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# Hate speech and discrimination: an overview of the Portuguese situation

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**Abstract**. Fundamental values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights are essential values of a democratic, social and participatory society. Despite this, in the past few years, it is possible to see an increase in hate speech, racism and hate crimes in many countries of the EU. This paper aims to present the state-of-art of the Portuguese situation regarding to discrimination, hate speech and racism, based on literature review of national and international resources, and interviews with persons that have suffered from hate speech, as well as experts in the field. Results forecast a long pathway still to mitigate these phenomena and claim that it is fundamental to have an intervention that includes all societal actors: government, organisations, civil society and citizens. The researchers hope that this paper enriches the knowledge around the concepts discussed and that is useful for the development of strategies towards the promotion of a more equitable society.

**Keywords**. Hate speech; Portugal; Discrimination; Minorities.

## 1. Background

In the last decades, the conceptualisations around diversity have gained increasing relevance. They pursue the goal of sensitizing people to different experiences, perspectives, values and lifestyles, and their benefits for societal and organizational developments have been broadly accepted. Nevertheless, in recent years a backlash in the trend towards more diversity could be observed. Democratic values have been repeatedly questioned in many areas of public life like social media, events and debates. And, at the same time, demands for traditional values and the rejection of unfamiliar ethnic and cultural concepts are on the rise. In this scenario, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/questioning + (LGBTQ+) communities, Roma people, migrants, refugees and everyone deviating from the main pattern or norms in a specific place and time are at risk or concerned by rejection or violence.

This situation has been increasing, especially after 2014 – the year that is considered to be the milestone in the rise of the ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic and illiberal atmosphere in many parts of the EU. The rising of these ideas is connected to the increasing of hate speech, racism and hate crimes, which have a big impact in the quality of life of the victims, that can feel fear, anger, guilt, panic and other emotional changes [1].

According to Cambridge Dictionary [2], hate speech is a concept used to capture "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation". Many associations at international, national, regional and local level have adopted this concept or similar ones such as dangerous speech, in order to work against hatred and for the creation of environments apt for all people, regardless of their sex, race or religion. Hate speech involves all verbal, as well as non-verbal interactions loaded with discriminatory hate based among other things on differences in race, sex, age, religion or ethnicity. Contrary to much more debated hate crime, hate speech situations do not involve serious attacks of physical violence. However, there are some reasons that justify the need to research and study the hate speech in European Union (EU).

The first reason is in the aforementioned growth of ultraconservative ideas that is accompanied by the rise of hate speech. Another reason is the fact that hate speech receives less media and scholarly attention than hate crime, but it turns often into a repetitive or even permanent condition of everyday life. The growing of internet, online worlds and social media has made room for hate speech acceleration and dissemination, and it is especially concerned in the study of these phenomena. There is a correlation between hate crimes and preceded cases of hate speech: although the majority of hate speech situations don't turn into hate crime scenes, there is a direct correlation in the other way around that should concern scientists, politicians and civil society. Another reason is related to the role that witnesses, bystanders and civil society may play in a hate speech situation: in hate crime scenes it is usually not recommended to intervene as these could lead to escalations with worse consequences; but in hate speech situations, there are indications that some kind of individual intervention is welcome. It is essential to investigate which intervening act of civil courage is senseful and worth cultivating. Various aspects of hate speech have been broadly researched within the last three to four decades. The main focus has been given to aspects of its legal and constitutional regulation (since mid1980s), and to processes of deep learning in order to detect hate speech online (since 2010s). However, what remains under-researched, with only few exceptions working with empirical material mostly from English speaking countries, is the victim perspective – that is, how hate speech is experienced. As contemporary state-of-the-art in this limited research suggests, the very majority of hate speech situations do not reach a court and many of them are not even officially reported (due to e.g. fear). Instead, they take place in the normal, day-by-day lives of victims. This "normality" decreases the personal awareness in practising it, also by persons who do not intend to do harm to others. It is crucial to hear and understand the perspective of people suffering from hate speech and have them into account as a guiding principle instead of suggesting what is best for them.

