

INACH

Bringing the Online In Line with Human Rights



INACH ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

Cyber Hate Summit - Connecting to
Build Bridges

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International Network Against Cyber Hate – INACH

INACH was founded in 2002 to use intervention and other preventive strategies against cyber hate. The member organisations are united in a systematic fight against cyber hate, for example as complaints offices, monitoring offices or online help desks. In their respective countries, they provide important contacts for politicians, internet providers, educational institutions, and users.

Funding for INACH is provided by its members, the European Commission, and other donors. The International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH) unites multiple organizations from the EU, Israel, Russia, South America, and the United States. While starting as a network of online complaints offices, INACH today pursues a multi-dimensional approach of educational and preventive strategies.

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Introduction

INACH's conference in 2023 took place on the 5th of October. The title of the annual conference was: Cyber Hate Summit – Connecting to Build Bridges. With a mixture of academics, representatives of NGOs, other stakeholders and social media platforms, the theme was discussed from different perspectives. The conference took place in Empresa Pública Para La Gestión Del Turismo Y Del Deporte De Andalucía S.A., in Málaga. Over 90 participants registered and around 80 joined both in person and virtually. This year the conference, beyond discussing interesting topics such as algorithmic transparency, the role of AI in combatting hate and presenting innovative initiatives and success stories also highly focused on providing a place for networking. Several stakeholders, for example TikTok, Meta, X, Viber, Tilt, European Observatory of Online Hate, the European Commission, Tremau, the Council of Europe and others were there to talk to civil society and discuss the possibilities of cooperation and new initiatives. At the end of the conference, Ronald & Suzette Award was presented to Panayote Dimitras, the Director of the Greek Helsinki Monitor.

Morning



As always, the conference was opened by the Chair of the INACH Board, **Philippe Schmidt**. Philippe thanked the audience for joining INACH in this exchange of ideas and expressed his gratitude to the staff of INACH for organizing this event, as well as to our sponsors: the European Commission, Google, TikTok, and the regional Andalusian government for their

support in our mission against online hate. He also expressed INACH's appreciation to Movimiento Contra la Intolerancia, INACH's Spanish member that co-organised the event, and all the speakers and panellists who have joined us. He highlighted how INACH is expanding its efforts, now offering training, monitoring online hate speech, and participating in EU projects, collaborating with social media platforms and other international NGOs.

He reiterated that in this conference, INACH's focus is on building new bridges to create a more substantial impact in our shared fight against online hate, because it is crucial to raise awareness through advocacy, especially during these uncertain times. Finally, he

expressed INACH's hope that this conference marks the beginning of new projects and the construction of fresh bridges to strengthen our collective efforts.



The second welcome address was given by **Valentín González** from MCI. Valentín welcomed everybody and he highlighted that there is a more than a two-decade-long relationship between INACH and MCI. MCI originated against the resistance against the Franco Regime. According to him, the diversity in Málaga is immense and can sometimes be a breeding ground for extremism. Therefore, MCI works closely with the police in order to combat hate speech and all other forms of hate and intolerance.



Valentín was followed by **Carmen Girón Tomás**, Technical Advisor of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE). She extended their gratitude to the organizers for inviting them to this important conference. In her speech, Carmen highlighted that OBERAXE, in their efforts to combat hate speech on social networks, employs specialized tools. In Spain, they have established an institutional agreement dedicated to fighting discrimination, which includes a specific working group focused on addressing hate speech. Their approach is closely aligned with the European Commission, and they have a designated national point of contact for communication with social media networks. This collaborative effort involves various stakeholders, including ministries, the general prosecutor's office, and organizations representing victims of hate crimes.

Additionally, according to her, OBERAXE is engaged in a project with the EU, employing a highly accurate algorithm to analyse hate crimes. They are also in the process of developing specialized training programs in collaboration with trusted flaggers to monitor and combat hate speech online, believing that this approach is pivotal in raising awareness.

