HATE, EUROSCEPTICISM, CITIZENSHIP:
THE YOUTH CONNECTION

COMPARATIVE REPORT
ON LATVIA, LITHUANIA, ESTONIA, CROATIA, BULGARIA,
AND ROMANIA

ANNA KRASTEVA
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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

"I feel that I can change the world," (Krasteva et al 2019: 213) a volunteer said. Such unqualified confidence seems paradoxical: how can volunteer work with refugee children – rendered invisible in the public space by the hegemonic securitarian and anti-refugee discourses – change society, politics, "the world"? However, it deftly captures civic activism and its transformative power. "To act ... means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word archein, 'to begin,' 'to lead,' and eventually 'to rule,' indicates), to set something into motion ... Because they are initium, newcomers and beginners ... take initiative, are prompted into action. … This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself" (Arendt 1998: 177). For Hannah Arendt, acting blends together agency, initiative, beginning, change – of the world and of the active Self. These introductory remarks announce three of the conceptual accents in the study – agency, youth, and a touch of utopianism in activism.

This study had a threefold objective:
- To analyse hate discourses and practices in terms of definitions, European and national standards, targets, actors, anti-discrimination policies, and good practices.
- To study the emergence and manifestations of Euroscepticism in countries with predominantly Eurooptimistic and Eurorealistic sentiments.
- To examine civic activism as a key factor in countering hate discourses and practices and in promoting the European values of respect for difference, liberty, equality, and human dignity.

These objectives were common to the whole project's "Active European Citizens Against Hate Speech" study and they were implemented in all national reports. This consolidated report also introduces a comparative perspective that will highlight the general trends as well as the specificities and differences regarding hate, Euroscepticism, and citizenship in two geopolitical regions and six countries, namely three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – and three Balkan states – Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania.

The conceptual cluster of the study is structured around three poles: hate, Euroscepticism, and citizenship. At the centre of this conceptual triangle are youth, and the political context is thematised through two types of crises – real and politically constructed (Krasteva 2017).

Conceptual cluster of the study
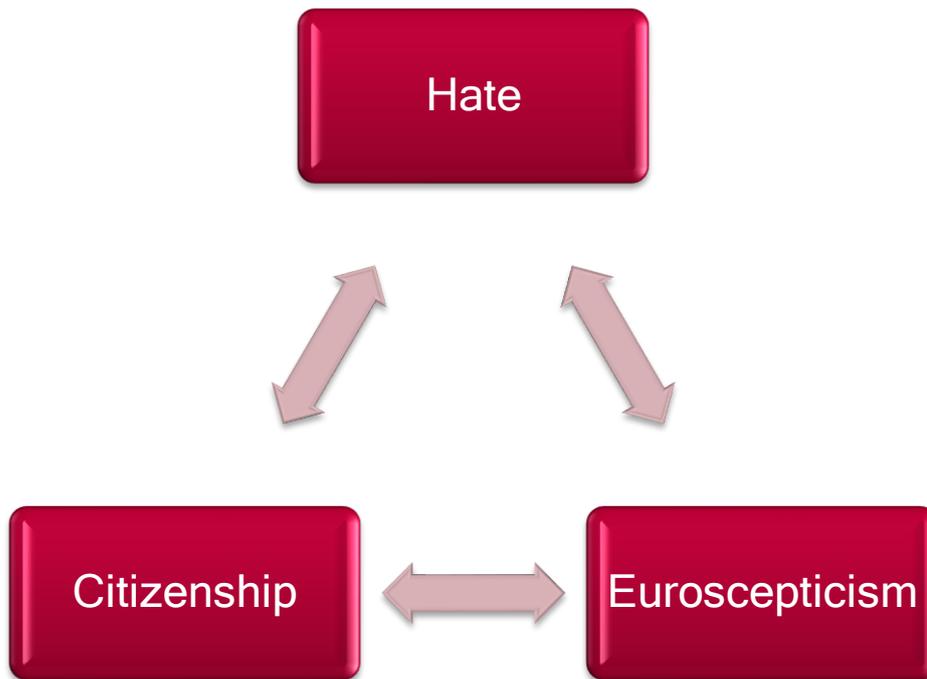
The objective of this report is twofold: to analyse in a comparative perspective the study on trends in hate and Euroscepticism in three Baltic and three Balkan states, but also to conceptualise and theorise them in an innovative way so as to transform the report into a reflection, the results into insights, and the desk and field research into theorisation.

Key to this study is the relationship between social sciences and social change, the ability of research to impact change. Herein lies a significant theoretical and social risk – that research reinforces negative phenomena, reifies them through the theoretical gaze directed at them. The three poles in the conceptual cluster of the study have a specific relationship to reification and impact on social change.

Concepts vs reification

Hate	Euroscepticism	Citizenship
Countering	Not to reify	Reify/Boost
Reifying? Paradoxical example of Roma promoting anti-Roma hate	Analysis of Eurorealism vs Eurscepticism	Concept Practice (activism)
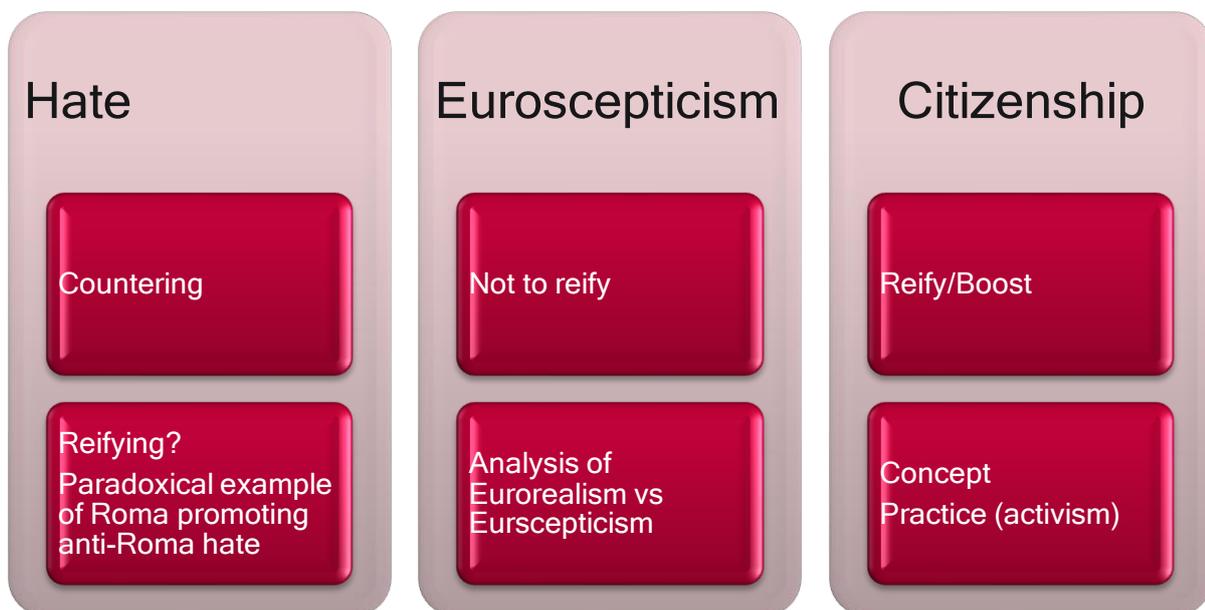
The aim of the analyses of hate is to counter the discrimination and symbolic violence implicit to hate discourses and actions. We identified an ambiguous civic practice with contradictory results. The Bulgarian report introduces us to the initiative of the Integro Association, which invited ten Roma students from various Bulgarian universities, who were doing a monitoring on hate speech in electronic media, to conduct an online experiment.[1] They all posted hate speech comments on Facebook targeted at the Roma population in order to analyse their effect. As a result, all of the statuses received many likes and support. There were only a few anti-hate speech comments. In addition, some of the Roma students got unfriended because of their obnoxious statuses. The Integro Association went on to organise training courses for young people on

[1] Integro Association. Roma students conduct social experiment on Facebook on hate speech (in Bulgarian). 30 April 2015.

identifying and reporting hate speech on social and online media.[2] The NGO's goals are to counter hate speech, but the experiment described above is more of an ambiguous practice that rather works in the opposite direction and reinforces hate. This example is an exception, but it clearly illustrates the civic responsibility of activists and analysts.

With regard to Euroscepticism, the aim of the analysis is not to reify it. This aim is achieved by a balanced evaluation of Euroscepticism through a comparison with Eurooptimism and Eurorealism. The opposite aim is pursued with regard to citizenship, which is promoted by the study both as a concept and practice of civic activism.

Types of definitions

Hate	Euroscepticism	Citizenship
Legal definition	Academic definition	Academic definition
EU & national standards	"Moving target concept" (Nicholas Startin)	New meaning of an old concept

Key concepts are also distinguished in terms of the type of definitions. Hate has legal definitions in authoritative European and national documents. Some of the reports have found insufficient definitions in the relevant national legislation. Euroscepticism is not a legal but an academic concept that is relatively new, not sufficiently crystallised - Nicholas Startin defines it as a "moving target concept". The specificity of citizenship is that this concept has a long history as belonging to the state, but the analysis adopts the relatively new understanding of citizenship as activism and participation.

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[2] Integro Association. Promising beginning of internship programme on countering online hate speech (in Bulgarian). 5 February 2021.

METHODOLOGY

Communicative Dialogical Approach

At the centre of the methodological and theoretical design of the project is the communicative dialogical approach. It is defined as informing real social transformation through research. I call it "action research +" because it builds on the latter and further develops the interactionist perspective: social reality is constructed in communicative ways through social interaction. It is based on a dialogical relation among the researchers and the social actors:

- Researchers – contribution to academic knowledge;
- Social actors – interpretations from the common sense of their lifeworlds (Gomez et al 2011).

The communicative dialogical approach was applied in different stages and elements of the project – from the definition of key concepts to the interpretation of the empirical material to the way our project network functioned. We started in a classic way, by looking at the major academic and policy definitions of the key concepts. During the empirical study, we examined how these concepts are understood by the various actors – researchers, on the one hand, and vulnerable groups, civic activists, policy makers, hate actors, on the other. The study examines these in a triple comparative perspective:

- the definitions adopted by national policies and scholars vs European policy and academic definitions;
- the various interpretations within one group – e.g., scholars or activists;
- the differences in interpretations among the various groups – vulnerable groups vs policy makers; activists vs extremists; policy makers vs scholars, etc.

The project deals with polarised issues and identities, such as hate, on the one hand, and civic activism countering hate, on the other. Research has demonstrated polarised images: civic activists consider their opponents extremists and hate-actors, while the latter consider themselves nationalists and/or patriots. The communicative dialogical approach facilitates the understanding and explanation of such divergent images.

Positioning the Project: Who and How

The positioning of the project is defined by the key questions of Who (actors of research and activism), Against Whom (targets), What (outcomes), Where (intercultural and civic spaces), How (innovative practices).

Who

The major partners for the co-creation of knowledge and for dissemination and communication of the project results are:
• Civil society organisations
• Activists and volunteers
• Policy makers
• Local authorities

Against Whom

The target groups comprise a variety of vulnerable groups whose weight may vary from country to country and from one historical and socio-political context to another:
• Minorities
• Migrants, refugees
• LGBTQIA+
• Other vulnerable groups

What

The main outcomes that will enhance the impact of the research:
• Effective practices for countering hate
• Promoting European values

Where

What are the social, inter/cultural and civic spaces for the dissemination and communication of the project:
• schools, universities
• civic forums
• art events

How

Brokering knowledge provides information on good and innovative practices tailored to the specificities of the various target groups, countries and contexts.

Multimethod

The research is based on a complex methodology, combining three main methods: desk research, survey, and interviews.

Desk research is the main method of the whole project, and it was applied to analyse the definitions, legislation, policies, practices, actors, and trends regarding the three phenomena under study: hate, Euroscepticism, and civic activism.

The survey method was applied to the youth target group and aimed to produce data on their experience with hate speech. The survey covered young people aged 16 to 25 and was conducted in the period between June and August 2021.

Number of respondents in the survey per country

	Bulgaria	Croatia	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Romania	Total
Number of respondents	82	100	144	131	189	202	**848**

The table above illustrates the number of respondents per country. A total of 848 young people participated in the survey in the six countries under research. Interviews is the third method, which complements the panoramic picture from the survey with more in-depth information about the mechanisms of impact of hate, as well as about policies and practices of prevention. Five to seven interviews per country were conducted with important stakeholders in the field of hate speech and hate crimes, anti-discrimination, prevention, civic activism

countering hate, as well as with young people, victims of hate speech and harassment (Roma, LGBTQIA+, etc.).

The complex methodology allowed identifying the key trends of the state of art in the three fields under study, as well as contributing to the analysis and understanding of hate and activism through the new information provided by the empirical survey.

1. HATE

1.1 Universality and Relevance of Hate Speech

"Hate speech is not a new phenomenon. For centuries, people have been using expression that maligns individuals or groups based on their fixed identity characteristics to maintain their preferred position in a social hierarchy" (Carlson 2021: 147). "Unfortunately, no culture, country, or form of communication is immune from the existence or influence of hate speech" (Carlson 2021: 1). I begin with this diagnosis to highlight the universal nature of the phenomenon of hate speech as its first characteristic.

