Words that hurt
Hate speech in Italy on 2018

Edited by

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This report has been written in the framework of **Words are stones project**

Background

This national report has been produced in the framework of **Words are stones** project, coordinated by Lunaria (I) in partnership with Adice (F), Antigone (GR), Grenzelos (A), Kisa (CY) and Sos Racisme (S).

Nationalist, populist and xenophobic movements which instrumentally mix euroscepticism, intolerance, hate and racism in order to increase their consent in public opinion represent a danger for the construction of a democratic, united, cohesive and peaceful European society. The public debate is crossed by stereotypes and prejudices targeting immigrants and refugees that often degenerate in racist offenses and attacks.

In this context, Words are stones aims to:

- analyze political discourses that exacerbate xenophobia, intolerance and discriminations against migrants, refugees and minorities crossing the public debate;
- enhance civil society organizations, European citizens and institutions capacity to prevent and respond to hate speech;
- involve European youth in campaigns countering hate speech
- sensitize European politicians promote intercultural dialogue, human rights protection and a pacific coexistence among nationals and people coming from other countries.

Six national reports will be produced in all partners' countries. The main results will be compared and summarized in an international report.

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1.The national context

1.1 Hate speech: an increasingly phenomenon in political communication

The spread of hate speech in Italy has been under examination for some years. The rise of hostile and stigmatizing expressions has in fact significantly increased in the different spheres of public debate. If the iteration of discriminant subjects, statements and messages is definitely not a new phenomenon, we can easily affirm that new technologies have created new ways for the propagation of verbal violence expressions directed to specific groups of people or individuals identified as belonging to these groups. These expressions are based on some characteristics considered as marks of "diversity" as compared to the dominant group - citizenship or national origin, somatic characteristics, religious or gender affiliation, physical conditions, status and, even, political affiliation[1].

Among the most significant changes caused by the spread of new technologies on the information system, we should mention three of them.

1. *The decentralization of information-production*. From a hierarchical system, in which few of the most powerful information media held the control of the entire information system, we moved to an apparently democratic system, in which millions of people are allowed to produce information by means of social networks and have the opportunity to interact with political and media stakeholders;

2. *The distribution of information has grown exponentially but only apparently it is independent*. Users are mostly allowed to read information that social networks managers and search engines, or rather, the algorithms used by them, have selected for them.

3. *The information system encourages polarization and discourages the search for the truth*. The hegemony of a model of social relations built on a friend/enemy comparison has two main consequences: it tends to make social networks communication increasingly aggressive - the Web and social networks are two of the greater channels of stigmatization, spread of verbal violence, and racism. Instead of promoting democratic processes and pluralism, the mesh of social networks flows into imprisoning users in the so called echo chambers that tend to exclude ideas and opinions that are not in compliance with users' political, gender, religious and cultural affiliations.

These transformations have arisen in a context of progressive invalidation of the forms of participation and democratic representation. The crisis of the democratic representation model based on political parties has increased the trend to shift the centrality of political action from a democratic and civil confrontation between worldviews and alternative public policies proposals, to a simplified political communication, steeped in populism, focused on the leader, aimed to provoke an emotional reaction and strongly aggressive towards the opponents[2].

The dialectical confrontation among different ideas and models of society has been replaced by a deeply polarized political debate, more easily inclined to use extremely violent expressions and tones and to search for scapegoats in order to acquire *consensus*. For that reason, communication strategies tend to identify and prefer referring to targets belonging to the weakest population groups, in order to counter them to the dominant group and to articulate a binary representation of the society, promising, simultaneously, to protect their rights and interests thanks to the reduction/denial of rights to those who, from time to time, have been identified as "others".

In 2018 the consequences of these transformations emerged with particular relevance during the electoral campaign preceding the 4th March general elections, but they continue permeating the public debate in the following months, enough to arouse the attention and reflection of many

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[1]See Giovannetti M., Minicucci C., "L'hate speech sui social media: analisi e proposte", in Scaramella (ed.), *Discorsi d'odio e Social Media. Criticità, strategie e pratiche d'intervento*, Arci, Cittalia, 2016, pp. 13-15.

[2]See Ferrajoli L., *Democrazia e populismo*, in Rivista AIC-Associazione Italiana dei Costituzionalisti, N. 3/2018.

reporters, scholars and legal experts, on the role played by discriminatory political propaganda considered to be stigmatizing and too often denigrating and offensive, particularly towards migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and Roma. The issue continues to be relevant today, on the eve of the European elections which will take place in May 2019. It is therefore useful to analyze all the hate speech recurring characterization elements in Italian public and specifically political debate used during 2018, year in which there has been a deep change in the national political system that has led to a new Government balance.

1.2 Hate speech: a concept of difficult definition

In order to proceed with the analysis, it will be useful to frame the phenomenon we are dealing with. The definition we will start from is the one proposed by the Council of Europe[3].

"The term "hate speech" should be understood as including all forms of expression aimed at spreading, fostering, promoting or justifying racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-semitism or other forms of hate based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed in the form of aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility towards minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin".

Hate speech definition includes thus "all discriminatory public expressions directed towards specific subjects or social groups, whose reaction must be carefully balanced by the legal system with the fundamental right of freedom of thought and expression. These include not only outrageous and/or defamatory manifestations of thought, but also every other type of thought manifestation having a provocative or violent meaning, as well as propaganda of ideas with a racist and/or discriminatory background"[4].

The Italian law does not provide an accurate definition of hate speech, but the art. 3 of law n. 654/1975[5] as amended by laws n. 205/1993, n. 101/1989, n. 85/2006 and n. 115/2016, offer a legal basis to punish racist ideas propaganda and instigation to commit discriminatory acts[6]. According to the art. 3, paragraph 1 of law n.654 / 1975, currently in force:

"Unless the fact constitutes a more serious offense, including for the purposes of implementing the provision of Article 4 of the Convention, shall be punished: A) with the imprisonment up to a year and six months or with a fine of up to 6.000 euros those who promote ideas based on superiority or racial or ethnic hatred, or those who instigate to commit or commit acts of discrimination for racial, ethnic, national reasons or religious; » b) with imprisonment from six months to four years who, in any way, instigates to commit or commits violence or acts of provocation to violence for racial, ethnic, national or religious reasons".

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[3] Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on "hate speech" adopted on 30 October 1997, Appendix

[4] Ciervo Antonello (ed.), *Discorsi e reati razzisti, condotte discriminatorie. Gli orientamenti della giurisprudenza più recente*, Lunaria, 2017, available at https://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/rassegnagiurisprudenza.pdf

[5] The law n. 654/1075 of ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of "Racial Discrimination", opened for signature in New York on March 7, 1966.

[6] For an overall review of the Italian legislation against discrimination and racism see: Naletto G., "La tutela contro le discriminazioni "razziali" e le violenze razziste", in Naletto G. (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, manifestolibri, 2009.

A second paragraph to the art. 3 of law n. 654/1975 has been introduced by law n. 115/2016. This paragraph provides some aggravating circumstances in cases of propaganda, incitement or incitement to hatred based on historical denial of the Holocaust or historical events concerning crimes against humanity and war.

"3-bis. Shall be applied the punishment by imprisonment from two to six years if the propaganda, the instigation and the incitement, committed in such a way that it produces a tangible danger of diffusion, are fully or in part based on the negation of the Holocaust or crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as provided for in articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, ratified according to law n. 232 of 12 of July 1999".

Article 1 of "Mancino law" n. 205/1993 c.2 also expressly forbids any form of association that has, among its aims, the incitement to discrimination or violence for "racial", ethnic, national or religious reasons.

"3. Shall be banned any organizations, associations, movements or groups whose purposes include incitement to discrimination or violence based on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds. Participants of such groups may be punished solely on the grounds of their participation in or mere assistance to them, with minimum prison terms of six months and up to four years; those who promote or preside over such organizations, associations, movements or groups may be punished with minimum terms of one year, and up to six years".

Mancino law also amended law n. 645/1952, whose aim was that of punishing any attempt to reconstitute the fascist party and/or performs an apology of fascism. As stated in Article 4:

"Shall be applied the same punishment referred to in the first paragraph (imprisonment from six months to two years and a fine of two hundred thousand lire to five hundred thousand lire (in the text of the legislation) to those who publicly exalt exponents, principles, facts or methods of fascisms, or its anti-democratic aims. If the fact concerns racist ideas or methods, the penalty consists on one to three years' imprisonment and a one to two million fine".

We must though underline that the Italian legislation concerning the punishment of racist propaganda and incitement to racist discrimination and violence has been poorly applied, especially with reference to political speech[7]. Motivations are easily understood. Balancing the right not to be discriminated and the right to freedom of expression is a difficult task. Both rights are protected by the Italian Constitution (article 3 principle of equality, art.21 right to free expression of thought). This difficult balancing act is particularly important when discourses or discriminatory statements are made by parties' members or people who hold an institutional role. Nowadays the jurisprudence in this field is very limited, despite the possibility to proceed *ex officio*, and even the complaints promoted by civil society organizations are very few in number.

First of all, there is a widespread awareness that hate speech cannot be fought only on a judicial level. Only a strategy involving all actors (victims and their representative organizations, anti-racist organizations, the traditional and online media system, national and local institutions, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, schools, universities and parties) within a multi-dimensional activity plan (monitoring, awareness, information, training) could effectively limit the phenomenon,

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[7]A review of the most recent judicial pronouncements concerning hate speech is contained in Ciervo A. cit., Pp. 15-21.

inside the Web and out of it. That kind of strategy seems unfortunately far from being even discussed.

The asymmetry of power and means also plays an important role, since it affects the possibility of ordinary citizens and civil society organizations to denounce and condemn the political hate speech of political and institutional decision-makers.