Carmen was followed by **Ruth Sarabia**, Territorial Delegate for Social Inclusion, Youth, Families and Equality of the Regional Government of Andalusia. Ruth warmly welcomed all attendees to the conference in Andalusia. According to her, the primary focus of the Andalusian Government is the promotion of cultural diversity, and they extend support to victims of various forms of hate in collaboration with **Movimiento Contra la Intolerancia**. They stand in solidarity with other regions actively engaged in the fight

against hate, extremism, and discrimination. The Andalusian Government is committed to establishing trust-based relationships with communities, fostering transparency, and facilitating open dialogues among civil society, authorities, and the local population.



Furthermore, she highlighted that they place a strong emphasis on educating the younger generation about hate crimes, incorporating this into primary and secondary school curricula. In line with this, they have published the first guide on hate crimes in Andalusia.

The final welcome speech was given by **Maria Teresa Verdugo Moreno**, Deputy Prosecutor for Hate Crimes and Discrimination and Economic Crime Section Coordinator of the Malaga Provincial Prosecutor's Office. She discussed the issue of hate crimes and emphasizes the importance of combating them. She argued that hate crimes stem from hate speech and hate propaganda, perpetuating discrimination.



According to her there are many challenges in addressing hate crimes, such as some member states lacking appropriate laws or gaps between legislation and its application. Prosecutors play a crucial role in enforcing these laws and therefore, legislation is seen as a valuable tool to address various forms of hate, violence, and discrimination.

However, she also emphasised that hate speech laws can sometimes be misused for political purposes, leading to concerns about trivializing the term. Maria concluded by addressing the role of the internet in spreading negative messages and the need for education and values to combat cyber hate, stating that criminal law should be a last resort.

The welcome speeches were followed by a presentation by **Heidi Beirich**, co-Founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. Her presentation focused on developments surrounding hate speech in the United States. According to her, in the U.S., some privacy protections have been enacted, albeit rarely, along with promises for transparency and AI safeguards under the Biden administration. Proposed tech-related

legislation, such as child protections and a national privacy bill, arose when Democrats controlled Congress after Biden's election.

Section 230, which shields tech companies from liability for content on their platforms, saw attempts to carve out protections for civil rights. However, this legislation failed to progress due to two primary reasons: First Amendment free speech concerns and significant lobbying efforts by tech companies.

Heidi highlighted a recent federal court ruling that restricts administration officials from engaging with tech companies regarding various issues, including medical disinformation and online hate. According to her, this ruling has disrupted efforts to address harmful content online, particularly regarding medical misinformation and misinformation related to vaccines. Additionally, the hyper-partisan nature of U.S. politics has led some Republican-led states, notably Florida and Texas, to pass laws against content moderation, as they fear it could censor their views. These laws have implications for posting content related to hate speech, particularly against immigrants and the LGBTQ community.

Despite these developments, it is widely believed that these state laws may be challenged and struck down. The situation in the U.S. has deteriorated, with universities discontinuing research due to attacks from Republicans and conservatives. Twitter has become a platform for hate speech, and some Republicans are questioning tech companies for not allowing more hate speech, which raises concerns about a return to a time before key legislation was implemented.



After this excellent summary of worrisome news from the US, our first keynote speaker, **Louisa Klingvall**, Team Leader on Combating Hate Speech and Hate Crime in DG Justice and Consumers, took to the stage to talk about the DSA. Louisa Klingvall discussed the detrimental impact of hate speech on freedom of expression in Europe, noting existing laws that criminalize discrimination on various grounds. In 2021, the European Commission proposed extending the list of EU crimes to include hate speech and hate crimes, subject to unanimous adoption.

She emphasized the need to combat hate speech and its creators, stressing that what is illegal offline should also be so online. According to her, collaboration with IT platforms and civil society is crucial for the timely removal of hate speech.

