Antisemitism is everyone's business

I recently started an internship at a research institute that deals with antisemitism. While I have not experienced online hate first hand, during this experience I have been able to learn more about hate speech on social networks and the different ways it can be portrayed.

Antisemitism is hate towards Jews, in general, or towards Judaism. It comes both in the form of religious prejudice and racism, and it might be one of the oldest forms of hate. While antisemitism isn't something new (is a thousand-old problem), the internet and social media gave anti-semites a new platform to spread hate and target individuals.

I have seen antisemitism in various forms: the religious kind, that is usually connected with old prejudices and stereotypes; nazi, neonazi, and racist type, where Jews are targeted not because of the religion, but based on "race"; negationists and revisionists, where they deny or underestimate the scale and the number of victims of the Shoah; anti-Sionisist, while anti-Sionist is not always anti-semitic, using racist and religious stereotypes while talking about Israel is; and lastly conspiracy theorists that claim that the source of all world problems as Jews (cabalists, New World Order, Soros, etc.).

What is interesting is that users that spread hate speech online, don't usually focus on a single group, in this case antisemitism, but they spread hate towards several minorities. In the profiles I have analyzed I have also seen anti-roma, homophobia, xenophobia, misogyny, and racism. Antisemitism is not only a Jewish problem, but everyone's business, as hate is systemic, and we will only be able to deal with it if we take a holistic and intersectional approach.

Social networks can be a very useful tool to connect family, friends and people, to help people that feel lonely or rejected to find a group, and to open one's mind to different realities. But it can also work as an echo chamber, as it seems to be the case when we talk about "serial haters". They form networks, they like each other's posts, retweet them, share them, etc, increasing the probability of their content affecting more people, and radicalizing others, especially vulnerable teens.

In my opinion, social network companies must be more proactive and fast on taking down hateful content, and our societies must do a better job on educating to diversity, and increasing digital literacy. Hate cannot be combated with more hate, we must learn how to be kinder to each other, and see diversity not as a threat, but something positive to our society.