The second characteristic is the persistence of hate speech and even an upward trend in several countries in recent years. Croatia is a case in point. According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "the freedom of expression in Croatia is negatively affected by the occurrence of hate speech in public discourse, especially racist hate speech directed against Serbs, LGBTQIA+ people and Roma" (ECRI Report on Croatia 2018 in Report on Croatia). Hate speech is a permanently established phenomenon in the Bulgarian political and media landscape. Media expert Georgi Lozanov has called 2015, the year the migrant crisis began, "the year of hate" (Report on Bulgaria). The ECRI diagnosis is also categorical and severe: "racist and intolerant speech in political discourse continues to be a serious problem in Bulgaria and the situation is worsening" (Report on Bulgaria).

The traumatising effect of hate speech has a lasting negative impact on individual victims, and entire groups and communities can be subject to dehumanisation:

> Whether online or in person, people wield language as a weapon to attack one another's identities, reaffirming their own perceived position of dominance and solidifying their feelings of belonging to a given social group. The impact of this expression is detrimental, both to the individuals targeted and to the societies that condone its use. Hate speech traumatizes its victims and negatively impacts their self-worth; it silences political participation and distorts public discourse. Hate speech can also

be used as a tool to dehumanize groups, normalizing violence against them by amplifying egregious claims through mass media. (Carlson 2021: 1-2)

The present study does not have the ambitious goal of examining hate speech across the world; it has the more specific goal of analysing its specificities in a comparative perspective in two regions of Eastern Europe, the Baltic and the Balkan regions. The study has a complex approach and analyses both the legislative regulation and the actors of hate speech, as well as the public spaces and causes of these negative phenomena.

1.2 Defining Hate

"Hate speech is an expansive and contested term. scholars don't agree on what hate speech is, or is not" (Carlson 2021: 3). Viera Pejchal also highlights the polysemy of the term:

"The term 'hate speech' has been widely used by scholars, the public and the media in referring to different legal, political and social concepts. This complex inquiry cannot be undertaken without answering a non-exhaustive number of fundamental questions such as: What is hate speech? Is hate speech regulation linked to the protection of certain values in democratic societies? How do hate speech regulation and democracy relate to each other? Is the international understanding of hate speech different from that which exists in the post-communist context? … How and why hate speech is understood within the framework of extremism in these countries?" (Pejchal 2020: 3-4).

European democracy is conceived "as a system that ensures freedom, equality, plurality of ideas but also the safeguard of the rights of others, mainly members of minorities and, importantly, as a system protecting itself from the enemies of democracy. Hate speech has been understood as anti-democratic speech that endangers public order, security, freedom and equality of members of society. In this context, hate speech, extremist and anti-democratic speech became synonyms" (Pejchal 2020: 284).

There is no universally agreed definition of hate speech. Arriving at a universally accepted definition of hate would be an undeniable scientific achievement, but focusing on conceptualisation can distract from prevention and counteraction (Pejchal 2020: 28). For the purposes of this study, we have accepted Caitlin Ring Carlson's definition as balanced and inclusive of multiple characteristics that are targets of hate:

> Broadly, hate speech should be defined as expression that seeks to malign an individual for their immutable characteristics, such as their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or disability. I use the term "expression" because hate speech includes not only spoken words, but also symbols and images that degrade people for the qualities they're born with. (Carlson 2021: 4)

Viera Pejchal has elaborated a "three-prong theory of three models of hate speech[:] ... hate speech as incitement to violence, hate speech as incitement to discrimination and hate speech as incitement to hatred" (Pejchal 2020: 282).

1.3 Regulating Hate

Two different but complementary approaches are applied in strategies and practices countering hate, the first inspired by the model of liberal democracy, the second by militant democracy: "The liberal approach would imply counter-speech of hate speech. … The militant approach implies the use of laws that limit the exercise of freedom of expression, association and assembly that are necessary for a democratic society to protect certain values" (Pejchal 2020: 288).

Hate speech regulation is extremely complex because it has to reconcile two types of rights that are often in conflict: the right to free speech as a cornerstone of democracy, and the rights of minorities:

Hate speech regulation implies regulation of oftentimes conflicting fundamental rights, in particular, the right to free speech and rights of minorities. Democracies have to balance these rights to ensure everybody enjoys them and, at the same time, allow dissident and challenging opinions to be heard. (Pejchal 2020: 7)

Hate speech regulation faces severe challenges because it is not based on a single definition but on a multiplicity of different situations: the European Court of Human Rights "does not define hate speech. The concept of hate speech embraces a multiplicity of situations in its case law" (Pejchal 2020: 134).

UN
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights "set the benchmark for values that a democratic society should protect even at the expense of limiting other rights, including free speech. These were: public order from violence, equality from discrimination, and human dignity from hateful attacks" (Pejchal 2020: 283-284).

Council of Europe
The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a unique human rights monitoring body which specialises in questions related to the fight against racism, discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic/national origin, colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance in Europe. The ECRI was set up by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe in 1993 and became operational in 1994. Its more than a quarter-century-long experience in combating racism and intolerance shows persistent problems in European societies that require renewed efforts to be overcome.[3]

European Union
To address the problem of hate speech specifically, in 2008 the EU adopted the Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law. The EU calls out specific conduct as hate speech, including:
- public incitement to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined on the basis of race, color, descent, religion or belief, or national or ethnic origin;
- the above-mentioned offense when carried out by the public dissemination or distribution of tracts, pictures, or other material;
- publicly condoning, denying, or grossly trivializing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes when the conduct is carried

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[3] About ECRI European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

out in a manner likely to incite violence or hatred against such a group or a member of such a group;

- instigating, aiding, or abetting in the commission of the above offenses is also punishable. (Carlson 2021: 43-44)

Each of these actions is punishable by effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties and a term of imprisonment up to a maximum of at least one year (Carlson 2021: 44). Thus, in the European Union the legislative framework is well-elaborated, but there is very scarce case law relevant to any hate speech category: the European Court of Justice has adopted a number of non-discrimination cases but, to date, has not dealt with a clear hate speech case (Pejchal 2020: 153).

Baltic and Balkan States

Elaboration of legislation on hate speech was accelerated by EU integration, but there is still a scarcity of case law in the six Baltic and Balkan states under research. Hate speech regulation in them is at different levels.

In some countries, hate speech regulation is at a high level and is provided for both by the Constitution and by specific laws. The most characteristic example is Lithuania: "The Lithuanian Constitution explicitly provides for the ban on hate speech. Paragraph 4 of Article 25 of the Constitution states that 'freedom to express convictions and to impart information shall be incompatible with criminal actions - incitement of national, racial, religious, or social hatred, violence and discrimination, with slander and disinformation'" (Report on Lithuania). Another positive aspect of the Lithuanian case is the regulation of hate speech by specific laws, such as the Law on Provision of Information to the Public, which prohibits the spread of hate speech through public information channels. Thirdly, we should note the severity of the relevant provisions, which do not only prohibit but also criminalise hate speech as a crime against all persons' equality before the law. Article 170 (2) of the Criminal Code provides that "a person who publicly ridicules, expresses contempt for, urges hatred of or incites discrimination against a group of persons or a person belonging thereto on grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, nationality, language, descent, social status, religion, convictions or views shall be punished by a fine or by restriction of liberty or by arrest or by a custodial sentence for a term of up to two years" (Report on Lithuania).

Countries like Latvia had relatively well-developed legislation:
"The prohibition of hate speech or incitement to hatred, is included in a number of legal acts providing for criminal or administrative punishment. The Criminal Law criminalises public calls to genocide (Article 71.1.) and public glorification, denial or gross trivialisation of crimes against humanity or genocide (Article 74.1). Article 78 of the Criminal Law explicitly criminalises acts aimed at the incitement to hatred based on such features as race, ethnicity, nationality and religion. Since 2014, Article 150 criminalises incitement to social hatred and enmity which explicitly covers such features as gender, age and disability of a person, while other protected features such as sexual orientation can be subsumed under the clause of 'other characteristics'" (Report on Latvia).

There are significant deficits in the regulation of hate speech in other countries. Estonia is quite exceptional among other EU countries as it has not yet criminalised nor provided a legal framework to protect the public against hate speech and hate crimes (Report on Estonia). The Estonian Penal Code does not include hate crime as a specific type of crime, nor bias motive as an aggravating circumstance, but the Penal Code (Estonian Parliament 2001) includes a provision on "incitement to hatred" in Paragraph 151 that could be considered as the legal definition of hate speech in Estonia (Report on Estonia). These deficits are not accidental, nor can they be regarded as inevitable in the early stages of hate speech regulation; some are systemic and persistent due to the strong influence of conservative political actors. A typical example is the Conservative People's Party of Estonia: "In 2021, a bill amending the Media Services Act reached the Estonian Parliament, including a new provision which prohibits the promoting of violence or hatred based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, nationality, economic status, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation or citizenship, when providing media services (Committee on Culture 2021). However, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) obstructed the passing of the bill because, in their opinion, the provisions regarding hate speech in the bill would start to restrict freedom of speech" (Report on Estonia).

Other noteworthy deficits include the lack of a definition, or a too narrow definition, of hate speech in national legislations. Estonia and Romania have been criticised for having a too narrow definition of hate speech in their laws. Since 2020, both countries have been subjected to the European

Commission's infringement proceedings (Report on Romania). The EC sent a formal notice to the Estonian government to fully and accurately transpose the Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law. It stated that Estonia has failed to transpose criminalisation of specific forms of hate speech, namely public condoning, denying or gross trivialisation of international crimes and the Holocaust, when such conduct aims at inciting violence or hatred. Additionally, it was noted that Estonia has not correctly criminalised hate speech, omitting the criminalisation of public incitement to violence or hatred when directed at groups, and has not provided for adequate penalties (Report on Estonia). The legal regulation of hate speech in Croatia is fragmented through a number of provisions that criminalise some forms of its manifestation, but none of these provisions refer to the term "hate speech" as such. There is also no universally agreed definition of hate speech, but the interpretations and understanding of the term closely follow the established European notions and standards (Report on Croatia).

Another deficit is the lack of protection for some groups, such as LGBTQIA+ in Estonia: "The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, expressed concerns about inadequate responses to homophobic and transphobic crime and hate speech. He recommended that sexual orientation and gender identity be explicitly included among the prohibited grounds concerning discrimination and encouraged the application of the existing legal framework with full consideration for the protection needs of LGBTQIA+ persons" (Report on Estonia).

Criticism from national and international institutions and organisations has helped to improve legislation. For example, the Romanian Constitutional Court accepted objections formulated by the Presidency of Romania, according to which "inciting the public, by any means, to violence, hatred or discrimination against a category of persons or against a person on the grounds that s/he belongs to a certain category of persons is punishable by imprisonment from six months to three years" is a vague formulation and can be easily misinterpreted and is an infringement of both the Romanian Constitution and Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Report on Romania).

There is no systemic and coherent data collection on hate speech and hate-motivated violence in Romania. Romania does not administratively collect

case-related data on hate crimes, including hate speech, disaggregated by grounds of discrimination, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The ECRI has recommended that the authorities put in place a precise and data-driven system "to collect data and produce statistics offering an integrated and consistent view of cases of racist and homo/transphobic hate speech and hate crime brought to the attention of the police and pursued through the courts and make this data available to the public" (Report on Romania).[4]

In Croatia, there is no disaggregated data showing hate crimes by different bias grounds. Statistics on hate crime, including misdemeanour offences, are not published in any adequate form that can serve for analysis of this type of violence. Croatia lacks systematic policies related to the monitoring of hate speech, which leads to lack of institutional knowledge and procedures for combating hate speech. This contributes to the problem of relativisation and data manipulation. Underreporting is also a problem in Croatia (Report on Croatia).

After analysing definitions and regulations, I will move on to the more dynamic aspect of hate speech, which I will examine in the quadruple perspective of actors, targets, public spaces, and reasons.

Who	• Actors
Whom	• Targets
Where	• Public spaces
Why	Reasons
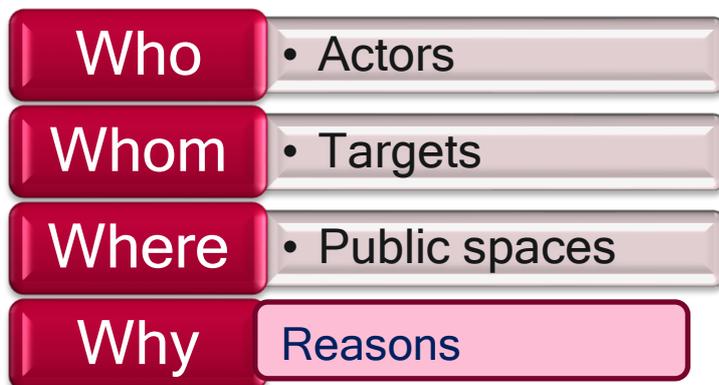
Youth are the central focus of the analysis of agency. Among the many public spaces of hate speech, the focus is on the latest and most relevant to youth agency: the digital agora.

[4] European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. ECRI Report on Romania (fifth monitoring cycle), adopted on 3 April 2019, ECRI, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 10.

1.4 Who. The Actors: The Youth Connection

"*We don't need your youth policy.*
Youth IS our policy."
Identitarians, France

The slogan of the French Identitarians vividly illustrates the systematic affinity between the far right and youth. Youth are both enthusiastic supporters and numerous voters as well as activists and leaders of far-right parties and organizations. "Youth are a strategic pool of eager supporters and future electors: 24% of Jobbik's supporters are too young to vote" (Saltman 2011: 122). Extremism precedes citizenship. Many young people join extremist groups, circles and organisations long before they come of voting age. Before the state and political society grants them the right to make electoral choices, they have already made their political choice.

