



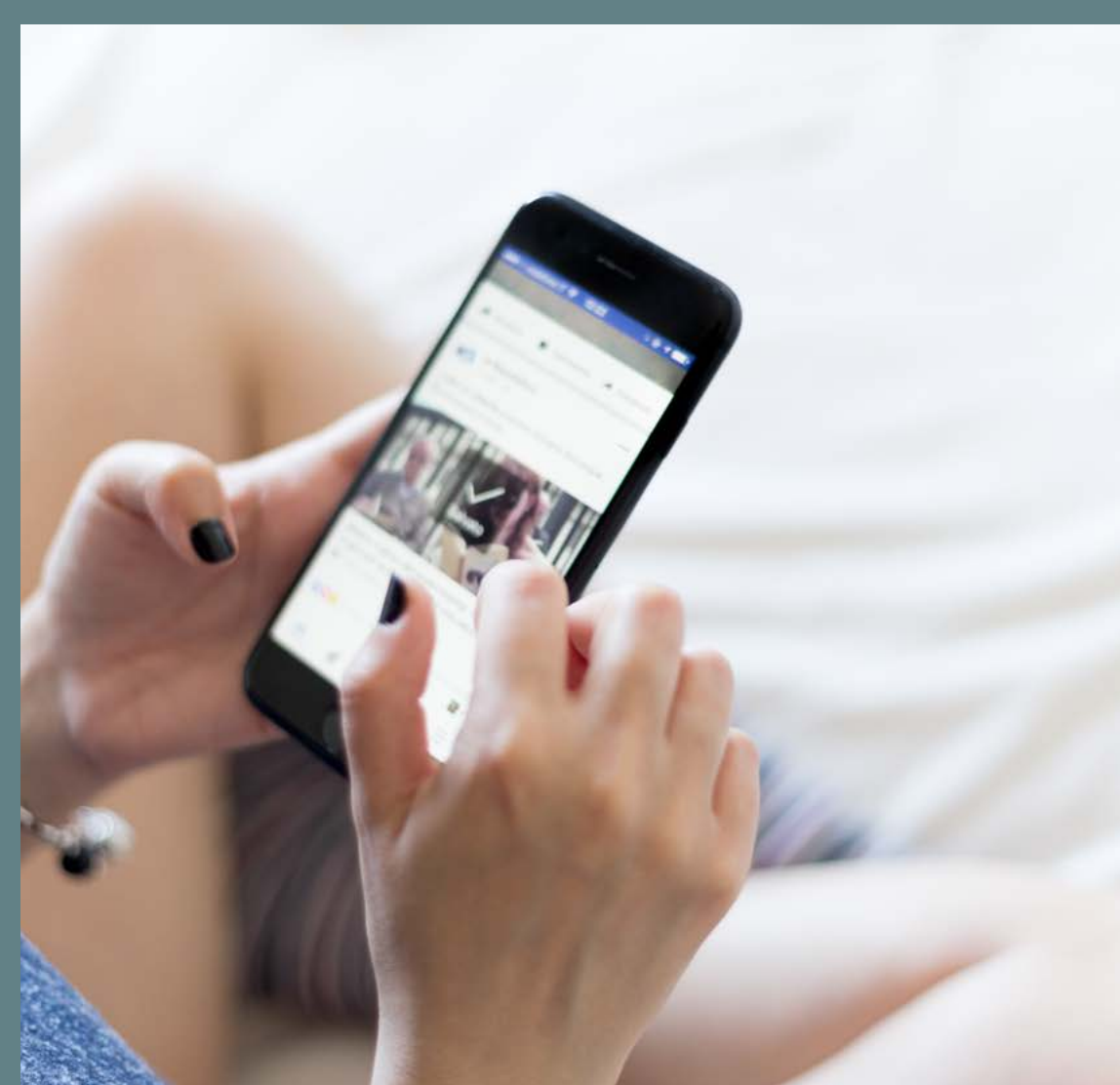
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