



## **Hate speech in Poland 2014 Summary of the national opinion poll**

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Warsaw, 2014

**„I detest fags - they are degenerate human beings, they should be treated" - every fifth Pole thinks that such a statement is admissible in the public discourse. Almost two thirds of young Poles encountered examples of anti-Semitic hate speech on the Internet. About the same percentage of Polish young people heard hate speech towards Romani people from their friends. Every third adult Pole read racist statements on the Internet, and as much as 70 percent of young Poles declare that they encountered such statements on the Internet. Surprisingly high percentage of Poles accept hate speech - in particular towards Jews, Romani people, and non-heterosexual persons - and see nothing offensive in it. But the representatives of the minorities are positive that such statements are offensive and should be forbidden. These are the results of the latest study performed by the Warsaw University Centre for Research on Prejudice and the Stefan Batory Foundation.**

The study had three stages. First, based on the existing database of the Internet hate speech (compiled by the Foundation "Local Knowledge"), a list of 30 statements of various level of hostility against six minorities (Jewish, Ukrainian, Romani, African, Muslim, and LGBT) was selected. Additionally, the list was supplemented by examples of media statements from public persons (two offensive statements for every minority group from politicians, journalists, commentators or musicians).

In the first stage of the study, a survey using CAWI technique on 270 representatives of the minorities was performed (the most numerous groups in the sample were sexual and Jewish minorities). The objective of the survey was to find out how the minorities react to the hate speech towards them and to the selected statements seen by the minorities as examples of hate speech. The results of the survey showed that the representatives of the minorities firmly declared that statements seen by them as examples of hate speech should be forbidden.

Based on the survey on reactions from the representatives of the minorities, a list of statements for the main study was selected. The study covered representative random samples: a group of 653 young Poles aged from 16 to 18, and a representative random sample of 1007 adult Poles. The survey used the CAPI technique and an identical questionnaire for both groups. The participants of the survey were presented with the statements seen by the representatives of the minorities as hate speech. In order to present similar examples concerning different minorities, statements on comparable subjects and of comparable hostility level were selected.

When hate speech against Jews is concerned, 10 percent of young Poles and 10 percent of adult Poles accept public statements such as: "As far as sheenies and hostility towards them are concerned, it is only a real assessment of the actions of these louses and Davidian fascists". 19 percent of adults and 21 percent of young people accept statements such as: "Jews must realize that they themselves made Poles to hate them because of their treachery and their crimes. And today, they try to hide their crimes and pass the buck". 14 percent of young Poles and 14 percent of adults declare that they very commonly encounter such statements. Young people encounter this type of hate speech mainly on the Internet (59 percent of young Poles encountered anti-Semitic hate speech on the Internet) and when talking with their friends (38 percent). Adults hear this speech mainly when talking with their friends (29 percent), on the Internet (29 percent), and on the TV (26 percent). Among young people, the level of acceptance for the hate speech is related to their right-wing political views, strongly hierarchical social views, being against censoring other people's statements, and anti-Semitic attitudes. When adults are concerned, support for such hate speech is less related to their right-wing/hierarchical views.

As far as hate speech against Ukrainians is concerned, 19 percent of young Poles and 10 percent of adults see as admissible the following Internet post: "The Ukrainians can only murder defenceless women and children". The well-known statement made in a radio program led by Kuba Wojewódzki and Michał Figurski about a rape on Ukrainian girl should be admissible in the opinion of 5 percent of young people and 6 percent of adults. 5 percent of young Poles and 5 percent of adults say that they very often encounter hate speech against Ukrainians. Young people encounter instances of such hate speech mostly on the Internet (46 percent of young Poles) and when talking with their friends (21 percent). Adults encounter such language mostly on the Internet (26 percent), when talking with their friends (19 percent), and on TV (20 percent). Acceptance for the hate speech towards Ukrainians is not related to political views, but rather to anti-Ukrainian attitudes (in particular for adults) and to support for strong social hierarchy (for young people).