Youth: a favourite target and privileged actor

Young people have been increasingly engaging in extremism and radicalisation, to which hate speech is closely connected (Baldauf, Ebner and Guhl 2019). The most remarkable characteristic of the meeting of radicalism

and youth is the early age at which it takes place (Mudde 2014). A militant from the Bulgarian National Union, a radical nationalist organisation, said: "I'm a patriot at heart. I've been a nationalist ever since I was at school, for as long as I can remember. I spent some time in other organisations, too, but I discovered myself and my ideas in the Bulgarian National Union when I joined it quite a few years ago and I've remained a member ever since" (Krasteva 2017: 151-152).

Youth have become not just a key target group, but the main characteristic of radical-right organisations. Asked how he would characterise his organisation, the leader of the Bulgarian National Union replied: "We are, first of all, a youth organisation, and second, we are a nationalist organisation." The Basarabia, Pământ Românesc (Bessarabia, Romanian Land) social movement is actively recruiting young people. Countless Facebook groups associated with the movement have an overwhelmingly young audience and promote "Romanianism" (Report on Romania).

Youth organisations are the political formation where far-right youths feel "at home", where they feel they are both "the head and the heart": "In political parties, the young are a labour force. Within Generation Identity we are the head and the heart. Among us, youth command youth. We are comrades, friends, brothers, a clan. More than a youth movement, we are the youth itself in movement" (Les Identitaires, quoted in Krasteva 2017: 153). A young supporter of a radical nationalist organisation in Bulgaria stated: "I like it that they are very young. The leadership is made up solely of young people, too. True patriots, nationalists, but also very ambitious. Here there is a way forward for young people, for their ideas" (Krasteva 2017: 153).

Young extremists, of course, are not the only actors of hate. The key responsibility lies with xenophobic and extremist political parties and leaders. Mainstreaming of hate - this is how we can define the amplification of the negative effect of hate speech when nationalist parties enter into ruling coalitions, as was the case in Bulgaria with the nationalist parties Ataka, NFSB, and VMRO in the third government of Boyko Borisov and his GERB party. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe stated: "High-level officials use their position to further fuel antagonism and intolerance in Bulgarian society" (Report on Bulgaria). In Romania, the Alliance for Romanian Unity (AUR), a party that proclaims to stand for "family, nation, faith, and

freedom", was elected to the Parliament. This party's nationalistic/supremacist discourse includes their opposition to European "belonging", to Hungarians (including their representation in the Parliament), to same-sex marriage, and often speaks against women's emancipation. Their xenophobic views and Holocaust denial attracted many voters under 30 years of age (Report on Romania). Politicians from the Conservative People's Party of Estonia, part of the previous ruling coalition, publicly express hostile and explicitly racist statements. For example, Mart Helme, the previous minister of the interior, said in a speech that "the number of black people [using the derogatory term] in Tallinn has exploded", followed by a story about how he had to teach black people at the university and found that "if you knocked on their heads, it sounds like hollow wood" (Report on Estonia). This statement received numerous comments that would be considered hate speech by social media codes of conduct, but would not qualify as illegal hate speech based on the Estonian Penal Code, due to the lack of real threat to a person's life, health or property (Report on Estonia). In Latvia, there is an informal alliance of the key actors of hate speech with high reach in terms of audience - the nationalist party Nacionālā Apvienība (National Alliance), Jaunā Konservatīvā Partija (New Conservative Party), Asociācija ģimene (Association Family), the newspaper Neatkariga (Independent), the online news portal Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze (Independent Morning News), and the anti-migrant Facebook group Latvijas nav iebrauktuve (Latvia is not an entrance) (Report on Latvia).

Churches are often active actors of discriminatory discourses. The Orthodox Church in Romania is vocal against the LGBTQIA+ community and same-sex marriages: "Since 2020 it has publicly voiced powerful misogynistic arguments. In 2021, the NCCD [National Council for Combating Discrimination] investigated Archbishop Teodosie for discrimination and misogynism after a number of controversial statements about the role of women in society. In the end it decided not to pursue an investigation. The decision caused intense public debate" (Report on Romania). The role of other churches is similar: representatives of the Lutheran and Catholic churches in Latvia are occasionally spreading "intolerance" statements towards women and LGBTQIA+. The charismatic religious organisation "New Generation" and its leadership frequently publish anti-LGBTQIA+ statements (Report on Latvia).

1.5 Against Whom. The Targets

 "They should be shot after their birth." This is what a member of the Czech Parliament said in 2017 when referring to Roma, homosexuals and Jews (Pejchal 2020: 1). I begin with this shocking quote in order to formulate the three main messages of the analysis of the targets of hate speech:

- Hate speech is typical for a wide range of countries, not only for the three Baltic and three Balkan countries under study but also for Central and Eastern Europe or the entire post-communist bloc, as well as for many others.
- Hate speech can reach extremely radical and extremist heights.
- Even the most democratic institutions, such as parliaments, are not immune to hate speech; on the contrary, it can be heard in them, too.
- It is important to note some common characteristics and trends.

The first is the connection between visibility and aggression: the more visible the person's identity (ethnicity, religious clothing, gender expression), the higher the possibility of them becoming a victim of verbal or physical aggression (Report on Lithuania).

The second characteristic is the wide range of negative reactions – from verbal insults to physical attacks.

The third is that the number of hate crime incidents is higher than officially reported. The research also found that because of a low level of trust in law enforcement responses to hate speech and hate crime, the affected members of targeted groups most often turn for support to their families, friends or communities.

The following list presents the targets of hate speech in the surveyed countries. It is important to note that some of them are universal and are found in all countries, others are specific only to individual countries, and still others are due to a particular situation – a migration crisis, offensive war, etc.

Targets of hate

Targets of hate
Roma
LGBTQIA+
Migrants/Refugees
Muslims/Islamophobia
Jews/ Anti-Semitism/Holocaust Denial
Women
Bosnians
Hungarians
Russians
Ethnic Latvians
Serbs
Turks
Elderly people
Foreign students
Dark-skinned/Black people
Persons with (mental) disabilities

Within the many and varied targets of hate speech, several circles with relatively different intensities can be identified.

Major targets
Roma, LGBTQIA+, refugees & immigrarnts
Islam

Important targets
- Jews
- Women & gender roles

Specific targets
- Russians for Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians
- Hungarians for Romanians
- Turks for Bulgarians
- Serbs for Croatians
- ethniic Latvians

Contextual targets
Foreign students in some countries

Groups subject to social distance:
- Elderly;
- Persons with disabilities;
- HIV/AIDS-affected people;
- Jehovah's Witnesses;
- Chinese;
- Chechens

The first circle comprises Roma, LGBTQIA+, refugees & immigrants, and Islam. This circle is characterised by several characteristics:

• The universal character of these targets. They are found in all six countries under research, as well as in many others.

• The negative attitudes towards these groups are very strong and widespread.

• Hate speech against them reaches high levels of symbolic violence. A physician, the minister of health in Bulgaria at the time, told the Roma: "You behave like animals and you will be treated like animals."

The targets in this first circle can be structured as a triangle.

Major targets of hate
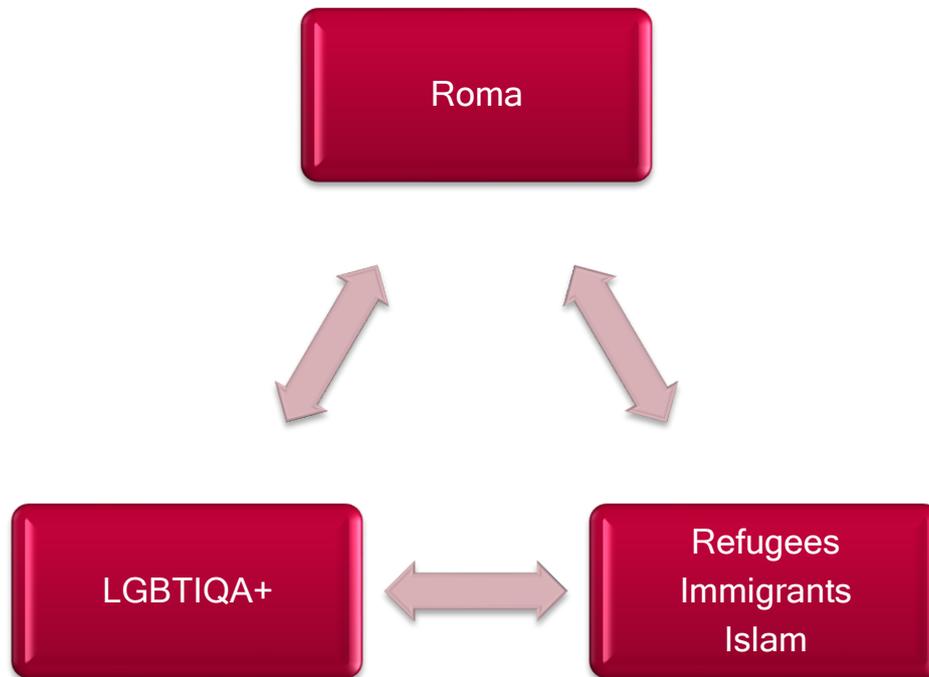
Roma are the archetypal image of the Other. Hate speech creates a cluster of Roma-associated negative characteristics, such as crime, lack of education, lack of work ethic, chronic unemployment, illegal houses, etc. The ECRI notes with great concern the persistent and high incidence of anti-Gypsyism, resulting in Roma constantly enduring hatred and insults in public life. Roma people are often portrayed as "thieves, liars, lazy" and systematically linked with criminality, which reinforces bias and increases their social exclusion. Roma are the target not only of discursive violence, but also of numerous anti-Roma marches, demonstrations, and mobilisations of extremist groups and organisations. The desire of the Roma community to respond with counter-protests is not always supported by the authorities. The Croatian report illustrates this negative dynamic: the organisers of a protest titled "I want a normal life" and held in Čakovec on 1 June 2019, misrepresented the Roma national minority in the context of violating citizens' security and national security. The Union of Roma in the Republic of Croatia "Kali Sara" decided to organise a counter-protest to warn of the inappropriateness and inaccuracy of such generalisations, but the City of Čakovec did not approve the use of public space for this public gathering and peaceful protest, which prevented the

exercise of the right to public assembly for members of the Roma national minority (Report on Croatia).

It is unsurprising that the negative attitudes towards Roma are particularly strong among supporters of extremist and far-right parties. It is surprising, though, that unacceptance towards Roma is very high also among business owners (36%) and the intelligentsia (25%) in Bulgaria (Report on Bulgaria). The Bulgarian intelligentsia is deeply divided: on the one hand, it is more tolerant (12% of its members accept Roma, as opposed to an average of just 4% in Bulgaria), but on the other, it is also radicalised: "This shows the polarisation of the Bulgarian intelligentsia" (Report on Bulgaria). Members of the intelligentsia are public voices of the conflicting attitudes in Bulgarian society.
It is important to note that (almost) every society has a central image of the Other. In this case, we see a profound change in the transition from communism to post-communism. The central negative Other of communist society was the composite image of the kulak, the bourgeoisie, and imperialism, combining economic, social, and ideological characteristics. The Roma as the central negative Other of post-communism changed the negative Other's profile from a socio-economic and ideological to an ethno-cultural one. This is a radical change associated with the new type of cleavages and the growing role of ethnicity, language, and religion. This change is related to the transition from ideological politics to identity politics.

It is also important to note the positive exceptions: while 61% of Europeans believe that discrimination of Roma is common in their country, in Estonia the corresponding figure is 23% (Report on Estonia).

LGBTIQA+ are another group associated with identity politics. They are a central figure that throws a bridge between the body of the individual and the body of the nation. Both should be "pure" and protected from "perversions". The cluster of associated phenomena is completely fabricated not with characteristics but with unfair accusations such as "paedophilia" and "perversion". At the opposite pole is the ideal of the traditional family with "classical" social and gender roles.

Refugees & immigrants are also among the key targets of hate speech. All six analysed countries have a very low percentage of immigrants and are not among the major refugee host countries, but anti-immigrant sentiment in them

is very high: more than 80% of Romanians are against allowing refugees or migrants to settle in their country (Report on Romania). The arrival of migrants and refugees in Europe is perceived as an invasion, colonisation, Islamisation, Africanisation of Europe (Report on Latvia). Anti-immigrant discourse in the different countries uses similar fake messages to reinforce fears and negative sentiments: immigrants will take jobs from the local population, they will cause lower wages, they will put pressure on public services, and they will be given a generous aid allowance which is higher than the wages of some citizens (Koreck and Asociația Divers 2017). Islamophobia is an expression of "the clash of civilisations" a la Huntington. It is characteristic of all countries in Europe, but even more so of the new EU member states, which do not have enough historical experience with immigration, nor enough civil society experience in countering hate speech and populism. With regard to religion, there are also positive exceptions: while 47% of Europeans regard religion as an important discriminatory factor, the corresponding percentage in Estonia is just 17% (Report on Estonia).

Islamophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes are separate phenomena, but they are often inextricably linked in the perceptions of public opinion, which is why I have grouped them together into a broader group. Muslims and immigrants quite often encounter institutional racism: Muslims and people of other races say they have encountered instances of institutional discrimination and negative stereotyping by public officials (Report on Lithuania).

The second circle comprises important targets such as Jews and women.

