

Citizen Journalists on Tour (2017)

COUNTERING HATE SPEECH

Manual



Kreisau-Initiative e.V.



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Citizen Journalists on Tour – Countering Hate Speech in a nutshell

Citizen Journalists on Tour (CJOT) – Countering Hate Speech was a training course that took place in Trebnitz, Germany, from 9-16 June 2017 and was designed for youth workers and trainers from six different countries in order to deepen their understanding on the issue of hate speech online. Altogether 24 youth workers and trainers from Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom took the opportunity to:

- (1) Deepen their understanding of the phenomenon of hate speech
- (2) Learn different strategies how to counter hate speech on the internet
- (3) Network and develop their own ideas with participants from six different countries.

Context

In light of the political right turn in many European countries we witness an increasingly hostile atmosphere towards Muslims, refugees, and other minority groups. For many people the Internet serves as a platform to spread their racist views. The aim of the training was to empower youth workers to counter hate speech.

Program

In the first part of the program participants learnt to recognize discriminatory posts and were familiarized with media literacy aspects of hate speech. As a next step, they embarked on a field trip to Berlin and interviewed various representatives of local media, civil society and political institutions. Finally, they acquired practical skills on countering hate speech and learnt how to apply these skills in their individual field of activity.

Approach

We actively involved the participants and engaged our brains, hearts and bodies. The methodological approach included theoretical inputs, non-formal learning and informal learning methodologies, discussions, workshops, reflections, best-practice examples, excursions, cooperation games, open space and others. The seminar language was English.

The aim of this manual

One of the outcomes of this project was the creation of a Countering Hate Speech Manual. The manual is designed for youth workers, trainers and youth leaders as well as young people who are not so familiar with the hate speech online phenomenon. Through this manual, readers are introduced to:

- the terms ‘hate speech’ and ‘hate speech online’
- the No Hate Speech Movement
- ideas, tips and strategies that were developed by the participants of the CJOT training course regarding combating online hate speech
- helpful links and further information regarding combat of online hate speech.

What is hate speech?

The term 'hate speech' is used to cover a wide range of content:

- Firstly, it covers more than 'speech' as it is perceived in common sense and can be used in relation to other forms of communication such as videos, images, music, lyrics etc.
- Secondly, the term can be used to describe very abusive and even threatening behavior as well as comments which are 'merely' offensive that can be passed as 'opinions'.

There may be no universal agreement on what constitutes hate speech but it is without any doubts an abuse and violation of human rights (Bookmarks, CoE, 2016). Council of Europe, the continent's leading human rights organization, and its 47 member states (28 of which are members of the EU) have defined hate speech as follows:

Hate speech, as defined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, as well as discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.¹

For the No Hate Speech Movement, also other forms of discrimination and prejudice, such as antigayism, christianophobia, islamophobia, misogyny, sexism, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, fall clearly within the scope of hate speech.

Online hate speech

Online hate speech is a growing, worrying phenomenon that needs special attention. The Internet has created new forms and spaces of communication and interaction with new elements: users can hide their identity. Behind anonymity and distance it is much easier to express hate to others than in person.² In addition, hate is also more visible as it can be spread and shared easily, for example via comments, retweets or re-posts, thus multiplying the effect of the original post. The effects can be devastating on the intended target of hate speech, online and in the offline world, and affect society as a whole.

The No Hate Speech Movement

This growing volume of abusive behavior on the Internet is likely to threaten the fundamental values of the democratic society in which we live. In order to combat online hate speech, the Council of Europe has created the No Hate Speech Movement³. Its aim is to reduce hate speech and to combat racism and discrimination in their electronic expression. The campaign focuses on combating hate speech on the Internet in all its forms, including those that most

¹ RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 20, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 1997
<https://rm.coe.int/1680505d5b>

² We CAN! Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives, CoE, 2017

³ No Hate Speech Movement, www.nohatespeechmovement.org

affect young people, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-hate. The campaign is based on trainings for human rights, the participation of young people and the media literacy.

The main objectives of the No Hate Speech Movement are:

- to support young people in the preservation of human rights, online and offline
- to raise awareness of hate speech and the dangers for democracy and promote literacy in the media and the Internet
- to reduce levels of acceptance of online hate speech
- to mobilize, educate and link online human rights activists
- to map online forms of hate speech and develop tools for constructive responses
- to support and show solidarity to individuals and groups who are victims of rhetorical hatred
- to support the development of European policy instruments that combat hate speech
- to strengthen youth participation and citizenship on the Internet.

