commonalities and country-specific dynamics.

Legal and institutional frameworks are partially developed. Anti-discrimination bodies, audiovisual councils, and NGOs monitor and respond to HDD, but enforcement is fragmented:

Comparative trends (2024 vs. 2025)

| Dimension	2024 Situation	2025 Shift / Trend
Most common HDD categories	Gender-based, racism/ethno-nationalism, homophobia/transphobia	Same categories persist, with higher online volume; antisemitic and politically motivated content rising (Bulgaria, Serbia)
Most targeted groups	Women, LGBTI+, Roma/minorities, migrants, religious minorities	Continued targeting; visibility of political and activist groups grows
Platforms	Facebook and TV as primary	TikTok and Instagram gain traction, especially among youth
Institutional response	Mostly reactive, limited coordination	Incremental improvement; more reporting and public condemnation, but weak enforcement
Youth impact	High exposure; emotional distress noted	Continued distress; increased youth counterspeech initiatives
Mental health	Anxiety, anger, sadness, withdrawal	More cases of self-censorship and avoidance; demand for psychosocial support
Overall trend	Escalation and visibility	Normalization of online hate and spread through short-form video and influencer content

Country	Dominant HDD	Trend / Key Issues	Youth & Mental Health
Albania	Gender-based, political	Misogynistic media remarks; ethnic chants	Emotional harm from non-consensual image sharing
Serbia	Politically charged, ethnonationalist	Rise linked to protests and national tragedies	Youth active in counterspeech but exposed to polarization
Italy	Anti-migrant, xenophobic	Persistent narratives; volunteer monitoring networks strengthened	Limited broadcaster accountability; youth exposed online
Bulgaria	Racism, sexism, homophobia/transphobia	Sharp increase; antisemitic incidents rising	Youth report anxiety, withdrawal; legal rulings documented
Tunisia	Religion- and politically motivated	Normalization of HDD across social networks	Youth report declining trust, fear of participation

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

This comparative analysis employs a mixed-methods framework, designed to bring together diverse evidence streams generated across the five LIFE partner organisations, AMAD (Albania), KOM018 (Serbia), YES (Bulgaria), Beyond Borders (Italy), and Euromed Eve (Tunisia). Although each country team implemented activities adapted to their local context, the project worked to harmonise methodological principles, ensuring that data emerging from national reports could be systematically compared. The core aim of the methodology is to generate defensible cross-country comparisons between 2024 and 2025, while respecting national variations in sample sizes, research tools, and monitoring capacity.

The national reports included quantitative survey evidence. Those numerical indicators were used directly. Where only qualitative materials or descriptive monitoring logs were available, findings were thematically coded, mapped onto a shared taxonomy, and consolidated to ensure consistency in interpretation. This approach provides both the flexibility necessary for country-specific inquiry and the analytical coherence essential for a transnational comparative assessment.
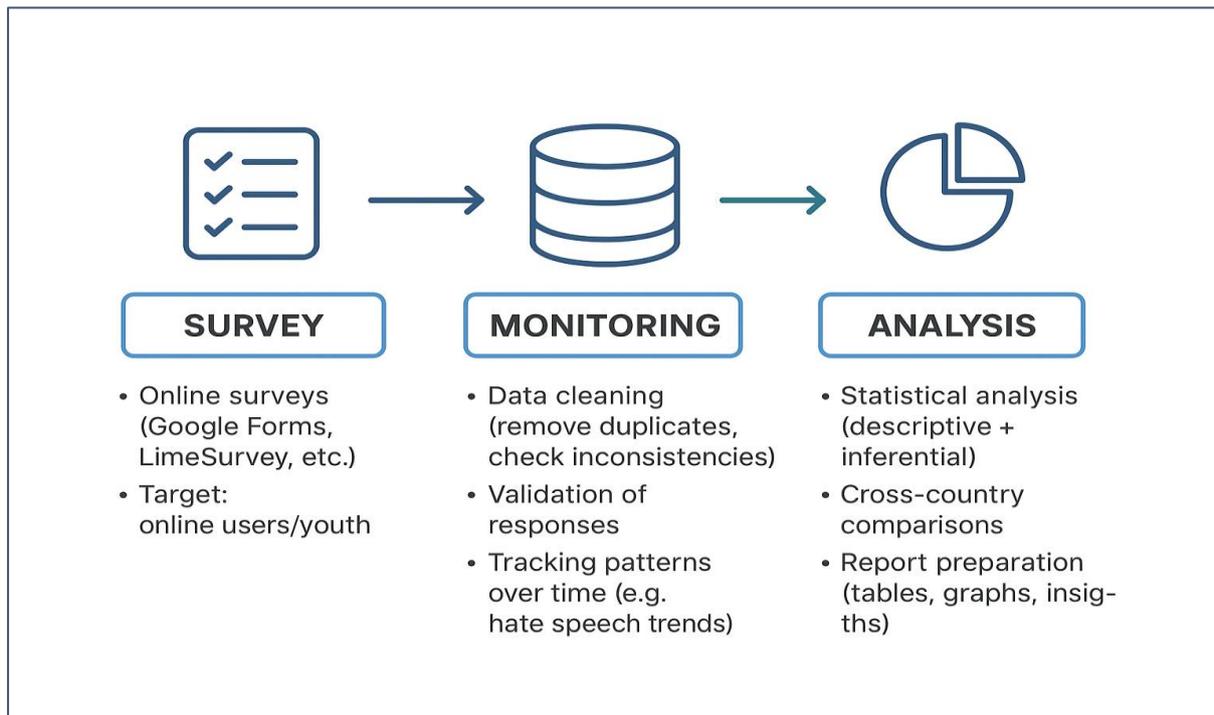
2.2 Study Design

The comparative framework rests on four complementary methodological pillars, implemented in varying degrees by each partner organisation.

a) Quantitative Surveys

Online surveys were conducted at the national level to assess experiences of hateful and discriminatory discourse (HDD), frequency and channels of exposure, perceived harms, reporting behaviours, and emotional or behavioural consequences. Survey instruments replicated core questions from 2024 into 2025 to allow for temporal comparisons. For example, all partners conducted nationally distributed survey in 2025 (n ≈ 1,000), and in meanwhile Albania reached approximately 1,200 respondents. These quantitative indicators provide the backbone for trend assessment, while acknowledging that sampling strategies varied by country.

b) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Semi-structured FGDs were organised to explore young people's lived experiences with HDD online, with particular attention to coping mechanisms, peer dynamics, and perceptions of institutional response. Participants were typically aged 16–22 or 15–29 and reflected diverse demographic profiles. FGDs allowed national partners to contextualise survey findings and surface narrative data, such as emotional impacts, forms of avoidance, emerging patterns of self-censorship, and normative shifts resulting from exposure to harmful content.

c) Desk Research and Media Monitoring

Partners engaged in systematic monitoring of media content, public social media posts, and relevant open-source material. This activity produced structured case logs, documenting incidents of HDD using a shared template capturing case ID, date, platform, target group, actor type, content characteristics, observed impacts, and any subsequent institutional or platform responses. Across countries, monitoring annexes contained approximately 15–21 cases per

reporting period, offering a qualitative corpus for thematic analysis and cross-country comparison.

d) Volunteer monitoring / Coder panels

In several countries of this consortium, trained volunteers supported ongoing monitoring activities. These contributors applied a shared taxonomy to classify incidents by form, target group, and source, ensuring greater consistency in coding practices. Volunteer panels were supported by training sessions, data entry templates, and periodic quality checks facilitated at consortium level. Together, these elements created a rich mixed-data environment, where survey patterns could be confirmed, challenged, and deepened through narrative and case-based evidence.

2.3 Sampling and recruitment

   a) Survey Participation

Surveys were disseminated digitally through youth organisations, schools, mailing lists, and social media networks. While sampling strategies varied, often adopting convenience models reinforced by targeted outreach, each partner sought to capture the perspectives of digitally active youth aged 15–29, reflecting the demographic most exposed to online HDD. When demographic or sample size information was provided in the national reports, it is summarised in the country chapters that follow.

   b) Focus Group Discussions

FGD participants were selected purposively to ensure diversity in gender, age, and geographic origin. A number of participants across contexts were youth workers or volunteers, whose experience provided an additional interpretive layer regarding institutional support, community moderation, and prevention needs. Groups generally ranged from 6 to 12 participants, enabling rich discussion while maintaining manageability.

   c) Monitoring Cases

Monitoring captured incidents arising from public social media posts, media sources, and voluntary reporting. Each partner documented their prioritisation or selection criteria, for example, cataloguing high-impact or representative cases. Because the selection was not randomised, the corpus provides depth rather than statistical representativeness.

2.4 Measures and instruments

Although each partner adapted tools to national conditions, a set of harmonised core measures ensured consistency in cross-country tracking:

- Exposure frequency: Ever / Daily / Weekly / Monthly
- Grounds of HDD: racism/xenophobia; sexism/misogyny; homophobia/transphobia; religious intolerance; socio-economic discrimination; disability; ageism; political identity/opinion
- Platforms: Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, news portals, forums
- Impacts: emotional (anger, anxiety, fear); Behavioural (avoidance, self-censorship, reporting, counterspeech); Institutional trust (confidence in authorities, victims' support)
- Reporting behaviour: whether content was reported, feedback received, and perceived effectiveness.

The continuity of core survey items from 2024 to 2025 allows for direct comparison of trends and the emergence of new patterns over time.

2.5 Case monitoring and coding protocol

To facilitate structured comparison, partners used a shared taxonomy to document cases of HDD. Each monitored incident included:
- Date and digital platform(s)
- Content type (text, photo, video)
- Dominant HDD ground(s)
- Actor classification (ordinary user, influencer, media outlet, public/political figure)
- Observable impacts (threats, doxxing, offline spillover, harassment)
- Recorded responses (NHRI referral, media authority intervention, takedown requests, public apology)
- Periodic consortium workshops supported calibration and reduced divergence in coding practices.

In national reports, annexes provided complete tables of logged cases, enabling transparent cross-country comparison and thematic synthesis.

2.6 Analytic approach

The analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a multi-layered comparative understanding of HDD.
   a) Quantitative analysis

The survey results were analysed primarily through descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages). Where both 2024 and 2025 data were available, percentage-point change was calculated to demonstrate trajectories. Comparative tables convert some raw counts to percentages to support alignment across countries.
   b) Qualitative analysis

FGD transcripts and case logs were mapped against thematic codes capturing normalisation, frustration with reporting systems, emotional impacts, and political instrumentalisation. Where qualitative patterns corroborated survey results, such as heightened reports of misogynistic content, these convergences are highlighted to strengthen the interpretive narrative.

This triangulation across tools increases internal validity and draws out connections that might be less visible in single-method studies.

2.7 Ethics, Privacy & Consent

All partner organisations implemented standard ethical protocols, including securing informed consent for survey and FGD participation and anonymising personally identifiable data. Monitoring focused strictly on publicly accessible content, and sensitive details were masked where harm to individuals could arise. All national reports include ethical compliance statements and funding acknowledgments.

2.8 Limitations & Data Quality Considerations

Despite deliberate efforts toward harmonisation, several constraints must be recognised:
- Sampling bias: Convenience sampling in digital environments limits representativeness. Results therefore reflect digitally active populations rather than full national cohorts.
- Comparability constraints: Not all partners generated the same types of quantitative indicators, and some relied more heavily on qualitative monitoring. As such, comparative tables contain "NA" where values were not reported.

- Temporal / contextual variability: Exposure peaks often coincided with specific political events, media cycles, or sports events, complicating interpretation across countries.
- Platform access limitations: Private messaging, closed groups, and deleted or ephemeral content fall outside the monitoring scope; as a result, some forms of harm (e.g., private doxxing) may be under-represented.

These limitations guide cautious interpretation and underscore the importance of methodological transparency.

2.9 Ensuring Comparability & Reproducibility

To maximise transparency and replicability, the comparative report:
- Uses national figures as reported or derived, clearly citing source material;
- Applies the LIFE shared taxonomy to classify cases across countries;
- Documents transformations (e.g., conversion of mentions to percentages);
- Annotates comparative tables where estimates are derived or unavailable ("NA").

This approach preserves the integrity of national data while enhancing comparability across contexts.

3. Comparative context (digital landscape, legal protections, institutional structures)

The Deliverable compiles five partner organizations' national reports for 2024 and 2025 (AMAD Albania; KOM018 Serbia; YES Bulgaria; Beyond Borders Italy; Euromed Eve Tunisia). The consolidated comparative report contains both survey and monitoring data.