Anti-Semitism is a historically constant and socially paradoxical phenomenon. Whereas the Roma are a marginalised group, Jews in most countries are a smaller and well-integrated group. Despite this, anti-Semitism is a persistent phenomenon. The Estonian report describes a typical case: "In March 2019, an incident occurred in a public space in central Tallinn. The Estonian head rabbi, Shmuel Kot, was on his way to the sabbath at the synagogue with his children. He was addressed by a male stranger speaking Estonian who, among other things, said to the rabbi: 'What are you looking at, Jew, you're going into an incinerator'" (Report on Estonia).

Adam Michnik has formulated the paradox of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe: "There are (almost) no Jews in Poland, but there is anti-Semitism." The Jewish

community in Romania numbers only 4,000 people, but anti-Semitism has been on the rise in the last decade (Report on Romania). Young people are particularly susceptible to anti-Semitism: 49% of people between 18 and 34 harboured anti-Semitic attitudes in Romania, more than any other age category. Lack of historical memory reinforces negative attitudes: only 25% of the respondents acknowledged that the Holocaust also took place in Romania (Report on Romania). Jean-Paul Sartre (1995: 8) has universalised this paradox: "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him." Anti-Semitism is particularly inventive when it comes to myths about the Jewish community: the most widespread anti-Semitic myth relates to the Nazi propaganda about "Jewish Bolshevism". Conspiracy theories such as the desire of the Jews to rule over the world are also commonly referred to (Report on Latvia).

Women and gender roles are an element of the new conservative wave: "The topic of 'gender', women's rights, and human rights education – some of the tenets of liberal narratives and values – are increasingly being criticised and belittled as 'neo-marxist', or 'fakely progressive' by opponents. The rhetoric about gender also lends itself to nativist discourses that argue that gender affects the 'national' (that is, ethnic) fabric and the purity of society" (Report on Romania). Paradoxically, such discourses are also found in in the six analysed countries, where the majority of women are emancipated and actively participate in social, economic, and political life. The most striking expression of anti-gender ideology by conservative and hate-speech actors is the attack on the Istanbul Convention. The Romanian report analyses typical developments:

Gender and family values debates have been a constant and perhaps more visible cause of concern in the past five years. The movement (and NGO) "Coalition for the Family", is a social movement which supports conservative women's role and the values of the "traditional family" and has been a constant source of extremist and conservative discourse. In 2018, their citizen initiative to define the family only as man-woman and not two people of the same gender triggered a referendum on a potential change in the text of the Constitution. It failed to reach the quota, but approximately 20% of the people supported it. It is important to emphasise that the Coalition was supported by the majority of the political parties at the time, and by both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Even though one of the leaders of the AUR was a member of the

Coalition, it received support from the liberals and social-democrats, including the prime minister of the time, the government, and multiple members of the parliament who supported these initiatives, despite their discriminatory content and incitement to hatred. In 2019-2020, Parliament passed a bill looking to modify legislation that was against gender studies education in schools and in higher education, however it was eventually stopped due to its unconstitutionality (Report on Romania).

The third circle comprises targets that are key in a particular country or group of countries.

Russians/Russian-speakers are the most typical example of key Otherness in all Baltic countries. The distance between the majority and the Russian-speaking communities is constant, but tensions escalate over specific controversial events. For example, the end of WWII is celebrated on 9 May as "Victory Day" by many Russian-speakers and by sections of the populations of the former Soviet republics. At the same time, many ethnic Latvians consider this day as the day when Latvia's occupation by the USSR brought mass deportations to Gulag camps and saw the oppression of the Latvian nation. Due to conflicting historical memory also ethnic Latvians being a majority of the population in Latvia are targeted by hate speech, mostly by the Russian speaking population (Report on Latvia).

The same logic is valid for important minorities in the respective countries, such as Hungarians for Romanians, Turks for Bulgarians, Serbs for Croats, etc.: "For example, in 2018 the two MPs representing the Serb national minority were attacked in the centre of Zagreb. Furthermore, of particular concern are statements and actions by public figures characterised by ethnic intolerance, as well as the absence of public condemnation and sanctions against such actions" (Report on Croatia). Bosnians and Orthodox Christians in Croatia fall into the same target group.

The fourth circle comprises groups that, in a certain political and social context, acquire negative public visibility.

The typical example are communities that are stigmatised in a given context by political and public discourse - for example, foreign students in Latvia: anti-migrant speech has also increased against the growing number of foreign

students from Pakistan and India, who are often associated with illegal employment and are seen as being responsible for a perceived rise in crime, and as a general threat to the public (Report on Latvia).

The fifth circle comprises groups subject to high and/or growing social distance, without necessarily being targets of systematic hate speech. A typical example are people with disabilities, including mental disabilities, and HIV/AIDS-affected people. They face more stigma than hate. Other examples of groups subject to high social distance that have not become targets of political hate speech are Jehovah's Witnesses, Chinese, and Chechens. These examples are from Lithuania, but they have more general validity and are also found elsewhere.

1.6 Where. Social Media: The New Digital Public Place of Hate

"In recent decades, hate speech has found a new place to proliferate – social media" (Carlson 2021: 116). Hate speech is not a new phenomenon. What is new is social media as a powerful, unbounded digital megaphone for intensifying and multiplying hate speech.

Hater social media are not only a channel for the dissemination of xenophobic discourses but also a powerful amplifier of their impact, which contributes to their becoming a hegemonic discourse. The weak presence of civil and human rights alternatives on social media further strengthens the hegemonic position of conservative and extremist discourses: "The far-right agenda is strong and overwhelming, only a few people dare to challenge dominant hate narratives. In addition, there are only a handful of anti-racist social media groups or groups where a human rights agenda is prevalent, as a result there is little impact" (Report on Estonia).

Digital natives and far-right youths belong to the same generation – Generation Y. Both are socialised through social networks, and both form and express their civic and political identities in the virtual agora. A number of comparative empirical studies show that the virtualisation of extremism depends on the internet penetration rate in the respective country (Cainai and Parenti 2013).

Those variations apply to a significantly less extent to young activists - digitalisation is their space-time:

The Basarabia, Pământ Românesc social movement (Bessarabia, Romanian Land), is actively recruiting young people. Countless Facebook groups associated with the movement have an overwhelmingly young audience and promote "Romanianism". Lupii Dacici (Dacian wolves) Facebook group promotes extremism and xenophobia. Another example is the "Dacii Liberi" (Free Dacians) community and "Tinerii AUR" (AUR Youth). Equally visible are groups and websites such as Nationalisti.ro. (Report on Romania)

Social media of extremist parties and their even more extremist fans are a very bad combination indeed. A typical example is the website Uued Uudised, the media platform of EKRE (Conservative People's Party of Estonia), where comments on articles call migrants "cockroaches" and "pests" or express wishes that the migrants would get infected with the coronavirus or go back to their home countries (Report on Estonia).

The Facebook generation is named "Why" for its lack of respect for authority and determination to question and challenge authorities. Hackers with their dissident spirit are the role models of the digital natives. Radical youth understand this dissidence as challenging the norms of political correctness and overproducing hate speech. The e-streets become more extremist than the streets.

Three main mechanisms work to this effect: networked activism, crowdsourcing, and "troll factories".

Networked activism often replaces formal membership, thereby multiplying fans and participants on the periphery, whose identity has not crystallised and does not want to be formally identified with a far-right organisation, but is mobilised for a particular cause or event. Networked activism draws on anonymity, and thus increases the cohorts of extremists who prefer not to be known as extremists and therefore can express views in the public digital sphere that they would have otherwise kept private (Krasteva 2017: 170).
The internet facilitates and catalyses the transnationalisation of extremist networks: "Transnational networks constitute a serious matter of concern. QAnon messages are widely shared and liked by young people in Romania,

as well as 'Schild & Vrienden', a Flemish nationalist organisation messages. Transnational movements such as Generation Identity also have a strong pull on local social media and join anti-LGBTQIA+ protests and have been associated with the anti-Covid protests" (Report on Romania).

Hate crowdsourcing takes a variety of forms – fundraising, practical advice, e-commerce. In the digital world, even single activists and small groups never feel alone: the Net advises, supports and promotes. If crowdsourcing refers to the instrumental aspect, to the increase of resources, community-building refers to the symbolic aspect, to building a community that is discontinuous offline and which unites online in order to multiply and consolidate itself (Krasteva 2017: 170).

Troll factories of hate speech facilitate the "industrialisation" and internationalisation of hate: for example, Russia's online news portal "Sputnik" is one of the actors inciting hate speech in regard to inter-ethnic relations between Latvians and Russians because of providing sensational or biased information. The presence of a Russian "troll factory" discovered in Latvia fosters the spread of hate speech, especially about sensitive inter-ethnic topics (Report on Latvia).

Internet regulation is not a panacea: In those countries where the participation of specific right-wing actors is limited, they try to compensate for their marginal role with a dense network of linkages among themselves, which potentially support mobilisation and favour the emergence of shared goals and collective identities (Caiani and Parenti 2013: 79).

Regardless of these reservations, content moderation is a key challenge and an ever more imperative practice: "Social media organizations regulate all kinds of potentially harmful content, including hate speech, violence or incitement, adult nudity, sexual exploitation of adults, sexual solicitation, suicide/self-injury, bullying/harassment, child nudity, privacy violations, image privacy rights, promoting crime, or selling regulated goods" (Carlson 2021: 123–124). I will briefly describe the three main forms of content moderation: editorial review, automatic detection, and community flagging.

Editorial review, the first phase in the process of content moderation, imposes oversight on content before it is made available. When a social media organisation identifies what kind of content qualifies as hate speech, there are generally two parts to the platform's definition: (1) the intention behind the biased words published by a user, and (2) the specific "protected categories" of people who must be targeted by the biased content in order for the post to be removed. For example, Facebook defines hate speech as "a direct attack on people" based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity, serious disease or disability, and immigration status (Carlson 2021: 124).

Automatic detection is the second phase of content moderation, which utilises sophisticated software to aid in the content removal process. Platforms use algorithms and/or artificial intelligence to remove content that violates their community standards both before and after it has been uploaded, e.g. Facebook proactively removed 89 percent of hate speech on the site before users reported it (Carlson 2021: 130).

Community flagging is the final and most visible phase of the content moderation process, where users report content they believe violates the community standards outlined by the company. Reported content is then manually reviewed by employees who determine whether it will be blocked, deleted, or remain on the site. There are billions of social media users worldwide and the task of reviewing flagged content is enormous. Facebook users, for example, flag over one million pieces of content worldwide each day (Carlson 2021: 132).

1.7 Why. Two Models for Explaining the Extremist Agency of Hate

How to explain the reasons and factors that orient young people towards hate activism and extremism (Kürti 1998; Lööw 2014; Mudde 2014; Saltman 2011; Watts 1996, 2014; Krasteva 2017)? Two theories offer different models for understanding far-right youth, a major actor of hate: lost generation and contestatory citizenship (Krasteva 2017: 173). They are complementary rather than rival.

The lost generation conception seeks to identify the structural causes and factors for the emergence and development of the phenomenon of youth extremism; the contestatory citizenship conception seeks to understand the youths themselves as actors, as authors of their political choices. This approach is premised on the assumption that socio-economic deficits and contradictions play a crucial role: there is an economic crisis that overproduces marginalisation; a neo-liberal globalisation that needs capital, not human beings; a party system that is increasingly losing its representative function. In this theoretical perspective, far-right youth have a clear class-based and social profile. The youth unemployment rate is two to three times higher than the average unemployment rate (Krasteva 2017: 173-174). Extremism among young people in Romania is often motivated by marginalisation and stigmatisation. Individuals identified as being most at risk of radicalisation include vulnerable young people from low-income families and/or dysfunctional families, who are sensitive to pressure and manipulation and who feel misunderstood by society and deprived of their rights (Report on Romania). Nationalist rhetoric presents itself as a refuge for disaffected youth: for example, in Romania the leaders of the extreme right Noua Dreapta (The New Right) focus on attracting young people with nationalistic power narratives, such as the "lost territory of Moldova". This has the effect of mobilising disenfranchised and impoverished young people by providing them with a cause.

The contestatory citizenship conception problematises the sphere of validity of socio-economic explanations. In doing so, it does not seek to reject or refute them; nor does it deny that the main resource of the far right are young people from disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates, where the national majority is often a local minority. Building on these findings, the contestatory citizenship conception seeks to open up new theoretical horizons along two lines. The first line concerns theoretical sensitivity to data which show that the far right attracts young people from different social classes; for example, similar to a global and European trend, middle/upper-class voters in Romania support extremist far-right parties and organisations, such as AUR. Similarly to the German AfD, AUR promotes xenophobia and has a strong youth focus (Report on Romania). The reasons for supporting and joining extremist organisations may have to do less with socio-economic marginalisation than with identities and protest. The second explanation is based on a conceptual apparatus whose focus is not on society and its

deficiencies, but on actors with their energy and activism. Actors are conceived through the concept of contestatory citizenship, which has two main implications: protest becomes a normal form of mobilisation in societies where there is "expansion of conflict", "normalisation of the unconventional", internet with a rebellious and hacker spirit. Youth are the main carriers of contestatory citizenship in its two opposite variants: green, open and solidarity-minded; denying/rejecting/hating otherness and diversity in its various forms (Krasteva 2017: 174).

2. EUROSCEPTICISM

The objective of the second part of this comparative report is twofold:
- To analyse the emergence, the development and the different conceptions of "Euroscepticism", a relatively new term and concept in the field of political sciences and European studies.
- To examine its manifestations by political parties and public opinion in the three Baltic and three Balkan countries under research.

