



International Conference

Echoes of Hate

Digital Communication, Populism,
and the Regulation of Hate Speech

15 December 2025
Ghent, BELGIUM



#EchoesOfHateConference

International Conference
Echoes of Hate: Digital Communication, Populism, and the
Regulation of Hate Speech
15 December 2025

In recent years, hate speech has become one of the most pressing challenges facing democratic societies, intensified by digital communication technologies and amplified by populist political narratives. Online platforms have transformed how ideas circulate, how communities mobilise, and how hostility, exclusion, and discrimination are normalised across borders at unprecedented speed and scale. At the same time, efforts to regulate hate speech raise complex legal, ethical, and political questions, particularly around freedom of expression, platform accountability, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

This international conference brings together scholars, researchers, legal experts, journalists, and civil society actors to critically examine these intertwined dynamics. By combining legal analysis, political theory, media studies, psychology, and comparative perspectives, the conference aims to foster a multidisciplinary dialogue on how hate is produced, experienced, governed, and resisted in the digital age. Particular attention is given to the lived human consequences of online hate, as well as to the responsibilities of states, platforms, and media professionals.

The programme reflects both conceptual debates and empirical insights, with panels addressing regulation, populism, gendered hate, media practices, emotional dimensions, and global case studies. By creating space for academic exchange and critical reflection, the conference seeks to contribute to more effective, rights-based responses to hate speech and to strengthen cooperation between academia and civil society in confronting one of the defining challenges of our time.



International Conference

Echoes of Hate
Digital Communication, Populism,
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Program Flow

Wintercircus

09:00–09:30	Welcome remarks and introduction
09:30–11:00	Governing Hate Online: Law, Responsibility, and Platform Power
11:20–12:50	Populism and Digital Polarization: The Politics of Online Hate
12:50–13:50	Lunch Break
13:50–15:20	Gendered Hate and Online Misogyny: Narratives, Movements, and Countervoices
15:40–17:10	Media, Journalism, and Countering Hate Narratives
17:10–17:30	Reflections & closing remarks by Prof. Dr. Johan Vande Lanotte

De Krook

(Parallel Sessions)

09:30–11:00	Emotions, Psychology, and the Human Experience of Hate
11:20–12:50	Global and Comparative Perspectives on Hate Speech



Wintercircus

Lammerstraat 13, 9000 Gent / Belgium

De Krook

Miriam Makebaplein 1, 9000 Gent / Belgium

Scientific Committee Members



Prof. Dr. Clara Burbano-Herrera
*Programme for Studies on Human Rights in Context
Ghent University, Belgium*



Prof. Dr. Yves Haeck
*Programme for Studies on Human Rights in Context
Ghent University, Belgium*



Dr. Eliza Bechtold
*Bonavero Institute of Human Rights
University of Oxford, UK*



Zoë Grossi
*Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies
Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium*

Welcome Remarks & Introduction

📍 *Wintercircus*

⌚ *09:00–09:30*



Prof. Dr. Clara Burbano-Herrera

*Programme for Studies on Human Rights in Context
Ghent University, Belgium*



Prof. Dr. Yves Haeck

*Programme for Studies on Human Rights in Context
Ghent University, Belgium*

Keynote Speech



Dr. Eliza Bechtold

*Bonavero Institute of Human Rights
University of Oxford, UK*



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Session 1

Governing Hate Online: Law, Responsibility, and Platform Power

 *Wintercircus*  *09:30 - 11:00*

This session examines how hate speech is managed online, from legal frameworks and platform responsibilities to real-world challenges, highlighting the tension between free expression and protection from harm.



Chair

Dr. Eliza Bechtold

Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford



Harmful Speech Online: Five Models of Platform Regulation

Prof. Dr. Gavin Phillipson & Prof. Dr. Robert Mark Simpson
University of Bristol Law School



From Online Hatred to Violence: The Architecture of Digital Hostility and the EU's Juridical Response

Lavinia Pedol
University of Milan



Profiting from Hate or Participating in Debate? Critiquing Elon Musk's Unique Political Reach as Owner-User of X

Dr. Stephanie Reynolds
University of Liverpool



Hate Speech in Italian Sport: The Case of Paola Egonu and the Growing Role of Populist Leaders

Dr. Cristiano d'Orsi
University of Johannesburg



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Session 2

Populism and Digital Polarization: The Politics of Online Hate

📍 *Wintercircus*

⌚ *11:20 - 12:50*

Exploring the intersection of populism, extremism, and social media, this session analyses how online spaces hateful narratives and reshape political discourse. It examines how digital platforms and populist actors co-produce online polarization and normalize hate within contemporary political discourse.



Chair

Coskun Yorulmaz

Human Rights Lawyer, Solidarity With OTHERS



Digital Populism and the Legitimization of Hate: Communication Strategies, Social Cohesion, and the Role of Online Platforms

Dr. Ibrahim Kurt
Society of European Scholars



Introducing the HARDGORE Project: Charting the Gore Digital Ecosystem and Its Role in “Mixed, Unclear and Unstable” Extremism

Prof. Dr. Stephane Baele & Dr. Lewys Brace
Catholic University of Leuven (UC Louvain) / University of Exeter



Digital Hate to Real World Harm: Online Platforms, Populist Leader Rhetoric and the Escalation of Hate Crime

Sahil Lohia
Jamia Hamdard University



Positive Obligations and Online Hate Speech before the ECtHR: Protection or Chilling Effects?