2. Hate speech in Italy and its political spectrum

2.1 Availability of official data

The official Italian statistics does not provide data specifically related to hate speech, or at least they are not widely available. The lack of an official database concerning hate speech and hate crimes has been repeatedly reported by different international and civil society organizations. In 2011 the Oscad (Observatory for security against acts of discrimination, set up within the Ministry of the Interior) and the UNAR (National Anti-Discrimination Agency, set up under the auspices of the Presidency of the Council) signed a memorandum of understanding to better coordinate their respective work. The agreement provides for Unar to forward Oscad all the cases that could give way to criminal proceedings (e.g. case pursuant to Article 3 of the so-called "Mancino law"), while Oscad should refer to Unar every discrimination case with no criminal relevance. The agreement has not brought to the creation of a systematic database on reports, judicial proceedings and convictions related to xenophobic and racist crimes and to hate speech. The official data available are therefore those collected by the Unar call- center and those circulated by Oscad in a non-systematic way.

The most reliable official source is therefore the one offered by the Odihr/Osce Observatory which publishes every year an international hate crime report, powered by official data provided by Oscad and law enforcement agencies and supported by reports provided by different civil society organizations.

We will start from the analysis of the latest data published by the Odihr/Osce Observatory. In 2017 Odihr has recorded 1.048 hate crimes reported by the Italian law enforcement agencies, and 154 cases by civil society organizations.

Hate report crimes 2013-2017. ITALY			
Year	Hate crimes recorded by police	Hate crimes -racism and xenophobia motivation	% of racist and xenophobic crimes on total cases reported
2017	1048	828	79,01
2016	736	494	67,12
2015	555	369	66,49
2014	596	413	69,30
2013	472	194	41,10

*Source: Odihr, http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy*

The data provided by law enforcement agencies suggests a growth in reported crimes from 2016. In 2013 police reported 472 hate crimes, 596 cases in 2014, 555 cases in 2015, 736 cases in 2016 and 1048

cases in 2017. It should however be noticed that the spread of recorded crimes does not necessarily correspond to an increase of the phenomenon, but it certainly underscores an alarming situation. Focusing on the motivation behind crimes, data show a prevalence of racist and xenophobic crimes which include the offenses based on prejudice against "race"/skin color, Roma and Sinti ethnic group, nationality, language, anti-Semitism, Muslims and members of other religions, collected in the so-called SDI database (the Police interchange system).

2017. Italy. Racist hate crimes recorded by Police by type of crime		
Bias motivation	**Type of Crime**	**Recorded by Police**
Racism and xenophobia	**Incitement to violence**	**337**
Racism and xenophobia	Desecration of graves	130
Racism and xenophobia	Physical assault	119
Racism and xenophobia	Threats/ threatening behaviour	94
Racism and xenophobia	Disturbance of the peace	68
Racism and xenophobia	Attacks against places of worship	44
Racism and xenophobia	Damage to property	15
Racism and xenophobia	Unspecified	9
Racism and xenophobia	Vandalism	6
Racism and xenophobia	Arson	4
Racism and xenophobia	Theft/ robbery	2
Total		**828**

Source: Odihr, http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy

In 2017, xenophobic and racist crimes were 828 in number, representing the 79% of all hate crimes. Again in 2017, for the first time, 337 crimes concerning incitement to racist violence have been recorded. These cases represent the 40,7% of all hate crimes motivated by racism or xenophobia.
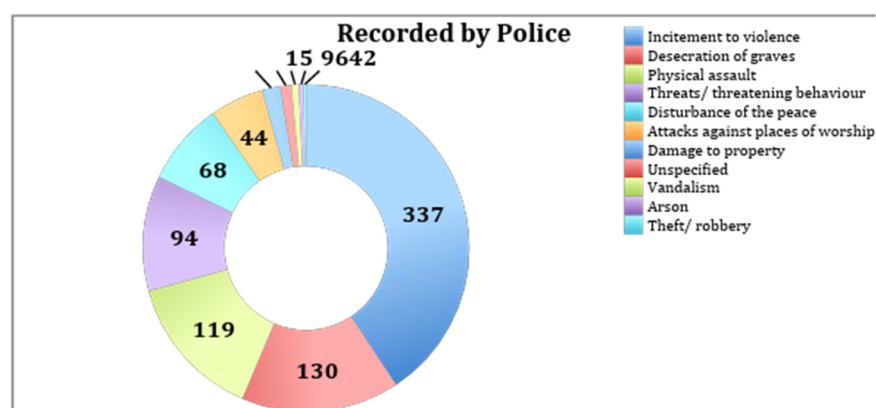
The xenophobic and racist topic is also common among those discrimination cases collected by UNAR in 2017. Out of 3.574 pertinent reports received by the Agency, discrimination ethnically or racially motivated (which also include discrimination against "Roma, Sinti and Travellers" and against "religions and personal convictions"), represent the 82.9% of the reports processed. In 2016 they represented the 69,4%. The most recurring discriminatory motives were skin color (32,5%) and "refugee" (22,9%) or "foreign" (19,4%) status.

Among the 354 discrimination reports based on religion, the 74,3% are targeting Muslims and the 18.9% falls into the anti-Semitism subcategory.

With reference to religious discrimination cases, in January 2019 the Unar released some data on some potentially discriminatory content traced on the main social networks, newspapers, blogs and fake news sites. In 2018, the dedicated Media & Web Observatory detected 10.229 messages with offensive anti-Semitic contents. In 2017 they were 7.485, a 27,4% increase in one year. The Oscad data are not recorded on a yearly basis. Between 10 September 2010 and 31 December 2017, Oscad received 2.030 reports that led to the charging of 840 people and 304 arrests. Oscad also recorded 764 discriminatory crimes, 272 discriminatory cybercrimes, and 1.036 discriminatory offenses, 622 of which have an ethnic or racist motive (around 60% of the total), followed by the religious one (187 cases -18,1%). The less common motives are: sexual orientation (140 cases – 13,5%), disability (75 cases - 7,2%) and gender identity (12 case – 1,2%).

2.2 Political hate speech

The analysis of hate speech cases that went through the Italian public debate in 2018 was carried out starting from the cases documented by Lunaria through its Observatory Chronicles of Ordinary Racism.

In 2018, Lunaria documented 628 cases of discrimination and racist violence. These cases were collected on the basis of direct reports received from victims, witnesses, other associations or news reported in the media, which are monitored daily. Among the 400 cases of verbal violence, we have extracted the 180 that attributable to hate speech.

Our monitoring work, it should be noted, has no claim to be exhaustive and does not intend to provide a statistical representation of the phenomenon, but rather a qualitative analysis, also through the "reading" of prime examples.

We have divided the 180 cases identified into three major areas: those directly related to the public statements of politicians, those linked to hate messages spread through social networks and one focused on rallies and demonstrations at the local level, also from self-organized groups.

2018. Hate speech in Italy documented by Lunaria				
Target	**Public declarations**	**Local initiatives**	**Messages on social networks**	**Total**
Immigrants/refugees	52	49	49	150
Muslims	4	2	0	6
Roma	2	1	5	8
Jewish	0	1	1	2
Black people	1	3	10	14
Total	**59**	**56**	**65**	**180**
Topic	**Public declarations**	**Local initiatives**	**Messages on social networks**	**Total**
Cultural Incompatibility	10	4	7	21
Costs	7	4	5	16
Competition in welfare/work	14	7	13	34
Security	16	24	17	57
Invasion	11	13	13	37
Other	1	4	10	15
Total	**59**	**56**	**65**	**180**

Source: Lunaria, www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org

These 180 cases are almost equally divided into the three areas, with a slight predominance of hate speech cases through social networks - a highly underestimated sample, as online hate speech is widespread through private profiles of regular citizens.

Public statements (59) mostly came from representatives of some political parties. In detail, these political forces are the Lega Nord (part of the governing majority), followed by members of the right/extreme right parties, such as the Fratelli d'Italia and Casapound.

Political actors involved are also institutional figures, such as members of Parliament, city mayors and presidents of Regions, as well as numerous local councilors. Campaigning candidates have also used hate speech to generate consensus ahead of march 4th 2018 general elections.

The cases which fall within the specific category of local initiatives (56) are characterized by two main tendencies. In one case extreme right (CasaPound and Forza Nuova) carry out nightly blitzes posting banners, posters and signs carrying a hate message. Often these actions are planned at a national level: identical actions take place in many different cities and with similar targets objectives (reception centers, courts, trade union centers, ecclesiastical centers, etc.). All these actions are then claimed through press releases and usually signed with nazi/fascist logos. A special mention should be made of night patrols, which are infrequent, but significant at the local level.

The second tendency sees Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia as main protagonists. These parties engaged in the organization of gazebos for the collections of signatures against the arrival of asylum seekers in a city, the construction of an Islamic center etc., or public rallies during which hate messages are often displayed and pronounced.

Less frequent, but consistent, are also the initiatives of local groups that organize rallies, sit-ins and torchlight marches, often with the support of far-right groups.

The last area we watch at, that of social networks (65 cases), is mainly made of Facebook posts which is the first channel used by politicians and elected officials to spread hate messages.

In most cases politicians use their own social media profiles to report on daily life episodes commenting them with racist insults.

These posts on pages with many followers generate huge numbers of racist/xenophobic comments from social network users.

It should be noticed that this is an ambiguous use of social media as politicians tend to speak on their pages as if they were private citizens and not public figures who use daily life episodes to publicly express concerns about migrants and related issues or, even worse, to reinforce and unleash hate.

Usually the target of hate messages is very precise and transversal. In all three areas, the target group consists mainly of migrants and asylum seekers (150 out of 180 cases), while other target groups such as Muslims, Roma and Jewish people.

