Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line

Making on-line public space safer by mobilizing young people for human rights, launching a media youth campaign against hate speech in cyberspace and elaborating policy guidelines
**Project rationale**

Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line is a project of the Council of Europe’s youth sector to be run between 2012 and 2014. The project aims to combat racism and discrimination in their online expression of hate speech by equipping young people and youth organisations with the competences necessary to recognize and act against such human rights violations. Initiated by the Advisory Council on Youth, and endorsed by the Joint Council, the project stems out from the worrying of rise in hate speech on-line. Central to the project’s philosophy is the idea that online public space is public space – human rights apply there as much in the rest of society.

The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers” Recommendation 97(20) on “hate speech” defines it as follows: “the term “hate speech” shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin”, placing the discussion on hate speech and its regulation in the framework of anti-racist and anti-discrimination work conducted by the organisation.

Hate speech as such is not a new issue in the human rights debate, its online dimension and the potential impact this offers gives new reasons for concern among young people and youth organisations. While easier to monitor and counter in mainstream professional media, the challenge posed by its online manifestation is the incapacity to monitor and measure its amplitude and impact. While the activity of static websites can be easily traced, most of the action is actually happening in the encounter spaces (i.e. social networking sites), which are far harder to monitor and analyse.

The Council of Europe has developed significant amount of work on dealing both with hate speech and governing the Internet. The basis for the work of the Council of Europe work is that Internet is a public space that should be governed by human rights principles and values and should contribute to the development of a human rights culture. The organisation takes an active role in the Internet Governance global and regional fora; part of this work is the development of Internet governance strategy and a Charter of Internet user rights. This is in addition to the framework provided by the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol which calls for the criminalisation of acts of a xenophobic and racist nature committed through computer systems. The Additional Protocol defines ‘racist and xenophobic material’ as “written material, any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocated, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual or group of individuals, based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors.”

Internet offers the possibility of every user/participant to create, publish, distribute and consume media content fostering therefore a space of full participation, engagement and self-expression. The development of social networks, in particular, has increased the level of youth participation in cyberspace in a variety of ways ranging from keeping in touch with peers and developing new contacts to sharing content and exploring self-expression. Online space, just as offline space, presents new opportunities, challenges and threats to young people. Just as in offline space,
young people may equally be victims and agents of abuse and human rights violation. Interaction in online space among different participants in communication, even though democratic and uncensored, cannot and is not to be value-void.

Three main types of projects can be identified in respect to work against hate speech online: 1. monitoring, focusing particularly of identifying abusive content; 2. hotlines and complaints gathering generally aiming at removal of abusive content online, but varying greatly from country to country and being generally limited to the fixed sites and subject to failure as Internet is not considering borders; 3. awareness raising and educational projects.

The project ‘Young People Combating Hate Speech in Cyberspace’ builds on the experiences ‘All Different-All Equal’ European youth campaigns and the capacity and competence of young people and youth organisations to act within online space.

The project will mobilise European and national actors through a variety of activities such as training courses, development of educational materials, national seminars and conferences. Central to the project is the European youth media campaign which will be designed and implemented with the agency of young people and youth organisations. This campaign will be declined in national campaigns and initiatives so as to be as close to young people as possible. National activities will federate various actors and organisations so as to make national authorities and actors aware of the need to take action. The campaign will adopt a positive and pro-active message – a campaign for freedom of expression on-line – while having a clear stance against all forms of racism and discrimination on-line. Youth from groups targeted by on-line hate speech – such as refugees and asylum-seekers, Muslims, LGBT and Roma – will play a particular role in the campaign.

A network of young bloggers will form the core of the project and will play a central role in the preparation of an on-line media campaign (see appendix for more details).

The project stands for equality, dignity, human rights and diversity. It is a project against hate speech, racism and discrimination in their online expression. The working methods are awareness raising and advocacy, also and it tries to find solutions and make a difference. It is a project for action and intervention.