Louisa highlighted the significance of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in creating a regulatory framework to address hate speech. This unprecedented legislation aims to protect fundamental rights and remove hate speech, requiring platforms to implement a notice and action system and assess and mitigate systemic risks, including illegal content and its negative impact on fundamental rights.

She noted that civil society's role is important, as the DSA imposes transparency and reporting obligations on platforms. Independent analysis of content moderation in practice is crucial. She finished by highlighting that trusted flaggers should be prioritized by online platforms, and systemic risk assessment should involve collaboration with civil society and at-risk community members. Civil society can file complaints if platforms do not comply, and the code of conduct remains significant.



Our first keynote speaker of the day was followed by the first networking event of the conference where our participants could meet and network with the **Council of Europe, StopFisha, the Spanish Civil Guard, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Movimiento Contra la Intolerancia, Tilt, and Panorama Global with the Reclaim Coalition.**

To finish our morning programme, the first panel discussion took place with speakers: **Sara Bundtzen**, Research and Policy Analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue; **Geert Ates**, Founding Director of UNITED for Intercultural Action; **Saikat Chatterjee**, Machine Learning Research Engineer and Data Scientist at Tilt Insights; **Silvia Semenzin**, Head of Research & Advocacy at Cyber Rights Organization, and it was Moderated by Andrea **Cox**, Director of digiQ. The topic of the panel was AI policy and algorithmic transparency.



Silvia, a specialist in gender-based violence, was deeply concerned by the increasing dissemination of hate on social media, a trend exacerbated by algorithms. Each day, she observes the troubling escalation of gender-based violence on these platforms. Silvia's primary focus has been campaigning to make image based sexual violence (revenge porn) illegal. She notes that responses to gender-based violence often lack the sense of urgency it deserves, allowing it to thrive. Silvia firmly believes in adopting a human-centred approach and encourages discussions regarding human responsibility in the realm of AI, advocating for a comprehensive reevaluation of this issue.

According to Saikat, the AI model's learning process relies on the training data it receives. To illustrate, it is akin to teaching a child through various examples, shaping their understanding. Consequently, the model's perspective on a given subject is heavily influenced by the examples it is exposed to during training. If the training data contains biases, such as pre-existing racist attitudes, removing these biases can be exceedingly challenging.

Sara highlighted that, when considering a risk-based approach and the "do no harm" principle, various issues come into play. Specifically, many language-based AI models can be exploited by malicious actors to craft convincing yet deceptive content. Additionally, a significant portion of social media platforms heavily rely on AI algorithms. This has led to

ongoing discussions regarding the potential harm caused by these algorithmic practices and the need to explore alternative approaches.

According to Geert, racism in Europe appears to be deteriorating rather than improving. This concerning trend is exacerbated by a surge in societal hatred, with social media and populist politicians playing significant roles in fuelling this problem. The internet serves as a platform for amplifying such divisive events, often driven by AI-generated news content. Combatting populist narratives is challenging, given the formidable algorithms at play. The need for media education is paramount, especially in cases where social media platforms are unwilling to take responsibility for their role in this issue.

Afternoon

The afternoon programme was opened by our second keynote speaker, **Arun Mansukhani**, Psychologist specialized in Clinical Psychology (PsyD). His speech focused on the mental roots of intolerance. Arun highlighted the dual nature of humanity, where people can display both the best and the worst traits. According to him, intolerance is unique to humans and that we are essentially bipolar beings, capable of extreme empathy and psychopathic behaviour. He suggested that people may adopt psychopathic traits if their community encourages it. Studies show that psychopathy increases as we move up in organizational hierarchies, with psychopathic traits becoming more prevalent.



He argued that human thinking is dichotomous, often favouring in-group versus out-group mentalities. This can lead to stereotyping, stigmatization, and the escalation of hate, fear, and disgust. To address these issues, he proposes three key intervention strategies: social protest, information and education, and social interaction, with the latter being particularly effective in changing stereotypes and reducing self-stigma.

