



IS THIS IT?...

Evaluation Conference of the
No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 10-12 April 2018

Closing speech by Anja Olin Pape

Good afternoon beautiful people and pillars of the No Hate Speech Campaign!

It is a true honour and a very humbling experience to be with you all here today, listening to the results of both this conference, and the era that the campaign really has been.

Background

I'm here representing the Advisory Council on Youth, who, as you all know, was and is the body within the Council of Europe that started pushing for action regarding the topic of hate speech, not knowing the extent or realm the idea would turn into. Today we can conclude that it has been a hell of a ride, and the most visible campaign with the furthest outreach we have ever been a part of.

Utoja

When my neighbouring country Norway, and the young political activists at Utoja, were attacked in the summer of 2011, something inside me, and many by my side, was shaken and changed forever. The otherwise so safe space and idealistic atmosphere was exchanged with a very concrete sense of threat and shock that few of us young people in Europe had been forced to face at that time. It came with the realisation that the crack in our society, based on inequality and segregation, was indeed much deeper, and more harmful than what we had ever realised, but that we since then have had to face over and over again.

The attack did not just hit Norway, Social Democrats or the specific group of people who were on the island. The attack was aimed at the foundation of the beliefs that we in this room, and within the Youth Sector of the Council of Europe have at our core. The idea of a free and open society, where young people have safe spaces to organise themselves, dream and act for a better society and engage as active citizens. Suddenly this idea was attacked, and the world as I knew it growing up was changed. This change has led to tremendous acts of civil courage, engagement and actions, but it has also left a big hole that will never again be filled, and that we must always carry with us as a reminder that our struggle is real, that it

counts and that it is a matter of shaping how society is supposed to function from here and now on. Every conversation matters, every young person is relevant.

Political situation

Many of the reasons why the campaign was deemed necessary eight years ago are still more than valid today. What has changed is that there's an active discussion about the narrative in our society, on how to combat hate speech, both online and offline, and new initiatives popping up at a racing speed to diversify, create safe spaces for discussion, and ensure human rights online. Activists all over the world have stepped up their efforts in denouncing fake news, hate speech and excluding narratives. On the other hand, as we are all aware, the situation in online discussions is still unbelievably polarised, hate filled and destructive. The abuse and hate speech has become systemised, organised and used with concrete intents to disrupt and split our common society. The way forward is also complicated, the path to better and more open societies is dwindling, and we constantly have to be self-aware of what steps we take.

Polarisation and excluding narrative

Even though the campaign is now finished, the key issues still remain at the heart of what the AC and the Council of Europe youth sector deals with and strives to create a positive impact within. In our current priorities the NHSM follow up has been mainstreamed and included in several different processes within our on-going work, and should remain so, since we still have a lot of work to be done.

It's stated in the priorities that "The sustainability of the Council of Europe's core values relies on the creativity, competencies, social commitment, and contribution of young people as well as on their confidence in the future."

This confidence in the future is a crucial part for all of us personally, but also for Europe on a larger scale. Young people's belief in democracy must be strengthened, but also, so must democracy itself. We are now seeing worrying trends towards the opposite across Europe, that even further pits people and states against each other, limits space for open and free discussion and horrible repression against Human Rights defenders. We have to strive towards that inclusive narratives are at the core of every politician's messages, and we have to strive towards more Human Rights education, stronger youth organisations and better Youth Work practices around Europe to uphold the values of the Council of Europe, now more than in a very long time. Youth participation in Internet governance, national policy development and media literacy are crucial parts of getting us even further forward on our path.

What happens now?

So, what happens now? The Council of Europe Youth sector is about to begin a journey to create a new Youth Agenda 2030 for the Council of Europe. At its core, the values, experiences and results of the No Hate Speech Movement should be enshrined and taken further. But at the same time, this is an opportunity for us to take a step back, look at the broader picture of Human Rights online, and the effects it has on young people's daily lives, both on and offline.

The stakes are admittedly very high, and progressive results are needed.

Thank yous

Saying goodbye to a campaign is never easy, especially one that has been present in our lives for such a long time. You have achieved so much and yet there is still so much more to do. But there is always a next step, and it's usually always something positive, when campaigns can be transformed into ordinary business, albeit painful. I want to finish off by directing a million wishes of gratitude towards a few people in particular.

The staff at the Youth Department who have followed this campaign from beginning to end, tirelessly worked and lived by its side for many years, and who have whole-heartedly committed to carrying it forward, shaping it into the legendary flagship it has become. Thank you Menno, Estelle and Rui and your team!

Following the staff, we have the campaign's ambassador Anne Brasseur, the CDEJ members, national campaign committees who have supported the campaign, rallied and raised their voices in favour of the campaign and its messages, allowing us to reach out and influence the member states of the council of Europe in a direct way. Thank you for your engagement!

I also want to thank my predecessors within the AC, who launched the campaign, and a few current and previous members of the Advisory Council in the room whose work has been inspirational, committed beyond high expectations and very successful. Youssef, Matej, Luis and Neringa - thank you!

Lastly, to all of you in the room, who as I stated when i started, truly are the pillars of the no hate speech movement.

These thanks come straight from my heart, since some of my dear friends are survivors of the attack in Utoja. I say this, because I want you all to know, how incredibly important this campaign and its message have been to so very many people.

Thank you for stepping up when others wouldn't, for carrying the messages of inclusive narratives and no hate to the public, for your countless hours of engagement. I trust that you will continue to be ambassadors of these messages for the rest of your lives, with or without the campaign. I promise you, I will.

Thank you!