The experiences of the project should result in policy guidelines, notably on the prevention of hate speech and education about its risks for democratic citizenship and for young people’s equality of opportunities for participation in all spheres of society.

**Aims and objectives**

The project aims to combat racism and discrimination in their online expression of hate speech by equipping young people and youth organisations with the competences necessary to recognize and act against such human rights violations.

The specific objectives include:

- To mobilise young people, youth organisations and other stakeholders to promote human rights and take action against racism and discrimination in online space, with a particular focus on hate speech online;
To provide young online activists and youth organisations with competences and tools, to take action for human rights in online space

To contribute to the democratic governance of Internet, by developing guidelines for policy and practice in respect to young people and youth organisations’ role in making the online space a human rights space and ensuring youth’s participation and contribution to the development of Internet governance initiatives that the Council of Europe takes part in

To map different forms of hate speech on-line, their impact on young people and ways to address them

To promote research about the forms and consequences of on-line hate speech on young people

To create and train a network of 60 young European online activists in human rights, online campaigning against racism and discrimination and to support them in running a mini-campaign online

To develop and run a European youth media campaign against racism and discrimination having both an international and national dimension and provide online human rights activists with campaign tools and materials

To support the development of regional campaigns in the Balkans, Caucasus and Mediterranean area focusing on antisemitism, antigypsyism, aggressive nationalism and religious extremism.

Methodology and main activities

The project places young people and youth organisations at the core of action and initiative. It consists of a series of activities in online and offline space that complement and intertwine.

Three preliminary studies have supported the development and feasibility of the project. One has identified the key issues for the campaign by looking into the relation between regulations on hate speech and the freedom of expression. The other two have studied existing initiatives and actions against hate speech and proposed guidelines for online campaigning. A Preparatory/Consultative Meeting was held in January 2012 and made several proposals for the development of content and form of the project.

The European youth media campaign will be supported by several other offline activities. The campaign will have an European dimension, but it is expected to have national and regional focus, therefore increasing the chances for real impact as racist and discriminatory content and speech is often distributed in local languages. The practice of national committees gathering key stakeholders used in previous campaigns of the Council of Europe is encouraged. These committees will also have the role of making national/regional campaigns more focused on the issues relevant in the specific context. The European campaign will focus on developing at-hand materials and tools for actions and on building a European-wide community of interest and action against racism and discrimination. The European campaign will therefore ensure that the voices, experiences and concerns expressed at local and regional level have visibility and role in shaping the European youth policy agenda.

Essential to the campaign and the project is the training of online activists and bloggers that will be the core group in shaping and carrying out this campaign. The training in itself should also be
seen as good practice to then be replicated at national level. The community of online activists gathered by the training course should shape and support the online campaign along with the different other features of the project: online survey, national and specialist seminars.

A European conference will be held in 2013 to take stock of results and consider measures for follow-up, including policy guidelines which may be drafted in the course of 2014.

An outline of main activities in the project:

1 - **Online survey** will be conducted to identify the perception and impact that hate speech has among young people. The survey will be used to gather data, to building up a community of young activists and organisations and to focus the message of the campaign. The survey has also an important participatory dimension because it should provide the information to base the campaign and project’s development on the expectations and needs of young people.

2 - **Training courses for online activists and bloggers** will gather 60 young activists, already active in the online space and able to multiply knowledge and mobilize young people. The training will be based on blended learning and will focus on such issues as: human rights, antiracism and antidiscrimination, online campaigning; building and activating online communities.

3 – **Study sessions** realised in partnership with European youth organisations and taking place in the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe will also support the project by aiming to support the share of practice and experience on the topic among youth workers, but as well to be a laboratory where new approaches and methods are developed and tested.

4 - **National seminars** will be organised in partnership with different governmental and non-governmental partners in the project. The national seminars will support the European campaign and will have a specific thematic focus agreed by partners and depending on the burning issues specific to the region/country.

5 - **Specialist seminars** will be realised in partnership with other departments of the Council of Europe involved in the process of democratic governance of Internet. The specialist seminar will aim to gather more expertise and good practice, to support the further development of the campaign at European level. Another seminar will be held to later in the project to discuss policy guidelines.

