



EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL Tackling Hatred in Society



European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society

Summary of Session 2

[26-28 April, 2024]

In a few words...

What are the priority actions to tackle hatred?

The second session of a European Citizens' Panel is always a challenge, and that of "Tackling Hatred in Society" was no exception! Taking place fully online via the Interactio platform, participants contributed in all EU official languages thanks to the outstanding efforts of remote interpreters.

The citizens again demonstrated unwavering commitment to this highly relevant and complex topic. In Session 1, citizens had identified the drivers and causes of hate and discussed, among others, social and economic inequalities, peer pressure, misinformation, and polarization of political discourse. The goal of this second session was to deepen the areas of action to tackle hatred: how to prevent it and how to respond to it. In this session, citizens advanced their work on more concrete ideas. Read on for a recap of the weekend's highlights!

Some key takeaways from the second session

As citizens began their in-depth work, guest speakers and Knowledge Committee members were on hand to comment and advise on their progress. Below are a few interesting excerpts from their interventions.

" You have approached the problem with a lot of respect, you come with an open heart, viewpoints, and life experiences."

Richard Kuehnel, Director for Representation and Communication in Member States at the European Commission (DG COMM) praised the work done by the citizens during the first session. *"The ideas you are developing will inform the work of the next European Commission and European legislation."* From the Knowledge Committee, **Robin Sclafani, Director of CEJI**, pointed to the challenges faced by European institutions and governments in addressing hate crimes. She highlighted the cycle of bias leading to discrimination, threats, and violence, which impacts communities and fosters systemic discrimination in services, housing, and education.

Tackling hatred through a set of common values and EU support

Daris Lewis Recio, Legal and Policy Officer at Equinet, noted the diverse experiences of hate across Europe and stressed the necessity for EU oversight to ensure Member States uphold their commitments against hatred. **Jelena Jovanovic, Coordinator of the Anti-racism and Diversity Intergroup at the European Parliament**, connected the shared stories across EU Member States, highlighting common challenges and the need for EU support through funding, programmes, and policies. She underscored the importance of local implementation of EU laws and the role of local leaders, like mayors, in fostering European values and preparing for future challenges in combating hatred at multiple levels—European, national, and local.

“Hatred is passed down from generation to generation”

Valérie Rosoux, Research Director at FNRS and Professor at UC Louvain, spoke about the transmission in hatred across generations: “The emotion ‘Hate’ is transmitted almost intact but without the narrative.” She outlined certain steps that can be taken at political, civil society, and individual levels to counter hate. “*Transforming hatred takes time but it is always possible*,” she concluded.

Discussions on preventing and responding to hatred

Throughout Session 2, citizens worked on two major aspects of the subject of hatred: prevention and response. While we cannot detail all working group discussions, you will find here the main contributions of the Knowledge Committee, external speakers and European Commission experts. The first aspect (**tackling the societal and cultural causes of hatred**) deals with education, societal awareness, citizens engagement, social and economic inequalities. The second (**tackling hatred in its different forms and contexts**) deals with media and discourses, digital environments, public accountability and law enforcement.

Tackling the societal and cultural causes of hatred

- **Education, whether formal or informal, plays a vital role in shaping societal attitudes towards hate, promoting a more inclusive and understanding community.**

Citizens have identified education as one of the main areas for action to combat hate. **Kuany Kiir Kuany, Project Officer at UNESCO's Section for Global Citizenship and Peace Education**, stressed that education extends beyond classrooms and is a continuous process critical for personal development and social cohesion. He highlighted the political nature of education, underscoring its role in addressing hate speech and reducing social inequalities. **Willem Wagenaar, Researcher at Anne Frank Stichting**, focused on practical applications of education to tackle hatred, citing the example of sport, and detailing initiatives to educate football fans about the impact of hate speech.

Ingrid Bellander Todino, Head of Unit, Fundamental Rights Policy, European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST), intervened on lifelong education: “*This is a fundamental issue in the fight against hatred. In this area, the EU has no competence over educational curriculum. However, we do have funding opportunities such as Erasmus+, which enables students and professionals to exchange ideas and broaden their horizons and become more open*”. **Manos Tsakiris, Professor of Psychology, University of London** pointed out that learning extends beyond traditional schooling. A holistic education is crucial for fostering emotional expression and non-violent communication.