Below are presented the shared features across countries, where, as main common element we see that platforms as central vectors such as social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) and national broadcast/TV remain main vectors where Hateful Discriminatory Discourse originates or gets amplified, as many incidents start on TV or mainstream outlets and then spread to social networks.

The institutional patchiness on national authorities, broadcasters' regulators, and National Human Rights Institutions-type bodies are active in some cases (referrals, public apologies, removals), but enforcement and platform follow-through are inconsistent across countries. Reports repeatedly note removal/appeal gaps, re-posts, and platform inaction.

Youth exposure and resilience where youth (15–29) are the most exposed group in all countries; reports highlight both mental-health impacts and youth-led counterspeech or resilience activities (training, peer campaigns).

Legal and regulatory environment play a crucial role as the reports recommend stronger alignment with EU-level tools (e.g., DSA), better platform accountability, improved reporting mechanisms, and expanded media/digital literacy. These are recurring recommendations.

3.1 Comparative data tables

Across the five monitored countries (Albania, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Tunisia) the regional picture of hate-driven discourse (HDD) in 2025 reveals a clear trajectory of increasing

frequency, normalization, and diversification of hateful expression. What began in 2024 as distinct national patterns of gender-based, ethnic, or political hate evolved by 2025 into a more complex and pervasive phenomenon that transcends single identity categories. Political and ethnic polarization have emerged as dominant vectors, often intersecting with gendered and racist forms of hate to create multi-layered narratives of exclusion and hostility.

This regional pattern underscores not only a quantitative rise in HDD incidents but also a qualitative shift: hate speech is no longer perceived as exceptional or marginal but rather as a normalized component of public discourse, particularly in online environments. The 2025 monitoring cycle documents how hate narratives increasingly function as tools of political mobilization and social division, amplifying pre-existing societal fractures and testing the limits of institutional and civic resilience.

One of the most striking and consistent developments across all countries was the rapid ascent of TikTok as both a platform of exposure and a space of normalization. While Facebook and YouTube remain significant vectors, TikTok's algorithmic model and youth-dominated environment have made it a central channel for the dissemination, imitation, and normalization of hate speech. The 2025 data highlight how short-form video trends and comment sections often frame discriminatory or hostile expressions as humor, opinion, or national pride, blurring the boundary between satire and harm. This pattern has been particularly visible among younger demographics, whose engagement with the platform exposes them to constant cycles of hateful or exclusionary narratives.

The youth cohort (ages 16–29) has thus emerged as both a key group at risk and an active force of response. On one hand, survey and focus group data across all five countries record high rates of exposure, often on a daily basis, accompanied by psychological impacts such as anxiety, withdrawal, and diminished confidence in online and public participation. On the other hand, the same age group shows notable resilience and initiative, leading peer-based counterspeech initiatives, awareness campaigns, and youth-led advocacy efforts. This dual role, as both vulnerable and proactive actors, has become a defining feature of the regional HDD landscape in 2025.

At the institutional level, the findings reveal a pattern of fragmented and uneven enforcement. While formal mechanisms exist, such as anti-discrimination bodies, media regulators, and national human rights institutions, their responses are frequently constrained by political pressures, procedural delays, or limited public trust. As a result, civil society organizations and independent monitors have increasingly filled the gap, leading efforts in documentation, education, victim support, and community awareness. These actors play a crucial role in sustaining public accountability, yet their work remains reactive and resource-dependent rather than structurally embedded within national enforcement frameworks.

The mental-health dimension of HDD exposure has gained growing recognition across all contexts. The 2025 data and testimonies reveal shared emotional consequences, including anxiety, fear, sadness, and self-censorship, among both direct victims and those repeatedly exposed to hate content. Crucially, these effects appear largely independent of national institutional strength: whether in countries with formal complaint systems or those with limited enforcement, the psychological toll remains comparable. This convergence points to a wider regional need for integrating mental-health and psychosocial support into anti-hate policy design, especially in youth and education programs.

Traditional and online broadcast media continue to play a central role in amplifying divisive rhetoric. High-visibility incidents, such as the politicized coverage of national tragedies in Serbia (2024), antisemitic and xenophobic content in Bulgaria (2025), or gendered hate cases

in Albania, demonstrate how moments of social tension or crisis can serve as catalysts for hate amplification. These examples underscore the enduring influence of mainstream media as both a source and amplifier of harmful narratives, even as social platforms increasingly dominate youth engagement.

The normalization of hate speech across the region, often expressed through humor, political commentary, memes, and viral trends, represents one of the most pressing challenges for 2025 and beyond. The blurring of boundaries between entertainment and hostility complicates public recognition of hate speech and weakens social condemnation. In this environment, traditional punitive or reactive measures prove insufficient; instead, policy design must emphasize prevention, media literacy, and digital ethics, supported by cross-sector collaboration between state institutions, platforms, and civil society.

The 2024–2025 period across the five partner countries marks a critical inflection point: hate-driven discourse has become both more visible and more normalized, fueled by social media dynamics, political polarization, and institutional inertia. Addressing this trend will require a coordinated regional approach that combines regulatory consistency, youth empowerment, and mental-health integration, transforming the fight against hate from reactive sanctioning to proactive social resilience.

Table 1. Most common categories of Hateful Discriminatory Discourse (HDD)

Country	2024 – Top HDD Categories	2025 – Top HDD Categories / Shifts	Trend
Albania	Gender-based hate (misogyny), ethnic/nationalist, LGBTI-directed	Gender-based HDD remains dominant; political and ethnic HDD remain strong	Increase in online HDD; gender-based stable as top category
Serbia	Political polarization, nationalist/ethnic discourse, sexism, racism	Politically charged HDD intensifies after 2024 events (Novi Sad, protests)	Shift toward political HDD; heightened polarization
Italy	Anti-migrant/racist narratives, religious intolerance, gendered harassment	Persistent xenophobic and racist HDD; repeated online and media patterns	Continuity; normalization of racist discourse
Bulgaria	Racism, sexism, homophobia	Intensified racism (70%), sexism (65%), homophobia/transphobia (62%); rise in religious intolerance	Sharp increase across all categories
Tunisia	Religious intolerance, political/civic polarization, gendered harassment	Continued religious and political HDD; normalization on TikTok/Facebook	Normalization, persistence of political and religious intolerance