6 – **Youth media campaign** aims to create a community of young people motivated to discuss and act against hate speech online and to place the issue of hate speech on the agenda of youth organisations. The campaign will have a European dimension that would provide the umbrella under which national/local campaigns should be more focused. The national campaigns should be carried out with the active involvement of non-governmental and governmental youth actors, in the spirit of co-management that under which the policy and programme of the youth sector of the Council of Europe is governed.

7 - **Educational tools and materials** will be created to support capacity building of youth organisations and online youth activists and action oriented tools that can be easily adapted to specific contexts. These will include a tool-kit on how to campaign online and awareness-raising activities about forms of online discrimination, including, for example, cyber bullying.

8 – **A campaign conference** gathering all the stakeholders and participants in the project will be held in late 2013. The conference will look at the overall achievements of the project and
will focus on making policy guidelines proposals and ways to further the action of youth sector on the topic.

**Means, management and partners**

Key activities in the project – like the training of young bloggers – are funded by the programme of activities of the youth sector, that is from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe. Others, however, especially the European media youth campaign, are relying on additional funding, mostly through Voluntary Contributions by member states (see appended logframe).

The scale of the programme of activities and the outreach of the campaign will, therefore, depend on the levels of additional funding, including staff to coordinate the project and the campaign (a call for national secondments was sent to the member states).

The project will, in any case, mobilise and make use of the various instruments of the Youth Department, including the European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg, the European Youth Foundation and partnership with the European Commission in the field of Youth.

The project is run under the political supervision and guidance of the Joint Council on Youth, the co-management body which brings together the members of the Advisory Council on Youth and of the European Steering Committee on Youth.

A Follow-up or Monitoring Group may be established, under the responsibility of the Joint Council, in order to support the management and coordination of the project, notably by linking it with national activities and with other international initiatives, including within other sectors of the Council of Europe.

Other partners and contributors to the project may be invited to the Monitoring Group.

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**Appendices:**

Provisional timeline of the project
Logframe for Voluntary Contributions
Appendix 2: Logframe for Voluntary Contributions

Interface - Project Logframes

Voluntary Contribution Projects (VC)

Plan
III - Democracy

Sector
III.2 - Sustainable Democratic Societies

Programme
III.2.3 - Culture and democracy: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; Cultural routes, North-South Centre, Eurimages and European Audiovisual Observatory

Project
III.2.3.0 - 2011/DG4/VC/2705 Young People Combating Hate Speech in Cyberspace

Duration
31/12/2011 - 31/12/2013 (24 months)

Origin
Decision of the Joint Council on Youth

Milestones
Done Date Type Country Report
No 31/03/2013 Final Belgium Contact December 2011

Nature
Standards and Policies

Partners
Youth organisations in member states
European Wergeland Centre
European Youth Forum

Beneficiary(es)
Albania / Armenia / Azerbaijan / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Georgia / Moldova / Montenegro / Serbia / "the former Yugoslavia" / Republic of Macedonia / Turkey / Ukraine / Caucasian countries / South-East Europe / Algeria / Belarus / Egypt / Morocco / Tunisia / Kosovo / Multilateral / States Parties to the European Cultural Convention

Themes/Subthemes
Human Rights
Protection of persons (dignity/integrity)
Media, information society and data protection
Youth

Links/Attachments
» Contrat Bulgarie 2011 – 20,700€.pdf

Programme 2012 (2012)

Year
2011 0 Activities

English (Show Budget) (Show Official budget) (Log of changes)

Logframe Status
VC Proposed to CM
Last modified 02/01/2012 - JOUBERT

Contact
GOMES, Rui
Owner
GOMES

Intervention Logic

Performance Indicators
Sources of Verification
Assumptions

Project Objective
To contribute to the democratic governance of the Internet and to make a safer public space by mobilizing young people to defend human rights online, launching a media youth campaign against hate speech in cyberspace and elaborating guidelines.