The present paper is based in research that focused on the unique, crucial, and often neglected perspective of victims. This means that the researchers were trying to understand how hate speech is experienced by victims in daily life, but also, they were looking to it through an intersectional approach. In other words, they were analysing situations where it was possible to gather and multiplicate discriminations such as racism and sexism. Multiple discrimination happens when victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance suffer multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on other related grounds such as sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status [3].

For this purpose, findings were collected on how discriminatory situations involving hate speech occurred and evolved, how quality of life was affected when hate speech experience becomes a kind of permanent condition, what are functional and dysfunctional coping

strategies, individual helps as well as formal and informal institutional infrastructures of support, ranging from self-organized protest activities to work of police.

## 2.     Methodology

The study here presented is based on research of personal experiences of persons that were a target of discrimination or hate speech, as well as statistic information on hate speech and interviews of experts. The data was collected from February to July 2021 and the interviews were held between April and June 2021. This research was part of an Erasmus+ project: Smart for Democracy and Diversity which aims to promote equality, social inclusion, and non-discrimination through a digital learning approach.

The desk research meant to gather information about (1) statistics on hate speech since 2014, (2) public discourse on the victim's perspective and (3) tips for experts and victims' interviews.  Regarding the literature review, the analysis was made against the following questions and keywords: Statistical trends in post-2014 racist discrimination; Statistical trends in post-2014 hate speech dynamics; Research on hate speech; Connections between hate speech and hate crime; Most targeted groups of hate speech vs. Hate crime; Most common offenders, places, environments, timings and circumstances of hate speech situations; Hate speech and role of media and politicians; 1-2 examples of mass-mediated situations of hate speech; and infrastructure of support. The data was collected through a broad web search mainly based on Google Scholar, EC webpage and references provided by the interviewed experts.

In what concerns the experts' interviews, the researchers were looking for people who work in the area of hate speech: counselling, researching, help desks, information centres, non-governmental organizations or advocacy groups. The interview guide mainly consists of open questions concerning hate speech contexts ("Who are the most common offenders?"; "What is the connection between racism and other kinds of discrimination in experiences of hate speech?"; "Could you describe in detail a typical example of escalation from hate speech to hate crime?"); experiences of responding and coping strategies ("What are the most common responses of victims to hate speech in the situation?"; "What kinds of longer-term coping strategies are employed by victims?") and experiencing interventions ("Could you provide examples of good formal and informal institutional interventions in a support of victim of hate speech?").

Three experts were interviewed, two men and one woman, with complementary backgrounds. One from a NGO developing policy work and direct support to migrants and refugees; the second, an expert working in the field for different non-profit organisations for twenty years, namely with Roma communities in Portugal and also in Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) mainly supporting social inclusion and employment opportunities.; the third expert held several relevant positions in the areas of labour and social support in public institutions and is currently leading one public agency in the area of equality. All these interviews were held online, in the format of an open dialogue and using the recommended script.

To choose the victims of hate speech to interview, there were only two criteria, apart from their direct experiences with racism via hate speech: guaranteeing gender equality; diversity in age, gender, place of living (urban and rural), ethnicity, education. The topics clusters were hate speech contexts ("Could you describe your overall experience with hate speech?"; "Who are the most common offenders?"); Experiences of responding and coping strategies ("How do you usually react in such situations and immediately after them?"; "Which effects do you consider to be the worst one and why?") and Experiencing Interventions ("Which

formal and informal institutional support was the most helpful to you in your responding and coping? Why?"; "When you are targeted in a hate speech situation, what are usual reactions of witnesses and bystanders?").

The analysis of the victims' interviews was developed in English and summarized into a specific template. In each case, consent forms were signed and anonymisation guaranteed.

### 3.    Discussion

According to the Report on Racism, Xenophobia and Ethnic-Racial Discrimination in Portugal, prepared in 2019 by the Portuguese Parliament, Portugal, like all societies, has a cultural and social matrix that assumes diverse behaviours towards ethnic-racial minorities [4].