Table 2. Most targeted / Marginalized groups

Country	Main Targeted Groups (2024–2025)
Albania	Women and girls, LGBTI+, ethnic minorities (Roma/Egyptian), journalists, political minorities
Serbia	Roma and ethnic minorities, LGBTI+, migrants, political actors/opponents
Italy	Migrants/refugees, Roma, Muslims, LGBTI+
Bulgaria	Roma, LGBTI+, Muslims, Jewish community (notable antisemitic cases)
Tunisia	Religious minorities, women, LGBTI+, political dissidents/activists

Table 3. Main platforms and channels

Country	Dominant Platforms (2024–2025)	Notable Shifts / Observations
Albania	TV & mainstream broadcasting; YouTube, Instagram, TikTok	Social influencers and podcasts gained prominence
Serbia	Facebook groups, TikTok, national TV portals	Strong political mobilization online; youth on TikTok/Instagram
Italy	TV and news portals, Facebook, YouTube, comment sections	Local sharing/reposting dynamics; high virality
Bulgaria	Facebook (71%), TikTok (63%), Instagram, YouTube, news portals	Sharp rise in TikTok's prominence among youth
Tunisia	TikTok comment sections, Facebook groups, national portals	Hate normalized in comment threads; low moderation

Table 4. Institutional and civil society responses

Country	Institutional Actors & Actions	Effectiveness / Limitations
Albania	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (NHRI); Audiovisual Media Authority; phone outreach, content removal	Mixed outcomes; partial compliance and public apologies
Serbia	Civil society collaboration; NHRI engagement limited by protests/politics	Inconsistent enforcement; politicized environment
Italy	NGOs and volunteer panels; regulatory warnings for broadcast hate; literacy initiatives	Persistent moderation gaps; recommendations repeated
Bulgaria	Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD); Council for Electronic Media (CEM); BHC monitoring	Active enforcement but limited follow-up; reporting underused
Tunisia	Civil society and NGO-led monitoring; advocacy for reform	Weak formal tools; reporting seen as symbolic

Table 5. Youth exposure and reactions

Country	Exposure Level / Experience	Responses / Coping
Albania	High exposure (15–29); daily encounters	Emotional reactions; youth focus groups via AMAD
Serbia	Youth active in protests and online activism	Victims and counterspeakers; reported stress and fatigue
Italy	Youth involved in volunteer monitoring and training	Peer-led counterspeech; empowerment and fatigue
Bulgaria	87% encountered hate speech in 2025	18% self-censorship; anxiety; limited reporting
Tunisia	Youth (16–22) report normalization and anxiety	Avoidance, confidence loss, calls for education/support

Table 6. Mental health consequences

Country	Key Reported Effects	Observations / Notes
Albania	Distress, fear, sadness; severe outcomes (suicide-linked case)	High emotional burden among young people
Serbia	Anxiety, withdrawal, reduced participation	Reporting seen as ineffective
Italy	Emotional distress, discouragement, withdrawal	Mirrors regional trends
Bulgaria	Anger, anxiety, self-censorship rising (2025 vs 2024)	Clear increase in psychological toll
Tunisia	Anxiety, withdrawal, loss of confidence	Reporting viewed as symbolic; fatigue evident

Table 7. Key cases and representative incidents

Country	Representative Cases (2024–2025)
Albania	Bujar Kapexhiu misogynistic TV remarks; Altin Çoku/Sibela Abedini blackmail case; Mirlind Daku ethnic chant (UEFA)
Serbia	Political hate after Novi Sad canopy collapse; media amplification of nationalist rhetoric; protests
Italy	Local broadcasters' racist speech; online hate toward migrants/refugees (annex case list)
Bulgaria	CPD rulings on antisemitic/xenophobic speech; PIK TV warning; threats to Sofia Synagogue (Feb 2025)
Tunisia	Documented online harassment of women/activists; religious intolerance in TikTok/Facebook debates

Table 8. General trends (2024 vs 2025)

Country	Overall Trend	Key Observations
Albania	HDD perceived as increasing; gender-based dominant	Enforcement uneven but engagement growing
Serbia	Shift toward political HDD after 2024 crises	High youth exposure; institutions lag
Italy	Persistent xenophobic and anti-migrant discourse	NGO monitoring expands; limited platform response
Bulgaria	Rising racism, antisemitism, and sexism	TikTok's role expands; reporting still weak
Tunisia	Persistent normalization of political and religious hate	Civil society advocacy grows; formal responses limited

3.2 Country profiles, 2024 vs 2025 (Albania, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, Tunisia)

3.2.1 Albania, presented by AMAD (2024 vs. 2025)

The National Annual Reports on Monitoring HDD online in Albania showed that the most common categories of Hateful Discriminatory Discourse (HDD) in online, across both 2024 and 2025, gender-based hate-driven discourse remained the most prominent form, with misogynistic rhetoric surfacing strongly across media platforms. In 2024, hate targeting women and girls was particularly visible, followed by discourse based on ethnic or nationalist grounds and LGBTI-directed hostility. By 2025, survey data confirmed that gender continued to dominate as the leading ground for HDD, closely followed by political opinion and ethnicity. The 2025 tallies reaffirmed that gender-based hostility remained the top category across all measured indicators.

The **most targeted** and marginalized groups which are also considered as the groups most frequently targeted by hate-driven discourse included women and girls, LGBTI+ persons, and ethnic minorities, particularly the Roma and Egyptian communities. In addition, journalists and certain political minorities faced sustained attacks, often in connection with their professional activities or public expressions.

While **television and mainstream broadcasting** continued to serve as key sources of hate narratives, especially through reality shows, talk shows, and entertainment programming, these narratives often spread rapidly to digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, where comment threads amplify their reach. Increasingly, social media influencers and podcast hosts were identified as secondary generators or amplifiers of HDD, further blurring the lines between entertainment and incitement.

Institutional reactions to HDD have been visible but uneven. Authorities, including the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (NHRI) and the Audiovisual Media Authority, actively pursued cases through referrals, outreach to producers, and formal requests for content removal or public apologies. While some cases resulted in public apologies or

removals, others remained unresolved or met with limited enforcement. The mixed results underline both growing awareness and persistent gaps in institutional accountability.

The **impact on young** people aged 15–29 emerged as one of the most heavily exposed demographics. Surveys and focus group findings conducted by AMAD revealed that youth encounter HDD content frequently, often on a daily basis, and report strong emotional reactions ranging from frustration to distress. Youth-oriented measures and discussions highlighted the normalization of online hate and the need for education and resilience-building efforts.

