

Permanent Mission of Finland

Freedom of expression is among core fundamental freedoms and human rights. However freedom of expression is not an absolute right and does not [?] hate speech. Hate speech continues to be a growing problem with negative effects for both individuals and society at large. It restricts freedom of expression, reduces the sense of engagement, increases polarization in society, and in the worst case threatens the rule of law and democracy. Persons, especially women belonging to minorities are often targeted by hate speech. Minorities within minorities are in a particularly vulnerable position, as for example sexual and gender minorities with an immigrant background. Thus, it is important to adopt measures to address racial and ethnic stereotypes. In Finland, the Ministry of Justice is coordinating a project called “Fight against hate”. It seeks to make efforts against hate crime and hate speech more effective, developing procedures for the collection of information and for local cooperation. A tool based on artificial intelligence will be piloted for monitoring hate speech online. Education focusing on hate crime and hate speech will be provided to local politicians and minority groups. Open, secure, and global internet and inclusive digitalization are foundations of open, just and democratic societies. In 2021, Finland will chair the Freedom Online Coalition. One of our thematic priorities is combating disinformation and online hate speech. Disinformation and hate speech call for common solutions. Further discussion is needed on responsibility of states, internet companies and social media platforms on illegal material online, especially targeting minorities.

Thank you!