- **Fairness and engagement to prevent societal discord.**

Federico Faloppa, Linguist from the University of Reading discussed the dynamics of hate speech, identifying four potential roles individuals might play: targets, witnesses, perpetrators, and those aware of hate speech. He advocated for community engagement and restorative justice as means to address and mitigate hate speech. **Juliana Santos Wahlgren, Director at the European Anti-Poverty Network**, similarly linked hatred to social and economic inequalities. She emphasized the need for fairness in public policy and equitable distribution of resources to prevent societal discord.

Tackling hatred in its different forms and contexts

- **The challenge of anonymity online: privacy or access to data?**

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA), as explained by **Menno Cox, Head of Sector at DG CONNECT**, is a robust regulation targeting very large online platforms, enforcing transparency and anti-discrimination policies across EU Member States. The DSA mandates risk assessments and responses to content potentially leading to violence or mental health impacts, with a strong focus on detecting and mitigating illegal hate speech to enhance user safety.

Martin Sacleux, Policy Officer at the Fundamental Rights Policy Unit of European Commission, DG JUST, highlighted the challenges of regulating anonymity on the internet. According to him, the concept of anonymity involves balancing the fundamental right to privacy and data protection under European law. He emphasized the ongoing need for a delicate balance, especially in scenarios involving criminal activities where law enforcement may require access to data.

The European Commission is working towards defining clear regulations that would classify certain online activities as criminal, aiming to address the nuanced challenges of digital anonymity and its implications for both privacy and security. **David Marin Abanades, a Police Inspector** from Fuenlabrada, in Spain, underlined the difficulties of combatting hate crimes, which vary significantly across different jurisdictions. He stressed the need for precise identification of what constitutes a hate crime in each Member State.

- **The challenge of freedom of expression and protection of victims**

Margarita S. Ilieva, an independent human rights lawyer, discussed the protection of victims and those speaking out against hate. Similar to other contributors, she flagged the importance of balancing freedom of expression with the need to prevent systemic oppression and hate crimes. She called for improved access to justice for victims, proactive measures against re-victimization, and the protection of human rights defenders, including lawyers, journalists, and members of various organizations, to foster a secure and respectful society.

- **“Your work reflects the nature of democracies”**

To conclude, **Irina Moozova, Deputy Director-General for International Dimension of Justice Policies, Rule of Law and Equality at DG JUST** commended the participants' motivation and

commitment, which is crucial in translating European decisions into practical actions on the ground.

Click [here](#) to watch the recording of Sunday's plenary!

Q&A with Jean-Luc (FR)

How was your online weekend?

"The weekend went well at home with the children wondering what Daddy was doing. We started to dive into more detail on the subject, especially in the discussion groups on Saturday and Sunday mornings. We were able to pool our initial ideas with the other groups so that everyone is aware of the ideas emerging in each group."

How did the discussions go?

