

## **Hate speech legislation in Lithuania**

Hate crimes in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania cover ridicule, expression of contempt, incitement of discrimination, violence, physical violent treatment of a group of persons or a person belonging thereto on grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality, language, descent, social status, religion, beliefs or opinions.

Recommendations of the Prosecutor General (version of 2023) is the only legal act in Lithuania that provides elaborate hate crime and hate speech definitions. It defines hate crimes are criminal acts perpetrated due to bias motive without defining an exhaustive list of bias indicators.

There is a clear distinction between the definitions of a hate crime and hate speech based on three essential criteria: the nature of these acts, their level of danger, and their proof. Thus, the Lithuanian legal framework discerns hate crimes as substantive (self-standing) criminal acts (Incitement of Hatred). While the motive of hate crimes can be identified as an aggravating circumstance or a qualifying characteristic.

Recommendations of the Prosecutor General (version of 2023) also defines hate speech as all forms of expression (linguistic, visual and inciting, encouraging, disseminating or justifying violence against a person or group of persons, hatred or discrimination against, or denigration of, a person or group of persons on the basis of their real or perceived personal characteristics or status, such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.