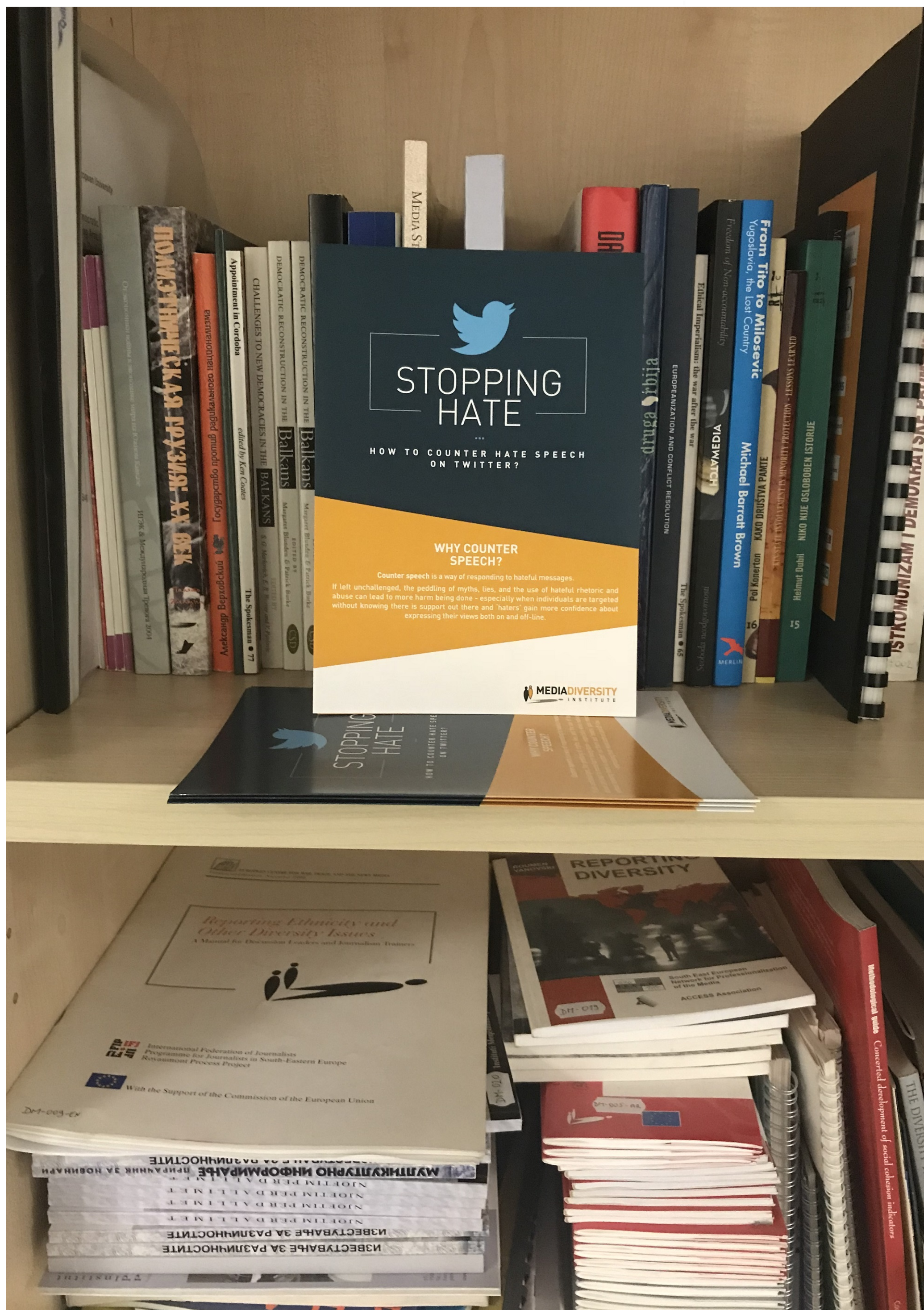
MONITORING REPORT



