

ECHR/CEDH LGBTIQ+

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SPHERE+ Cooperation Against LGBTIQ+ Hate Speech in Political and Public Spheres

We would also like to invite you to support our SPHERE+ project, especially by following and engaging with us on [LinkedIn](#), where we will soon start sharing learning sessions targeted at political staff.

SPHERE+ is dedicated to tackling LGBTIQ+ hate speech in politics and public life. Over the past months, we have been developing learning materials to train civil society organisations and political staff to better recognise, prevent and combat hate speech. Starting from June, we will also begin online training sessions, which will bring this work into practice and create more space for exchange, learning and cooperation.

If you have not yet discovered the project, this is a good moment to do so and to help us spread the word through our LinkedIn channel. For more information, you can visit project's [website](#)



SPHERE+ at the CINGOs of the COE

The fight against hate speech in public spaces has entered a new phase in Europe with the launch of SPHERE+. Developed in collaboration with Conference of INGOs (CINGOs) of the Council of Europe, the project marks a significant step forward in addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing democratic societies today.

The initial SPHERE+ project invited civil society actors to contribute to an Evidence Base Report on “No Hate Speech in Public Space,” creating a shared understanding of how hate manifests across European societies.

SPHERE+ expands this work, becoming the first Europe-wide initiative specifically dedicated to tackling hate speech in public environments through coordinated action, policy engagement, and awareness.

A central highlight of this effort is a high-level thematic debate focusing on hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination, with particular attention to antisemitism and hatred targeting LGBTQI+ communities. The discussion brought together leading voices from European institutions and civil society, reflecting the urgency and complexity of the issue.

Among the key participants were:

- Irene Kitsou-Milonas, Special Representative of the Secretary General on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious intolerance
- Michael Ottolenghi, representing the Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe
- Mats Lindberg from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
- Yanna Parnin, Head of Unit on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) at the Council of Europe
- Isuf Halimi of the European Center for Human Rights (ECHR/CEDH)
- Ahmet El-Salamy from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO)

The debate underscored the growing concern over the normalization of hate speech in public discourse and the tangible risks it poses to social cohesion, democratic values, and fundamental rights. Participants emphasized that hate speech is not an isolated phenomenon but often a precursor to hate crime and systemic discrimination.

SPHERE+ aims to address these challenges by strengthening cooperation between institutions, civil society, and grassroots organizations. Its approach combines research, advocacy, and practical tools to ensure safer, more inclusive public spaces across Europe.

As Europe continues to confront rising polarization and identity-based hostility, initiatives like SPHERE+ demonstrate the critical role of coordinated, evidence-based action. By bringing together policymakers, experts, and activists, the project sets a new benchmark for how societies can respond to hate—not only by condemning it, but by actively preventing it.

ECHR/CEDH based LGBTIQ+ European Association.

We support associations working with LGBTIQ+ communities focusing on No Hate Speech.



ECHR | CEDH

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