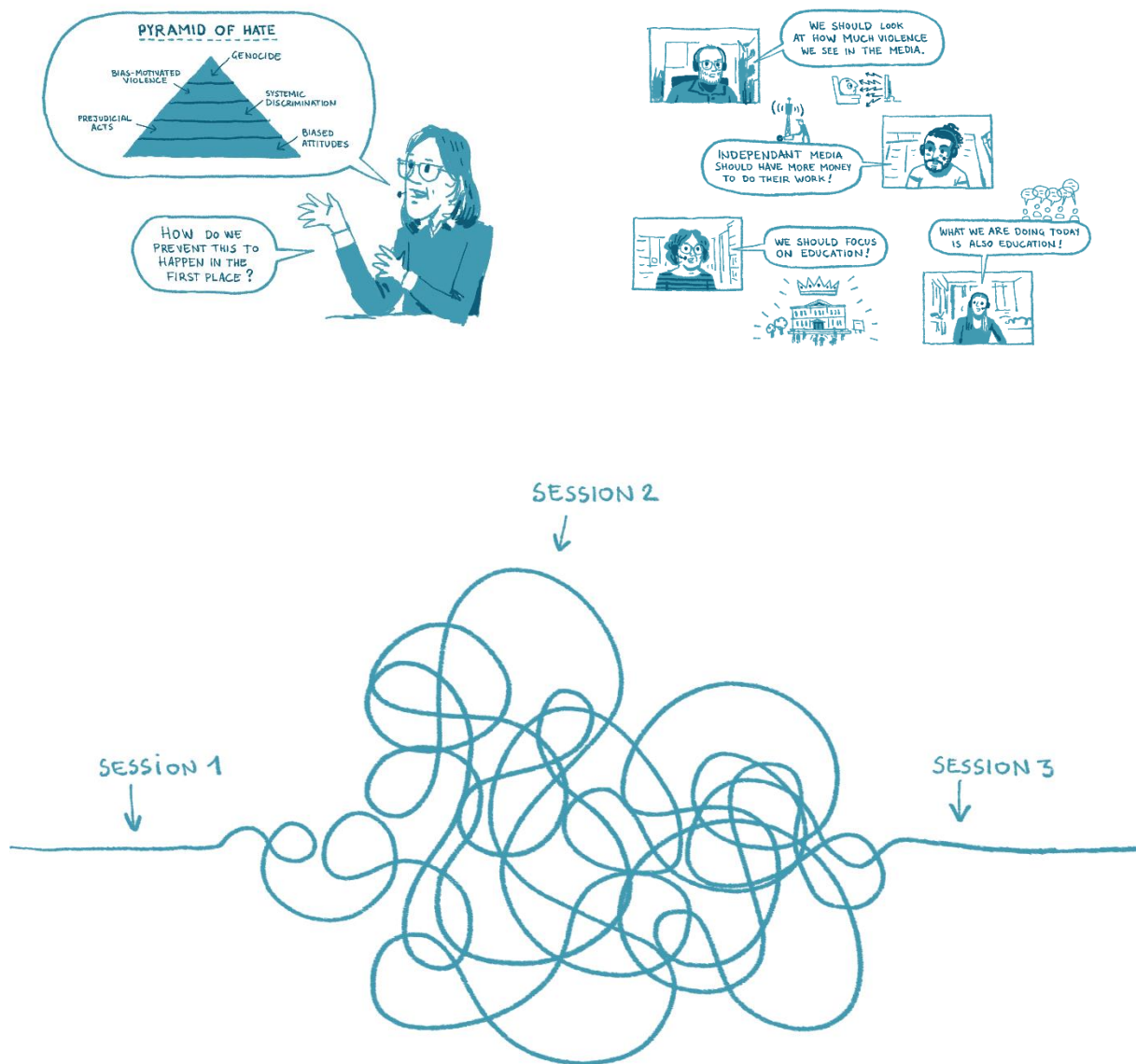
"The group atmosphere was very friendly. We discussed mainly the topic of education and how to develop social skills to enhance emotional intelligence, humanity, and our knowledge of other cultures and religion. Sharing common values is essential to combat prejudice and stereotypes and help to define a more inclusive and desirable future for everyone."

What was the highlight of your weekend?

"This session helped to clarify the direction in which we are moving regarding the ideas we formulated. I hope that our solutions will be coherent and can be used to feed the work of the European Commission. However, there is still a lot of work to be done before we can provide concrete, realistic and implementable final recommendations, but I am confident and optimistic for Session 3."

The weekend through Sylvain's perspective

Sylvain Mazas is a graphic facilitator, who captures the evolution of the Panel's discussions visually. Below is a glimpse of his impressions of the weekend:



Reminder: Objectives of all 3 sessions

- **Session 1, 5-7 April:** Citizens develop a common understanding of hatred and the scope of the Citizens' Panel, by sharing with and listening to external speakers, testimonies and experts. Together, citizens identify different causes and drivers of hate as well as potential fields of action in which hatred in society can be tackled.

- **Session 2, 26-28 April:** Building upon Session 1, citizens develop ideas on how to tackle the problem of hatred in society, which can be considered as draft recommendations.
- **Session 3, 17-19 May:** Citizens finalise their refinement of ideas and recommendations. Eventually, these ideas become the final recommendations to the European Commission.