“Get the Trolls Out!” – Program to Encourage Young People to Combat Discrimination and Religious Intolerance in Europe

We have spent a little over a year monitoring the traditional and social media for incidents of anti-religious hate in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary and the UK with some very interesting findings. Our project will continue to monitor both and draw attention to incidents of hate towards religious groups in the media. If you are interested in learning more about what we are doing in reaction to these incidents please browse through our website to see what impact we are having.

8th of February 2019



This report presents the results of the media monitoring section of the project *Get the Trolls Out*. It first briefly outlines the objectives, rationale and the analytical tools used in media monitoring. This is followed by a summary of the identified patterns and the immigration theme within which antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Christian rhetoric, as well as other forms of hate speech occur. The report explores the significance of the findings and provides methodological recommendations for setting up similar project in the future.

8th of February 2019



Media monitoring: objective, strategy, rationale



The main objective of the media monitoring is to document incidents of intolerance and xenophobia which have emerged on new and traditional media platforms. The monitoring strategy was developed to provide systematic and consistent analysis of antireligious speech across all six countries based on the following premises:

- Mainstream media reach the largest audience, have influence on decision makers and are the most important in shaping public opinion
- Journalism section of the media is a vehicle for public conversation and civic action
- Online hate speech that is linked to mainstream media is more powerful than individual social media accounts

Based on background knowledge on a set of factors that have the potential to influence media work - religious groups, civil society organisations, political groups, anti-discriminatory legislation and the ownership, reach and organizational structure of media in each country – monitors selected four mainstream news organisations for regular monitoring.

The main criterion for selection was the audience reach (circulation, number of viewers and listeners and number of views).

Using key words that refer to religion and religious affiliation to select the sample, monitors collected data and analyzed media content published on the main platform (online pages of newspapers, radio, television, and online only news outlets), as well as the Facebook and Twitter accounts of these organizations. Posts on the social media pages of mainstream organizations were used to identify individual posts that carried antireligious messages.

Documented incidents were used to inform other project activities: production of a range of media products with a view to challenging stereotypes, debunking discriminatory rhetoric, showing its harmful effect on at-risk communities and encouraging dynamic social media engagement.

Documenting Incidents

Media monitoring generated data about the following aspects of reporting: date of publication, country, type of hatred speech, hate speech originator, type of content, description and context of the incident, details about the outlet, engagement level on Facebook and Twitter, if the incident was reported, could it be considered a criminal offence, and would a monitor report the hateful comment (on main platform or social media).

Data was collected and analyzed in terms of the content and context of religious intolerance, as well as the production and reproduction of hate speech. Attention was paid specifically to the use of sources, dominant frames, newsgathering techniques, genre of the text, and language used. More specifically, the monitors were instructed to look at the following:

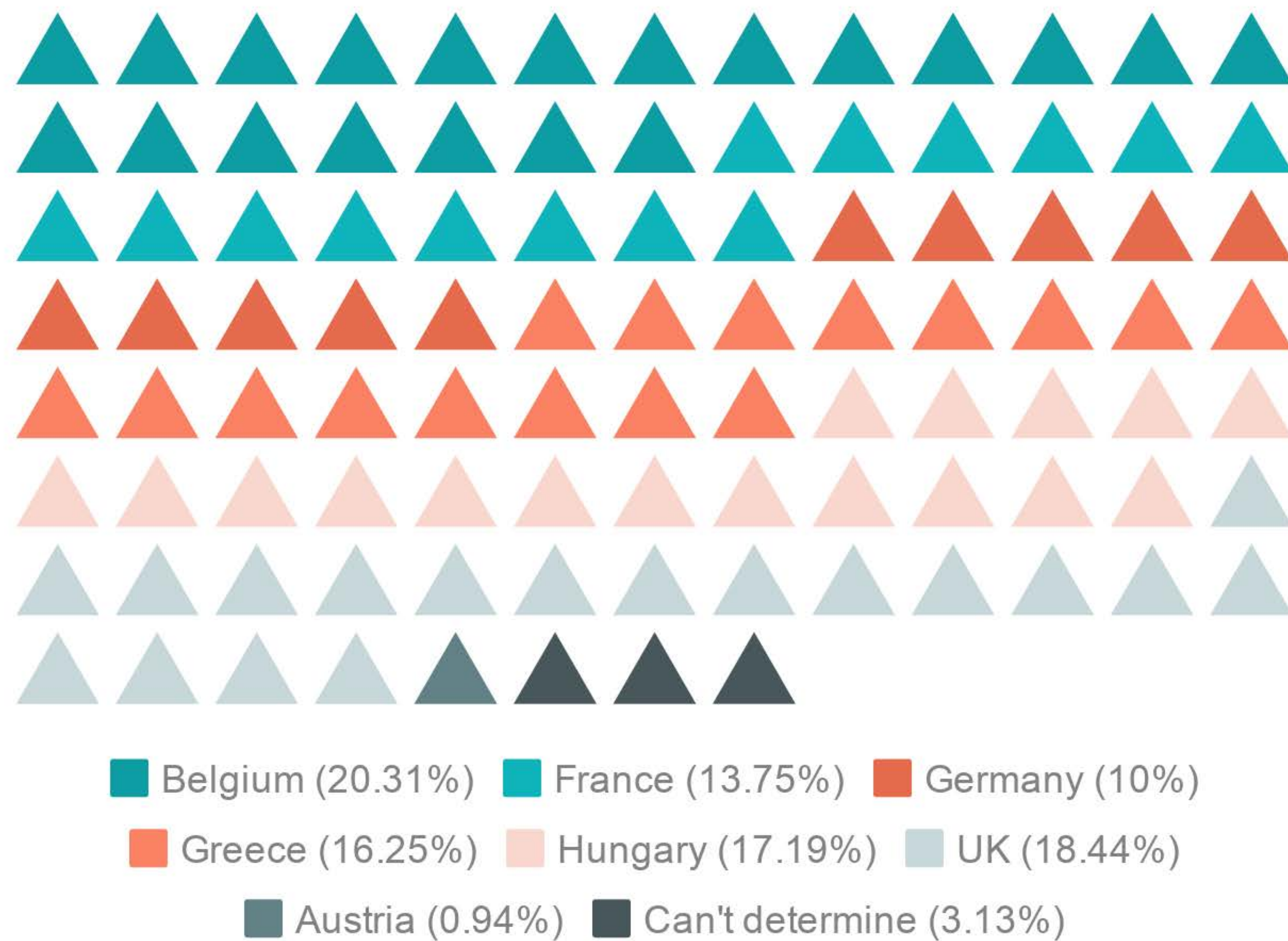
- *Newspaper text* - lexical choices, naming, attribution, referencing, argument, narrative structure, use of images
- *Television story*: voice-over, close-ups, two-shots, sign-off, wrap (when two or more stories wrap together); the rest as for the newspaper text
- *Radio story*: voicer (narrator), actuality (sounds from the news event or after the event interviews), intro to the story, talents (people interviewed)
- *Online story*: form, style, interactivity, use of audio and visual material, regularity of updates