Francesca Cassano
University of Milan



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Session 3

Gendered Hate and Online Misogyny: Narratives, Movements, and Countervoices

📍 *Wintercircus* ⏰ *13:50 – 15:20*

This session explores the gendered dimensions of hate speech, examining how misogyny, anti-gender movements, and the use of feminist language shape far-right discourse. It also considers how digital spaces both reinforce inequality and provide opportunities for resistance.



Chair

Dr. Eliza Bechtold

Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford



Emergency Meeting 63: Extreme Misogyny, Andrew Tate, and the Stoking of Collapse

Dr. Elizabeth Pearson

University of London



Weaponized “Sisterhood”: How Far-Right Feminist Groups Co-opt Women’s Rights to Fuel Polarization and Violence

Dr. Gwenaëlle Bauvois

University of Helsinki



Anti-Gender Coalitions and Populist Attacks on Sex Education in Belgium

Prof. Katrien Jacobs & Katrien Lievens

Monash University Malaysia



Hate Speech Through the Screen: Lessons from the Jeannine Dauder Case before the Meta Oversight Board

Renzo Diaz Giunta

University of Lima



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Session 4

Media, Journalism, and Countering Hate Narrative

📍 *Wintercircus*

⌚ 15:40 - 17:10

This session brings together insights from media and communication studies to explore how journalists and media practitioners confront hate speech and disinformation. Discussions will highlight resilience in exile, ethical storytelling, and the role of fact-checking in rebuilding public trust.



Chair

Dr. Qingxiu Bu

University of Sussex (UK)



Journalism in Exile: Resistance and Vulnerability under Hate Speech

Dr. Kezban Karagoz

Utrecht University



Beyond Hate: Disinformation Targeting Minorities and the Erosion of Democratic Debate

Prof. Dr. Carla Sentí Navarro

Human Rights Institute, University of Valencia



Fact-Checking as a Tool to Tackle Hate Speech

Dr. Juliana da Cunha Mota

University of Oxford



Human, Wholesomeness, and Rhetorical Softening within the Affective Ecology of Far-Right Instagram

Benjamin Nangle (*Online Presentation*)

Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven)

Session 5

Emotions, Psychology, and the Human Experience of Hate

 *De Krook*  *09:30-11:00*

This session examines the psychological and emotional roots of hate speech, exploring how fear, vulnerability, and identity dynamics lead online hostility. Through interdisciplinary perspectives, presenters discuss the human costs of digital hate and potential pathways toward disengagement.



Chair

Zoë Grossi

Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven)



The More Sensitive, the More Susceptible? Threat Sensitivity, Emotions, and Attitudes in Response to Social Media Threat Framing of Immigration

Silva Heinonen

Utrecht University

Perspectives from Forensic Psychology: Understanding the Psychological Mechanisms of Digital Communication to Combat Online Hate and the Transition to Real-World Violence

Dr. Rachel Worthington & Dr. Sören Henrich (*Online Presentation*)

Manchester Metropolitan University



From Label to Harm. How hate speech against individuals associated with the Gülen movement turns “presumptions” into the basis for legal-administrative decisions and leads to real-world harms.

Aneta Szarfenberg

Maria Grzegorzewska University



Digital Platforms as Tools for Influence and Polarised Politics

Dr. Soraya Afzali

Trinity College Dublin



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Session 6

Global and Comparative Perspectives on Hate Speech



De Krook



11:20 - 12:50

This closing session takes a broader perspective on hate speech, exploring how it appears and is addressed across different sociopolitical contexts. Through case studies from Turkey, China, Latin America, and Europe, the session highlights the challenges hate speech presents and the ways societies and authorities respond.



Chair

Dr. Juliana da Cunha Mota

Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford



Hate Speech in Times of Crisis: Digital Discourse and Real-World Consequences in Turkey

Elif Erol

Hrant Dink Foundation



Digital Legal Nationalism, Foreign Firms, and the Regulation of Online Hate Speech in China

Dr. Qingxiu Bu

University of Sussex; College for Social Sciences and Humanities, University Alliance Ruhr, Germany.



Generating the ‘Threatening’ Other: Visual Reconstructions of Hateful Rhetoric in @EuropeInvasionn’s AI-Generated Images

Dr. Allysa Czerwinsky

University of Manchester



Violence Against Women in Politics and Digital Expression: Lessons from Mexican Electoral Law

Luz Helena Orozco y Villa

University of Oxford



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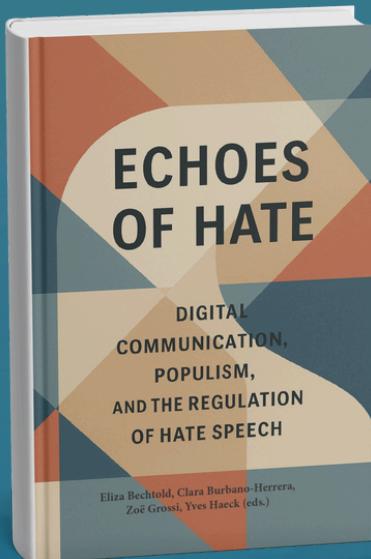
Reflections & Closing Remarks

📍 *Wintercircus*

⌚ *17:10–17:30*



Prof. Em. Dr. Johan Vande Lanotte
Ghent University, Belgium



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