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Press release | 18.01.2024

MEPs calls for hate speech and hate crimes to be criminalised across the EU

Today, Members of the European Parliament voted in favour of adding hate crimes and hate speech to the list of EU crimes. The EU list of crimes in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union consists of offences that are considered particularly serious and have a cross-border element. The Parliament calls on the Council to add serious forms of hate speech and hate crimes to the list. The EU already criminalises hate crimes based on race, skin colour, religion, nationality and ethnic origin. The expanded criminalisation the European Parliament calls for would mean it covers hate crimes based on gender, sexual orientation, age and disability as well.

Alice Bah Kuhnke MEP, Member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur, comments:

"The situation is extremely serious. Hate leads to violence and death, that is a fact. Therefore, in order to defend our open and democratic society, our legislation must be ambitious. Violence against LGBTI people in Europe during the year 2022 was more severe and serious than for the past 10 years. In many cases, the violence was fatal. LGBTI people in the EU deserve to live openly and freely and without fear. They deserve strong protection against threats and hatred. Today this protection is far too weak."

“In addition, on the urging of the Greens/EFA Group, this report also calls for the protection of the Sami people, the only indigenous people in Europe. It is a sad fact that the knowledge about the Sami people, and their vulnerability, is very low in the EU and also among my fellow colleagues in the European Parliament. We have long called for stronger support and protection of the Sami, and we will continue to do so.”

More:

In December 2021, the European Commission announced it intended to initiate the process of adding hate crime and hate speech to the list of EU offences, which would lay the groundwork for more effective action against hate crime and hate speech across the EU. The proposal now requires a unanimous decision by the Council, which has so far failed to reach an agreement.

A decision to criminalise hate crimes and hate speech at EU level would mean adding them to the so-called EU list of crimes in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The list consists of offences that are considered particularly serious and have a cross-border element. Once an offence has been added to the list, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers have the power to adopt minimum rules on the definition of offences and penalties.

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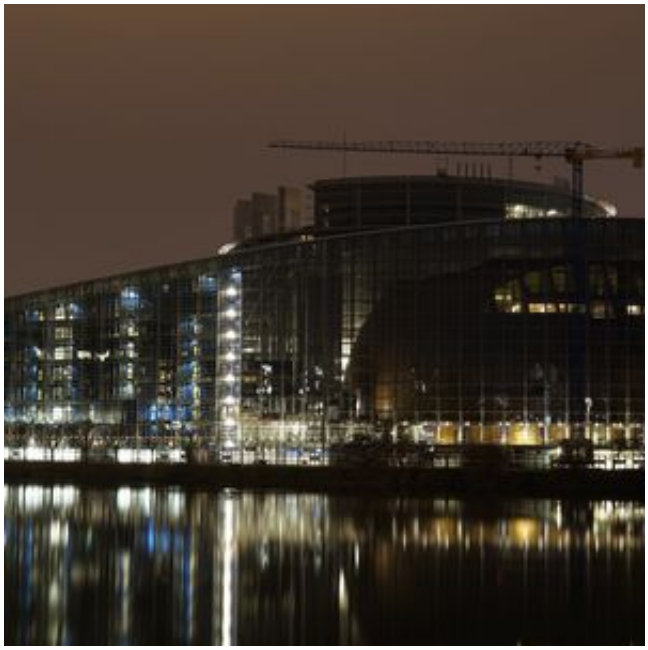

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