Regardless of a legal framework assumedly egalitarian for all citizens - the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CRP) states in article 13, n. 1: "All citizens have the same social dignity and are equal before the law" and n. 2: "No one can be privileged , beneficiary, impaired, deprived of any right or exempt from any duty on grounds of ancestry, sex, race, language, territory of origin, religion, political or ideological convictions, education, economic situation or social condition", - the country's organization and interaction still hold ethnocentric behaviours. For historical reasons, the Portuguese society and its institutions have been constantly confronted with difference, as well as with ethnic-racial and cultural diversity [5].

In recent years, namely since 2017, there were several events in Portugal that drew attention to the phenomenon of hate speech and that included it in the national political agenda. Namely, the attacks on the Roma community and the incitement to hatred in Moura; the beating by the security guards of the Urban Beach nightclub of a young Black man, for alleged racist reasons; the trial of several officers of the Alfragide police station on suspicion of detention, insults and assault of a young Black men in Amadora; the beating by a security guard of a young Colombian girl in Porto, among others. More recently, in 2020 the actor Bruno Candé was shot dead in the middle of the street in Moscavide, by a man in his 80s in an allegedly racially motivated crime.

In 2018, the report on Portugal of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a Council of Europe independent expert body, already warned of the existence of "hundreds of messages charged with hate, particularly in the forums of extreme right groups on the Internet", aiming at and negatively representing "especially Roma, Black, Muslim and LGBTQ+ people" [6]. The same report, despite recognizing the presence of racism and hate speech in the public sphere, noted "with satisfaction" that Portugal politicians and other public figures, in general, did not make racist, homophobic or transphobic comments [6].

The 2019 Annual Internal Security Report, which analyses crime statistics in Portugal, already reports the reorganization and recycling of the far-right's discourse, recruiting elements from social fringes that were normally not accessed [7].

In the space of one year however, the country that was considered an exception to the growth of the far right in Europe was faced with events that had never been seen before – from the suggestion of an elected deputy (André Ventura) that another elected deputy (Joacine Katar Moreira) should be "returned to her country of origin" [8] until the escalation of threats against anti-racist and anti-fascist leaders.

The hate speech became even more preponderant in the political agenda of nationalist parties during the COVID19 pandemic, that used it as an approach, mainly aimed at Roma people and citizens living in deprived neighbourhoods, to collect votes during this period of social and financial instability, due to the confinement and containment measures. One relevant

expression stated by the leader of one of these parties was: "minorities only want rights and not duties" [9].

Unfortunately, this same trend of increasing hate and intolerance is European, as stated in the 2019 report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI): "…the simplistic, confrontational, and often non-factual style of debate in online fora and social media leads to increased polarisation and inability to have a nuanced exchange of views in which different opinions are expressed in a respectful manner" [10].

In what concerns the regulatory framework, the Portuguese Penal Code, in its art 240 "Discrimination and incitement to hatred and violence", states that:

1 - Who: (a) to establish or set up an organisation or develop organised propaganda activities that incite discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability, or which encourage it; or (b) participate in the organisation or activities referred to in the preceding subparagraph or provide assistance to them, including their financing; is punished with imprisonment from 1 to 8 years.

In the second article, the Portuguese Penal Code states that:

2 - Who, publicly, by any means intended for dissemination, in particular through the apology, denial or gross trivialization of crimes of genocide, war or against peace and humanity: (a) provoke acts of violence against a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability; (b) defame or revile a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability; (c) threatening a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability; or (d) incite violence or hatred against a person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical or mental disability; is punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years.

Hate crime and hate speech are thus approached in the Portuguese legal framework, and besides the transcribed articles above, it is also relevant to mention Article 132, number 2 f), that defines as an aggravating circumstance the murder of qualified hatred, including with regard to sexual orientation: "be determined by racial, religious, political or racial hatred or generated by the colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim".