Migrants and asylum seekers become scapegoats in many different terms (the robber, the parasite, the rapist). Based on the cases documented by Lunaria, migrants and asylum seekers are the privileged victims of haters both online and offline.

The arguments used to support hate messages and their motivations vary greatly. The security topic (57 cases) is the one most recurrent. Migrants and asylum seekers are often depicted as criminals, delinquent and decay generators.

Security is also associated with the idea of the need to defend national borders against the alleged spread of diseases or Islamic terrorism.

The second most used issue is that of invasion (37 cases), which is often associated with the **refusal to accept** and the demand to expel migrants from the national territory (we will recall the hashtag #portichiusi or recurrent sentences such as "go back to your home" or " the bloom is of" referred to the closure of harbours to NGO vessels and to the alleged good life that asylum seekers had before the arrival of Lega Nord at the government).

One more issue is that of competition from migrants in the Labour market and their exploitation of welfare state benefits (34), accompanied by the slogan "Italians first". Other arguments are less present, such as the one that theorises the alleged cultural or religious incompatibility (with the spectre of the so-called "ethnic substitution" and the failure to respect the rules), or the controversy concerning the costs of the reception of "self-styled refugees" or otherwise defined "economic migrants".

3. Political hate speech: some exemplary cases

3.1 Overview

Once we have examined the political hate speech's general characteristics, in this part of the report we will depict 24 selected "star cases" (8 for each of the three macro-areas) to more specifically describe the Italian political hate speech's trends in 2018.

In recent years, we have witnessed a hatred escalation spread by politicians, especially via social media. Actually the 2018 Parliamentary elections, that have led the most active (on social networks) political leaders to victory, have been a key point in the political debate. Hate speech has been one of the most used topics also in the post-vote period and help us to understand the actual scale of the issue, especially in the political arena. Politicians who speak in public or have a broad audience on social media have a great responsibility: their power to spread racist prejudices is very broad, as their words also end up on mass media. Unfortunately, this responsibility degenerates very often in its exact opposite.

During the campaign for the 2018 Parliamentary elections Amnesty International Italia, monitored posts containing insults, racist and other hate messages. During 23 days Amnesty activists collected 787 reports (about one insult every hour), 287 of which classified as concerning hate speech. Reports were ascribed to 129 candidates, 77 of whom have been elected in the last elections. The main issues in hate speech messages against migrants, repeated like a mantra in the election assemblies and propagated in a viral way on the Web, were: invasion, defence of borders, costs related to immigrants' reception (the "business" of immigrants reception), deviance, identity alerts, Islamization, primacy of Italian people and that of "buonismo" (naïve optimism) of those who work or express themselves in solidarity with immigrants. All these arguments have been used for a long time and repeatedly re-examined according to different historical and political times and to different migration trends.

At the very beginning of 2018 Attilio Fontana, the Lega Nord candidate for the Lombardia Regional Presidency, stated in an interview that the "white race" should be defended from foreigners' arriving on the Italian shores. After his statements were relaunched by the press and harshly criticized, Fontana said: "It was a slip of the tongue, a mistakenly way of expressing a concept, I meant that we must reorganize a different kind of reception in accordance with our history and our society". Despite the main criticism there were some expression of solidarity. Renato Brunetta, Forza Italia MPs President, said that Fontana had "chosen the wrong words", " it is true that it was a slip of the tongue but he has apologized for it".

More excuses for those words came from the soon-to-be Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini: "White Race? A bad choice of words, but I would like to draw your attention to the principle behind it: our culture is in danger, as Oriana Fallaci said years ago". These legitimization of Fontana's words do not sound plausible: the soon to become president of Regione Lombardia expressed his beliefs in an extremely clear way. There was no wrong choice of words.

Fontana was referring to the theory that claims there is some kind of "white genocide". The idea is very simple: occult powers are trying to destroy the European "racial purity" that will lead to the extinction of the "white race". The most widespread current declension of the theory is the Kalergi Plan conspiracy theory. The "plan" would be that of political and economic elites, organising the arrival of hundreds of thousands migrants into Europe to be used as cheap labour and to "mix" them with the "European races" with the aim to create a more submissive crossbreeding. This theory, supported by some extreme right parties (Lega Nord among others), has had very tangible cultural and political consequences in everyday life. The return of the racist issue goes far beyond the radio declaration made by Attilio Fontana.

Politicians' public statements are rarely brought to court, even when they are widely documented by the media. When the offence has not a specific person as a target, no one can make a complaint as a concerned party. However, the Italian law provides that associations representing and protecting foreigners and migrants' interests can act on their behalf before civil courts, especially when the offences are particularly serious.

One of those cases has involved Joe Formaggio, the mayor of Albettone (in the province of Vicenza) in 2018. It was nor the first openly racist statement, neither the first charge against Mr. Formaggio. In June 2018 the Civil Court of Milan had condemned the mayor of Albettone for discriminatory behaviour and "incitement to racial hatred" against Roma and migrants, after the use of racist expressions during the radio show "La Zanzara" in October 2016. Mr. Formaggio was ordered to pay a compensation mounting to 12.000 euros and to reimburse any legal fees to "Avvocati per nulla" and "Asgi", the two legal help associations who had promoted the appeal.

In his explanatory statement the judge stated that such statements tend to create "a hostile, degrading and humiliating climate" because they damage the dignity of the social groups involved and "confer inferior qualities to ethnicity and nationality", in violation of Article 3 of the European Union Constitution and of other anti-discrimination regulations. Unfortunately, the lenghth of trials in Italy discourages the report of hate speech, encouraging haters to strike again. Furthermore, it is outrageous that some local and national media tend to act as a sounding board for hate statements. When it comes to hate speech on social network accounts, the number of complaints increases considerably. Most of the reported hate messages have been followed up with a report to the page manager or to the Postal Police with the suspension and/or shutdown of the involved social media account or page. Sometimes reports have also led to disciplinary actions or criminal charges with the accusation of inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred.

Although this reporting/sanction system is functioning, it does not discourage the spread of hate memes, hate statements etc through social networks, which despite easily identifiable are also very dangerous: someone said that it should be better if migrants drown in the Mediterranean rather than reaching the Italian coasts ("Drowned or not, fuck it... If they had remained at home, they would not have died" and "Migrants? They should be drowned far from the coast"), others have hoped for the death of immigrants ("Run over them", "Sharpen the snowplough blades", "Hit them on the first try: there's a reward of one thousand euros for each one of them"). It should be also noted that, despite a huge number of reports, the investigations do not always lead to a conviction, or when it happens, these do not match the seriousness of the offense.

The current Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, has the record (for year 2018) in complaints concerning hate speech: at least 5 legal actions before September 2018.

On June 21th the MP Roberto Speranza filed an "incitement to racist hatred" complaint for some statements on Roma people expressed by the Minister of the Interior during an interview for TeleLombardia, a local network.

This complaint was suddenly followed by another one filed on June 26th by Fondazione Romanì, for the offensive and discriminatory sentences pronounced by Salvini to support a "reconnaissance" of the Roma presence in Italy and to conduct a new census concerning Roma people.

On August 1st the roman Association Baobab Experience, filed a new complaint for "incitement to racist hatred" relating to a tweet posted by the Minister in July 12th, in which he contested the Italian Supreme Court role that had condemned the author of the statement "go away", addressed to migrants, expressed in different social networks.

On August 10th, the Roma activist Alievski Musli denounced the Minister again for spreading ideas based on racist hatred, by reference to another statement on TeleLombardia.

Lastly, a group of citizens filed a complaint to the Public Prosecutor's Office of Treviso for a number of discriminatory public statements (and to some racist comments that they had produced on social networks) expressed by Salvini between June and July 2018.

The slogans most used were: "Prima gli italiani" ("Italians first") and "Tornate a casa vostra" ("Go back to were you belong"). The first one has been typical of all the Italian right parties' electoral campaigns (such as Lega Nord, Fratelli d'Italia and the neo-fascist party CasaPound), but it has also been quite successful among the public opinion. "Prima gli italiani" suggests that the 5 million of immigrants that have reached the country, and particularly the most recent arrivals, are favoured, privileged and got more and better services and safeguards than natives, and that the reception of thousands of migrants who every year come to Italy entails unsustainable costs for Italy. The "Tornate a casa vostra" motto is less political but is a sentence often used during verbal confrontation or physical racist violence and was also used by Minister Salvini in his earlier mentioned tweet.

An important event inspired by a philosophy were the protests against a conference in Verona in May 2018. This time the target were not only migrants or asylum seekers but LGBT people. "LGBT: asylum seekers, sexual orientation and gender identity", was the title of the meeting. In this case the protests against it gave rise to the so-called multiple discrimination, as homophobic discriminations were in fact added to racist ones. The discriminatory acts were carried out through press releases and leaflets (marked "No gay refugees in Verona, stop gender dictatorship"), blitzes and public statements. The protest carried out by the extreme right party, Forza Nuova, and supported by some Catholic fundamentalists, forced the Headmaster of the University to suspend the event, "postponing the study of its scientific content to a date to be determined". The intimidation was only partially successful, and the study day was then regularly held on September 21th 2018.

3.2 Selected cases

Public statements by politicians

1. 15-01-2018, Milan (MI) - Lombardia
Source: Ansa | Area: Institutions
"We cannot accept them all, because if we had to, we would no longer be a social and ethnic entity. There's a lot more of them than us, and they are extremely determined to occupy our territory. It is not a xenophobic or racist matter", said the candidate for the Presidency of the Lombardy Region for the centre-right coalition, Attilio Fontana, during a Radio Padania (the Lega broadcast) interview. "This is a matter of being logical or rational. We have to decide if our ethnicity, if our white race, if our society must continue to exist or if it must be deleted". "It's a choice - adds Fontana - if the majority of Italians were to say 'we have to self-eliminate', it means that we have to go somewhere else".