As for the social media content, monitors examined comments and replies to the main text, number of likes, shares, replies, and background of the author. The objective was to provide information for creating counter narrative social media content.

FINDINGS:

Chart 1:

In which country did the incident take place?

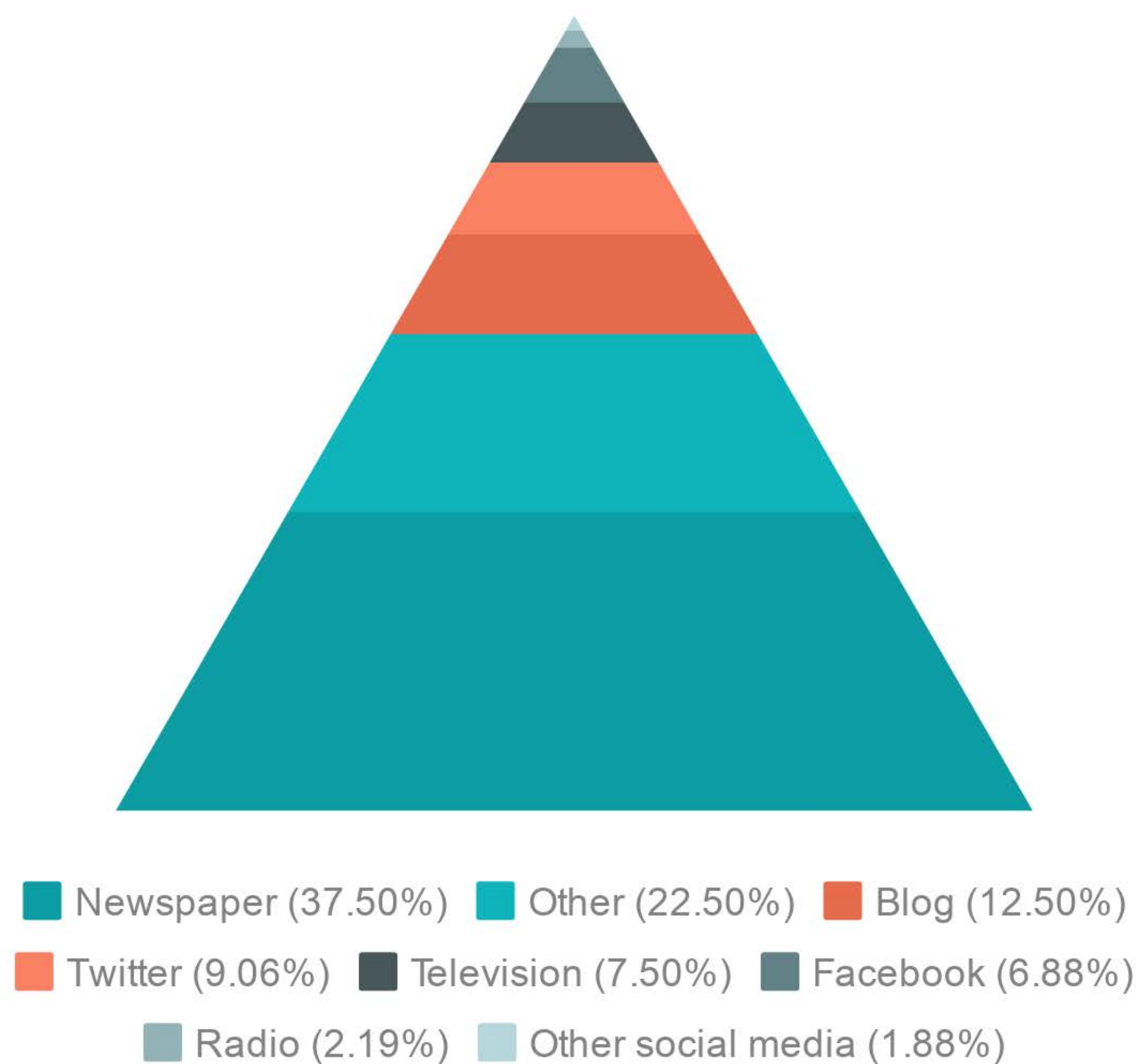


There were 310 registered incidents over the monitoring period. They were equally spread across all six countries. In addition, a number of reported incidents occurred in Austria, these media texts were either republished or commented upon by the media subjected to monitoring (Chart 1). The media monitoring results confirmed that newspapers are still the dominant media platform from which the content and tone of antireligious messages is generated (Chart 2).