Despite the Portuguese regulations already predict the above-mentioned offenses, still civil society actors demand for more. For example, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) argues that the "hate crime" should be stated as such in the Portuguese law, stating that it is a reality that needs to be "uncovered" because it happens and the victims do not even know. "It is time to improve the legislative framework and send a very clear message of non-permission and combat. For this there must be a crime called 'hate crime', a new crime," said APAV President João Lázaro [11].

In Portugal, official data on hate speech is sparse. According to the above-mentioned ERCI report on Portugal, the justice system only produces hate speech statistics if more than three cases are registered each year, a threshold that has never been exceeded in the previous five years. The statistics published by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) only contain data for 2014, when the police registered 21 cases, including cases of hate speech and discrimination. For offenses other than racial discrimination (Article 240 Penal

Code), the police does not record a possible racist, homophobic or transphobic motivation (Article 240 Penal Code).

In 2017, the Portuguese legislation was amended in order to strengthen it against hate crimes and a new law against discrimination was approved introducing the reversal of the burden of proof in cases of discrimination for reasons of racial or ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, ancestry and place of origin (see Law n. ° 94/2017, 23 August 2017). In addition, Portugal ratified in 2017 the Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, which stipulates a general prohibition of discrimination. According to the *Memorandum on combating racism and violence against women in Portugal*, although this evolution has substantially improved the normative framework for combating racist hate crimes and racial discrimination, gaps persist in the Portuguese criminal law namely the lack of a provision in criminal law that stipulates that racist motivation constitutes an aggravating circumstance in all offenses [12].

The High Commission for Migration (ACM) and Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) do not publish specific statistics on hate speech, while civil society statistics and various studies indicate that the number of cases of hate speech is higher. In 2016, the NGO ILGA registered 179 complaints for homophobic and transphobic acts, of which 55.9% involved insults or threats and 10.5% verbal harassment [13]. Only 31% of victims reported the incidents to an authority; a considerable number of victims stated that they were not decently treated by the authorities when filing a complaint [13].

In a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 40% of LGBTQ+ people surveyed in Portugal responded that they discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (EU-28 average: 42%) but only 8% reported the incidents to the authorities (EU-28 average: 11%) [10]. Looking at other discriminated group, a different study of FRA indicates that 47% of Roma respondents felt discriminated based on their ethnic background in the 12 months before the survey (EU-28 average: 26%), however, only 5% had reported the situation (EU-28 average: 12%) [14].

The Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) aims to promote prevention and prohibition of racial discrimination and to sanction the commission of acts that result in the violation of fundamental rights or the refusal or conditioning of the exercise of economic, social or cultural rights by any person, on the grounds of belonging to a particular racial and ethnic origin, colour, nationality, ancestry or territory of origin, in accordance with the terms and limits provided for in Law No. 93/2017 of 23 August, which establishes the legal regime of prevention, prohibition and combating discrimination . In 2019 Annual Report, it's possible to see an increasing trend of complaints stemming from phenomena and manifestations of racial hatred, xenophobia and intolerance in the Portuguese society, often associated with media cases and events that, with social networks, reach a new dimension [15].

The main trends in ethnic-racial discrimination in Portugal include: 436 complaints were received by CICDR depending on whether they were sent, respectively, by other entities, by the victims, or by third parties, with an increase of around 26% compared to 2018, when 346 complaints were counted. Most complaints were sent to CICDR via email (39.7%). As in recent years, the first impetus for complaints came mostly from the victims themselves (54.5%), who often go directly to CICDR, but also through other entities. The expression that stands out most, as the basis for the origin of discrimination, is belonging to the "Roma ethnicity" with 19.3%, followed by the expressions "Black skin colour" (17.7%) and "Brazilian nationality" (17.0%). The Lisbon area registered the highest number of occurrences (28.0%). Situations carried through the media or internet maintain a growing trend (22.2%). As regards areas of discrimination, trade remains the one with the highest number of complaints (25.7%), followed

by situations on the internet or social media (11.7%). The vast majority of complaints was filed against the private sector (46.3%), while the public sector was in 16.7% of cases. Based on this classification by discrimination factor in the above-mentioned report and identified the main causes of the complaints presented, the following groups were defined as the object of analysis for the impact of racism, xenophobia and ethnic-racial discrimination: the Roma communities, Afro-descendants and the Brazilian community [15].