2. 15-01-2018, Milan (MI) - Lombardia
Source: Ansa | Area: Institutions
Matteo Salvini lined up with Attilio Fontana, after his statements on the "white race": "We will control any Islamic person in Italy. Exactly as Oriana Fallaci claimed in non-suspect times, we are under attack, our culture, our society, our traditions, our way of life are at risk. There's an ongoing

invasion and in January, new waves of migrants have been landing. The skin color has nothing to do with it, but we are living a real dangerous situation: centuries of history are about to disappear - said Salvini - if this underestimated Islamization doesn't stop".

3. 29-01-2018, Rome (RM) - Lazio
Source: ilgiornale.it | Area: Media
"Migrants are a danger to women" Giulia Bongiorno, a lawyer and a former Alleanza Nazionale parliamentarian (now ministry for Public administration for the Lega Nord), is sure about this. "Some of these people - she said on Skytg24 - come from countries where women are considered less than men. In their houses violence is an everyday issue". And she continued: "By opening the borders to any kind of immigration wave, people would not distinguish between regular and irregular immigrants. It's confusing".

4. 08-02-2018, Milan (MI) - Lombardy
Source: newspaper.net | Area: Politics
Matteo Salvini attacks the Government arguing that Islam is incompatible with the Italian Constitution: "The question is: is Islam, in the literal application of Muhammad's provisions, compatible with our values, our freedom and our Constitution? I have very strong doubts about it", he said referring to the construction of the Islamic cultural center in Umbertide. "Islam represents a risk - he said - if the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights provides that the Islamic justice prevails over the national one, it is a problem for me. I don't want to end up like Great Britain, which has Islamic Courts instead of English ones".

5. 15-02-2018, Fermo (FM) - Marche
Source: cronachefermane.it | Area: Politics
"We are in a situation where to say 'stop new immigrants' arrivals and repatriate illegal immigrants' is seen as a racist statement" said Graziella Ciriaci, an entrepreneur who had been nominated by Forza Italia for the uninominal elections to the Senate on 4th March. "The disorder, the difficulties, the violence linked to immigrant's phenomenon are clear to see (...). The murders occurred in Marche, as throughout the whole Country, show the political system failure. It had transformed immigrants' reception, integration and sense of community from values and development marks to a war between the poor people (...). Stop new immigrants' arrivals, repatriate illegal immigrants should be seen as a symbol of respect for others, confidence in integration solidarity-based and above all, as an incentive to build a stronger society, based on a good quality of life. It is a condition to which everyone is entitled. The Government has a duty to guarantee it".

6. 18-03-2018, Vicenza (VI) - Veneto
Source: vicenzapiu.com | Area: Politics
"He was an ordinary guy, in love with football, but the expulsion of this Senegalese guy brings out a problem of social coexistence that confirms how these young foreigners are exposed to radical impulses and to terrorist acts" - saied Alex Cioni, spokesman for the Citizens' Committee PrimaNoi, referred to Mame Fily Sall (a 21 years old Senegalese formal player of Verona football team) ejected from the game, according to the "anti-terrorism protocol". "Like other second-generation immigrants, Sall Mame Fly ja, in recent times had harboured some resentment at the community that had welcomed him" he said. "This is where the baby gangs, often composed of immigrants or immigrants' children born in Italy, come from. A problem unfortunately underestimated by those who are unable to have a pragmatic approach and a great deal of clarity. This is the result of the forced uprooting from their native lands and of cultural, religious and social different models.

7. 03-07-2018, Brescia (BS) - Lombardia
Source: Repubblica.it | Area: Politics
"We don't want coloured things around town". This is what the newly elected Fratelli d'Italia Council member, Giovanni Francesco Acri, said during the inauguration of his Council activities. The statement was pronounced during the first session of the Council, but others councillors immediately criticised Mr. Acri and distanced themselves. In his speech, Acre also reiterated that in Brescia "Brescia people come first" just like "Italians come first".

8. 13-11-2018, Albettone (VI) - Veneto
Source: ilfattoquotidiano.it | Area: Media
During La Zanzara radio show (Radio24) the Fratelli d'Italia mayor Joe Formaggio (already condemned for discriminatory behaviour and "incitement to racial hatred" against Roma and migrants) said: "Hire a Roma caregiver? Absolutely not. The judge also criticized me for the fact that rather than renting a house to a Roma person, I would have set it on fire. The house is mine, can I do anything I want with it? The answer is No. You can't even do that. I keep it closed so the wharf rats can run through it. Wharf rats are better than Roma people. Sometimes I go there and greet them. I prefer wharf rats to Roma people to stay in my house. Can I rent it to the fuck people I want?". Then he added: "The four beasts that killed one of our girls will be out in few months. We are idiots in Veneto. They arrested a Nigerian carrying drugs and they took away his money. The judge freed him immediately and forced the police to give him back his money. Are we kidding? Instead of break him a leg, we gave him back his money. What would I like to do with Desirée's killers? Of course, they don't deserve the 500 euros we spend every day for a prisoner. I would give them to Desirèe's father to let him do whatever he wants. I would grant him one hour to do that.

Self-organized local initiatives

1. 23-01-2018, Rimini (RN) - Emilia-Romagna
Source: chiamamicitta.it | Area: Politics
Forza Nuova activists demonstrated in front of the Court, to oppose what they claimed to be "the permissiveness of some magistrates in judging on illegal immigrants' causes". The activists (about 10 people) voiced their opinion demonstrating with flags, smoke generators and posters, yelling: "We want certain punishment for the invaders!". In a note they explained that the intent was to "denounce the obvious difference in treatment between Italians and illegal immigrants. While Italians are mostly punished with imprisonment for the committing of a crime, African invaders get away with a pat on the back and with a reprimand".

2. 24-03-2018, Perugia (PG) - Umbria
Source: Press Office Forza Nuova | Area: Politics
In the evening, some Forza Nuova activists stuck up a poster near the former Monteluce hospital that carried the slogan: "Italians on the streets, immigrants in houses... Beware of the "Polveriera"". "Polveriera" (armory) is a term used by a Municipality Councillor to express what would become the building owned by Ater (the Agency for Public Residential Buildings in Rome Ed.) in Via del Favarone during the coexistence period between the new inhabitants of the buildings and the "false refugees housed in the area using the SPRAR project", said a note.

3. 11-05-2018, Verona (VR) - Veneto
Source: veronasera.it | Area: Politics
Lega Nord, Popolo della Famiglia and Forza Nuova, mobilized against the study and training day on lgbti migration, planned for May 25th at the University. Forza Nuova announced a mobilization

in front of the University for the day. "The gay-refugee meeting is an affront to Verona and must be forbidden. If no one would cancel the event we will take care of it", declared the Northern-Italy coordinator of Forza Nuova. The new provincial Coordinator added: "We are faced with a real creeping dictatorship. On May 25th all the anti-natural and anti-national ideologies are going to join in the gay-refugee meeting, with the complicity of those who should have cancel the event, due to personal convictions, or at least after the electoral promises they had made, also considering that the event will take place in the University". The event was cancelled.

4. 25-06-2018, Giaveno (TO) - Piemonte
Source: La Stampa | Area: Politics
A Forza Nuova poster with the mottos (written in 5 different languages) - "Immigrants, go home" and "Every land has its own community, every community has its own land" was posted in the evening. The poster has provoked a popular uprising. The Regional Councillor for Immigration, Monica Cerutti, declared: "These posters are offensive because they invite immigrants to return to their Countries. We ask for the removal of them. Instead of dealing with the immigration phenomenon someone is looking for some ways to exacerbate the situation". The local contact person of Forza Nuova, Usseglio Viretta, said: "The poster was affixed on the political notice board of our party. That space has been granted us exactly by the Municipality".

5. 09-08-2018, Palermo (PA) - Sicily
Source: livesicilia.it | Area: Society
The Municipal Police began the demolition of the Favorita Roma camp. Four families were transferred from the camp to Via Felice Emma, where there are some villas confiscated from the Mafia. The inhabitants and some homeless living in the area started to protest occupying the villas. Even on social networks the protest gets stronger: "We don't want you", write one of the resident, supported by Forza Nuova. "We are not racists, but people from Palermo with children have priority". Then they put a big poster on a gate: "Le case agli italiani" (Our homes to Italian people).

6. 19-08-2018, Viterbo (VT) - Lazio
Source: ultimavoce.it | Area: Society
During the night, several racist marks appeared on some immigrants' houses in the city centre. "Go away", "Out of here", or "We don't want black people here". According to the USB (an Italian trade union Ed.), "It's getting a little intense for immigrants to live in this City. Many of them are worried because they have already heard about some racist acts that have occurred in Italy, even though they have been no similar cases here.

7.30-09-2018, Bolzano (BZ) - Trentino-Alto Adige
Source: globalist.it | Area: Politics
Casapound is posting an electoral manifesto in the whole Province in view of the elections to be held in 21th October. It is written "Let's clean Sud Tirolo" (in Italian and German). On the poster there are also some images of the outgoing provincial Government and of a group of immigrants.

8. 08-10-2018, Arco (TN) - Trentino-Alto Adige
Source: ilgiornale.it | Area: Society
Some migrants, guests of the local hostel, have been invited to "have a class to teach" in some primary schools. The initiative is part of the "Welcome Week" project, which provides for a meeting between immigrants and little children. Many parents have started to complain, thinking that the initiative tend to "inculcate" a one-sided image of the immigrants' reception. Some of them pointed out that since one of the two guests "arrived on a boat, he must be regarded as illegal. If he is illegal,

in our opinion he should not come into contact with minors". According to the father of a child, "these kinds of issues should not be dealt with little children. We must evaluate Islam, the relationship of immigrants with women and crime linked to illegal immigration: how can I talk about these topics with a child?".