The interactions and interferences of Euroscepticism and hate are analysed in the conclusion of this report.

It should be emphasised from the beginning that in the six countries analysed Euroscepticism is not a mass phenomenon. The prevalent attitudes in public opinion are the opposite – Eurooptimism and Eurorealism. The study focused precisely on the paradoxical nature of Euroscepticism in the Baltic and Balkan geopolitical regions – why and how have Eurosceptic parties emerged, and what is their impact on citizens' electoral attitudes.

2.1 Definition, Conceptions, and Characteristics

Euroscepticism is a relatively new term and concept. It appeared in the mid-1980s. Logically, it originated in one of the most Eurosceptic countries, the UK, but subsequently spread throughout the EU: "The term 'Eurosceptic' can be traced back to the mid-1980s in the United Kingdom (UK), where it was used by journalists and politicians to refer to those Members of the Parliament (MPs) within the Conservative party who had reservations about the path of European integration in the post-Single European Act era, i.e. they were sceptical (in the lay sense of the word) about 'Europe'" (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2018b: 4, referring to Spiering 2004).

The genesis and spread of Euroscepticism can be summarised in five characteristics.
The first is that the term was created by non-academics using academic jargon.

The second characteristic is that Euroscepticism is ultimately a negative construction: it refers to opposition to some aspect of European integration – ranging from individual policies to the very idea of belonging to the EU.

The third characteristic is the rapid expansion of the scope and validity of the concept – from a specific feature of the British political system to a transversal European phenomenon. "From that narrow and precise germ, the [concept] grew in use, first to sweep across much of the British political system, and then across the entire continent. Since the advent of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, a key turning point in terms of the crystallisation of opposition towards the EU, it has become a transnational and pan-European phenomenon, and the term Euroscepticism has become common political language in all EU member states (FitzGibbon et al. 2017). More recently with the advent of the Great Recession and the Eurozone crisis, Euroscepticism has become increasingly 'embedded' within European nation states (Usherwood and Startin 2013)" (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood, 2018b: 4).

Euroscepticism develops in three directions. From a stance of marginal political parties, today it is a stance of mainstream parties as well as of those in ruling coalitions. From being a British phenomenon, today its manifestations can be found in many countries. The most striking manifestation is undoubtedly Brexit – the full realisation of the most hardline form of rejecting and leaving the EU (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2018). Scholars predict "a bright future for the study of Euroscepticism":

It now appears across the continent and in 'new' public arenas: in the media, within civil society and civic movements, and at the transnational and pan-European levels. It is no longer confined to the margins, and contributes to both the democratisation and legitimation of the European Union as well as its potential disintegration. ... [T]he academic debate on Euroscepticism has led to the emergence of a true sub-field of European Studies. While competing conceptualisations and studies explaining the causes and consequences of this phenomenon continue to emerge, the future of Euroscepticism studies, if not as a result of this future of the EU itself, is bright. (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood, 2018b: 9)

The fourth characteristic is that Euroscepticism avoids the classic left-right divide because it is found in both parts of the party system: "Euroscepticism

has become de-aligned from left-right, as both the far left and far right oppose Europe" (de Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell 2018: 50).

The fifth characteristic is related to the question of whether Euroscepticism is a stand-alone phenomenon or embedded within a broader cleavage. I agree with the latter, broader view. Although the term refers to a European phenomenon, Euroscepticism is part of the more general problem of reservations about and rejection of globalisation: "those who consider themselves the 'losers of globalisation' become Eurosceptic, just as they oppose other aspects of this modernising transformation" (de Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell 2018: 51). In the present study, Euroscepticism is in a conceptual and political cluster with hate speech and practices.

Euroscepticism studies have rapidly multiplied and diversified, covering "theory and conceptualisation; party-based Euroscepticism; public opinion; non-state Eurosceptic actors; transnational and pan-European Euroscepticism; and the future of European integration post-Brexit" (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2018b: 6). These multiple fields are beyond the scope of the present study, which focused on the manifestations of Euroscepticism in the party system and public opinion in the countries under research, as well as on its relations with actors and manifestations of hate.

2.2 Forms of Euroscepticism

The best known typology of Euroscepticism is that of Aleks Taggart and Paul Szczerbiak, who, in their actor-based concept, distinguish between soft and hard Euroscepticism, voice and exit. Soft Euroscepticism criticises individual policies and prioritises national interests, especially when they are at odds with EU priorities. Hard Euroscepticism articulates radical opposition to the EU and calls for exit (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2018).

The two forms of Euroscepticism
according to Taggart and Szczerbiak

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              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
        ┌─────────┐                    ┌─────────┐
        │  Soft   │                    │  Hard   │
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  ┌──────────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────────────┐
  │ No principled        │     │ Principled opposition to  │
  │ objection to the EU  │     │ the EU and European       │
  │ National interest at │     │ integration               │
  │ odds with EU         │     │ Exit                       │
  │ priorities           │     │                            │
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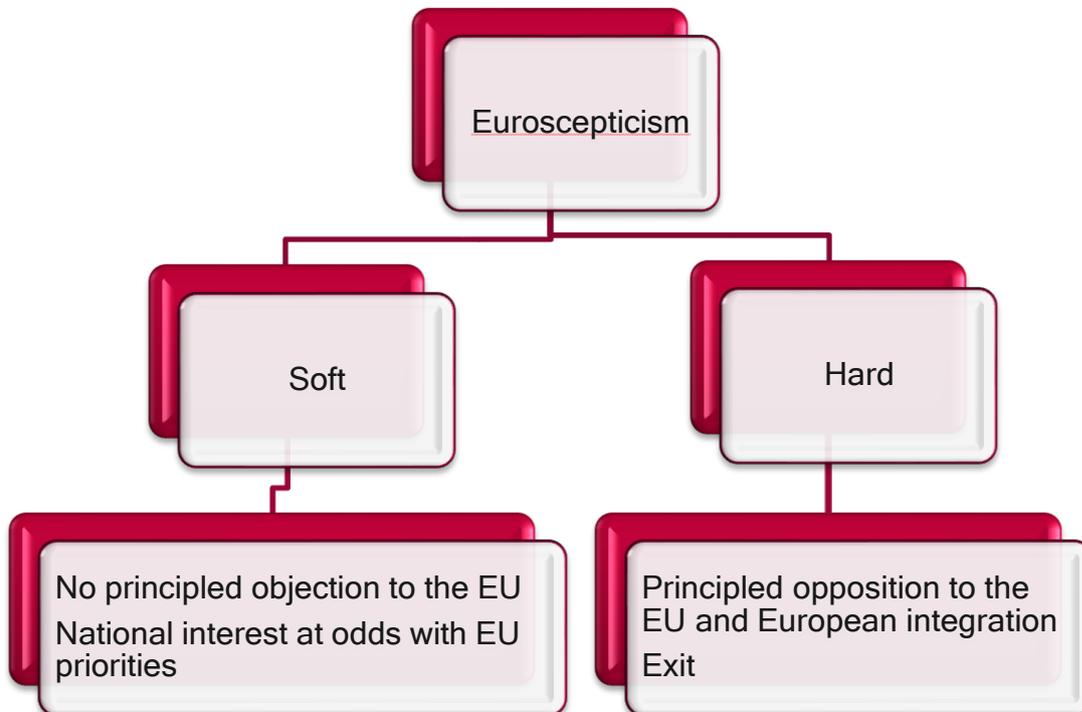
This distinction is as well-known and cited, as it is criticised: the definition of soft party-based Euroscepticism is too inclusive and all-encompassing. Defining Euroscepticism in such a broad manner means that virtually every disagreement with any policy decision of the EU can be included (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Vasilopoulou 2018).

More productive for the study of the three Baltic and three Balkan countries under research is the party-based approach of Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde, who distinguish four types of party positions on Europe: Euroenthusiasts, Europragmatists, Eurosceptics, and Eurorejects (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). The first pair expresses a positive and supportive attitude towards the EU, ranging from pragmatism about benefits to enthusiasm for values and the democratic project. The second pair conceptualises reservations about and critical attitudes towards the EU, ranging from soft forms of Euroscepticism to hard forms of rejection of European integration.

Types of party positions on Europe according to Kopecký and Mudde

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┌─────────────────────┐
│   Euroenthusiasts   │
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│   Europragmatists   │
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│     Eurosceptics    │
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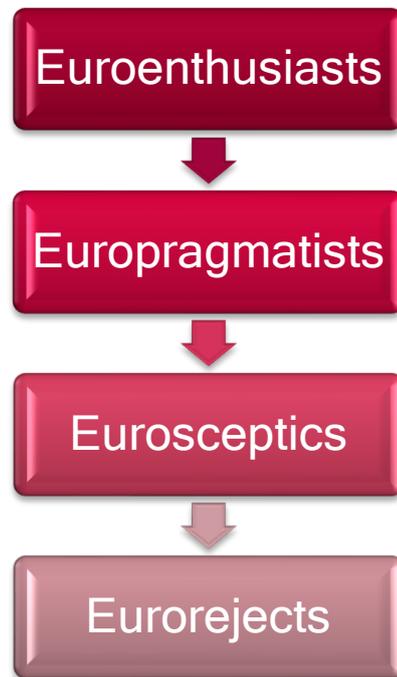
Kopecký and Mudde's typology is characterised by the symmetry of two positive forms, Euroenthusiasts and Europragmatists, and two negative forms, Eurosceptics and Eurorejects, of attitudes towards the EU. Other authors propose a typology with a wider negative scale: Euro-confidence, Euro-scepticism, Euro-distrust, Euro-cynicism, and Euro-alienation (Vasilopoulou 2018: 25, referring to Krowel and Abts 2007).

The different forms of Euroscepticism prioritise a different cluster of arguments, usually structured around one central concept:
   •   Socioeconomic Euroscepticism is related to economic and financial arguments such as fiscal sovereignty, national debts, and the euro.
   •   The argument of sovereignty is traditionally a very solid one and it is mainly used when talking about delocalisation, transfer of decision-making, and centralisation.
   •   The Euroscepticism associated with fear of loss of European and national cultural values is triggered by the topics of immigration, multiculturalism, Christianity, Islam and security.

- The Euroscepticism of legitimacy mobilises the arguments of democratic deficit, effectiveness, competence, corruption (Pirro and van Kessel 2018).

2.3 Causes – Elite or Mass Driven

An in-depth analysis of the causes, spread and persistence of Euroscepticism is beyond the scope of this study. Here I will focus only on the analytical dilemma of whether Euroscepticism is elite or mass driven (de Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell 2018), on the explanation of the phenomenon as being top-down or bottom-up. Students of party politics build on the assumption that the structure of national party systems and strategic behaviour of political elites determine the degree and characteristics of Euroscepticism (Ladrech 2007; de Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell 2018). Such studies take a top-down perspective and view political elites as the drivers of citizen opinions toward European integration (Ray 2003). On the other hand, studies that take a bottom-up perspective assume that public opinion either enables or disables political elites' debating of the issue and further determines the course of European integration (Inglehart et al 1987; Niedermayer and Sinnott 1995; de Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell 2018).

For the purpose of the comparative analysis it is crucial to understand which of the two theoretical approaches is more adequate to explain the emergence and specificities of Baltic and Balkan Euroscepticism.

Euroscepticism in Eurorealist States

"(Non)Existence of Bulgarian Party-Based Euroscepticism – Why Should We Care?" is the provocative title of a study by Natasza Styczynska (2015). It refers to the Bulgarian case, but has a more general validity for the Baltic and Balkan countries under research. Why Should We Care? For a number of reasons, of which I will highlight three here - theoretical, political, and European.

The theoretical reason for the importance of the topic of Euroscepticism is related to the fact that it is under-researched in the two geopolitical regions analysed here: studies on Euroscepticism in the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe are relatively few in number (Ehin 2002; Mikkel and Kasekamp 2008; Stojic 2006; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Batory and Sitter

2008; Riishøj 2007; Neumayer 2008; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2018; Henderson 2008). All six countries under research are included in Euroscepticism and the Future of Europe: Views from the Capitals (Kaeding and Pollak 2021), which analyses Euroscepticism in all EU member countries. The political reason is related to the paradoxical nature of Baltic and Balkan Euroscepticism – although it is a marginal phenomenon, it has a permanent place on the political scene.

The European reason refers to Brexit – after the UK proved that European integration is reversible, all manifestations and aspects of Euroscepticism should be carefully and systematically analysed in both national and comparative perspective.

It is important to underline that the context is not favourable for the flourishing of Euroscepticism. A typical example is Lithuania, in whose Parliament "there are no parties which could be described as Eurosceptic, although some might be cautious with regard to further deepening of the European integration, for example, moving from veto to qualified majority voting in areas of taxation or foreign and security policy" (Vilpišauskas 2021: 90). Membership in the EU is a matter of security and geopolitical affiliations for the relatively small Baltic and Balkan countries. Among the analysed countries there are even champions of Eurooptimism – emblematic is the case of Estonia, which is "an exemplar of rationality and democratic values, becoming an epitome of digital innovation, openness and budgetary balance" (Veebel 2021: 39), where trust in the EU reaches 69% (Veebel 2021: 40), and the majorityof citizens, 74%, support EU membership (Report on Estonia). But even in that country a previously marginal anti-European populist party, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), has started gaining popularity, increasing its electoral support in the last decade from 2–3% to around 20% (Veebel 2021: 39).