The National Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination has been launched in March, after been placed under public consultation. There were identified 10 priority areas for intervention: Governance, information and knowledge; Education and culture; University education; Work and employment; Housing; Health and social action; Justice, security and rights; Participation and representation; Sport; and Media and the digital. This plan shows a preoccupation of Government to take measures against racism and discrimination, based on four main principles: deconstruction of stereotypes; coordination, integrated governance and territorialisation; integrated intervention in the fight against inequalities; and Intersectionality. The above-mentioned plan contains measures like the Launch of a new National Study on Roma Communities, the development of Anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns, or the diversification of scholar curriculum to approach the historical presence of discriminated groups, discrimination and racism processes, historical colonialism and slavery processes [16].

From the interviews with experts collecting during the study, it was also highlighted that, besides the above-mentioned, transsexuality is being reported as one of the most usual situations for hate speech and discrimination, and that preventive actions will be needed in the near future.

Regarding the context of the victims and their perspectives, the interviews made confirm that, for historical, sociocultural and territorial reasons, the main affected people by hate speech are: 1) Roma communities; 2) Afro-descendants and the Brazilian community.

The history of the Roma Communities in Portugal dates back to the 15th century, with this minority having remained in the Iberian Peninsula since then, being today the only indigenous ethnic minority, both in Portugal and in Spain, although there is no legal recognition of this status [17]. They have a history of sociocultural practices different from the mainstream community, making the Roma population one of the most vulnerable groups to poverty and social exclusion and the target of multiple prejudices and stereotypes [17].

Concerning to the Afro-descendant community, their history is strongly linked to Portuguese colonialism, being today mostly made up of descendants of people from the former colonies or, more recently, from the PALOP – Portuguese Speaking African Countries. It should be noted that a high number of African descendants in Portugal are Portuguese, many of them born in Portugal, and many others having obtained Portuguese nationality, especially between 2007 and 2017, when about half a million people (449,691) acquired nationality due to the changes produced by the Organic Law 2/20062 [4].

In what regards the Brazilian community, they are immigrants from a country belonging to the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), with the language being one of the main reasons for the choice of Portugal as the European country of destination, as well as the fact that there is a deep historical relationship and a bilateral agreement of reciprocity in citizenship rights between the two countries. It is, today, the largest immigrant community in Portugal, accounting for 20.3% of its total, according to data from the Foreigners and Borders Service [18].

It is also worth to mention the upraising situations of hate crimes directed to LGBTQ+ people, namely transexual or transgender. The largest survey ever of the European Union's

LGBTQ+ community (with 93,079 respondents), conducted by FRA, concluded that 26% of LGBTQ+ people had been attacked or threatened with violence at home or elsewhere and this number increased to 35% if they were trans people [19]. The survey also shows that many cases of hate-motivated discrimination or violence happened just because the victim had been perceived as being LGBTQ+. In Portugal, the case of Gisberta, a transsexual woman murdered in the city of Porto in 2006 by a group of 14 young people, after three days of torture, raised the attention of the media and the law and many concerns to hate crimes perpetrated for gender identity reasons. The Portuguese society is again showing signs of an increased hate speech in this respect since sex change operations became more available in the country, also in the private sector.

In what concerns the effects of hate speech and hate crimes, some international studies point out to severe physical and psychological consequences [20], prolonged symptoms [21] and increased probability of symptoms such as higher levels of anxiety and nervousness; difficulties in concentrating; increased difficulty in falling asleep; anger; fear; decreased feeling of security, as well as feelings of lack of control [22]. Furthermore, victims are also at increased risk of developing mental disorders, such as depression [22], anxiety disorders [23] and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [24]. The tendency for the recovery process to be longer for these victims is also highlighted when compared to victims of offenses of the same nature but not motivated by hatred or prejudice.