Social media messages

1. 18-02-2018, Naples (NA) - Campania
Source: cronachediordinariorazzismo.org | Area: Media
A philosophy teacher at Fonseca high school (in the historical city centre of Naples), published on his Facebook profile a sort of hymn to racism through numerous posts of contempt towards Nigerian people. Despite some comments of condemnation posted by some students who have asked him to "go slow" he continued to incited to the rejection of the "African race". "They are encouraging us to commit a cultural suicide of our Christian civilization" he said in a post "to lose our feelings of self-worth, to despite ourselves, using a bizarre populism, full of demagogy and ideology in favour of a very dangerous vague interculturalism without any meaning". Some students declared that they sent a report to the Postal Police.

2. 26-02-2018, Palermo (PA) - Sicily
Source: globalist.it | Area: Media
The Riccardo Iaccarino Twitter profile (a Forza Nuova Parliamentary candidate) is no longer accessible. After having "suspended" him several times, the social network administration had decided to obscure his profile. Iaccarino wrote a series of outrageous tweets concerning the aggression suffered by Massimo Ursino, the Forza Nuova provincial Manager. His tweets were a crescendo of hate, racist and gross messages, culminating with some real death threats. He wrote to Oiza, a black girl: "It seems ridiculous to me that you, a nigger, are able to speak Italian... maybe you also have an Italian passport... and it is also ridiculous that you are in Italy... and that you have the right to speak to white people... and that you may have been in bed with some white men...imagine this! There are different points of view".

3. 28-03-2018, Cividale del Friuli (UD) - Friuli-Venezia Giulia
Source: nextquotidiano.it | Area: Media
Riccardo Prisciano, a Fratelli d'Italia candidate for the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Regional Council, defines himself an anti-gender and anti-Islam sovereign. In a racist Facebook post, Mr. Prisciano got annoyed with some unaccompanied minors who had access to the Civiform (a Cividale body accredited to the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region Ed.) company canteen, where also the Carabinieri used to go. According to him, "it is absurd that the Carabinieri have to eat in the same plates and with the same cutlery as minors' immigrants do". It has to be said that all the dishes and cutlery, just as in all canteens, are regularly cleaned and washed.

4. 02-07-2018, Verona (VR) - Veneto
Source: corrieredelveneto.corriere.it | Area: Media
"Those are fucking puppets" wrote Alessandra Maggia, a psychologist and a writer from Verona, on Facebook, in response to an article reporting on the shipwreck occurred in the Mediterranean Sea, assuming that it was a made up scene. "Children drowned but completely dry. Something doesn't add up". And again: "Drowned or not fuck it... If they had stayed at home they would not have died". The journalist Selvaggia Lucarelli, published the screenshot of the conversation and after that Mrs. Maggia removed the post and all her comments, but at the same time she reiterated that she

didn't want to change her mind on the matter: "I really believe- she said - that it is a staging to bring down the Government. The children in the photos were dry, I think they were mannequins".

8-2018, Rome (RM) - Lazio
Source: fanpage.it | Area: Institutions
Alievski Musli, a Roma activist, decided to report with the support of small left party Possibile, the Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini for the discriminatory expression pronounced against Roma citizens living in the camps: "I have a dossier on the Roma issue in Italy. After Maroni, nothing has been done and now it is chaos. We need a reconnaissance to understand how, who, how many are there, so we need to make a new Roma census. Let's make a Roma register, let's understand what the situation is. If there are some irregular foreigners, we will expel them. Unfortunately, we have to keep the Italian Roma people". The reply of the Minister to the charge was something unexpected: "Every day there is a complaint ... for me it's like to have a medal for each of them!". The post on the Prime Minister Facebook profile was accompanied by the famous hashtag: "#primagliitaliani".

6. 28-08-2018, Spoleto (PG) - Umbria
Source: ilmessaggero.it | Area: Media
"Immigrants? They should drown in the open sea". These are the last words of a long post on a facebook page with 38 thousand members (Doctorsinfuga). In the Facebook post immigrants are defined, among other things, "niggers with Nike shoes and bellyfull", and scabies disease is related to "perpetuated violences". The author of the post is a doctor, a manager in a public hospital Emergency Room. The Asl (Local Health Autority) has started a disciplinary procedure and so will do the Medical Association, which has received several reports. The post has obtained hundreds of likes, retweets and comments. Some of these come from doctors, who dissociated themselves with the main post.

7. 21-09-2018, Ventimiglia (IM) - Liguria
Source: La Stampa | Area: Media
A car driver, driving on the A10 highway, published a post reporting the presence of some immigrants on the same road he was riding. Some comments were: "Run over them", "Take the snowplough blades", "Hit them on the first try: there a reward of one thousand euros for each one of them". The authors of these comments, suddenly reported to the judicial authority, are mostly people with no previous convictions. Eleven people, including a woman, have been identified and reported to the Police Headquarters of Imperia. They will stand for racist propaganda and incitement to commit crimes based on "ethnic and religious racial discrimination".

8. 29-10-2018, Susa (TO) - Piemonte
Source: il Giornale | Area: Media
"To show solidarity with Desirée's family, Nigerians, Senegalese and fake refugees in general are not allowed to join the demonstration. This is the only way we can protest. Please share this message so other people could do the same. Goodbye little star". This is the message - which has removed with some excuse words - appeared on the "Salottino del Ponte" Facebook page (a private club in Susa). The club owners tried to explain: "It was a strong provocation driven by anger for a barbaric child murder. Honesty and fairness have nothing to do with skin colour. This was a condemnation but not a racist one". The Carabinieri have investigated on the situation. The Prosecutor's Office has a propensity for an "incitement of racial hatred" charge.

4. Deconstructing the five main topoi

As we have already mentioned, the xenophobic and racist discourse tends to use the news cycle instrumentally to feed fears and resentments. It also uses data to give some basis of neutrality and objectivity to its incitement to hate. In this chapter we analyze and deconstruct some of the topoi used by "haters" that we have previously identified.

"Stop the invasion"
In the years in which the xenophobic and racist discourse has found legitimacy in everyday life, in the media and in political discourse, the issue of the number of people who lands on the Italian coasts is one of the topics that has most persuaded the public opinion. Stopping the invasion was one of the subtext of the electoral campaign that preceded the political elections of March 4th 2018. The previous years, with the war in Syria and the regional crisis in the Middle East, had caused a huge increase in the number of people forced to leave their countries. This flow on different European routes, in the absence of a shared EU policy, has contributed to generating widespread fears. The high number of arrivals in the 2015-17 three-year period was not destined to become the new normal: not only the people fleeing the war decreased but also numerous European and national policies with the aim of discouraging arrivals were implemented. The UNHCR data are unequivocal: in 2015 the arrivals in the Mediterranean were 1,032,408, in 2016 about a third of the previous year, in 2017 185 thousand, in 2018 141.472 and seem destined to decline in 2019[8].
As for Italy, even in the years of bigger inflows there was no "invasion": the number of arrivals would have been manageable without provoking conflicts at local level, if only the reception system had been adequate.

Italy. Sea arrivals, Years 2014-2018		
Previous years	**Sea arrivals**	**Dead and missing**
2018	23.370	1.311
2017	119.369	2.873
2016	181.436	4.578
2015	153.842	2.913
2014	170.100	3.093

Fonte: Unhcr, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205

Between 2014 and 2018 the number of foreign citizens residing in Italy increased by only 222,355 people, bringing its overall incidence on the population to 8.5% (from 8% in 2014). This proportional change, however, is not due to new arrivals, but to a decrease in the number of Italians, as the birth rate continues to fall and the country is aging. For the first time, the total number of deaths exceeded the new births in 2017.
Over 50% of immigrants have lived in Italy (2.8 million) for at least 5 years; almost half of these for ten years or more. Of the more than 5 million immigrants residing in the country, 2.7 million arrived before the age of 18, 600,000 were born in Italy and 480,000 arrived as children (that is, under the age of 12). Immigration in Italy therefore has a long history and has not caused any catastrophe. In the last few decades the word invasion has been used

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[8]https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean

many times to spread fears and concerns among the Italian population, but the data tell us that an invasion has never occurred.

In Italian schools, just under one in ten is a foreigner. In high schools, the figure is 7%, in nursery school and primary school (ages 4-6 and 6-10, respectively) is 11%. Two thirds of these children were born in Italy but do not have the right to citizenship (the corresponding figure was 30% in 2008)[9].

There is no invasion, there is a slow process of inclusion that accelerates while second-generation youth (or Italians with foreign origins) live their lives in schools, universities and the labor market.

"They cost too much"

When it refers to the costs of immigration, the xenophobic rhetoric used in the last few years, mostly refers to those individuals and families they can frame as "the invaders": asylum seekers and migrants crossing the Mediterranean (and not to the totality of immigrants). Those who arrive in Italy after a sea voyage - and in the last few years after weeks or months spent in Libya, in inhuman conditions - need care, must be identified, hosted and their legal status determined through a slow and complicated bureaucratic procedure.

Is there another way to enter Italy without using the boats of the smugglers? The "Flow decree" introduced into Italian legislation by Law 40/1998 establishes how many foreign people can enter the country each year. In recent years, Italian governments have complied with this legal obligation by issuing decrees in which the number of entries is practically zero. In 2018, for example, the entry of 30,850 non-EU foreign workers was authorized, of which 12,850 for subordinate and autonomous work and 18,000 for seasonal employment reasons in the agricultural and tourism-hotel sectors. 9,850 permits for non-seasonal work have actually allowed the conversion into residence permits for subordinate work and for self-employment of residence permits issued for other reasons to persons already present in Italy.[10] Almost no new work permit has been issued in recent years.