This keynote speech was followed by our second panel discussion of the day that focused on innovative initiatives and success stories. The speakers were **Jordy Nijenhuis**, co-Founder of Dare to be Grey; **George Weiss**, Founder and CEO of Radio La Benevolencija

Humanitarian Tools Foundation; **Teresa Barros-Bailey**, Manager at Moonshot; and **Xavier Brandao**, co-Founder and Director of #jesuislà. The panel was moderated by **Tomer Aldubi** from Fighting Online Antisemitism.



The panel was launched with a presentation by Jordy. His project, "Project Grey" is an initiative aimed at countering black and white thinking. It involves the training of youth workers, gathering data on online polarization, and launching a social media campaign with the goal of encouraging behavioural change. The message behind the project is clear: it is important to foster a sense of doubt and curiosity, reminding individuals that the world is not simply black and white, but rather filled with shades of grey.

Jordy was followed by George. According to him, two decades of research conducted in countries that have experienced genocide has led to the development of the continuum of violence approach. This approach underscores the importance of healing trauma, as unresolved wounds can pave the way for future violence. The Radio La Benevolencija is pioneering the use of long-duration, nationwide broadcast campaigns to reach mass audiences, aiming to inoculate citizens against scapegoating and propaganda, while also providing trauma healing techniques for affected populations.

Additionally, the organization has adapted this model to European projects, specifically within the realm of online gaming, to foster resilience against right-wing and jihadist extremism among gamer audiences. They have also extended their efforts to support campaigns initiated by students, youth, and civil society organizations, with the overarching goal of countering extremism in all its forms.

Teresa from Moonshot described the company as a social impact entity deeply rooted in ethics, evidence, and human rights, with a core focus on violence prevention through a comprehensive approach involving understanding, intervention, and sustainable prevention. Their strategies for countering online harms encompass insights, disseminating campaigns, online interventions, and capacity building. They also adopt a public health approach to violence prevention, working with individuals at indicated risk or those who may pose a risk as perpetrators. During the U.S. elections, they operated a crisis text line. They've implemented a model inspired by Ontario and Quebec, which involves self-referrals, although this can be a significant challenge.

Xavier, the co-founder, and director of #jesuislà, described the organization as a collective and association dedicated to combatting online hate and disinformation. Their approach involves utilizing social media for collective actions, engaging in comment sections of news pages with the "I am here" hashtags, and offering support to individuals promoting positivity. Their efforts have resulted in over 400,000 actions seen by millions, although they recognize the challenges in Eastern European countries. Nonetheless, they maintain hope in the potential of the Digital Services Act (DSA) to address these issues effectively.

The panel was followed by the presentation of the **Ronald & Suzette Award**. The award was given to **Panayote Dimitras**, Director of the Greek Helsinki Monitor. For more than 30 years Panayote, and the [Greek Helsinki Monitor](#), have been fighting a tireless battle against hate speech, racism and human rights violations, and in more recent years, also against cyber hate. In the past 5 years, Panayote Dimitras has taken more than 400 lawsuits against Greek authorities and organizations for violation of human rights and/or anti-racism laws.



For years now, Panayote Dimitras is experiencing a smear campaign against himself and GHM in his own country. He has been experiencing judicial harassment and smear campaigns, that are recently taking an increasingly oppressive form and about which organizations such as [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have already published articles and statements. Panayote could not be present at the conference, because he was barred from travelling by the Greek authorities.

The award ceremony was followed by the second networking event of the day where our participants could engage with **Meta, TikTok, Viber, Tremau, X, Textgain** and **The fest**.



At 17:00, after the networking fair, **Tamás Berecz**, the General Manager of INACH closed the conference by thanking everyone for their attendance and participation; and he announced that INACH's 2024 conference will be held in Budapest, Hungary.



If you are interested, [here are the official photos](#) of the conference and the [recorded stream of all speeches and panels](#).