From the expert interviews, it is recognised that there is little knowledge of what hate crime is and the legislation needs improvements. For example, harassment conditions should be altered, autonomising it as a crime and extending denunciation beyond 6 months. One of the experts proposed that hate speech consists on the injury of a legal good for reasons of racial hatred, and that hate crime occurs by harming someone because he or she is part of a particular group. In hate speech there is an incentive to violence against people who are part of a specific group. In principle, hate speech must be specific enough to be injurious, for example, when there is a public provocation through specific media that encourages violence. If it results in assault, it will be considered an aggravated crime.

There is not enough data in Portugal related to ethnical aspects and thus it is difficult to correctly assess the dimension of hate speech and hate crimes. Very recently, there was a national census but ethnicity was deliberately not included in the questions. Even if this decision was taken considering high ethical reasons, it ends up hindering an adequate panorama of the Portuguese reality, needed for the policy decisions in this area, as one of the experts explained.

Also according to one of the experts, there is a nuance of a "nice racism of differentiation" – sociologically, the Portuguese society recognizes that the African Black Portuguese work and make sacrifices; there is the myth of the single mother, the man who works with no contract. There is secondarisation, but Black Africans are not segregated. In the case of the Roma people, there is a "gypsophobia", a security discourse of round truths that became absolute truths. In this racism of segregation, it is said that Roma people do not want to work, integrate, etc… they only steal, they live from selling drugs, they are incapable. It is thus necessary to deepen the distinction between prejudice, racism and discrimination to understand how to act.

One of interviewed experts highlights that Roma communities in the Iberian Peninsula are very different of the Hungarian or Romanian groups, especially concerning number,

representativeness, literacy and economic activities. Because of that, most of the European policy recommendations don't fit to the needs of this particular group in Portugal.

In what concerns migrants and refugees, one of the experts referred that they often suffer from racial injury, namely through basic insults that he said are common knowledge of the population. According to the same expert there is a racial hierarchy of the prejudice of the Portuguese in relation to certain people; for example, when talking to landlords or employers he realizes that there is a hierarchy by which there is more preference to make a housing or employment contract. There is possibly more prejudice against African Black and people from the Middle East, followed by the population of China, Bangladesh, or other Asian people, finishing with Latin America and people from Eastern Europe as the ones who generate the least prejudice among the Portuguese. In the area of housing, landlords have the idea that emigrants or refugees will mistreat their homes or destroy them and that they will possibly put more people to live in them than stipulated in the contract. Also, the specialist considers that there is little social housing in Portugal and that there is still a lot of discrimination in its attribution.

According to one other expert, creating separated classes in schools under the "excuse" of the existence of special needs, receive different theft and robbery charges, and different results for requests of social support by beneficiaries of social income are some usual discriminatory situations.

In relation to the impact that statements in the media and politicians have on the dissemination of hate speech situations, interviewees consider that these legitimize even more the value of hate speech. Nowadays politicians use social networks, such as Twitter, to instigate hate speech, but even in prime-time television there is gratuitous hate speech. There are television shows where it is "normal" to insult, or bully. These situations make the population lose track of what they should or should not do.

In the short and medium term, according to one of the experts' interview, victims feel humiliation, sadness, and demotivation. The emigrants have no residence, and they no longer believe they can find a home. They have reactions of retreat, but they do not externalize the revolt they may feel. He further considers that victims should be informed that when they suffer hate speech, racism or hate crime, if they have witnesses, these are obliged to go to court to testify.

When asked about specific places where hate speech tends to happened, respondents mostly agree that there is no specific place for it. They consider that it can happen anywhere, at any time and do not agree that there are specific offenders, with a specific sex or specific age groups. It was common in the discourse of all the victims to refer a specific new political party that publicly assume hate speech without any kind of punishment and think that this is a very worrying starting point to influence the population to the practice of hate speech.

