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Countering online hate speech: how to adequately protect fundamental rights?

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Countering online hate speech

Today, almost 5 billion people communicate through social media online platforms. Easy access, large audience sizes, anonymity, and instantaneous publication of content all contribute to expeditious information spread and suggest new tools for large-scale influence. The benefits of online communication are undeniable. Concomitantly, we witness the proliferation of hate speech on online platforms, already linked in certain cases with an increase in offline violence. Online platforms have developed self-regulatory polices to counter hate speech which often remain opaque, lack democratic enforcement and remedy mechanisms.

This thesis builds on a critical conceptualization of online hate speech deriving from the European regulatory and policy framework, to investigate and propose legal avenues for the strengthening of the responsibilities of online platforms to counter online hate speech whilst upholding fundamental rights. More specifically, this thesis seeks to: 1) advance the legal conceptualization of hate speech; 2) systematize legal responsibilities of online platforms when regulating hate speech; 3) propose and evaluate, from a human rights perspective, new mitigation and enforcement designs; and, 4) study remedy mechanisms compliant with human rights law. This thesis aims to strengthen the corporate responsibilities of online platforms to countering online hate speech in a human rights compliant manner.

This is a volume in the series of the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of the Leiden Law School of Leiden University. This study is part of the Law School's research programme 'Effective Protection of Fundamental Rights in a pluralist world'.

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