

For the last 6 years, I have been working in non-profit organisations on issues related to migration and integration in Europe and have encountered online hate speech in my professional environment. Nevertheless, I have never been a direct target, as I am not active on social media through personal accounts.

Usually, the online hate speech I dealt with - as communications focal point for one of the organisations I used to work with - came from alt-right individuals or far-right groups in reaction to posts in which we promoted welcoming actions and messages toward newly-arrived people in the UK. I also remember a time when we received several hateful voice messages on the office main line, that was criticising the organisation's services and support to migrant and refugee populations. It was a very distressing experience to hear someone's voice using such distasteful language to refer to our work and the people we were accompanying.

The content of these voice messages was similar to the hateful comments we would sometimes receive online. This shows how hate speech can be taking different forms: nevertheless, in the case of online hate speech, the content is public, and it can sometimes be tricky to know how to deal with it. Some people would recommend deleting the hate messages, others to let them appear online but ignore them. Depending on the content of the message - for example, if it does not relate to incitement to hatred or violence to a specific group, but is a message that is critical towards immigration in general - another solution can be to address the person and provide further information to them, usually using emotions rather than facts: what can work is to try to find common values and share an example of a personal story that they could relate to.