When Romani people are concerned, the most frequent place where hate speech is encountered is the Internet (66 percent of young Poles, 27 percent of adults) and - specifically for

this group - talks with friends. As much as 60 percent of young Poles and 49 percent of adults heard anti-Romani statements from their friends. Every fourth young Pole and every fifth adult hear hate speech towards Romani people very commonly. What's more, 16 percent of young Poles and the same percentage of adults think that the statement: "Gipsies are and will be thieves" (a citation from a song by a band Bracia Figo Fagot) is admissible, and every tenth Pole (young and adult, irrespectively) do not see the statement as offensive. Acceptance for anti-Romani hate speech is a result of anti-Romani prejudices, and is very weakly related to the support for freedom of speech, which indicates that Romani people are a group that is not protected by political correctness norms in Poland.

Racist hate speech is seen by Poles as much more unacceptable than the one directed towards Romani people. 89 percent of adult Poles and as much as 91 percent of young people said that the statement: "Negros are not humans but monkeys" was unacceptable and should be forbidden. On the other hand, hate speech towards black people seems to be the most common on the Internet. As much as 70 percent of young Poles encountered racist sayings on the Internet. 58 percent of young Poles heard such statements when talking with their friends. Adult people seem to have less frequent contact with racist opinions - 29 percent of adults encountered them on the Internet, 30 percent when talking with their friends, and 25 percent heard them on the TV. When young people are concerned, acceptance for racist hate speech is strongly related to their support for a strong social hierarchy, which can indicate that they believe that some races are "better" than others. Perceived competence of black people strengthens the tendency to forbid racist hate speech - people seeing black people as intelligent and competent see hate speech towards them as unacceptable.

The survey showed that hate speech against non-heterosexual people receives the highest acceptance in Poland. 35 percent of adult Poles and 38 percent of young Poles see as acceptable the recent statement from a leader of All-Polish Youth organisation: „I understand that some people can have homosexual inclinations, this is a kind of handicap, weakness [...] But poofs-activists who want privileges for homo relationships and child adoption should be fought". Even the most offensive statement about homosexual people ("I detest poofs - they are degenerate human beings, they should be treated") was seen as admissible by 22 percent of adult Poles and 20 percent of young people. Only 59 percent of adults said that such statements should be forbidden. Homophobic hate speech is encountered by young people mainly on the Internet (77 percent), when talking with friends (65 percent), and on the TV (33 percent). Adult Poles most commonly hear such statements from their friends (43 percent) and on the TV (41 percent). Acceptance for this kind of hate speech is strongly related to homophobic views. When adults are concerned, both right-wing and left-wing

supporters opt for admissibility of such statements - for young people the attitude is related to right-wing views.

The level of acceptance for anti-Muslim hate speech is also relatively high. 15 percent of adult Poles and 19 percent of young people think that the statement: "Muslims are stinky cowards, they can only murder women, children and innocent people" is admissible. The Internet is the main vehicle for hate speech towards Muslims - both for young people (55 percent) and adult Poles (28 percent). Interestingly enough, the support for anti-Muslim hate speech is not related to the level of Christian faith and the observance of religious practices on the part of respondents, but it is rather strongly related to the belief that Muslims are a threat to the Polish culture. Thus, the acceptance for hate speech towards Muslims is related to anti-immigrant fears rather than to any religious prejudices.

To sum up, surveyed Poles (both adults and young people) expect that hate speech towards Ukrainians and Africans/black people to be forbidden, but they are willing to accept hate speech against LGBT people, Romani people and Jews. The acceptance for hate speech, especially among young people, is strongly related to their right-wing, hierarchical attitudes. People with right-wing views were in particular tolerant for hate speech towards non-heterosexual people. Young Poles witness hate speech in everyday life much more frequently than adults, but their familiarity with such statements need not to lead to their acceptance for hate speech and has no bearing on their attitudes towards strangers. But for adults, their contact with hate speech brings farther reaching consequences - such adult people are more prejudiced and declare lower acceptance for Jews, Ukrainians, Africans or LGBT people they meet.

When young people are concerned, their acceptance for hate speech is a result of prejudices rather than support for freedom of speech. But the acceptance for hate speech is not just another sign of increasing verbal aggression - young people with higher level of verbal aggression does not necessarily support hate speech.