

An important aspect of combatting online hate speech are the attempts to remove such content from social media pages. Unfortunately, in Poland most of the IT companies are not willing to remove hateful posts and comments. Non-governmental organizations are actively reporting instances of online hate speech while simultaneously trying to convince social media companies to take action against the spreading of hate on the Internet.

As the statistics show, most of reported content is not removed. While hate speech is a huge problem itself, the ignorance on social media platforms side is another issue. The situation differs from country to country, which can lead to conclusion that employees in these companies take completely different approach based on local situation. In Poland, the situation is visibly worse than in many Western European countries. It may have something to do with the political climate. Populist right-wing politicians ignore or even mock the dangers that arise from hate speech; they sometimes encourage IT companies to ignore the problem of hate speech.

The approach to online hate speech is also dependent on the kind of content reported. Based on the research, we can say that some posts and comments are treated more seriously than others. If the content is racist, homophobic or antisemitic, but seems to not pose a direct threat to anyone (such as threats or call for violence) it is more likely to be ignored. It is a short-sighted strategy – even non-direct hate speech targeted towards minorities or some social groups is dangerous as it creates a climate in which violence is more acceptable.

Apart from online hate speech, a very concerning matter is the rise of hateful words coming from public figures – politicians, journalists, religious leaders. It is directly connected to physical violence in everyday life, as well as with the discrimination that takes different forms. There is no indication that this will end; the hate speech is constantly rising and being normalized. Words that would seem totally inappropriate a few years ago, now are a part of mainstream political debate.

Unfortunately, without both the good reaction from Internet companies and stigmatization of hate speech in public debate, the hate incidents everyday will not perish.