Eurosceptic Parties – Marginal, but Vocal

"Euroscepticism, from the margins to the mainstream" (Brack and Startin 2015) – this diagnosis still applies more to the old than to the six new EU member states analysed, where Euroscepticism remains marginal, although it is increasingly vocal, more in the Balkan than in the Baltic countries.

The following table illustrates the main Eurosceptic parties in the analysed countries. Three points should be kept in mind when analysing the data in it:

- Eurosceptic parties – like all others – are dynamic formations, they appear and disappear, some are short-lived; the table contains certain typical examples.
- The soft/hard Euroscepticism distinction should also be regarded as provisional for two reasons: Eurosceptic parties evolve and change their messages as well as their radicalism; because these parties operate in a Eurorealistic context, they tend to be more focused on criticism of certain policies than on calls for an exit. In a number of cases, the term "hard" refers more to the type of far-right profile of the party in question. Different assessments of whether a party advocates "soft" or "hard" Euroscepticism can be found in the literature. The table represents the assessments of the study researchers from the respective countries.
- Euro-integration is a complex process and attitudes towards individual policies can range from support to rejection: European integration being a multidimensional and nonlinear process, it is possible to be in favour of the euro but against developing common security and defence policy (Austers 2017: 217).

Table

Eurosceptic parties
in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

Name of Eurosceptic party in English	Euro-sceptic (Soft Euro scepticism)	Euro-reject (Hard Euro scepticism)	Year of creation	% of votes in the last parliamentary elections	Main messages
Bulgaria					
Ataka		X	2005	0.46%	Anti-Roma/immigrants/gay Anti-EU Anti-Globalisation
VMRO	X			1.08%	National sovereignty Anti-minorities/immigrants/gay

Party			Year	Percentage	Description
Revival (Vazrazhdane)		X		4.86%	Anti-vaccination Anti-euro Anti-EU Anti-Americanism/Anti-Globalisation
Croatia					
Key of Croatia (ex-Human Wall)		X	2011	1.84%	Against Europe and EU institutions, Anti-euro, Anti-migration
Croatian Party of Rights		X	1990	0.84%	Anti-EU
Croatian Pure Party of Rights		X	1992	/	Anti-EU
Croatian Demochristian Party	X		2009	/	Anti-EU
Homeland Movement	X		2020	10.89%	Not really anti-EU, just against a more centralised Union. The basis should always be a sovereign state. Againstmore Europe
Socialist Workers Party Croatia		X	1998	/	Anti-EU, pro-EU exit
Workers Front	X		2015	One seat in parliament (out of 151), the exact percentage not known as they ran on a coalition ticket, which enabled them to win that one seat	Anti-EU
Estonia					

EKRE (Conservative People's Party of Estonia)		X	2012	17.8%	For less federalism of the EU and more intergovernmentalism Protection of sovereignty of ordinary Estonians Anti-minorities/immigrants
Latvia[5]					
National Alliance/Nacionālā Apvienība	X		2010	11.01%	For ethnically Latvian Latvia Supporting EU as union of national states Against federalisation of the EU and attempts to weaken and split transatlantic cooperation
Union of Greens and Farmers/Zaļo un Zemnieku Savienība	X		1991	9,91	For stabile development and quality of life to every Latvian resident. For pragmatic Latvia's policy with EU
Harmony/Saskaņa/	X		2010	19,8	Latvia is active and trusted EU and NATO member state. Stand for foreign policy aimed at prosperity of Latvian residents. Building good relations with Russia and CIS states based on mutual respect.
Action Party/Rīcības partija		X	2003	0.12%	For national interests Against ratification of Istanbul Convention and Baltic Pride 2018

[5] Messages from parties' programmes for Parliamentary election 2018

					Reception of refugees endangers Latvia's security
Latvian Russian Union/Latvijas Krievu savienība	X		2007	3,2	Protection of Russian cultural-linguistic community. Good relations with Russia. Future vision – united Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok.
Lithuania					
National coalition "For Lithuania in Lithuania" *(non-existent anymore)*	X		2002	From 2004 to 2020, four elected MEPs 2016 parliamentary elections, 5.3%, eight seats	1) Supported the idea of a referendum on the introduction of the euro in Lithuania; 2) argued that it stood against the discriminatory policies of the EU towards farmers' subsidies; 3) expressed ideas about the necessity of reform of the EU (the importance of strengthening the model of EU confederation instead of EU centralisation and federalisation).
Republican Party *(non-existent anymore)*		X	2011	2014 EP elections, 2%, no seats in	Objectives of the party were to: 1) "revoke the pre-eminence of European legal acts over the national legal acts"; 2) "seek to recognise the Treaty of Lisbon as illegal and void". Against the introduction of the euro

Order and Justice Party *(non-existent since 2020)*	X		2002	From 2004 to 2020, four elected MEPs 2016 parliamentary elections, 5.3%, eight seats	1) Supported the idea of a referendum on the introduction of the euro in Lithuania; 2) argued that it stood against the discriminatory policies of the EU towards farmers' subsidies; 3) expressed ideas about the necessity of reform of the EU (the importance of strengthening the model of EU confederation instead of EU centralisation and federalisation).
Nationalist Union		X	2011	2014 EP elections, 2%, no seats	Objectives of the party were to: 1) "revoke the pre-eminence of European legal acts over the national legal acts"; 2) "seek to recognise the Treaty of Lisbon as illegal and void". Against the introduction of the euro
Coalition "Valdemar Tomaševski Bloc" of the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Russian Alliance	X		2014	2014 EP elections, 8.05%, one seat 2019 EP elections, 5.5%, one seat	To recognise family as the main element of society, return Europe to its Christian roots.
Labour Party	X		2003	2014 EP elections, 12.12%, one seat 2016 parliamentary	Anti-immigrant

				elections, 4.68%, two seats 2019 EP elections, 8.99%, one seat 2020 parliamentary elections, 9.43%, nine seats	
Public election committee "Vytautas Radžvilas: Recover the State!"		X	2019	2019 EP elections, 3.35%, no seats	The views of the committee are that the EU, in its current state, destroys the nation states' "cultural traditions, moral norms and natural family". Therefore, it promised to seek "to limit the Union's interference into the matters of the state".
Christian Union	X		2020	2020 parliamentary elections, 0.75%, no seats	Against LGBTQIA+ rights, pro traditional family values
National Alliance (the same leadership as in the Public election committee "Vytautas Radžvilas: Recover the State!"		X	2020	2020 parliamentary elections, 2.14%, no seats	Against deeper EU integration Anti-LGBTQIA+ Anti-immigrants

Source: National reports and researchers.
NB. The Report on Romania does not provide information on Eurosceptic parties.

Among the great variety of Eurosceptic parties, some main characteristics can be identified:

- The first one is the paradox between a Eurooptimistic and Eurorealistic environment and the emergence of Eurosceptic parties. The surveyed countries are among the major supporters of EU integration. It is supported by broad segments of the population, but especially by the young, the educated, the mobile. Naturally, it is not them, but the precarious, the losers and those concerned about EU integration who are targeted by Eurosceptic parties' messages.

- Another significant characteristic is the marginal nature of Eurosceptic parties. Their electoral weight varies from negligible to relatively low, from less than 1% of votes won to around 10%. Parties such as EKRE in Estonia, which reached 20% electoral support, are rather the exception. Typical are opposite examples - for instance, "[i]n the May 2019 European Parliament elections in Latvia, none of the 13 political parties supported leaving the EU. At the same time, several parties expressed dissatisfaction or even anger at the current state of the EU and promised to improve Latvia's socio-economic and political situation in the EU" (Bukovskis and Spruds 2021: 82).

- Euroscepticism does not have a clear political colour and is found both on the right and on the left. It is characteristic of the nationalist and extremist parties in question that they themselves not infrequently combine far-right and far-left demands and policies.

- Eurosceptic parties' political weight is higher than their electoral weight. Despite their relatively low electoral support, their political influence is reinforced by their participation in government coalitions in a number of countries such as Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria.

- Framing the debate on the future of Europe. The voice of the Eurosceptic Balkan and Baltic parties is amplified by the significantly more powerful Western European Eurosceptic voices. At the same time, however, their rhetoric has failed to become central in the analysed countries: the Eurosceptic debate remains sporadic, with some peaks especially before European Parliament elections, but overall it is not key and not hegemonic.

- Disproportionate to their electoral weight is the media attention accorded to them in the name of a specifically understood pluralism and representation of all points of view.

- Many Balkan and Baltic parties are imitating Western Eurosceptic parties, targeting a similar electoral niche or even striving to create it by trying to achieve their success: "Eurosceptic political parties and individual politicians have emerged … [h]oping for success similar to that of Eurosceptics in other European Union (EU) countries" (Bukovskis and Spruds 2021: 81).

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The messages of Eurosceptic Balkan and Baltic parties can be grouped into two clusters – "anti" and "pro".

The first, negative, cluster contains more messages. It is centred around reservations about and criticism of EU integration and its attributes. Balkan and Baltic Eurosceptics are less likely to call for an EU exit and more likely to argue for a more intergovernmental and less federal EU: this is a cry for help against a federalised Europe, where neo-Marxist ideology is proliferating (Report on Estonia). They use the populist argument for a referendum in which citizens can decide whether they want to hand over the tax and migration policies to the EU or whether they want to go their own way (Report on Estonia).

The euro is one of the favourite targets of criticism: the Bulgarian party Revival (Vazrazhdane) organised protests against the introduction of the euro and in defence of the national currency – one of the oldest in Europe, with a 140-year-long history, one of the last defences of national sovereignty (Report on Bulgaria). The most criticised EU policy is that on migration, with accusations of changing the "genetic code" of original European peoples, Islamic invasion, etc. The refugee crisis increased the audience sensitive to the Great Replacement conspiracy theory – that is, that non-European migrants would replace the indigenous European population. Criticism of immigration is underpinned by fears of emigration. Eurosceptic parties give a platform to these frustrations.

The "pro" messages represent the views and values that Balkan and Baltic Eurosceptics defend in public and political debates:
- Asserting national and fiscal sovereignty by protecting the national currency, increasing the role of nation-states in determining key policies such as border policy, migration policy, etc.
- Defending traditional European values, including Christianity.

2.4 Public Opinion – More Eurooptimistic and Eurorealistic Than Eurosceptic

Public opinion in the analysed countries shows a sustained and high level of support for EU integration. The attitudes of public opinion towards EU integration can be clustered into four groups:

- Eurooptimists – those who agree that the EU is a good thing and support membership in the EU.
- Moderate Eurosceptics or Europragmatists – those who support membership in the EU but are opposed to the EU as such.
- Radical Eurosceptics – those who disagree that the EU is a good thing and that membership in the EU is a good thing.
- Alienated – those who disagree that EU membership is a good thing although they like the EU as such (Austers and Ņikišins 2017; Austers 2017: 211).

The Eurooptimist group is the dominant opinion group in the Baltic countries. The second largest group, Radical Eurosceptics, is considerably smaller in all three countries. In terms of mutual proportions, in Estonia, the difference between the proportion of Eurooptimists and Radical Eurosceptics is the largest, while in Latvia it is the smallest, thus confirming the more pronounced Eurosceptical inclination of the Latvian people. The third group, Europragmatists, is rather small in all three countries, although it is twice as big in Lithuania as in Latvia and Estonia. The last group, Alienated people, is almost absent in Estonia, and in the other two countries it is minuscule (Austers and Ņikišins 2017; Austers 2017: 211).

Comparative studies of the Baltic cases of Euroscepticism reveal a common panorama, but also some national differences. Austers' diagnosis is that Euroscepticism in the three Baltic countries has been of a sporadic nature, based on specific issues and personalities, and has not yet developed into a systemic institutional phenomenon (Austers 2017: 233). However, specific nuances can be identified in each country:

A cross-country comparison reveals that Latvia tends to be most sceptical of all three Baltic states, while even there, as shown by longitudinal examination, the level of opposition towards the EU has considerably diminished since 2011

as a consequence of a series of events of geopolitical nature. Estonia turns out to be the most consistently pro-European country, while in Lithuania, largely because of higher national self-esteem, a greater variety of opinions is observed, including on benefits from hypothetical membership in the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States]. The scepticism about the EU in the Baltic states is not so much driven by radical opposition to the EU but by a critical appraisal of its negative side-effects. (Austers 2017: 233)

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Eurorealistic, neither Eurosceptic nor Euroenthusiastic - this is how the prevailing attitude in the Baltic and Balkan geopolitical regions can be characterised. EU membership is not seriously questioned, but the number of Eurosceptic parties is growing.

3. CITIZENSHIP – CIVIC ACTIVISM COUNTERING HATE

Civic activism countering hate speech, supporting vulnerable groups, and working for their empowerment, is conceptualised through the concept of citizenship. Three reasons explain this choice.

The first reason is the post-communist "discovery" of citizenship. During communism, this concept meant nationality, it was tied to collective identity and belonging, and was "occupied" by the state. Post-communism has not negated the first meaning of the concept, which refers to national identity and belonging to a particular state, but it has opened up a wide field for its civic uses. In the democratic version, citizenship is tied to civic activism, participation, engagement (Carter 2001; Isin and Nyers 2014; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Krasteva et al 2019).