The inability to enter on a regular basis and the consequent increase in the use of non-regular routes has contributed to a constant increase in the number of asylum requests. The many migrants who did not obtain refugee status found themselves in limbo: if they appealed to the decision, they had to wait months for a judge's decision, hosted by the Italian authorities in many different ways.

This has certainly led to substantial public spending. In 2016, Italy spent about 4.5 billion euros on reception, aid at sea, language courses and health care. But as we mentioned, the years 2014-2017 were somewhat exceptional: in 2012 and 2013, Italy spent less than a billion to meet the same duties. The number of people hosted by Italian institutions has not decreased drastically in 2018 as that of people arriving from the sea, but this is due to the "permanent emergency" approach that characterizes the way in which Italian institutions

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[9]All data on foreign population in Italy come from http/::demo.istat.it:

[10]http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/01/16/18A00308/sg

have faced a structural social phenomenon. Among the many, a study by the Bank of Italy[11] recalls that 77% of people were housed in temporary governmental facilities called Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS) and not in the so-called SPRAR (Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees) which offers a decentralized system, managed by the Municipalities, hosting and inclusion in a local context. Emergencies drastically increase costs, stabilizing the system of legal admissions and public reception would make it possible to better accommodate people and also save resources.

The rhetoric on costs is also related to the false claim that "asylum seekers receive 35 euros a day". This is a voluntarily distorted interpretation of real data: Italy has spent about 35 euros on average for asylum seekers in recent years, but the people housed in the CAS and in the SPRAR projects received only 2 -2.5 euros a day as pocket money. On the other hand, a welcome that wants to promote the progressive autonomy of people is both an immediate expense and investment on the future.

"Immigrants criminals"
As it often happens, statistics tell us that the link between security, crime, terrorism and immigration is misleading. But even when an immigrant commits a crime, this does not mean that "immigrants are criminals", it is a kind of badly conceived synecdoche. Immigrants, like any other category of people, do not commit crimes by nature or by osmosis. In the history of migration, some national groups have brought criminal organizations to other countries, but this does not make most of the immigrant communities. Let's use the United States as an example: not all Italian-Americans belong to the Mafia, not all the Japanese are Yakuza, Russians, Chinese, Irish, etc.
Let's start with data: Italy has not witnessed a foreign terrorist attacks for decades. The only violent incident linked to terrorism was the killing by the Italian police of Anis Amri, an asylum seeker and fugitive refugee who perpetrated the Berlin truck attack in 2016. The Italian police also discovered a series of cases of online recruitment or international connections, but linking the presence of terrorist networks to recent immigration would be misleading. In their annual report to the Italian Parliament the secret services speak of a "sporadic and non-structural use of illegal immigration channels for the transfer of extremists"[12]. Many of the people involved in these groups have lived in Europe for some time. On the other hand, the vast majority of immigrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy from the sea do not come from countries with significant terrorist activity.

The hijacking of the school bus, with 50 children on board, performed in Milan on March 21 by a citizen of Senegalese origin, resident in Italy for many years, does not refute this reading: the investigators have in fact ruled out any connection to international terrorist networks.

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[11]Aa. Vv., *I rifugiati e i richiedenti asilo in Italia, nel confronto europeo, Banca d'Italia*, Questioni di economia e finanza, Aprile 2017.
[12]Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, *Relazione sulla politica dell'informazione per la sicurezza 2018*, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, febbraio 2019.

Secondly, the data on crime and foreign inmates in Italian prisons deny the false equation that more immigration means more crime. First of all, in Italy the total number of reported crimes is constantly decreasing: the complaints have decreased from 2.89 million in 2012 to 2.4 million in 20172. The increase in arrivals of asylum seekers is therefore not reflected in an increase in the number of offenses.

Furthermore, table 1 shows very clearly that the increase in foreigners residing in Italy does not correspond to an increase in foreigners held and sentenced.
The rate of detention of foreign citizens, according to the Antigone association, between 2003 and 2018 decreased from 1.16% to 0.39%. Where the foreign population has grown by about 3.5 million, the number of foreign prisoners has increased in the same period by only around 2,800.

Table 2. Foreign residents/Foreign inmates ratio			
Year	Foreign residents	Foreign Inmates	Imprisonment ratio
2003	1.464.663	17.007	1,16%
2008	3.023.317	21.562	0,71%
2013	4.387.721	21.854	0,49%
2018	5.047.028	19.811	0,39%

Fonte: Antigone, XIV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione, 2018

The Ministry of Justice updated data also recall that of the 20,325 foreign detainees in prison on February 28, 2019, more than seven thousand are defendants, but have not yet been convicted[13].

We must also remind four other aspects concerning immigrant foreigners and their relationship with the Justice system.
1. A non-negligible number of foreigners is stopped for crimes related to the sale of counterfeit products (bags, etc.), a crime that does not allow them to be classified as dangerous. One of the crimes for which foreign residents are condemned more frequently is drug dealing, a typical "job" of easily accessible criminal laborers.
2. The undetermined legal status of many foreign people reduces the quality of social inclusion and, therefore, increases the propensity to commit minor crimes to survive.
3. Foreign citizens have less access to adequate legal defense and this makes them more easily condemned.
4. Small "street" crimes are easier to counter and a foreign citizen is a person easier to identify during land control operations carried out by the police.

[13]https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?contentId=SST168816&previsiousPage=mg_1_14

"Italians live in the streets, immigrants get public housing"

Although varying in the quantification of estimates on the impact of the foreign presence on the Welfare State, all the main studies carried out in recent years, reach a similar conclusion: the contribution by immigrants to public finance is higher than the value of the social benefits they enjoy.[14]

According to the most recent estimates, immigrants pay 11.9 billion euros of social security contributions, adding 131 billion, about 9%, of value to the GDP: this means that they "pay for themselves and also for us" with 3.3 billions of euros in disbursed in taxes[15].

Migrations, of course, also generate new demands for services: but this is normal, it is not an emergency.

One of the reasons why people think that immigration has a negative impact on the proper functioning of Welfare State is the misperception of data. The *Ipsos annual report[16]* on the dangers of perceptions has good data on this: there is a widespread belief that 26% of Italians are less than 14 years old, while this age group represents just 14% of the entire population. Italians also think that foreigners are 26% of the population, while they are about 9% of the total. As we have seen, real numbers tell us that the economic impact of immigrants on welfare in Italy on is positive: they pay more than they get.

"They are instigating us to cultural suicide"

Migrations are part of human history and, yes, they have also generated conflicts and cultural frictions. Does this mean that a person who emigrates from one country to another is incompatible with the society in which he or she settles? History suggests that this is not the case: local habits, societies, experiences have a direct influence on people and change their knowledge, cultural practices, relationship system, their stories.

The most common arguments used to support the thesis of cultural incompatibility refer on the one hand to religious diversity and on the other to the different treatment of women in some countries of origin of immigrants. In particular, the Muslim faith is considered a "threat" to the preservation of the European, Christian and white identity. The terrorist attacks in Europe in recent years, some news that involved Muslim couples or families and cases of sexual violence committed by foreign citizens have therefore been used to demonstrate the need to stop the "dangerous" contamination that would result from Asian, Maghreb and Sub-Saharian African migrations.

These arguments have hit the public opinion.

It is estimated that in 2017 Muslim citizens living in Italy amounted to 4.8% of the population, about 2.8 million people.[17] Most of them are citizens have lived in the country

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[14] Tra i molti: Gabriele S., "Dare e avere: migrazioni, bilancio pubblico e sostenibilità" in Ronchetti L. (Ed.), *I diritti di cittadinanza dei migranti. Il ruolo delle Regioni*, Giuffrè, Milano, 2012; Benvenuti V. e Stuppini A., "Immigrati, fiscalità e spesa pubblica: uno scambio alla pari?" in Centro Studi e Ricerche Idos (Ed.), *Immigrazione. Dossier statistico 2013*, Unar 2013, pp. 333-340; Lunaria, *I diritti non sono un costo*, 2013, downloadable here: http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/i_diritti_non_sono_un_costo-tot..pdf

[15] Fondazione Leone Moressa, *Rapporto 2018: Prospettive di integrazione in un'Italia che invecchia*, 2018.

[16] Ipsos/Mori, *The Perils of Perception 2018*, https://perils.ipsos.com/

[17] Pew research Center, *Europe's Growing Muslim population*, 2017,
http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/

for many years and are well integrated in the Italian society: The first immigration flows in the 70's have involved, migrants from Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt who were joined in the 1990s by Bengali, Indian and Pakistanis. To date, these people have not represented any threat or generated religious conflicts. If anything, they were hindered in the profession of their religion, for example with acts of the Municipalities that prevented the opening of new mosques.

Schools and universities are full of foreign students who speak perfectly Italian and have expectations, lifestyles and consumption similar to their native peers.

One more important data on the integration of foreign residents is their length of stay in the country. Only 16% of immigrants living in Italy have been living in Italy for less than 5 years. Italian is used in 1.3 million foreign families and 90% of foreign residents under the age of 18 speak Italian with their friends. About 90% of foreign workers speaks Italian in the workplace, with the exception of members of the Chinese community, who are often employed by fellow entrepreneurs, who are in very large numbers compared to other communities (a 2017 *UnionCamere*[18] survey refers to 52 thousand businesses for about 290 thousand residence permits issued to people belonging to the Chinese community).