About the responses directed to hate speech victims, one of the experts recommends the victims to go to the police or to entities such as APAV - Portuguese Association of Victim Support, not having much feedback of the long-term results. In the case of witnesses of hate speech or hate crime, the expert considers that those who witness the situations should report to the police, support the victim and be a witness.

Digitization brings opportunities that could be seized for inclusion opportunities, for example by creating spaces for dialogue or even work solutions (e-commerce). Also new public

housing policies should be designed to stimulate the interconnection between different people, not creating minorities niches.

The different experts agree that education around this theme should begin in school and that there should be more institutional publicity to sustain the theme of non-discrimination. Media often highlight discrimination and this can promote polarisation of opinions and extremes; thus communication is one area where improvements are needed.

Regarding responses and coping strategies, opinions are divided into two different perspectives. On the one hand, there are victims who think the only option is to ignore hate speech. On the other hand, there are victims who think they should intervene in an educational way, trying to combat hate speech. None of the people interviewed think violence is the way to follow, yet at least one must make some effort to calm down when attacked by offenders. After being victims of hate speech, respondents revealed different reactions in the short-term such as sadness, anger, disappointment, become more introspective, unwillingness to relate to other people. After a situation, they often want to return to their countries and do not because their country is in fragile economic and social situation and because they do not want to give up the search for a better life. One of the most pointed issues for this purpose in the long term is the fear that these situations will be repeated with their children or with future offspring.

Regarding attacks at work, one of the women reported situations where people have witnessed hate speech and defended her. People who watch these situations often tell young people that they are poorly educated and that they should be educated to not treat people badly. She feels good when people defend her.

About the experience with support institutions, most victims have no experience and never reported any cases, however they think that there is a lack of structures that support people who suffer from hate speech and that support them psychologically in these situations, realizing how to deal with them. Some of the victims were part of university groups of support, such as groups of students (Angolans or Guineans) who helped to mutually support people who went through the same issues. Three of the victims turned to organisations that supported them only in acquiring documents and dealing with legal issues, such as the case of associations of Ukrainians in Portugal. These organisations help Ukrainians to legalize and to integrate. One of the victims reported harassment situations in job interviews. She reported it to the Employment Centre because it was the entity that referred her to the interview. The Employment Centre did nothing about the situations that happened and just referred her to other job offers.

## 4.    Conclusion

With view to the increasing problems caused by racism and hate speech, its threatening potential to ethnical minorities and its lingering influence in everyday life of all people in Europe, it is of urgent necessity to develop interventions that raise the awareness for this phenomenon, strengthening the cooperation with policymakers, associations and lobby-groups. And to do so, it is also necessary to seriously consider the perspectives of people that experience discrimination and the contribution that their views bring. As fast-paced globalization processes keep on changing societies all over the world and creating spheres where different lifestyles, ethnicities, genders, etc. come together, the values of tolerance, solidarity and equality will gain importance everywhere and must be reinforced as European values.

Regarding future actions, it is relevant to refer the opinion of Pedro Neto, Director of Amnesty International Portugal, when stating that the greatest human rights challenges today are the fight against discrimination and the lack of economic rights. On the

one hand, he said, the discrimination against women, refugees, LGBTQ+ communities and other races; and on the other, the lack of economic rights for a fringe of the population, such as decent housing and salaries [11]. In fact, economic deprivation, unemployment, teleworking, accentuate discrimination. Interventions should be focused on preventing and solving these underlying issues.

But education has a key role when it comes to fight against discrimination and hate speech. In fact, civic education can unwrap fundamental differences of opinion and promote contradictions and critical thinking; can raise awareness of the perception of social discourses and its impact on personal attitudes and actions; can implement a conscious approach that promotes emphatic and critical thinking, create an understanding for marginalized positions, and strengthens the capability to reflect one's attitudes.

Knowledge about inequality, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination as well as familiarity with strategies against these phenomena opens up the opportunity to work for more equality, democracy, participation and social inclusion.

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