Ideas and strategies for countering hate speech online

Participants of the project – through the combination of non-formal and informal learning activities, as well as their field trip in Berlin and interviews with the No Hate Speech Campaign of Germany, various representatives of the local media, society and political institutions – explored different ways of addressing hate speech online and they share the following tips and ideas on how to counter online hate speech.

Join the Movement on www.nohatespeechmovement.org

It is very important to support an online campaign that is already established and well known. The No Hate Speech Movement produced various tools from educational materials about countering online hate speech (manuals such as Bookmarks, or We CAN!) till hashtags, action days and online activities against hate. You can become a member of the No Hate Speech Movement at any time!

Assess the hate speech and ...

As it was mentioned in a previous section of this manual, hate speech can differ from a very threatening and abusive behavior till a merely offensive comment; in conclusion we have bad hate and worse hate. In order to properly respond to hate speech you need to classify it.

The information on hate speech online in Chapter 5 of the CoE manual Bookmarks⁴ contains some 'criteria' for assessing cases of hate speech. These include the following:

- the **content** or **tone** of the expression: this covers the type of language used
- the **intent** of the person making the statement, in other words, whether they meant to hurt someone
- the **target audience**, e.g. persons that belong to a minority or minority groups can be more vulnerable than people of higher status

⁴ Chapter 5, Classifying Hate Speech, p. 151-153, Bookmarks, CoE, 2016

- the **context** of the utterance: this includes the current situation, e.g. the context of a particular expression covers the historical and cultural circumstances surrounding an expression of hate. It may also include other factors such as the medium and the likely target audience, existing tensions or prejudices, the 'authority' of the person responsible for the expression, and so on
- the **impact**, in other words, what effect the statement might have on individuals or on society as a whole.

... respond accordingly!

Our response may differ according to the level of the hate speech. CJOT participants through their experience from this project concluded in the following tips for respond:

Use facts

A hate speech comment is usually comprised by a lot of generalizations such as stereotypes or prejudices that most of the times are either completely false or belong to the category of 'alternative news'. It is essential to respond to the hate speech comment with statistics or facts. Even if you don't convince the person that wrote the hate speech post, your rich in facts reply will be visible to others and might also get positive votes (likes or favs) so it will be higher in the responses even more visible to other users. Do you want an example? Here it is!

Hate speech comment:

„Immigrants take all of our jobs!“

Your rich in facts reply:

“Studies find no correlation between unemployment and the share of immigrants in a country. Indeed, a study of the effect of increased immigration in Europe found that in competitive markets, labor migration increased the efficiency and flexibility of labor markets and slowed wage growth, allowing more people to find jobs.”

Use humor

From the participants' visit to both local online newspapers and the No Hate Speech Movement of Germany we found out that humor can be a very effective response towards mild offensive or ignorant comments. You can find many fun replies and memes against hate under this address: no-hate-speech.de/de/kontern/fuer-gegen-alle-hate-speech/.

Use the report button

If the hate speech that you encounter online escalates and becomes from bad to worse you need to take action and use the report button that is available in social media, so the operators will be notified, can evaluate and take measures against the hate speech post. In fact, social media companies operating in Germany face fines of as much as \$57 million if they do not delete illegal, racist or slanderous comments and posts within 24 hours under a recent law. The law reinforces Germany's position as one of the most aggressive countries in the western world at forcing companies like Facebook, Google and Twitter to crack down on hate speech and other extremist messaging on their digital platforms⁵.

Identify the roots of the problem

Through their participation in the "Roots and Branches" activity of the Bookmarks manual (p. 108), CJOT comprehended that in order to understand and respond to hate speech online, we need to see it as a problem with numerous connections to other issues, and to the 'real' world. In particular, when we are trying to combat hate speech, it can be useful to look at the underlying causes. Addressing these is often more effective than trying to address instances of hate speech itself. Especially since youth workers, trainers and educators are working more in the prevention of the online hate speech phenomenon.

Take action online and offline to promote human rights for all and fight hate speech

While online actions can reach to a wider audience more easily, their impact will be much bigger if you combine them with offline activities. Organizing an awareness offline activity with your group about online hate speech and promoting human rights will help you reach to local audience, inform them about the phenomenon and maybe find other supporters too. You can organize your activity on one of the International World Days such as the International World Day of Human Rights (December 10th) or one of the European Action Days (e.g. European Action Day against Sexist Hate Speech, March 8th). Your activities can vary from a flash mob to a street performance, or an info stand where passers-by can get informed.