Exposure to hate-driven discourse has been linked to mental health consequences such as emotional distress, fear, and sadness, with some cases escalating to severe mental-health consequences. A documented example includes a case of intimate image-sharing and coercion, which was connected to a tragic suicide, underscoring the human cost of unchecked online harassment.

Representative Cases

Several emblematic incidents illustrate the scope and diversity of HDD during the period:

- Bujar Kapexhiu's misogynistic remarks on television led to significant public backlash and ultimately a public apology following institutional intervention.
- The Altin Çoku / Sibela Abedini case, involving the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and blackmail, highlighted the severe personal and psychological consequences of digital gender-based violence.
- During a UEFA event, footballer Mirlind Daku's ethnic nationalist chant drew widespread attention, emphasizing the persistence of nationalist rhetoric within public spaces and sports culture.

Trends and overall assessment

Across both years, the perception of increasing HDD remained strong. Gender-based discourse continued to dominate, while online platforms solidified their position as the primary environment for hate-driven communication. Although institutional engagement grew more proactive—reflected in increased referrals and public interventions, the effectiveness of enforcement remains inconsistent.

The 2025 data indicate a rising awareness and institutional visibility of HDD, but also highlight the urgent need for systemic prevention measures, media accountability, and mental health support for those most affected.

3.2.2 Serbia, presented by KOM018 (2024 vs. 2025)

The monitoring of hate-driven discourse (HDD) in Serbia during 2024 and 2025 revealed a landscape increasingly shaped by political polarization, nationalist narratives, and social tension amplified through both traditional and digital media. The period was marked by a series of politically charged incidents and public crises that not only intensified online discourse but also blurred the boundaries between political speech and hate expression.

In 2024, Serbia's HDD environment was dominated by politically motivated rhetoric and nationalist or ethnic discourse, reflecting deep-seated divisions in public life. Cases of sexism and racism were also documented, particularly in online spaces and television commentary.

By 2025, this polarization had further entrenched itself. The aftermath of key national events, notably the Novi Sad canopy collapse and subsequent public debate and protests, triggered

spikes in divisive and hostile discourse that carried over well into the following year. These moments acted as catalysts for waves of online mobilization, where hate narratives intertwined with political messaging, reinforcing an environment of distrust and antagonism.

The **groups most marginalised and targeted** being frequently subjected to hate-driven discourse during this period included Roma and other ethnic minorities, LGBTI+ persons, and migrants, often portrayed through exclusionary or dehumanizing rhetoric. Additionally, political opponents and civil society activists were recurrent targets, with attacks often couched in nationalist or moralistic language. These patterns reflect both entrenched prejudices and a political climate where public dissent is often delegitimized through personal or identity-based attacks.

The spread of HDD occurred across **multiple platforms**, combining traditional and digital ecosystems. Facebook groups and comment sections on TikTok emerged as key hubs for political and ethnic hate narratives, often driven by viral content or influencer commentary. Mainstream media outlets, particularly television segments and national news portals, played an influential role in legitimizing or amplifying divisive discourse. Among youth, TikTok and Instagram became central spaces for both exposure to and participation in HDD, signaling a generational shift in how hate content circulates and takes shape.

Institutional engagement during this period involved limited collaboration with civil society organizations and selective involvement from the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). Reports note that protests, political crises, and heightened polarization in 2024–2025 created a volatile context that constrained institutional action. While there were efforts to monitor and respond to major incidents, enforcement remained inconsistent and follow-up procedures lacked transparency. Civil society actors continued to fill monitoring gaps, but their impact was frequently undermined by a lack of sustained coordination with state bodies.

Youth impacted and emerged as both participants and victims within the HDD ecosystem. Many young people were actively engaged in protests and online activism, where they faced targeted harassment as well as exposure to hostile narratives. Focus group discussions revealed significant emotional and psychological strain, particularly among youth who felt overwhelmed by the toxicity of online political debate. At the same time, some youth groups became leading voices of counterspeech, challenging hate narratives and promoting inclusion, highlighting both vulnerability and resilience within this demographic.

Regarding the mental health consequences, as in other partner countries, exposure to persistent hate and polarization contributed to anxiety, emotional withdrawal, and decreased civic participation. Participants expressed frustration with reporting mechanisms, often viewing them as ineffective or inaccessible. The sense of futility in seeking redress compounded emotional distress, particularly among individuals who had experienced online harassment or witnessed sustained hate campaigns.

Key Cases and Catalysts

Several incidents underscored the politicized and emotionally charged nature of HDD in Serbia. The Novi Sad canopy collapse in 2024, and the subsequent public discourse surrounding accountability, sparked a surge of hostile commentary, much of it aimed at political figures, activists, and ethnic groups. Similarly, nationalist rhetoric amplified by media outlets and political actors around protest movements further polarized online communities. These episodes shaped the monitoring focus for 2025, illustrating how public tragedies and political crises can act as flashpoints for hate-driven mobilization.

Trends and overall assessment in Serbia

The overarching trend from 2024 into 2025 was a shift toward politically charged hate-driven discourse, often tied to real-world events and crises. Peaks in HDD activity coincided with moments of public mourning or protest, demonstrating how emotional volatility in public spaces was quickly weaponized for political gain. At the same time, youth exposure increased, as digital platforms became key arenas for both political engagement and hate propagation. Institutional responses showed greater awareness but limited adaptability, struggling to keep pace with the rapid evolution of online discourse and the growing influence of alternative media. Serbia's 2024–2025 period reflects a deepening entanglement between politics, media, and hate speech, with online ecosystems serving as accelerators of social division. While monitoring mechanisms and public awareness have improved, the challenge remains to translate this recognition into coherent prevention, protection, and accountability frameworks that can withstand politicized pressures and ensure protection for vulnerable groups.

3.2.3 Italy, presented by Beyond Borders (2024 vs. 2025)

The monitoring of hate-driven discourse (HDD) in Italy across 2024 and 2025 highlighted the persistence of xenophobic, racist, and gendered hate narratives, particularly in relation to migration and identity politics. Despite increased attention from civil society and local monitoring initiatives, anti-migrant and anti-minority rhetoric remained deeply embedded in both public discourse and media representation. The findings illustrate a continuing tension between freedom of expression, media sensationalism, and the protection of marginalized groups from harm.

In 2024, Italy's monitoring focused heavily on anti-migrant and racist narratives, alongside patterns of religious intolerance and gender-based harassment. Public debate surrounding migration, border control, and national identity served as a fertile ground for exclusionary speech, often reinforced by political rhetoric and sensationalized media coverage.