Academic studies have shown that media imitate each other and tend to devote attention to issues that have previously received exposure in other media outlets. Newspapers take a lead, but adoption of each others agenda (known as intermedia agenda setting) happens across all platforms and includes transfer of content, formats, and language. More than a third of incidents registered in the newspaper coverage of religion signify the print media power to determine agenda and to influence the way religion groups are perceived by the public.

Chart 2:

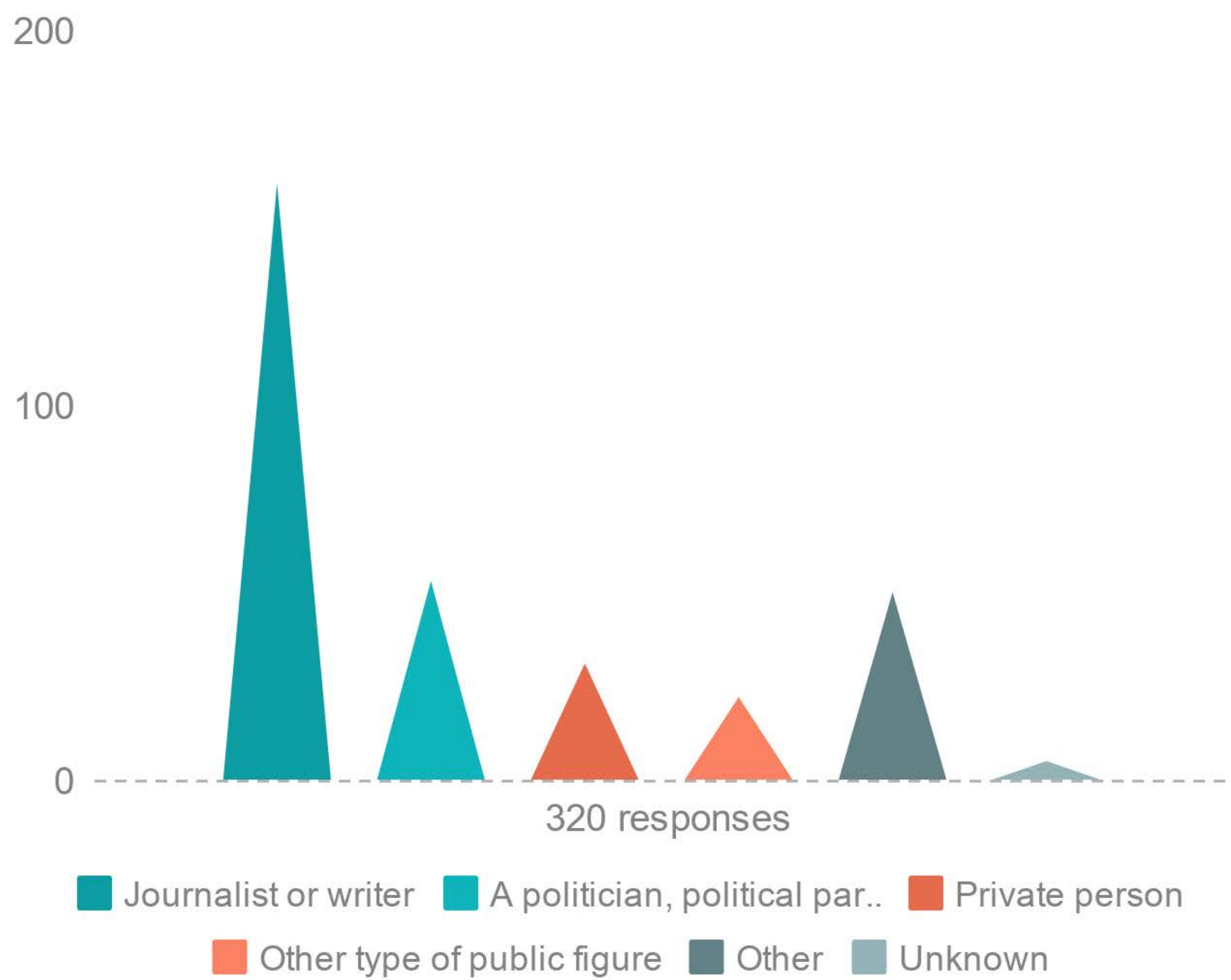
What type of media was the incident identified in?