What "Italian identity" would be threatened?
As far as sexual violence is concerned, unfortunately a phenomenon that is still too widespread in Italy as in the rest of the world, the available data shows that it is mostly a matter of violence perpetrated in the family, mostly by indigenous citizens. In 2017 out of 988 complaints about femicide, those involving foreign citizens are 17%. Of the 4,429 reports of sexual violence, foreign people are involved in the 39% of cases[19]. Recent data on convictions issued are not available, but a report by the Ministry of Justice has analyzed about 600 cases of murders of women committed between 2012 and 2015, estimated the incidence of foreign authors at 25.5%.[20]

What does this data tell us? That it is impossible to generalize and attribute a "propensity" or cultural customs to people considering them "natural" or inextricably linked to the country of origin or to the "culture of belonging". The crimes are of personal responsibility and in no way can a person's responsibility be attributed to an entire group.

Beyond the "rational" deconstruction
So far we have tried to deconstruct hate speech by identifying some of the most recurrent "rational" topics used to fuel it. Debunking and fact-checking are important and useful tools because they provide arguments to those who find themselves fighting the political hatred speech in the public sphere and on the media. Several election campaigns observed from the point of view of hate speech and more generally of fake news spread on the Web show us though that, however useful and necessary, rational arguments alone are not enough to

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[18]https://www.infocamere.it/documents/10193/90282173/Imprese%2C+quelle+di+stranieri+verso+quota+600 mila+%28%2B3%2C4%25+nel+2017%29/73afe25f-9163-4af2-94df-c6c7c0651e45?version=1.2

[19] Istat, *Violenza sulle donne*, 2017. https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-percorso-giudiziario/condanne

[20] Ministero della Giustizia, *Inchiesta con analisi statistica sul femminicidio in Italia*, 2016.

counteract the spread of the racist and xenophobic discourse[21]. They are not sufficient to weaken the effects on an audience that appears less equipped to discern between true and false news: young people because they have always coexisted with a sphere of public discourse where authoritative and non-authoritative voices are not necessarily distinguishable; adults because in large part they are not educated on social media.

What strategies should we adopt then?
In the first place it is useful to recall that not all audiences are the same: neither in the ability to identify and recognize the hate speech, nor in the ability to read the media and to use the channels through which hateful content spreads. Each campaign that aims to counter the discourse of hatred must therefore be thought of in relation to the target, the place (physical or virtual) and the objective to be achieved.

Do we contrast hate speech by using a humanitarian or "anti-racist" subject? Or is it a matter of deconstructing a specific message? Or should we propose an alternative narrative on the general themes evoked by hate speech? The tools may change according to the strategy one would choose.

What alternative strategies?
Italy has for sure a media literacy problem: deconstructing the xenophobic and racist rhetoric also means providing tools to help people extricate themselves from the constant flow of inputs coming from media and social media. How does a news story occur? Why aren't the media all the same? How to recognize an authoritative source?

Another general theme concerning the role played by social network managers: if information is managed and there are channels for the dissemination of news with a huge potential audience, you have responsibilities. Information is a "commodity", a special product. Solicit social networks, report hate speech episodes conveyed in their networks and request their deletion is one of the "must do" things.

Then there is the countering of the idea that hateful and xenophobic speech is something acceptable. It is one thing to believe that immigrants in a particular country are present in a higher number than that country is able to support: this is an opinion that may or may not be shared. It is completely different to argue this same idea with false data, feeding prejudices on some target group. Making hate speech unacceptable, something to be ashamed of, is another tool to contrast it.

In a consultation[22] on racism, *Lunaria* also noted that among young Italians there is a tendency to view racism as something cool. Irony and strong messages can be used to deconstruct this idea: is a slave ship cool? Is a racist murder cool? Is a lynching cool? What

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[21] Hunt Allcott, Matthew Gentzkow, Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election, Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 31, Number 2—Spring 2017—Pages 211–236; Richard Gunther, Paul A. Beck and Erik C. Nisbet, Fake News May Have Contributed to Trump's 2016 Victory, A study on fake news and its influence on the 2016 election, Ohio State University, 2018.

[22] Lunaria, *Giovani e razzismo*, 2018: http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/1_GIOVANIERAZZISMOINITALIADEF_11marzo2019.pdf

can be cool and what can't be cool? A narrative that encourages greater reflection on the communication that each one makes online and on the importance of words is another possible strategy.

Show the fruits and benefits of cultural contamination and another option. The direct testimony of people and famous testimonials (storytelling) can be supportive to this end, also thanks to the story of lifestyles and consumption (what music do you listen to? What sport do you do and which team do you think about what you eat? And so Street).

Speaking of virality and penetration into the social media sphere: in recent years, those who work to spread hate speeches are organized, equipped with tools, capable of networking. There are numerous case studies and examples. Equipping oneself, as far as possible, with the necessary technical skills, creativity and developing the ability to network is another crucial aspect.

5. The initiatives proposed by civil society organizations

5. Combating hate speech: the most significant initiatives promoted by civil society

The dissemination of violent messages of online and offline discriminatory content has brought to the birth of a wide range of initiatives aimed at combating it. The polarization of the public debate on migration and asylum carries with it the risk of degeneration into forms of verbal and physical violence that entail serious violations of the dignity of the person and, in the most serious cases, of their safety.

The activities promoted are a wide range and may, therefore we will limit ourselves to mention those that are not extemporaneous or that we consider original. We have divided them into 4 categories: a) monitoring and mapping of hate speech cases; b) promotion of correct information; c) awareness campaigns; d) media education.

Monitoring and mapping

The Prism project involved 12 partners, including universities, associations and NGOs from five different countries (Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Great Britain) with ARCI as a leader. Research coordinated by the University of Barcelona compared the scenarios of the 5 countries involved, making some recommendations to decision makers.

An original contribution of the project is the mapping of the activity of political parties, organizations and xenophobic movements on social media which is summarized in the report: "Speeches of hatred and Social Media. Criticality, intervention strategies and practices", (Arci, 2016).

The Vox Rights website, http://www.voxdiritti.it, has created three maps of online intolerance by analysing the messages on Twitter. The mapping (which allows you to geolocalize and extract tweets that contain words considered sensitive) focuses on six groups among which intolerance is most widespread: women, homosexuals, immigrants, the disabled, Jews and Muslims. The third survey - which examined the period between

May and November 2017 and March - May 2018 - highlighted how, unlike past years in which homosexuals were the main target, in the last year tweets against foreigners and of different religions have gone from 32.45% (2017 figure) to 36.93%, increasing by 4 points in a few months.

On the occasion of hate 2018 general elections, Amnesty International Italy, monitored the electoral campaign by archiving posts containing insults, racist and other hate messages. In 23 days AI collected 787 reports, 287 of which were classified as hate speech. The reports were attributed to 129 candidates and 77 among those were elected. A similar initiative is planned for the 2019 European election campaign.

The website www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org set up by Lunaria, started documenting different forms of everyday racism in society, institutions, media and public debate in 2011. An online database offers a chronological narration of the cases documented on the basis of articles published in national and local news media, news reported by other websites or blogs, press releases from the associative world and direct reporting. Between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2018, 6,823 cases were documented, of which 4623 are classified as verbal violence; of these 1869 are attributed to institutional actors. Papers and white books published periodically offer an analysis of the main trends that characterize the evolution of racism in Italy.

Promoting correct information

With a resolution dated July 25, 2018, the AGCOM (Communications Authority) launched a regulation aimed at preventing and combating discrimination in the broadcasting system. The regulation was submitted to a public consultation of the media actors. This decision is inspired by the risk that an excessively polarized public debate on the presence of foreign citizens favours generalizations and stereotypes that undermine social cohesion thanks to strategies of disinformation that contrast with the fundamental principles of protection of the person and respect for human dignity. This is particularly true when media spread inaccurate, misleading or false information.

The **Carta di Roma** Association, www.cartadiroma.org, was founded in December 2011 to implement the deontological protocol for correct and respectful information on the rights of asylum seekers, refugees, minorities and migrants, signed by the National Council of the Order of Journalists (CNOG) and the Italian National Press Federation (FNSI) in June 2008. The association also includes some organizations of civil society.
Carta di Roma carries out training activities for media operators and students in journalism schools, research and information monitoring activities that feed an annual report. CDR also organizes conferences and study seminars.

Among the initiatives aimed at promoting correct information on migration, there is the Website **Openmigration.org**, which proposes analysis and visual data representation and on story telling. The data regularly published on the site also includes those concerning

asylum released by Unhcr (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

The association **Parole O_Stili** was born in 2016 (https://paroleostili.it/) with the specific aim of combating hatred online. The group launched a Manifesto of non-hostile communication based on a national forum that took place in Trieste in 2016. The association uses the support of various communication professionals (university professors, journalists, social media managers, influencers and bloggers). In addition to promoting an online campaign, the association has published various reports and carries out training activities.

The Facebook Group **"Fuori il razzismo da Facebook"** (https://www.facebook.com/groups/545005558939798/), born in 2014 it has gathered over 49 thousand followers. The group is active in reporting to the social network manager the pages, posts and groups that convey messages of hatred.

The **Valigia Blu** site (www.valigiablu.it) has been very active in media literacy and in the deepening of issues related to digital rights in connection to the spread of the hate speech. Migrations are also a recurrent topic on the site.

Eye to the media (www.occhioaimedia.org), is a Website set up by a group of young activists working in Ferrara. The Website has the aim of systematically monitoring the local press in search of news related to migrations and hate speech or racism. The group has also produced several videos with the aim of encouraging people to denounce everyday racism.

