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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

Conference Conclusions

The evaluation conference was held from 10 to 12 April 2018 in the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. It celebrated the achievements of the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign, reflected on emerging threats and proposed future measures to combat hate speech and safeguard human rights online. Representatives of national campaign committees and support groups, online activists, European partners, national and regional authorities, education professionals and youth activists were united by the experience of campaigning together and by the motivation of thousands of young people across Europe and beyond who made this a *youth* campaign.

The unhindered spread of hate speech and the rejection of diversity, pluralism, democracy and human rights in the aftermath of the terror attacks at Utøya on 22 July 2011, together with the impact of cyberbullying on young people, motivated the youth representatives in the Joint Council on Youth to propose this campaign. Their initiative was supported by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and several member states. The No Hate Speech Movement – the first online campaign of the Council of Europe – was launched on 22 March 2013.

The campaign has been rooted in the understanding that the Internet is a public commodity, a common space where human rights ought to apply for everyone and where human dignity must come first. Through awareness raising and human rights education – prompting critical thinking, media and information literacy and the ability to denounce, report and take action against hate speech – the campaign promoted freedom of expression and the full participation of young people in society, both on and offline. Young people have been the agents, the actors and the activists for the benefit of all.

The impact of terrorism and violent extremism underlined the urgency of the campaign and impelled the Committee of Ministers to prolong it until 2017. The need for counter and alternative narratives to the ideologies of hatred and fear motivated more countries, more partners and more young people to join the movement.

Hate speech can target anyone for whatever real or perceived characteristic, identity or affiliation. Solidarity with targets and victims, as well as joint action for human rights are therefore imperative; we are all potential targets and victims.

The campaign has become a movement present in 45 countries, an international community of online activists and a myriad of partners. It has mobilised new partners and was supported by all instruments of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg and Budapest, the European Youth Foundation, the intergovernmental cooperation and the co-management.

The campaign was the first broad international initiative to tackle hate speech and to address it as a major human rights issue. It also succeeded in:

- raising awareness of the extent and risk of hate speech to young people and to all of society;
- equipping thousands of educators, youth workers and youth leaders with the competences needed to empower young people to recognise, report and react to hate speech through human rights education;
- mobilising thousands of young people across Europe and beyond to take action against hate speech online;
- organising action days to mobilise activists and partners around particular issues and in solidarity with specific targets of hate speech and to draw attention to under-estimated or under-reported manifestations of hate speech;
- creating a positive form of engagement and identity for young people and human rights activists across national, cultural, social, religious, ethnic or organisational boundaries;
- re-assessing the importance of media and information literacy in formal and non-formal education;
- understanding Internet governance as an area for the exercise of citizenship and youth participation as the prevention of online abuse of human rights also implies a critical review of how the Internet and Internet businesses are regulated.

The campaign has also been a stark reminder that the crisis of human rights in Europe is real and impacts negatively on the lives and aspirations of many young people.

Many national campaigns relied almost exclusively on the voluntary commitment of young people and youth organisations. Commitments to human rights and human rights education should also be translated into financial commitments. The outreach of human rights education in many educational institutions, including providers of non-formal education, is still limited and too often censored or self-censored.

Public institutions are often reticent when faced with abuses of human rights and dignity by major Internet companies and reluctant to act. At times, representative democracies appear powerless and this powerlessness undermines young people's belief in democracy.

Hate speech is still insufficiently understood by all stakeholders of human rights online. Hate speech is the visible part of racist and supremacist views of society, not just another form of freedom of expression. Hate speech cannot be disconnected from deep-rooted prejudice and forms of social exclusion and discrimination.

It is important to denounce, address and combat discrimination and hate speech in all their forms, regardless of who is targeted. There are no acceptable forms of hate speech.

The European campaign has come to an end, but the movement for human rights online must continue. It is important that the Council of Europe, its member states, and civil society organisations be part of this movement by:

1. giving full support to and promoting human rights education programmes;
2. making widely available educational resources on combating intolerance and hate speech, and on using counter and alternative narratives to foster a culture of human rights both on and offline;
3. strengthening the competences of educational professionals in all sectors of education, including non-formal and youth work, to address hate speech, dispel misconceptions and promote human rights and democratic values;

4. supporting youth work and non-formal education activities that develop competences for a democratic culture of young people based on critical thinking, intercultural dialogue and conflict transformation;
5. strengthening redress mechanisms and reporting tools for hate speech, hate crime and discrimination on and off-line;
6. providing support to targets of hate speech and hate crimes, consistent with Council of Europe standards, including ECRI's general policy recommendation on combating hate speech;
7. providing tailored responses to hate speech targeting different groups in society by:
 - a. enabling full participation of the targeted groups in the design of the responses;
 - b. providing, where needed, capacity building and information on their rights;
 - c. publicly condemning hate speech regardless of who is disseminating it and whom it targets;
 - d. ensuring national legislation provides protection against discrimination and hate speech on all grounds, both on and offline;
8. ensuring the privacy and safe participation of children and youth online by:
 - a. integrating media and information literacy in school curricula and youth programmes, including international youth work projects;
 - b. supporting parents, teachers, and youth workers by offering education in Internet safety;
 - c. providing easy-to-understand guidelines for seeking advice or reporting problems and ensuring a quick and tailored follow-up;
 - d. ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people is their primary concern over, notably, commercial interests;
9. supporting the full involvement of young people in Internet governance processes with a particular concern to:
 - a. ensuring their full enjoyment of their human rights online, freedom of expression, association and participation;
 - b. informing them how human rights are protected online, how they can seek redress and receive clear and detailed information on the follow-up of reports;
 - c. understanding the impact of new technical developments on their enjoyment of human rights, including online participation, access and filtering of information, privacy, and protection from harm;
 - d. providing them with the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to express their views on all Internet governance processes, especially at national level;
10. rejecting the use of hate speech for political or economic and personal gains by:
 - a. the building of cross-sectoral and cross-party alliances against hate speech mirroring the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance;
 - b. the adoption of ethical codes and self-regulatory guidelines by national and regional parliaments, media companies, Internet businesses, political parties and civil society organisations consistent with Council of Europe standards;
11. developing new and up-to-date human rights standards regarding hate speech;
12. supporting on-going national campaigns;
13. Supporting online activists to set up a network.

Hate speech is not a thing of the past; it is as dangerous as ever. We remain active, vigilant and committed to keeping the movement for human rights online alive, relevant and youthful.