GTTO monitoring revealed how the digital world has expanded communication space by allowing an ongoing dialogue between both traditional and new media, and media and citizens. A single communicative act, political speech for example, first reported by journalists was republished, commented on, and discussed in a chain of communicative acts that spread across mainstream and social media, removing the boundaries between them and linking citizens, political and social activists, civil society representatives, academics, and other participants in public discussion.

When asked what type of figure committed the discriminatory incident, monitors discovered that journalists and writers of the text were the most dominant generator of offensive language, but this high percentage of authorship (Chart 3) has to be taken with caution because it gives just a snapshot of a single moment in the communication process.

Chart 3: What type of figure committed the incident?

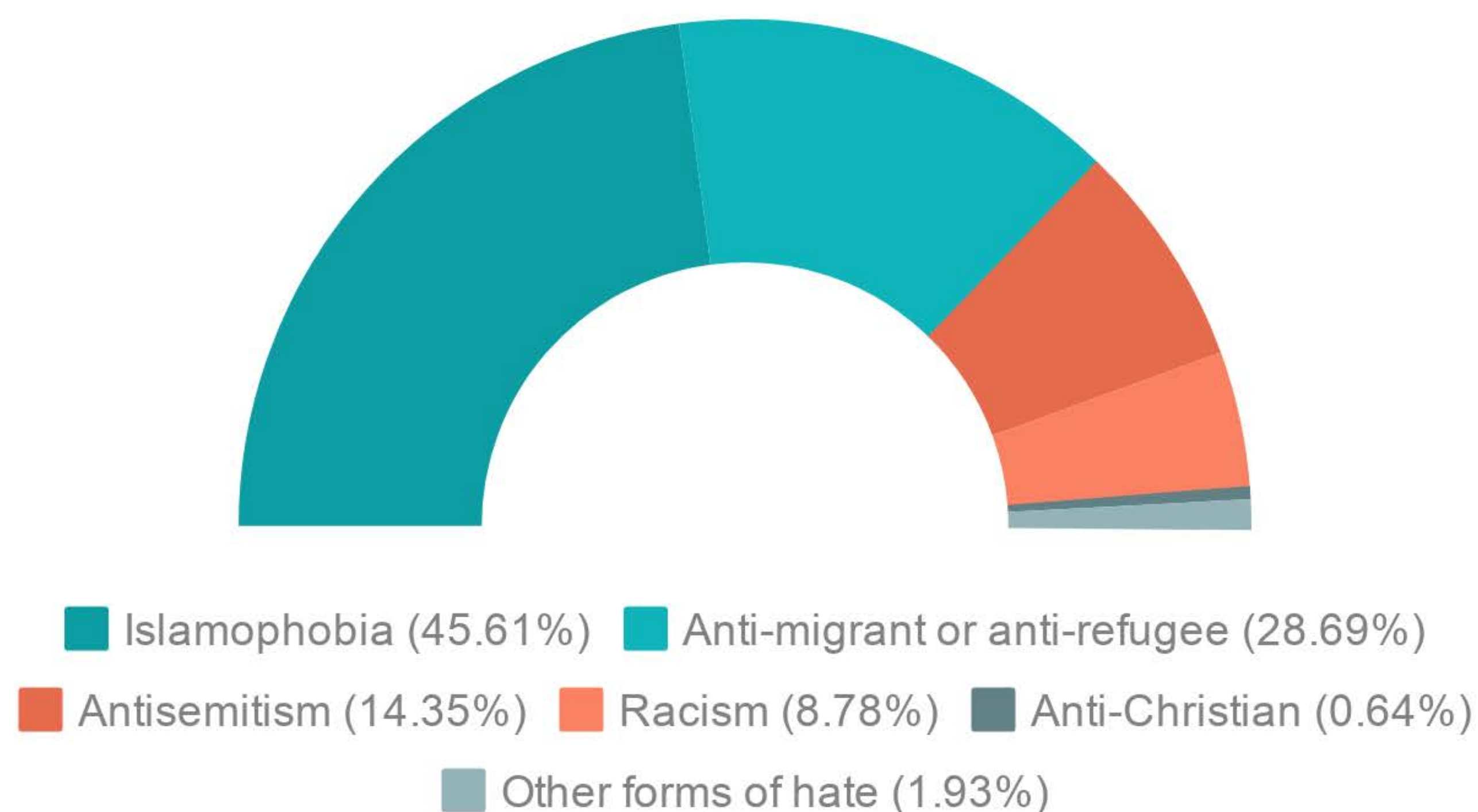


Monitoring allows us to identify a specific incident that is always a fixed moment, not an element in a very dynamic communication process. Capturing the communication process and not a single act would help to provide details about the damage done, was a journalist citing someone's speech (political statement) or offering personal view, and if and what has happened afterwards (how many times and where it was republished or posted in a spiral of digital communication). Future research should focus on developing tools to capture the journey of hate speech based on religious grounds.

GTTO monitoring of media in six countries over the year revealed that Islamophobia was the dominant kind of hatred in the sample of media content, followed by implied references to religion in anti-migrant and anti-refugees messages, antisemitic messages and racism (Chart 4). Despite the variations in the tone and balance of media texts reported as incidents, Muslims were generally portrayed using stereotypes, while Islam is presented as a threat to security.

Chart 4:

What kind of hatred are you reporting on?



Victor Orban’s statement “We must keep Europe Christian”, given at the peak of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, has been often evoked as serving as a generator for a wave of antireligious messages towards non-Christians. Antisemitic discourse, again strongly present in Hungary in the campaign against George Soros, involved aggressive campaigning on social media, stereotyping, posting misinformation and misleading claims, ranging from light provocative behaviour to outright abuse. A relatively small number of anti-Christian messages, (3%) occurred predominantly in reports related to the problems with the Catholic church.

