

International Conference



Echoes of Hate

Digital Communication, Populism,
and the Regulation of Hate Speech

15 December 2025
Ghent, BELGIUM



Bonavero
Institute
of Human
Rights



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#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.



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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*



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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*

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



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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

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Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford



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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. Gwendëlle Bauvois

University of Helsinki



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

Prof. Katrien Jacobs & Katelijne Lievens

Monash University Malaysia



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

Renzo Díaz 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)



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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)*



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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

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.



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Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford



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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



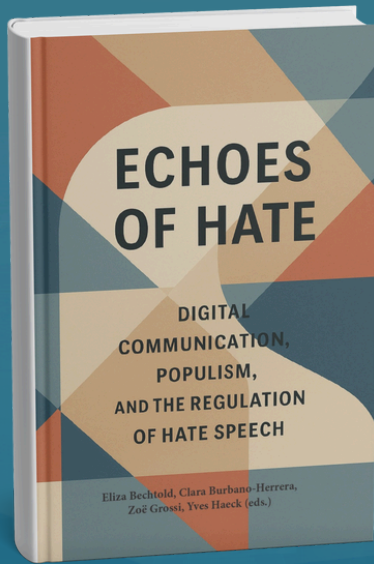
Wintercircus



17:10–17:30



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



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