By 2025, the situation showed continuity rather than decline. Both panel-based and volunteer-led monitoring confirmed the ongoing prevalence of racist and xenophobic hate-driven discourse, with online spaces and comment sections serving as echo chambers for such narratives. The repetition of these themes across two consecutive years suggests a normalized public tolerance of discriminatory speech, particularly when directed at migrant communities.

The **primary targets** of hate-driven discourse in Italy remained migrants and refugees, frequently framed as cultural or economic threats. Roma communities continued to experience entrenched stigmatization, while Muslims faced ongoing hostility linked to religious intolerance and stereotyping. In addition, LGBTI+ persons were targeted in specific online and media incidents, often through moralistic or exclusionary language. The intersectionality of these identities — for example, among migrant or Roma women, compounded their vulnerability to hate speech and discrimination.

The spread of HDD in Italy occurred across various **platforms and channels**, a hybrid media ecosystem, combining the influence of national television and online news portals with the viral dynamics of social media. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube were frequent hosts of hateful commentary, particularly within comment sections of news reports or viral clips. Local volunteer monitoring panels noted a strong "sharing and re-posting" dynamic, where emotionally charged or fear-based content was circulated rapidly without verification. This

amplification loop allowed hate narratives to move fluidly between mainstream media and user-generated spaces, extending their visibility and reach.

Institutional responses in Italy involved an active network of local NGOs, volunteer panels, and civil society groups engaged in monitoring, reporting, and awareness-raising. While there were some regulatory interventions and public condemnations following high-profile broadcast incidents, systemic enforcement remained limited. National and local stakeholders continued to advocate for stronger moderation mechanisms, media literacy initiatives, and capacity-building for journalists and moderators. Recommendations from both 2024 and 2025 emphasized the need to balance accountability with sustained public education on the social consequences of hate-driven discourse.

The Beyond Borders initiative placed a notable emphasis on youth engagement, incorporating non-formal learning, peer-to-peer education, and volunteer monitoring. **Young participants** were trained to identify, document, and respond to hate speech online, fostering civic awareness and critical digital literacy. The 2025 follow-up highlighted youth-led counter-narrative actions, demonstrating growing empowerment but also noting the emotional fatigue experienced by youth exposed to continuous negative content.

As in other monitored contexts, exposure of mental health and consequences experienced which are hate-driven discourse, was associated with emotional distress, feelings of exclusion, and reduced participation in online or public discussions. Focus group data revealed that participants often responded to repeated exposure with withdrawal or avoidance behaviors, expressing a sense of discouragement about the possibility of meaningful change. These patterns mirror findings from partner countries, suggesting a shared cross-border impact of digital hate on young people's mental well-being and social engagement.

Key cases and examples

The 2024–2025 monitoring documented several notable incidents of hate speech within local broadcasting and online portals, particularly targeting migrants and refugees. These cases, detailed in the country annex, reflected recurring tropes portraying migrants as threats to public safety, culture, or welfare. The persistence of such messaging in traditional media underscores the ongoing challenge of addressing hate within influential communication channels that shape public perception.

Trends and overall assessment

From 2024 through 2025, the dominant trend in Italy was the continuation of xenophobic and anti-migrant narratives, both in mainstream broadcasting and online ecosystems. Despite growing civil society involvement and expanding monitoring networks, the platform responsiveness problem remained largely unresolved, with tech companies slow to act on content flagged for hate speech.

While progress has been made in community-based documentation and youth engagement, Italy's case demonstrates the difficulty of reversing entrenched narratives once they are normalized in public discourse. Sustained progress will depend on institutional cooperation, media accountability, and investment in preventive education to counter the social and psychological toll of hate-driven communication.

3.2.4   Bulgaria, presented by YES (2024 vs. 2025)

The Bulgaria country monitoring across 2024 and 2025 revealed a marked intensification of hate-driven discourse (HDD) across both online and traditional media. The findings are supported by rich numerical data and case documentation, offering one of the most detailed national profiles in the regional monitoring. The reports point to rising hostility toward ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, alongside persistent patterns of sexism and political intolerance. The 2025 survey results confirm a broad social exposure to hate content and highlight growing concern over its psychological and societal impacts.

In 2024, the dominant categories of HDD in Bulgaria included racism, sexism, and homophobia, reflecting entrenched societal divides and the politicization of minority identities. These patterns became even more pronounced in 2025, when monitoring data recorded a significant escalation: racism was present in 70% of observed cases, sexism in 65%, and homophobia or transphobia in 62%. Additional forms of hate-driven discourse emerged around religious intolerance and socio-economic discrimination, particularly targeting marginalized and impoverished communities. This quantitative increase indicates not only a higher frequency of hate expression but also a wider normalization of discriminatory language in both digital spaces and public debate.

The **most affected groups** during this period were Roma communities, LGBTI+ persons, and Muslims, with each group facing recurrent and overlapping patterns of stigmatization. The Jewish community also faced a notable rise in targeted hate incidents, including several high-profile antisemitic cases between 2024 and 2025. Such incidents ranged from online harassment to direct threats against religious sites, signaling the persistence of deep-rooted prejudice and the resurfacing of extremist narratives in public spaces.

The distribution of HDD across **digital platforms** in Bulgaria underscores the central role of social media in amplifying hate speech. According to the 2025 data, Facebook remained the leading platform for hate-driven discourse, cited in 71% of documented cases, while TikTok's share rose sharply to 63%, reflecting its expanding influence among youth audiences. Instagram, YouTube, and news portals also featured prominently, often serving as secondary channels for the reproduction and commentary of hateful content. The growing prominence of TikTok from 2024 to 2025 highlights the shifting dynamics of hate dissemination toward short-form, high-engagement video content that spreads rapidly and is harder to moderate effectively.

Institutional responses in Bulgaria were relatively active compared to regional peers, with several notable interventions from the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) and the Council for Electronic Media (CEM). The CPD issued sanctions against political figures responsible for antisemitic or xenophobic remarks, setting important precedents for accountability. The CEM also issued broadcast warnings, including a notable case involving PIK TV, where discriminatory content prompted regulatory action.

Civil society organizations, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, played a sustained role in monitoring, documentation, and advocacy, providing complementary oversight to formal mechanisms. Nonetheless, reports indicate that reporting and complaint mechanisms remain underused and perceived as ineffective, particularly among younger citizens who doubt their practical outcomes.