One of the monitoring questions monitoring addressed the question of the nature of offensive statements and if they could be considered a criminal offence. The majority would not (56.5%), and only 8.1% would be considered a criminal offence. A relatively small percentage is to be expected in the context of increasing mainstream media’s awareness of the anti-discriminatory legislation and the community guidelines for social media users. However, for more than a third of the stories (36.5%) monitors were not able to make a call. This high percentage of unknown is a lesson for future work. If the project continues, partners should to recruit monitors with a background in law and media or providing a legal workshop at the beginning of the project.

Going back to the results: where did these incidents take place? Anti-religious messages were mainly posted on individual users and private group Facebook pages and Twitter accounts (63.3% and 10%) while only 6.7% of anti-religious posts were registered on the official mainstream media organisations pages and accounts (Chart 5).

Chart 5:

Social media - the page or the profile the incident took place on belongs to



■ An individual ■ A private group ■ A public group
■ A media organisation ■ Other

The GTTO project aimed to generate material that would put anti-religious media language into the context of dominant social issues at that time. A number of open-ended questions was listed in the incident form to provide further information on the relationship between media text and a wider social, political and cultural context. Immigration and the refugee crisis are still and by far the most dominant topics that trigger discriminatory narratives.

IMMIGRATION AS A MAIN TOPIC:

Much of the media content referring to religion appeared when reporting on events and controversies related to highly contested political issues of immigration and the refugee crisis. Media associated migrants with bad news and a threat to national identity, culture and cohesiveness. The immigration issue was commonly framed as a challenge to the economy and a threat to national identity and security. Variations of the following examples were present across all countries: “If we did not have mass immigration in France of millions of Muslims for 40 years, we would not have Muslim terrorist attacks. It is as simple as that,” or “Think ahead rather than too late: What can it mean if Islam spreads throughout Germany?”