A network of young bloggers and on-line activists is formed and trained on human rights.

An Internet campaign is prepared and launched with youth organizations. A system of reporting hate speech on-line by young people is developed. Guidelines for combating hate speech on-line are developed: 3 plie seminars are organized in member states.

Number of bloggers applying and attending the courses; projects of bloggers and readership; result of the Internet campaign (number of visitors, users, petitions, signed); number and types of hate speech reports; interest in guidelines and seminars.

Influential and active young bloggers will get involved in the project; the Internet campaign is accessible and attractive; member states and other partners take a direct interest in the project.

Expected Result 1
The nature, dimension and forms of hate speech on-line as a threat to a culture of human rights are clarified and made applicable to on-line spaces. Strategies and tools for a a media campaign are made available to on-line human rights defenders.

Mapping of forms of hate speech on-line and ways to address them, development of Internet platform and social media tools for human rights defenders and activists; campaign tools and materials are developed and made available.

Publications and studies. Suitability of Internet platform and tools for social media (through evaluation of users); numbers of requests, feedback and registered users.

Suitable common approaches to combat hate-speech and human rights violations on-line. Accessibility and up-to-date on-line tools set up in time and with the expected level of quality.

Expected Result 2
Young bloggers and on-line human rights activists are trained on defending human rights on-line; they initiate a network of core activists against hate speech on-line and take the lead in the Internet campaign.

At least 60 young bloggers and on-line human rights activists are trained and remain active through the project; 180 activists are brought into a European network; they will start at least 30 projects within the Internet campaign. Tools and applications for on-line speech reporting will be made available and facilitated

Number of interested bloggers in the project; evaluations of the training; membership and activity of the network; number and usage of the tools developed; number of cases of hate speech report and denouncing; number of downloads of applications.

Young bloggers’ interest and availability for the project. Technical and financial resources for the media campaign and tools.
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<th>Expected Result 3</th>
<th>Expected Result 4</th>
<th>Expected Result 5</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Guidelines for protecting human rights online</strong> and for combating hate speech online are developed, together with human rights and Internet governance experts, and disseminated in pilot seminars in member states and study sessions at the EYC.</td>
<td><strong>Youth organisations are consulted and involved in Internet governance processes and documents. Youth organisations are mobilised and take actions during the Safer Internet Day. Internet governance principles and codes of conduct are adapted to youth-friendly versions and applications for smartphone and similar devices. Two study sessions of youth organisations are held.</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-line human rights defenders from the Balkans, Caucasus, and South Mediterranean initiate regional media campaigns on fighting intolerance and ethnic hatred; visibility is given to positive role models of young people as active rights defenders.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Results of a joint expert seminar with DIGNI experts. Suitability and usage of the guidelines by both legal and human rights experts and by young human rights defenders. Countries and partners interested in hosting and co-organising pilot seminars at national and regional level and study sessions at the European Youth Centre.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Opinions of the Advisory Council; attendance of meetings and consultations processes by youth organisations; number of downloads of applications and tools; results and evaluations of study sessions and of initiatives on Safer Internet Day.</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 young activists from those regions are trained and develop region-specific projects against antisemitism, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and religious extremism. Regional media campaigns and tools are developed. 10 pilot projects of young people are supported and monitored online. 2 regional campaign events will be organised in Turkey, Serbia and Tunisia.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interest in attendance of the experts’ seminar and evaluation of its results; development and adoption of the guidelines; interest in attendance of seminars and study sessions, their results and evaluations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Openness of Internet Governance actors to youth participation; broader consensus on Internet Governance Principles.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of applications for the training activities and their evaluations. Media feedback on the regional campaigns; applications and tools downloaded; interest in the seminars; participation and connections with existing campaigners and bloggers.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Feasibility of guidelines that combine the protection of human rights online and freedom of expression. Interest of member states and other national partners in the guidelines and their promotion at national level.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Supportive freedom of access to and usage of the Internet in some countries; effectiveness of regional and language-specific tools (e.g. Arabic, Russian).</strong></td>
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