Post-communist "discovery" of citizenship as participation and activism

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                         Citizenship
                              |
            ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
        Communism                          Post-
                                          communism
            |                                  |
     ┌──────┴──────┐                    ┌──────┴──────┐
 "Occupied"    Tied to            Liberated by    Tied to
 by the state  belonging &         citizens      participation
               identity                          & activism
```
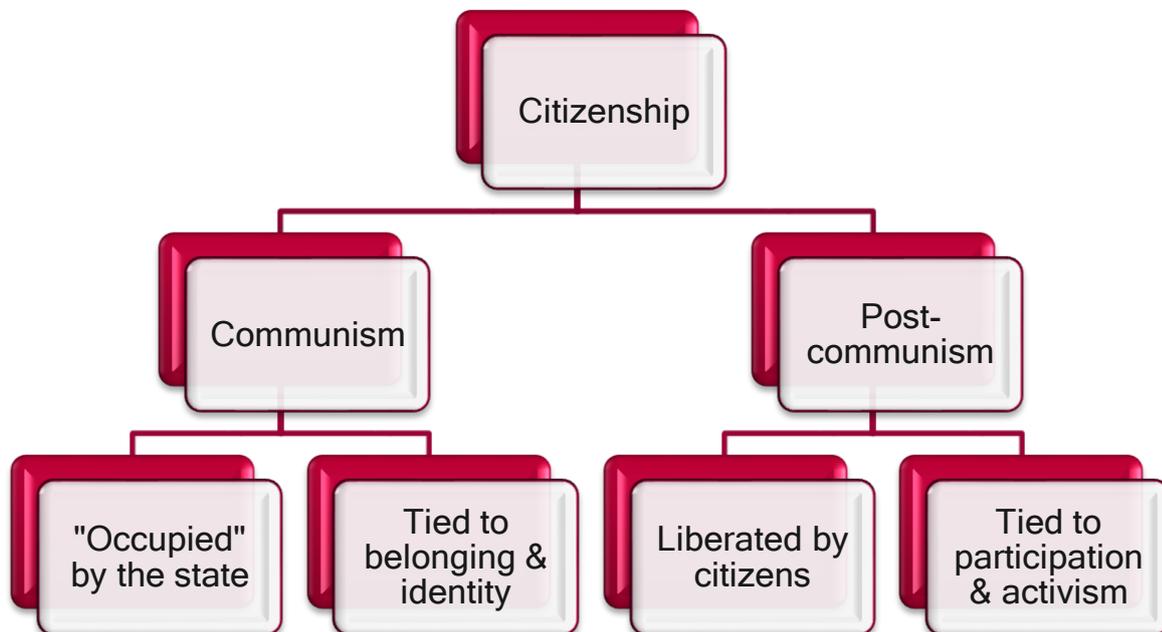
The second reason is the relevance of citizenship to the militant pathos of this study, to the active position of rejecting and countering hate speech: "citizenship remains a significant site through which to develop a critique of the pessimism about political possibilities" (Isin and Nyers 2014: 9). Pro-diversity,

pro-migrants, pro-minority activism is the civic voice of those who do not have a voice. Solidary citizenship has the (im)possible mission to counter far-right populism. Solidary citizenship is conceptualised as symbolic battles against the hegemonisation of the discourses of B/Ordering and Othering (Krasteva, Saarinen, and Siim 2019); the project to transform public space through the alternative discourses of solidarity, human security, inclusion, and acts that are foundational for constituting civic actors through their struggle for human dignity and politics of friendship. Solidary citizenship uplifts citizens' activism to the intersubjective imperative of Emmanuel Levinas, where our responsibility toward others makes our own existence meaningful: "Our responsibility for the Other founds our subjective being-in-the world by giving it a meaningful direction and orientation" (Levinas 1969: 22, quoted in Krasteva, Saarinen, and Siim 2019: 277).

The third reason is the multiplication and diversification of the forms of citizenship, which strengthens the links of solidary citizenship with other types of activism, conceptualised through the concept of inclusive intersectionality. The latter aims at countering the populist exclusionary intersectionality: the right-wing discourse of an "exclusionary intersectionality" (combining class, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality) forges these narratives into a common-sense perspective of difference and inequality, of belonging and non-belonging and thus exclusion. The radical right's strategy of "exclusive intersectionality" builds on a "chain of equivalence", which results in "anti-immigration", "anti-Muslim" and "anti-gender" as "empty signifiers" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) for the new hegemonic project of exclusion, inequality and solidarity of nationals only, of the nativist and homogeneous "we". Inclusive intersectionality as "total activism" takes a central position combining strong elements of both solidary and contestatory citizenship and aiming at impacting both politics and policies. Its high ambition is to counter the exclusionary intersectionality of the new right-wing hegemonic project by raising awareness of the crucial importance of intersectional mobilisations, the hybrid organisations aimed at transversal politics, and the enlarged transversal understanding of activism (Krasteva, Saarinen, and Siim 2019: 286).

Civil society plays a very important role in preventing and combating hate speech through its monitoring, advocacy, awareness-raising, educational, and other activities. This role has grown due to the state's weak commitment to countering hate speech in most of the analysed countries. Typical examples

outlining a common trend are Latvia and Lithuania: in the absence of any common and coordinated national policy on combating hate speech, the majority of the implemented initiatives have so far been performed by civil society (Reports on Latvia and Lithuania).

The political context of civic activism, solidarity movements, and acts of citizenship is framed by the mainstreaming of national populism and hegemonisation of sovereignist politics. The hegemonised populism in a number of countries explains the paradox between innovative civic activism and lack of political impact of numerous civic mobilisations, between the differentiation and determination of civic actors and the difficulties in building a counter-hegemonic strategy (Krasteva, Saarinen, and Siim 2019: 270-271)

Good practices of civic activism to counter hate speech will be grouped into several categories: strengthening the institutional structure for countering hate by strengthening existing and creating new organisations, movements, and initiatives; creating information portals for reporting hate content, raising public awareness, and intervening for eliminating hate speech; legal aid for victims of hate speech and hate crimes; developing anti-discrimination and human rights organisations and initiatives; strengthening ties between civil society actors; strengthening ties between representatives of civil society organisations and institutions; capacity building and training of civil society representatives to counter hate speech; urban initiatives to clear public spaces of signs of hate speech; art for creatively transforming hate into friendship.

Strengthening the institutional structure for countering hate by strengthening existing and creating new organisations, movements, and initiatives. Very successful in this regard was the Switch OFF/ONline Hate Speech project of the non-governmental organisation PATRIR, during which it brought the No Hate Speech Movement of the Council of Europe to Romania. (Report on Romania). In Estonia, the Equal Treatment Network (ETN) and the Estonian Human Rights Centre (EHRC) have played an active role in tackling hate speech issues in society with several educational initiatives and policy recommendations for criminalising hate speech (Report on Estonia).

Creating information portals for reporting hate content, raising public awareness, and intervening for eliminating hate speech. An interesting example is Pink Megaphone – an online tool, created by the organisation

Zagreb Pride in 2011, for reporting cases of violence, threats, and hate speech, especially related to sexual orientation or gender identity. A similar initiative was started in 2016 by the Centre for Safer Internet, which offers an online tool for reporting illegal internet content, including hate speech (Report on Croatia). Even more ambitious is an online hate speech reporting tool called DostajeMrznje.org (Enough with the hatred). It is a website created in 2016 by three Croatian civil society organisations: Centre for Peace Studies, GONG, and the Human Rights House Zagreb. It provides an opportunity for every citizen to warn against hate speech in the public space. Since different forms of hate speech do not fall under the same legal frameworks but are covered by different sectoral regulations (media, criminal law, anti-discrimination, etc.), the tool facilitates access to intervention of unacceptable public speech. Depending on the nature of each individual application, it may be converted by the administrators of the tool into an official submission to the competent public authority (e.g., regulatory body, Ombudsperson institution, or State Attorney's Office). The purpose of the DostajeMrznje.org tool is both to intervene to eliminate hate speech and to raise public awareness of such expressions as being incompatible with a democratically organised society (Report on Croatia). Do One Brave Thing is an interesting example from Romania of a European project that looked at raising awareness on recognising fake news and critically assessing the background and pre-conditions of their emergence. The project produced a public tool where users can test a news site or article for click-bait content. The project produced a number of guides, toolkits and informational videos, tailored specifically for young audiences, showing how hate narratives accentuate polarisation and extremism, specifically among young people (Report on Romania). In Estonia in 2021, a few anonymous self-proclaimed promoters of the Estonian language, culture and art launched a website, Vihakone.com, to raise awareness on hate-speech-related problems by posting examples of hate speech from various online platforms. The website's mission is not to pass judgement on people using hate speech but rather to refer to the content of hate speech and find a solution to this growing issue in Estonian society (Report on Estonia). It should be noted that the struggle on social media is difficult and unequal because anti-hate posts trigger a strong backlash: as noted by one interviewed representative of civil society in Estonia, the reaction towards anti-hate-speech activities is often negative, even aggressive. Social media posts about consequences of hate speech attract internet trolls, politicians, and activists who advocate total freedom of speech (Report on Estonia).

Legal aid for victims of hate speech and hate crimes. A typical example is the European Foundation of Human Rights (EFHR) in Lithuania, which provides free legal aid to victims of hate speech (and hate crime as well) (Report on Lithuania). The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee is also very active in providing legal aid to victims of hate speech.

Developing anti-discrimination and human rights organisations and initiatives. Many of them are specialised in protecting the rights of certain minority groups. Among the many Roma organisations, the Romanian report singles out Romani CRISS. It has an almost 20-year-long history (it was founded in 1993) and aims to protect the Roma community's fundamental rights in Romania. The NGO provides legal assistance in cases of abuse and works to prevent the discrimination of people belonging to the community. Among its activities, the organisation is monitoring and investigating cases of human rights violations, including incitement to hatred, creating and organising campaigns, conducting research, and producing brochures and studies (Report on Romania). The rights of the LGBTQIA+ community are also the object of activities of organisations in the different countries. Among the most active ones in Romania is ACCEPT, founded in 1994 to challenge and combat the negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community by raising awareness among the Romanian public and media (Report on Romania). In Latvia, the LGBTQIA+ organisation Mozaika organises different activities aimed at combating homophobic hate speech and hate crimes. In 2020, Mozaika analysed police reaction and investigation of homophobic hate speech. Since 2017, the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Mozaika have participated in a hate speech monitoring exercise initiated by the European Commission (Report on Latvia). Strengthening ties between civil society actors to promote exchange of information and experiences on good initiatives and practices, as well as to strengthen and reinforce civil society and its self-confidence as an agent of change. A CSO representative pointed out in an interview: "Every form of exchange is important for the work of breaking down one's own prejudices, from which any further (hateful) action starts. Any initiative aimed at sharing experiences, socialising, understanding positions and situations is important and can contribute to the creation of an integrated and reasonable society which is good and comfortable to live in" (Report on Croatia).

Strengthening ties between representatives of civil society organisations and institutions: all the interviewed civil society representatives in Estonia have a working cooperation with the Estonian police and numerous positive experiences regarding specific cases and projects (Report on Estonia). A good example of cooperation with local authorities is the annual initiative of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, in partnership with the organisation "Participation for All": training for pupils and teachers in schools about hate speech. The activities are funded by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports of the Riga City Council in the framework of the annual Society Integration Programme (Report on Latvia). A specific example is analysed by the Latvian report – namely, the national campaign on combating hate speech launched in 2013 within the framework of the "No Hate Speech Movement" initiated by the Council of Europe. The campaign was coordinated by the Society Integration Foundation in cooperation with the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and the Ministry of Education and Science. It included training for journalists about hate speech and a competition for young people to produce videos on the theme of "No to Online Hate Speech". An interesting aspect illustrating the insufficiently active role of the state is that although the campaign was coordinated by a state institution, it did not receive national funding, but was funded by the EEA/Norway grants (Report on Latvia). In Lithuania, the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Human Rights Monitoring Institute and the Lithuanian Human Rights Centre organised meetings between law enforcement officers and representatives of the groups vulnerable to hate crime and hate speech. Five discussions in five of Lithuania's biggest cities were held (Report on Lithuania).

Capacity building and training of civil society representatives to counter hate speech. An example of such good practices is the organisation of training for professionals on Criminal Code provisions on hate crimes and illegal hate speech (public incitement to hatred and violence). This has been implemented in Croatia by the Government's Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities in cooperation with the Judicial Academy and CSO Centre for Peace Studies. The training is designed for a mixed group of professionals involved in different aspects of dealing with these criminal offences, including judges, lawyers, state attorneys, police officers and civil society representatives (Report on Croatia). The Latvian Centre for Human Rights implemented a project titled "NGO Capacity Building to Combat Online Hate", which included a variety of mutually complementary activities, such as