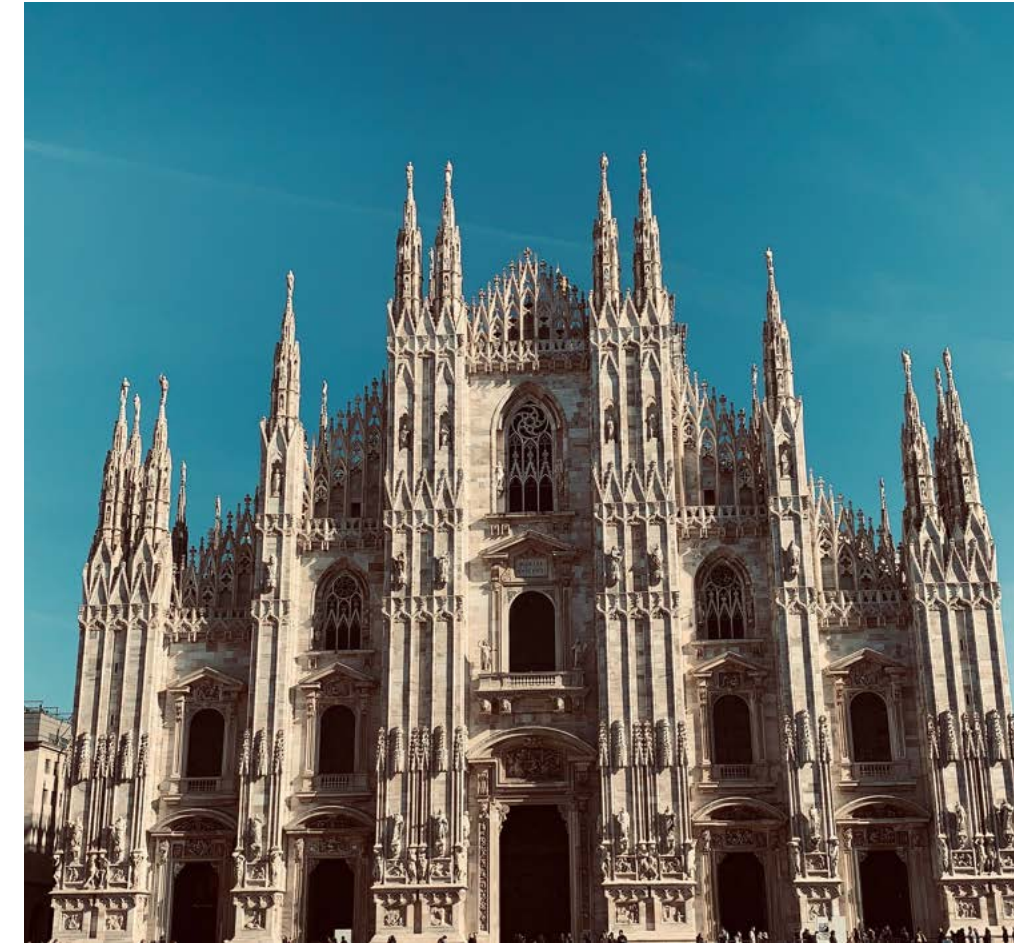
Reports on issues such as teaching Islam in schools, terrorism, the veil, integration, places of worship, forced marriage, abortion, extremism, homosexuality, sexual scandals in the church, identified in the 2012 MDI report “Getting the facts right: reporting ethnicity and religion in Europe” were in 2018 still the most common triggers and the place for antireligious talk. Our sample of media stories and posts demonstrated that religious intolerance is consistently more implied than explicit, no discriminatory language and racist labels are used but intolerance inferred when religion is described. For example: “they are all economic refugees, and on the top of that Muslims, they even don’t pay to come – have you ever seen a Coptic Egyptian seeking refugee status, don’t be naive”, or “butt out, Mr Soros, you can keep your tainted money” or “ “which religion comes first when you think about death? Islam 85%”. In one article that talks about ISIS “apparent plans to infiltrate Europe” the author associates Muslim immigrants with ISIS, suggesting they are “slowly spreading Islam” in countries like the UK.



Significance of research

The media monitoring part of the project Get the Trolls Out was designed to inform other activities in the project. As such it has provided a significant data base for the production of counter-narratives and dynamic social media engagement.

Documenting incidents has generated knowledge about the ways traditional and social media are implicated in antireligious discourse. One of the significant patterns identified by monitoring is intermedia agenda setting as a mechanism that underpins offensive media talk. The competitive setting of most media markets and the popularity contest on social media encourages reprinting, borrowing and sharing the content that brings competitive advantage. Studies consistently found that newspapers matter more for than TV, and GTTO monitoring confirms this trend.



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