The awareness campaigns

The **No hate speech** movement (http://www.nohatespeech.it/) also operates in Italy, supported by the Council of Europe in raising the awareness of young people against online hatred. At national level, the movement is supported by the inter-institutional table for combating hatred and intolerance on the web, by the National Youth Agency, Anci and the Conference of Regions. Online awareness campaigns have been promoted since 2017 on the occasion of the international day against racism on March 21st. Several useful materials on different ways of elaborating counter and alternative narratives are available on its Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/ NoHateSpeechIT /

On the occasion of the 2014 European elections, a network of civil society organizations (21 July, Lunaria and Antigone, in collaboration with ASGI), promoted the **Campaign for rights, against xenophobia**, with the aim of informing citizens, denouncing violations of migrants' rights, Roma people and inmates. And to call on national and EU institutions to review the guidelines of their policies, making the protection of dignity and human rights a priority. A daily monitoring of hate speech towards migrants documented between February 1 and May 7, 2014 88 cases of discriminatory statements and incitement to hatred conveyed by the public political discourse.

Storytelling was the strategy favored by the informal movement **#italianisenzacittadinanza**

which brought together young people from different Italian cities in an advocacy campaign that claimed the reform of the law n.91 / 1992 on citizenship. The movement has given new impetus to the campaign I am too Italy, that had collected more than 200 thousand signatures and had succeeded in promoting a popular initiative bill proposal on the issue of *ius soli*. The reform was not voted by the Parliament, but the visibility of the advocacy campaign was very significant thanks to the spread of many personal stories of young people who were born and raised in Italy but are not Italian citizens which were posted on their Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/italianisenzacittadinanza/), The campaign and the stories made it to get to the mainstream media.

A very effective communication campaign was carried out by **Save the Children** in 2018. **#oltrelodio** involved 2 thousand children from more than 30 Italian cities in thematic workshops and radio broadcasts (www.underadio.it) against hate speech and in envisioning an online campaign that has become viral on social networks. The campaign asked everybody to take a selfie with the hashtag #oltrelodio drawn on one arm. The schools that participate to the platform are 36.

The **IntoEurope project**, promoted by Arci, is currently underway, and is aimed at combating the stigmatization of immigrants and deconstructing the distorted vision of migrations promoted by populist movements and disseminated through social media. Thanks to the creation of eight groups of regular citizens coordinated by a group leader, efforts were made to foster understanding of European and national policies for the inclusion of migrants in relation to the spread of racist, reactionary and anti-European movements and to stimulate the debate on the subject to deconstruct the stereotyped and stigmatizing vision of migration. A counter-narrative campaign is scheduled for the 2019 European elections.

Media education

The European **BRICkS project - Building Respect on the Internet by Combating Hate Speech -** promoted by Cospe has fought the spread of online hate speech against migrants and minorities through media literacy and the active involvement of users and producers of web content. Four media education modules were created - one for each country involved in the project (Italy, Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic) - and tested in schools and youth centers between September 2015 and November 2016. A report provided a summary on design and experimentation process of these training modules in each national context by collecting the materials produced: the training modules, the trainers 'or teachers' logbooks, quantitative data, examples of student productions and some images of the laboratories.
www.bricks-project.eu

The REACT project http://www.reactnohate.eu/ also intervenes in the field of media literacy for educators and young people and foresees the development of a counter-narrative campaign, to be carried out taking into account the results of quantitative

monitoring and quality carried out on a selection of media, social accounts and websites in 5 countries (Italy, France, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany). Capacity building and training activities are aimed at both teachers and students of high schools. During the project, a national seminar brought together activists, professionals and researchers in a discussion on the most effective intervention strategies to be followed towards the media, young people and civil society operators. The need for coordination between the various actors operating in the fight against hate speech at institutional, media and civil society level is one of the main indications that emerged during the discussion, together with that of opening spaces of debate with the groups of the older population, which is normally difficult to interact with through social networks.

The fragmentation and lack of a stable coordination between the different initiatives put in place seems to be one of the main limits that Italy will have to overcome in the coming years to achieve significant results in the reorientation of the public debate towards a more civil and free dialogue.

To date, the attention of civil society has favoured the monitoring and reporting of verbal violence, mainly online. The world of information has yet to fully confront the changes in the communication system produced by the diffusion of new technologies. Greater creativity and media literacy activism is also deeply needed, particularly in schools. There is also the need to refine the technical skills of those who work in institutions, civil society organizations, and to define and implement communication strategies on the Web. A closer and more systematic collaboration between the researchers that deal with information technologies, institutions, media and the associative world would be useful for this task.

6. Conclusions[23]

The analysis of speeches, statements, posts on social networks, posters and slogans used in public events in the Italian political debate in 2018 that Lunaria carried out shows that the violent and stigmatizing rhetoric mainly used by rightwing politicians was widespread and, has fueled the polarization of public opinion. The electoral results of 2018 and 2019 (general and European elections), show that this rhetoric was approved by a significant portion of Italian society.
In a country still recovering from the effects of the economic and social crisis that began in 2008, xenophobia and racism seem to be convincing political responses to a "crisis of signifcance" that many Western countries experiencing. The extreme right-wing rhetoric on immigration is not limited to a criticism of the immigration and asylum policies adopted at a national and European level they become a project of political alternative. In short, the rhetoric of contemporary nationalists and populist right-wing parties seems to offer an answer to Western societies disorientation and to their identity fears: racism and xenophobia are used to reconstruct new national identities.

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[23] The findings of this report have been written taking into account the discussion at the national seminary "Words that hurt", hosted by Lunaria in Rome on April 18, 2019.

To counter this trend, it is not enough to denounce the hate preachers, but it is crucial to analyse in depth the structural socio-economic changes that have occurred in the Italian society, especially in urban suburbs and provincial areas, and to put in place concrete and not ephemeral interventions of inclusion, solidarity, social and economic justice[24].

The analysis of the most recurrent topics in the violent, discriminatory, xenophobic and racist rhetoric used during the electoral campaign of 2018 is revealing. Security, evoking of an invasion (of immigrants), competition between social and labour rights of Italians and foreign citizens, cultural incompatibility and migration economic and social unsustainability were the topics obsessively used. This violent political rhetoric seems to have made a major breakthrough in Italian public opinion. Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and the so-called "second generation" citizens have undoubtedly been the preferred target of this rhetoric.

The normalization and legitimization of xenophobia and racism online and offline and their acceptance at a cultural and social level, make it harder to promote successful counter-narrative and fact-checking initiatives for two main reasons: a) those who produce fake news, often used by haters, use the same formats as fact checkers, for example by providing distorted, decontextualized or partial data; b) hate messages don't appeal on the rationality of the reader/listener but on his emotions[25].

Moreover, in this context, it is necessary to give due consideration to the fact that hate speech is a daily problem not only online, but also in other places (TV, print, public spaces), so it must be fought everywhere using different tools and languages.

One of the biggest challenges in contrasting hate speech is to widen the target of information campaigns, media education and awareness raising.

There are different chances to promote useful interventions in this direction.

A large portion of public opinion (according to some studies, it constitutes the majority), places itself in between "haters" and "friends". This large segment of general public is the one most willing to change their opinions and includes a large portion of young generations who happen also to be the most active on social media. The efforts of civil society coping with hate speech prevention and contrast should target this intermediate group[26].

Targeted actions directed to those involved in the information industry, can also make a significant contribution to limiting the spread of violent and stigmatising political discourse.

React, Raise awareness

Alternative storytelling strategies should attempt to pursue the following objectives[27].

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[24] It is the interpretation, which we agree with, proposed by Guido Caldiron, whom intervened as chairman at the Italian seminary.

[25] Observations made by Andrea Romano in the working group "React, Raise awareness", during the WAS Italian seminary.

[26] Comments proposed by Tommaso Fusco with reference to the Ipsos, Social Change Initiative and More in Common survey: "A fragmented Italy: attitudes towards national identity, immigration and refugees in Italy", available here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a70a7c3010027736a22740f/t/5b5ecb23352f53124f920dc5/1532939059607/Italy+IT+Final_Digital.pdf

[27] Proposals arisen in the working group "React, Raise awareness", during the WAS Italian seminary.

- Abandoning a purely defensive strategy and ceasing to follow the agenda as dictated by the main-stream public debate, producing an alternative narrative that is proactive, curated, original, engaging and centred on personal stories.

- Alternative storytelling strategies should include different communication methods and tools depending on the target audience and communication spaces.

- The involvement of communication experts and external actors (beyond the anti-racist community), is an indispensable condition to target that portion of the public opinion further away from the anti-racist community. One of the strategies considered most effective to broaden the target audience is to involve testimonials and influencers.

- Networking among civil society organisations by supporting, sharing and enhancing the campaigns promoted by the various organisations.

- Define common and coordinated strategies for social media management, on the platforms that make it possible (Facebook, Twitter).

- Promote a coordinated and not occasional collaboration among the civil society's social media managers.

Promoting correct information

In order to raise awareness among information experts, it might be useful to prioritize the following objectives[28].

- Consolidate and increase local press monitoring actions in order to support, when necessary, reporting and denunciation interventions to the Association of Journalists and/or to the competent authorities.

- Reduce the visibility to those media that use a stigmatizing and hostile editorial policy towards immigrants, avoiding the spread of these kind of contents.

- To promote through training activities for journalists, an information system that gives greater visibility to immigrants and minorities, based on the idea of equality and guaranteed rights for all, rather than the merely denounce of discrimination cases.

- To be careful of the language used in communication, by simplifying it, in order to make it less institutional and more comprehensible to the general public.

- Encourage journalists to deepen the knowledge of the concrete implications that the legislation on migration, asylum and security issued may have for citizens.

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[28] Proposals arisen in the working group "Promoting correct information", during the Italian seminary.

- If involved in television programmes and when appropriate, choose not to answer questions and try to change the agenda by reporting on the daily activities and solidarity initiatives promoted by civil society.

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