monitoring of online hate speech and improving the response of local internet portals on hate speech, training of NGO representatives and young people on identification and responding to online hate speech, and strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and NGOs (Report on Latvia).

Urban initiatives to clear public spaces of signs of hate speech. For example, a project titled "Incidental Evil" conducted research in three major Croatian cities – Zagreb, Osijek and Split – as well as in smaller towns and other micro-locations throughout Croatia. It documented more than 400 hate signs and symbols in about 170 locations. The project's implementers intend to report them to the competent authorities, enclose the exact addresses with photographs of the documented locations, and request their removal. The general public also participated in this project by sending photos and locations. Another example is an exhibition called "Walls of Hate", which was opened in November 2019 by the photographer Jovica Drobnjak, who documented graffiti in public areas such as walls, newsagents, traffic signs, underpasses, tram stations and garbage cans. These and similar initiatives work towards the prevention and spreading of hateful messages by raising public awareness of their existence and overcoming ignorance of such occurrences (Report on Croatia).

Art for creatively transforming hate into friendship. A specific example of civic courage was shown by Jure Zubčić, a young city councillor in Zadar, who used a simple semantic intervention to turn the hateful graffiti towards the Serbs into a message of love. Following that event, the EXIT Foundation from Serbia launched a regional campaign, #ShareLove, which invited people from the region to share similar positive messages or examples on their social media. Another promising practice of cooperation of local citizen initiatives and local authorities can be found in Osijek, where the newly established Mladforma initiative turns graffiti of inappropriate content into imaginative street paintings with financial support from the City of Osijek (Report on Croatia). In early 2021, three NGOs in Lithuania launched a social campaign titled "Daugiau meilės" (More Love) to counter hate speech: "several videos were created that transformed real online hate speech into the messages of love. One of the videos starts with the reading of hate speech comment: 'And from me throw a brick to those LGBT' that suddenly is transformed to a colourful image stating: 'And from me – red roses to the LGBT', and finishes with encouraging people to report hate speech to the police. Similar videos were created to counter hate

speech against the Jewish and Roma communities, as well as hate speech against Muslims and the Polish minority" (Report on Lithuania).

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David versus Goliath – this is how one can figuratively describe the struggle of civil society against the "giant" of hate-actors: parties, conservative groups, and a haterised digital public space. The Estonian report notes that sentiment of pessimism is evident. It was noted that there is very little that can be done in the current environment due to public attitudes and lack of legislation. Despite the unequal battle, civil society representatives are continuing to work for the cause of countering hate speech and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups.

CONCLUSION

The Symbolic Cartography of Hate and Euroscepticism

Hate and Euroscepticism are interrelated and interfering elements of a common symbolic politics of national populism, structured in the following chart:

Chart

Symbolic cartography of hate and Euroscepticism

Politics of Hate & Fear
Identitarianism
Othering
Anti-minorities/migrants

Demophilia
vs
Anti-Elitism

Post-Secularism
Religionisation of politics
Conservative values of Christianity, traditional family, gender, etc.
Anti-Islam

Euroscepticism
Nationalism & Statism
Anti-EU integration/ globalization
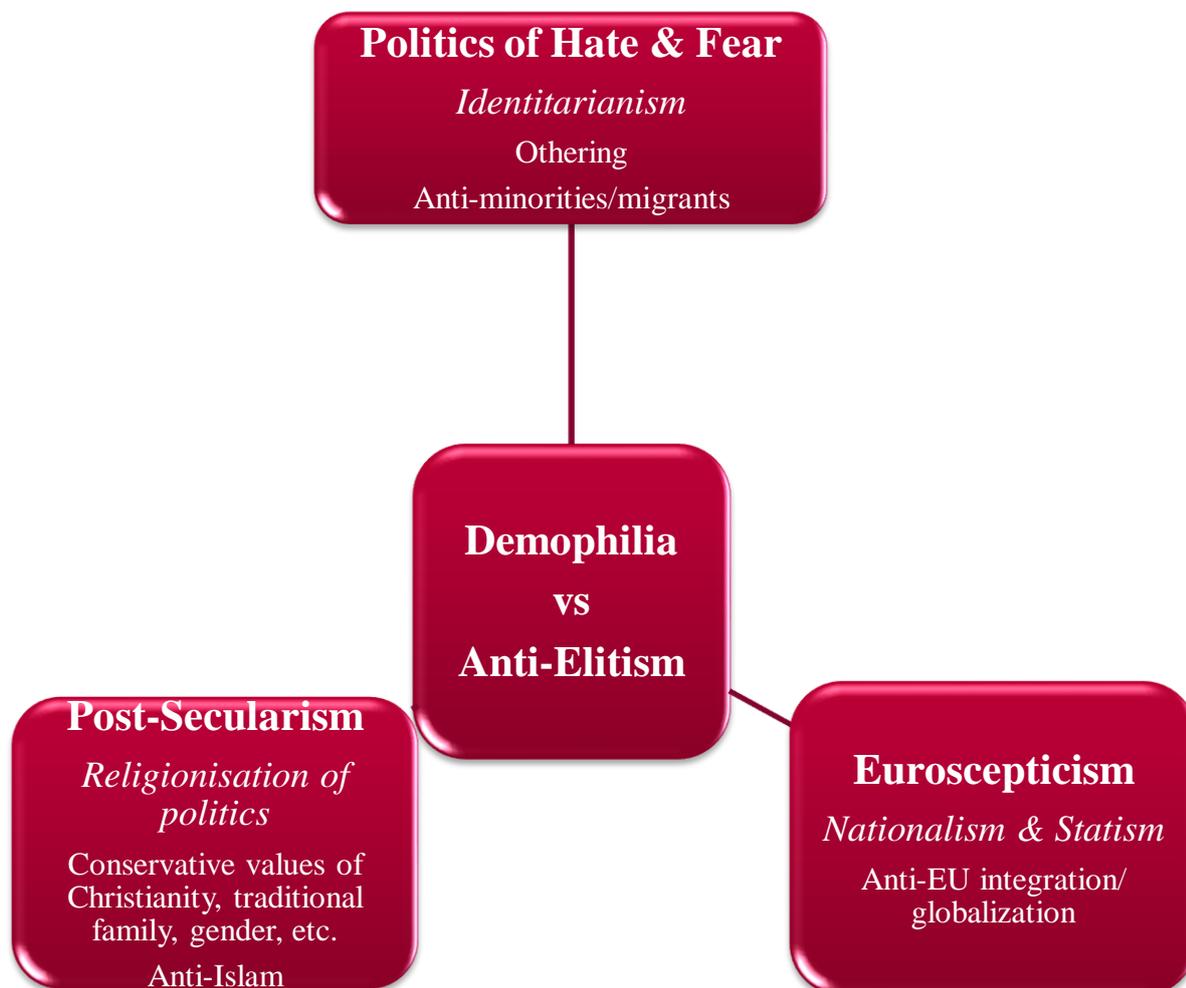
The identitarian pole concentrates the overproduction of Othering and expresses its politics of hate and fear. Euroscepticism is one of the expressions of rising nationalism. The new wave of conservative values of Christianity, of the traditional family and gender roles are structured in the third pillar of post-secularism. The people – the sine qua non of any national populism – is in the centre of the three-pole map. The radical demophilia is defined and defended against the radical anti-elitism. This symbolic cartography structures the ideological universe of national populism (Krasteva 2016).

Politics of Hate. "If the Roma did not exist, post-communism would invent him."[6] I allow myself to paraphrase Sartre, because his insightful observation provides the subtlest description of the mechanism for transforming Roma people into a key, archetypal figure of Otherness. We must note the radical change from communist to post-communist Othering. Communism perceived Others in political and class-based terms: imperialists, bourgeoisie, kulaks, enemies inside the Party. Post-communism redesigned symbolic cartography from politics and class to ethnicity. "Putting an end to Gypsy crime" is one of the slogans of the Bulgarian extremist party Ataka, which is also found in the discourse of many other parties. Thus, two effects are achieved – the ethnicisation of crime and the criminalisation of the Roma community. The hate cluster is also crowded with many other figures of Otherness, such as refugees, migrants, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Euroscepticism is a relatively new phenomenon in the powerful cluster of nationalism. It calls for the return of the state and vehemently criticises EU integration and globalisation, which it often describes as "neo-colonialism". Characteristic of the analysed Baltic and Balkan countries is the asymmetrical production of Euroscepticism from above and from below – it is significantly more intense on the part of elites and significantly more moderate on the part of citizens. The answers to the theoretical dilemma of whether Euroscepticism is elite or mass driven in relation to the Baltic and Balkan post-communist context definitely tends towards the former – supply of Eurosceptic messages by party actors exceeds demand from voters.

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[6] "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" (Sartre 1995: 8).

Conservative values are part of the third cluster of post-secularism and the resurgence of religion, of the more general trend of the religionisation of politics. A number of nationalist parties are close to the churches in their respective countries and mobilise religious themes in their rhetoric. A typical example is the Ataka party, which has campaigned in elections under the slogan "Orthodox Solidarity" (Krasteva 2016). EKRE in Estonia declared that the EU should protect Christian culture and traditional European values, primarily by stopping immigration and deporting illegal immigrants. In this conservative value-universe, it is easier to promote ideas of a return of modern emancipated women to traditional gender roles in the family and society, as well as the rejection of other religions and powerful anti-Islam rhetoric.

"Small is small" – Vitkus's (2017) diagnosis of Euroscepticism in Lithuania can be applied to the whole Baltic region and to a lesser extent to the Balkan region, but the phenomenon is tending to develop. It opposes – although it has failed to completely undermine – Husserl's beautiful and inspiring idea of Europe not as a geographical reality but as a spiritual essence whose intellectual substance is philosophy and whose political realisation is democracy.

Citizenship as Politics of Solidarity, Empowerment and Friendship

To the negative three-pole symbolic cartography of hate and Euroscepticism I will contrast the positive and militant symbolic cartography of solidary citizenship.

The cartography of solidary citizenship is structured around three poles. The central one is citizenship as participation, engagement, as a contribution to militant democracy. This pole is key because an activist understanding of citizenship has developed parallel with the democratic changes, in which the consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of participative citizenship reinforce each other.

The second pole is related to civic activism as a politics of friendship. I conceptualise solidary citizenship as symbolic battles against the hegemonisation of the discourses of B/Orderning and Othering; the project to transform public space through the alternative discourses of solidarity, human security, inclusion, and acts that are foundational for constituting civic actors through their struggle for human dignity and politics of friendship (Krasteva et al 2019; Krasteva, Saarinen, and Siim 2019). Solidary citizenship uplifts citizens' activism to the intersubjective imperative of Emmanuel Levinas,

Chart

Symbolic cartography of solidary citizenship

where our responsibility towards others makes our own existence meaningful (Levinas, 1969: 22).

The third pole is the actors who promote EU values, anti-discrimination and human rights. A key strategy is inclusive intersectionality for countering the populist exclusionary intersectionality of the mainstreamed far-right hegemonic project. The aim is to develop an activism that is not ad hoc and that addresses not individual but multiple causes – of minorities, refugees, women, etc. The power of national populism is largely due to Othering and Ordering, to the overproduction of Others and the redefinition of social order based on exclusion. Citizens' activism is more fragmented, issue-based, ad hoc, etc. Identifying inclusive intersectionality, the need for civic alliances and coalitions as a crucial way to counter hate and populist exclusionary intersectionality is a promising strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU and its institutions should be explained in an understandable, appealing and intriguing way. EU representatives need to demonstrate that European integration is not a project driven exclusively by the elites or benefiting just the centre. EU-wide societal integration should not be limited to youth and the Erasmus+ programme. Mainstream and moderate parties need to seriously address some of the salient weaknesses of EU policies to respond to citizens' concerns and fears.

The Governments should apply a holistic approach to combating hate speech that includes maintaining comprehensive dialogue with the aim of recognising, monitoring, preventing, raising awareness, activating citizens and empowering victims, as well as strengthening regulatory mechanisms.

Hate speech should be adequately prosecuted and punished by law. In addition to sanctioning the perpetrator, criminal sanctions also have the purpose of general prevention.

It is necessary to achieve an active partnership with various social actors in the countering of hate speech: state authorities, educational and religious institutions and communities, trade unions, the wider economic community, CSOs, and civil society platforms.

Systematic civic education covering the topics of: combating discrimination; fostering an inclusive environment; recognising hate speech; improving media literacy; etc., should be an integral component of curricula in educational institutions. These topics should also be part of non-formal education programmes for various stakeholders who encounter the spreading of hate messages or who encounter the targets of such messages – from media workers to police officers, other professionals within the justice system, health workers, and the education system.

Public authorities should unambiguously condemn hate speech and hate crime, in particular where inflammatory statements by political figures are involved.

There is a need to actively advocate for the adoption of codes of ethics within political parties and to promote their implementation in order to prevent hate speech by high-ranking politicians and public figures.

Large-scale awareness-raising campaigns should be regularly organised at national and local level for increasing awareness and understanding of hate speech and for building social resilience. A multi-stakeholder approach including schools, universities, civil society, media, media regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, and social media should be developed and strengthened in order to create more synergies.

Political parties, institutions and media which use hate speech should be deprived of European, national, and local funding. Those who use it should be fined.

As journalists are the most concerned about freedom of speech, targeted activities, discussions and workshops should be regularly organised to discuss the distinction between freedom of speech and hate speech and the methods to tackle hate and to promote inclusiveness.

The online environment should be viewed as a serious threat. The authorities should be trained to understand the intentions of those who misuse the internet. Legal tools should be mobilised to sanction the spreading of hate speech on websites or social media. In order to tackle online hate speech, algorithms detecting hate speech should be developed and adapted to the national languages.

Hate should be interpreted in relation to political phenomena such as populism, rise of the far and extremist right, and Euroscepticism, and legislation should be focused on factors and drivers.

Systematic efforts should be implemented for increasing trust between law enforcement and vulnerable groups, for strengthening the police capacity in identifying hate speech and hate crimes and for encouraging victims to report hate speech and discrimination. Information campaigns should be organised regularly to raise the awareness of the targeted groups of their rights and the possibilities for reporting hate speech.

Systematic efforts should be implemented for raising the capacity of NGOs, especially youth organisations and youth centres on hate speech, including provision of support to the victims of intolerance and hate speech.

Issues promoting European values, democracy, human rights and diversity should be included in education programmes throughout the education system, creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment.

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