Finally, there are many other ways that a young person or an activist can contribute to the No Hate Speech Campaign. Some of them are listed below:

- Sign up to the Campaign newsletter, post photos or videos and interact with others on the Campaign website (forum.nohatespeechmovement.org)
- Monitor hate speech online and report examples to national bodies (www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/reporting-to-national-bodies)
- Watch out for the European Action Days and organize your own national event
- Visit the campaign co-ordination website at www.coe.int/youthcampaign
- Find out who your national co-ordinator is and see how you and your group can get involved in the campaign in your country

⁵ www.nytimes.com/2017/06/30/business/germany-facebook-google-twitter.html

- Join the discussions about hate speech online and the campaign in the forum (forum.nohatespeechmovement.org)
- Disseminate the campaign on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nohatespeech) and Twitter (#nohatespeech @nohate_speech)

Useful resources and links

Council of Europe

- **Council of Europe (2017), We CAN! Taking action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives.** This manual presents communicative and educational approaches and tools for youth and other human rights activists to develop their own counter and alternative narratives to hate speech. Based on the principles of human rights education and youth participation, We CAN! complements the manual Bookmarks. Available at: www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/we-can-alternatives1
- **Gomes, R. (ed.) (2016), Bookmarks – A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education.** These bookmarks are published to support the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign of the Council of Europe for human rights online. It is useful for educators wanting to address hate speech online from a human rights perspective, both inside and outside the formal education system. The manual is designed for working with learners aged 13 to 18 but the activities can be adapted to other age ranges. Available at: www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions
- **Council of Europe (2015), Compass. A Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People.** Compass is a key reference manual for people involved in value-based youth work and non-formal education. Its version for children is called Compasito. Available at: www.coe.int/compass
- **Council of Europe (2011), Living together. Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe.** Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe. Available at: rm.coe.int/16806b97c5
- **Weber, A. (2009), Manual on Hate Speech.** This manual clarifies the concept of hate speech and guides policy makers, experts and society as a whole on the criteria followed by the European Court of Human Rights in its case law relating to the right to freedom of expression. Available at: www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/publications-on-hate-speech

European Commission

- European Commission and IT Companies announce [Code of Conduct on illegal online hate speech](#), 31 May 2016
- [Code of Conduct on illegal online hate speech](#) - Questions and Answers, 23 June 2016
- [Concept note establishing the sub-group on countering hate speech online](#), 5 October 2016
- [Fighting illegal online hate speech: first assessment of the new code of conduct](#), 6 December 2016

- Code of Conduct on countering online hate speech – results of evaluation show important progress, 1 June 2017.
- Minutes of the 25 October 2017 meeting of the Subgroup on countering hate speech online

EU-funded projects

Ongoing projects on online hate speech:

- Monitoring and Detecting OnLine Hate Speech (MANDOLA)
- Research Report Remove: Countering Cyber Hate Phenomena (INACH)
- Monitoring and reporting online hate speech in Europe (e-more)
- Bringing together NGOs and Security forces to tackle hate crime and on-line hate speech against LGBT persons (UNI-FORM).

Further links

- European Network of Information and Vocational Training Centers, which promotes safe use of the internet and mobile devices for young people, www.betterinternetforkids.eu
- European Schoolnet, a network of 34 European Ministries of Education, provides teachers and students with resources and material for the digitalized society and the use of the internet, www.eun.org
- European Wergeland Centre, offering a variety of educational material and sources for education in the field of human rights, www.theewc.org
- Web We Want, offers training manuals for young people and teachers on rights, obligations and developing of critical thinking about the use of The internet, www.webwewant.eu

Annotated resources

1. RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 20, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 1997 rm.coe.int/1680505d5b
2. We CAN! Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives, CoE, 2017
3. No Hate Speech Movement, www.nohatespeechmovement.org
4. Gomes, R. (ed.) (2016), Bookmarks – A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education. Available at: rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168065dac7
5. Delete Hate Speech or Pay Up, Germany Tells Social Media Companies (Melissa Eddy and Mark Scott), NY Times, available at: www.nytimes.com/2017/06/30/business/germany-facebook-google-twitter.html

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Für das Neue Kreisau



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