



Workshop for Development of a Manual on Effective Investigation and Prosecution of Criminalised Hate Speech 28-29 April 2026

Location: Novotel Malta Sliema, Gżira, Malta

Background

Within the framework of the Mission-Driven Initiative (MDI) [“Enhancing multi-stakeholder responses to hate speech and hate crime”](#), the Council of Europe aims to develop a practical manual on effective investigation and prosecution of criminalised hate speech. To this end, the **two-day workshop in Malta** on 28-29 April, organised with the support of the European Commission, aims to bring relevant stakeholders around the table (mainly prosecutors and law enforcement, around 20 practitioners from different European countries) to brainstorm the outline of the manual, potential case studies and country examples to be further explored. Participants will actively participate and contribute with their knowledge and experience in recognising, investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech. Through case studies, round table and group discussions, the objective is to collect and discuss needs, challenges and best practices in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech, which will then be included in the manual. The manual will therefore rely on the firsthand experience of professionals, in order to make it as practical and useful for their work as possible. The main reference point for this endeavour is the Council of Europe Recommendation on combating hate speech [CM/Rec\(2022\)16](#).

To ensure that time is used effectively and help participants getting into the spirit of the workshop, we encourage them to think through and prepare their comments on two points:

- 1) **challenges in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech**, including online, facing law enforcement and prosecutors at the national level – whether they might be common across Europe or specific to your country; during the workshop we will discuss which of them we want to tackle through the manual; you can rely on both, successes and failures; we will discuss these challenges in small-group discussions;
- 2) **positive practices in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech**, including online – how a successful court decision was secured, what elements contributed to this achievement, for example: sought international legal assistance, worked effectively with civil society organisations, lawyers or media. Rely on your own experiences and those shared by other law enforcement officers and prosecutors in your country; each participant is invited to present a good (stable) or promising (one-off, developing) practice to the group (7’ per participant).

In addition, on the second day of the workshop, we will discuss a specific case together – the challenge of identifying perpetrators of online hate speech. What measures are available in your country when a social media platform refuses to sufficiently cooperate, for example by not granting you access to the perpetrator’s personal data?

Co- organisers

The **Council of Europe** is currently implementing the Mission-Driven Initiative (MDI) [“Enhancing multi-stakeholder responses to hate speech and hate crime”](#) funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. This MDI aims to support public authorities and civil society organisations in their efforts to combat hate crimes, curb online hate speech, and counter disinformation, promote fact-based communication and protect the human rights of people targeted by hate speech and hate crime, as the foundation for a safer, more inclusive Europe.

This initiative is particularly important for **Malta** as the Manual will provide a comprehensive and user-friendly guide on what constitutes criminalised hate speech under Maltese law, while situating it within comparative EU legislative frameworks and relevant European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence. By serving as a practical tool for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and other key stakeholders, the Manual will strengthen national capacity, promote legal clarity and consistency, and support alignment with European standards and best practices.

The workshop is further supported by the **European Commission**, and directly contributes to the objectives of the [EU High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime](#), which in particular aims to support national authorities in their responses to these crimes and produce practical and co-developed guidance in the area of hate speech and hate crimes. The workshop will bring together participants from the networks of prosecutors and law enforcement contact points recently established under the EU High Level Group, which is led by the European Commission, together with its international and national partners.

Day 1 – 28 April 2026

9:00 - 9:15	Arrival and registration of the participants
Morning session	
9:15 - 10:00	Welcome and introduction to the programme Menno Ettema – Head of Unit - Hate Speech, Hate Crime & Artificial Intelligence (AI), Council of Europe Representative from the Human Rights Directorate, Malta Elena Haig, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission
10:00 - 11:00	Tour de table Introduction of the participants - each participant will say a few words about their background and experience
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee break

11:30 - 13:00	Identifying challenges faced in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech World Café - participants are divided into 4 groups and discuss the challenges - which they thought through before the workshop - at four tables facilitated by four experts
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
Afternoon session	
14:00 - 15:30	Which of the identified challenges in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech should be addressed by the manual? Presentations by speakers, discussion
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 - 17:15	Positive practices in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech Participants are divided into 2 groups - law enforcement officers and prosecutors - each participant is invited to present a positive practice (around 7' per participant)
17:15 - 17:30	Closing session
18:00	Dinner/social event

Day 2 – 29 April 2026

9:00 - 9:15	Arrival and registration of the participants
Morning session	
9:15 - 9:45	ODIHR's practical guide "Hate Crime Prosecution at the Intersection of Hate Crime and Criminalised 'Hate Speech'" Presentation Marharyta Zhesko, ODIHR
9:45 - 10:45	CoE manual on investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech - scope, methodology, structure Presentation and discussion Piotr Godzisz, consultant, Council of Europe Anna Mazurczak, consultant, Council of Europe
10:45 - 11:15	Q&A/open discussion based on the presentations
11:15 - 11:45	Coffee break
11:45 - 13:00	Positive practices in investigating and prosecuting criminalised hate speech (cont'd) Participants are divided into 2 groups - law enforcement officers and prosecutors - each participant is invited to present a positive practice (around 7' per participant)

13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
Afternoon session	
14:00 - 15:45	Case study – hate speech online Presentation and group discussions – after the case study is presented and participants' questions are answered, participants discuss the solution in four groups; at the end, the four groups present the results of their discussions
15:45 - 16:15	Coffee break
16:15 - 17:15	Closing and evaluation Presentation of the next steps and how the participants may be involved Piotr Godzisz Anna Mazurczak