Youth impact and exposure to hate-driven discourse in Bulgaria was exceptionally high. In 2025, 87% of young respondents reported having encountered hate speech at least once, a significant increase from 2024. This constant exposure has tangible effects: many young people report anxiety, emotional fatigue, and self-censorship when engaging online. About 18% of surveyed youth admitted to withdrawing from digital participation due to toxic discourse. However, a smaller but noteworthy segment of young people responded with peer mobilization

and counterspeech, suggesting emerging resilience and civic engagement despite adverse conditions.

The **mental health consequences** associated with hate exposure were clearly documented in both focus groups and survey data. Participants commonly reported feelings of anger, disturbance, anxiety, and fear, with an observable increase in withdrawal and self-censorship between 2024 and 2025. The repetitive nature of hate content, particularly when encountered daily, fostered a sense of helplessness and emotional exhaustion, reinforcing the need for psychosocial support and awareness programs addressing the link between digital toxicity and mental well-being.

Key cases and illustrative incidents

Several emblematic cases illustrate the scale and character of hate-driven discourse during this period:

- CPD decisions against political leaders who engaged in antisemitic or xenophobic speech set significant legal precedents for accountability in political communication.
- The Council for Electronic Media's warning to PIK TV underscored the persistence of discriminatory rhetoric in broadcast media and the challenges of ensuring responsible journalism.
- In February 2025, authorities documented threats against the Sofia Synagogue, a case that attracted national attention and was monitored closely by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee.

These and other incidents point to a climate of escalating hostility toward minority groups and demonstrate both the potential and limitations of existing institutional safeguards.

Trends and overall assessment

The overall trend from 2024 to 2025 shows a clear intensification of racism and antisemitic content, as well as a continued prevalence of gender- and sexual-orientation-based hate speech. The rise of TikTok as a major platform for hate dissemination signals a changing technological and demographic landscape, in which younger users are both the most exposed and the least protected.

Despite visible progress in legal and monitoring frameworks, reporting mechanisms remain largely ineffective, and institutional responses struggle to keep pace with the speed and scale of online discourse. The data from Bulgaria thus portray a society in which hate speech is both more visible and more contested, an environment where progress in enforcement and civic awareness coexists with persistent normalization of discrimination.

3.2.5   Tunisia, prepared by Euromed Eve (2024 vs. 2025)

The monitoring of hate-driven discourse (HDD) in Tunisia during 2024 and 2025 revealed a complex interplay between religious intolerance, political polarization, and gendered harassment, reflecting the broader socio-political tensions of a transitional public sphere. The findings, drawn from quantitative data, focus groups, and qualitative case studies, paint a picture of a society where hate speech has become increasingly normalized, particularly in digital environments. While civil society efforts to document and respond to HDD remain active, structural mechanisms for protection, reporting, and psychological support continue to lag behind the pace of the problem.

In 2024, Tunisia's HDD landscape was characterized by religious intolerance, political and civic polarization, and gender-based harassment. Online hate was often intertwined with

broader political and ideological divisions, amplifying existing social fault lines. The discourse commonly framed difference, whether religious, gender-based, or political, as a source of threat or conflict, creating fertile ground for incitement and exclusion.

By 2025, the monitoring data confirmed the continuing dominance of religion-based and politically motivated HDD, accompanied by an alarming normalization of hostile rhetoric on social media. Platforms such as TikTok and Facebook became central spaces where discriminatory or inflammatory comments circulated freely, often without moderation. The recurrence and acceptance of such speech suggest that hate has evolved from episodic incidents into a routine component of online engagement, especially among younger users.

The **groups most frequently targeted** during this period included religious minorities, women, LGBTI+ persons (particularly in online spaces where visibility was limited but hostility persistent), and political dissidents or activists. The intersection of political and identity-based targeting blurred the lines between ideological disagreement and personal attack, exposing individuals, particularly women in public life — to sustained online harassment and reputational harm.

Tunisia's **digital ecosystem** remained the primary arena for hate-driven discourse, with TikTok comment sections and Facebook groups identified as consistent hotspots. These spaces facilitated both the spread and normalization of hate narratives, often through memes, videos, and user threads that framed intolerance as humor or opinion. National online news portals also played a role in amplifying inflammatory content, either through unmoderated comment sections or through coverage that sensationalized divisive issues. The interconnectedness of these spaces created a feedback loop in which hate content circulated widely with minimal intervention.

Institutional responses to HDD in Tunisia were largely led by civil society and NGO initiatives, which played a critical role in documenting incidents, supporting victims, and advocating for policy reform. While these efforts have produced valuable data and awareness, formal reporting mechanisms and platform-level interventions remain weak. Many victims viewed existing complaint channels as symbolic rather than effective. Recommendations emerging from 2025 reports call for enhanced victim support, structured reporting tools, and collaboration with platform operators to address online hate more systematically.

Youth impact and perspectives, gathered through focus groups involving participants aged 16-22, revealed a troubling sense of desensitization and normalization regarding hate speech. Many young people described feeling anxious, disillusioned, and socially withdrawn due to constant exposure to hateful content. Some reported avoiding online spaces or reducing participation in classroom discussions, reflecting a broader erosion of confidence in both digital and civic life. At the same time, participants expressed strong interest in counteraction, proposing education initiatives, peer-led awareness campaigns, and accessible support services as tools to rebuild trust and resilience among youth communities.

Regarding the mental health consequences, the emotional toll of hate-driven discourse was evident across focus group and case study findings. Participants frequently reported anxiety, fear, and withdrawal, as well as a loss of confidence in public expression. These mental-health effects were compounded by a sense of futility, as reporting mechanisms were widely viewed as symbolic or ineffective. The repeated exposure to hostile content, especially without visible accountability, contributed to an atmosphere of resignation and emotional fatigue, particularly among younger users and women.

Key Cases and Illustrative Examples

Country-specific case studies presented in the annex provide qualitative insights into the everyday normalization and emotional consequences of hate speech in Tunisia. These cases include examples of targeted harassment against women and activists, religious intolerance in online debates, and recurring instances of political hate speech that blurred the boundary between civic expression and defamation. Collectively, they underscore how hate discourse operates both as a social habit and as a political tool for marginalization.

Trends and Overall Assessment

The overarching trend from 2024 to 2025 in Tunisia is the persistent normalization of hate-driven discourse, especially on TikTok and Facebook, where moderation remains minimal and reporting mechanisms largely ineffective. While civil society monitoring and advocacy have gained strength, the lack of structural follow-up, both at platform and institutional levels, continues to undermine accountability and protection.

The combination of religious intolerance, gendered harassment, and political hostility forms a recurring triad in Tunisia's HDD environment. As normalization deepens, calls for enhanced reporting systems, youth-focused education, and mental-health support have grown stronger, reflecting an urgent need to shift from documentation toward prevention and response.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The comparative report on the monitoring of online Hateful and Discriminatory Discourse (HDD) in Albania, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Tunisia for the period 2024–2025 demonstrates a clear and sustained escalation of online hate, both in terms of frequency and social normalization. What appeared in 2024 primarily as distinct national patterns of gender-based, ethnic, or politically motivated hate had, by 2025, consolidated into a multi-layered regional phenomenon, closely intertwined with political polarization, digital platform dynamics, and institutional weaknesses.

A key cross-cutting finding across all countries is the normalization of hate speech, particularly in online environments. HDD is no longer perceived as a deviation or marginal phenomenon, but increasingly as a "normal" component of digital public debate. This normalization manifests through humor, memes, political commentary, and viral content, making hate more difficult to identify and challenge as a form of social harm.

The report highlights a clear shift in hate vectors toward video-based platforms and fast-paced algorithmic content, particularly TikTok. While Facebook and YouTube remain significant platforms, TikTok's rise as a space for both exposure to and normalization of HDD represents a structural change in how hate is produced, disseminated, and replicated—especially among younger audiences. This development has outpaced existing moderation capacities and institutional response mechanisms.

Young people (aged 15–29) emerge clearly as the most exposed group across all monitored countries. The report documents high levels of daily exposure to hate content, accompanied by significant mental health consequences, including anxiety, emotional fatigue, self-censorship, and withdrawal from public participation. At the same time, young people also appear as key agents of resilience, leading counter speech initiatives, volunteer monitoring, and awareness campaigns, making their role central to any long-term strategy against HDD.

From an institutional perspective, the report reveals a fragmented and uneven response landscape. Although legal frameworks, anti-discrimination bodies, media regulators, and

human rights institutions exist, implementation remains inconsistent and often reactive. Reporting procedures are widely perceived as ineffective, while platform follow-through is limited and unpredictable. As a result, civil society organizations and independent monitors have assumed a disproportionate role in documentation, victim support, and the preservation of public accountability.

A significant cross-country finding is that the psychological cost of HDD remains comparable regardless of formal institutional strength. Even in countries with more developed complaint mechanisms and regulatory structures, the mental health impacts on exposed individuals are similar to those in contexts with weaker protections. This demonstrates that legal and regulatory responses alone are insufficient without the integration of psychosocial support and preventive measures.

The period 2024–2025 represents a critical inflection point for the LIFE project region. HDD has become more visible, more normalized, and more politically instrumentalized, accelerated by platform algorithms, social polarization, and institutional inertia. Addressing this trend requires a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach that goes beyond reacting to individual incidents and focuses instead on prevention, digital education, and the strengthening of social resilience.

The report concludes that efforts to combat Hateful and Discriminatory Discourse must shift from a predominantly punitive logic toward a proactive model that combines platform accountability, institutional strengthening, youth empowerment, and the systematic integration of mental health considerations into anti-hate policies. Only through such a comprehensive approach can the normalization of hate be curtailed and safer, more inclusive digital spaces be fostered.

Recommendations

Based on the comparative analysis of HDD monitoring in the five partner countries during 2024–2025, the report identifies the need for an integrated, multi-level, and preventive approach to addressing online hate. The following recommendations aim to strengthen institutional capacity, platform accountability, youth resilience, and mental health protection.

1. Strengthening the accountability of digital platforms

Improve the practical enforcement of existing EU and international standards (e.g. the Digital Services Act – DSA), with a focus on the timely removal of harmful content, algorithmic transparency, and responsiveness to user reports.

Develop independent monitoring mechanisms, in cooperation with civil society, to periodically assess the real effectiveness of content moderation, particularly on fast-growing platforms such as TikTok.

Require platforms to provide clear and accessible feedback to users who report hate speech, in order to reduce perceptions of futility and mistrust.

2. Harmonising and strengthening institutional responses

Improve cooperation between anti-discrimination bodies, media regulators, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and judicial authorities to ensure coordinated and non-fragmented responses.

Standardize reporting and case follow-up procedures, ensuring transparency, clear timelines, and public communication of outcomes.

Strengthen institutional professional capacity to address emerging forms of HDD, including hate disguised as humor, political opinion, or viral content.

3. Integrating mental health into anti-HDD policies

Formally recognise exposure to HDD as a risk factor for mental health, particularly for young people and marginalised groups.

Integrate psychosocial support components into anti-hate programmes, including counselling services, helplines, and referral pathways for victims of online harassment.

Develop awareness campaigns that directly link online hate to emotional and social harm, reducing its normalization.

4. Empowering youth as key actors in prevention

Invest in digital and media literacy programmes that go beyond identifying hate speech and include counter speech skills, critical thinking, and emotional resilience.

Support youth-led initiatives such as volunteer monitoring, peer-to-peer campaigns, and the production of positive counter-narratives.

Ensure that youth engagement in anti-HDD activities is accompanied by emotional support and safeguards against psychological burnout.

5. The role of traditional media and editorial responsibility

Strengthen ethical standards and self-regulatory mechanisms in media, particularly in high-impact formats such as talk shows, reality programmes, and political debates.

Provide continuous training for journalists and editors on responsible reporting of sensitive issues, to prevent the amplification of discriminatory narratives.

Encourage the exchange of good practices among media outlets and across countries at regional and Euro-Mediterranean levels.

6. Sustained support for civil society and independent monitoring

Recognise and support the essential role of NGOs and independent initiatives in documenting HDD, educating the public, and supporting victims.

Ensure medium- and long-term funding for online hate monitoring to avoid dependence on fragmented, short-term projects.

Integrate civil society data and findings into official policymaking and reporting processes.

7. From reaction to prevention

Anti-HDD policies should shift from a predominantly reactive logic toward a preventive and resilience-building model.

This requires combining regulation, education, psychosocial support, and civic participation to address not only symptoms but also the structural drivers of hate.

Only through such an integrated approach can the normalization of HDD be curbed and safer, more inclusive, and democratic digital spaces be built.