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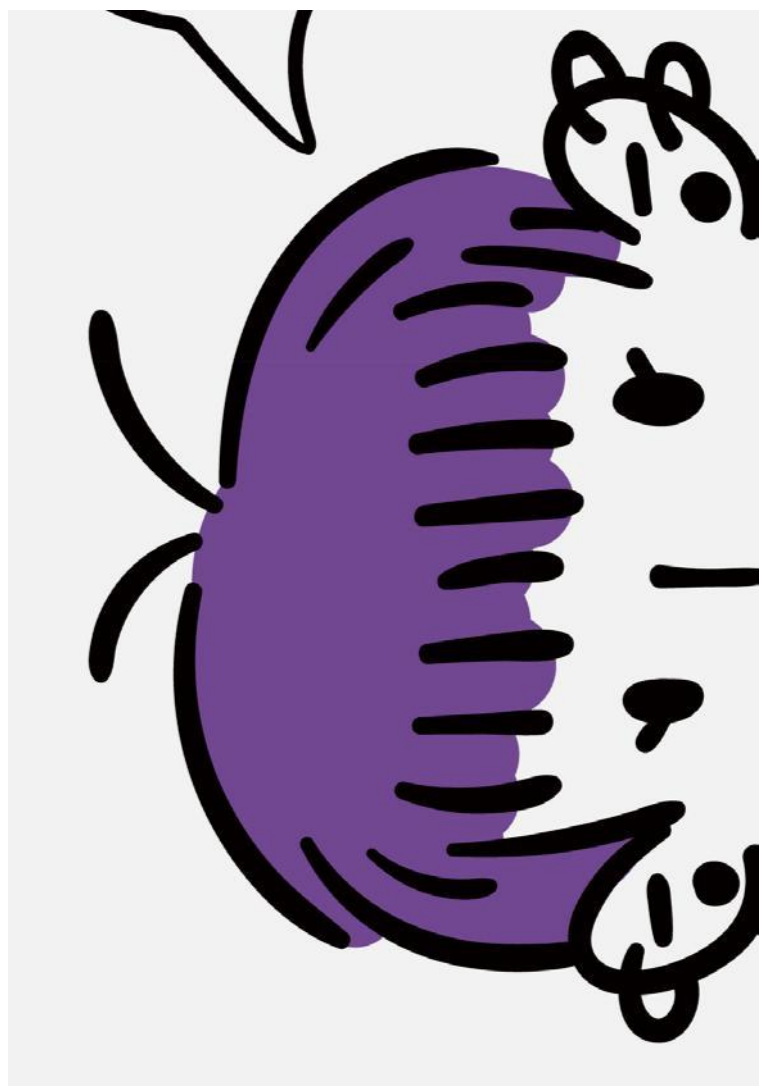


Implemented
by the Council of Europe

AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES: COMBATING HATE SPEECH THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ARMENIA

February-May 2021, Armenia

REPORT



This educational activity was implemented in the framework of the project “Strengthening access to justice for victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crime in the Eastern Partnership”. The project is financed by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of either party.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the results of two phases of educational activities organised by the EU – Council of Europe project “Strengthening access to justice for victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes in the Eastern Partnership” in spring 2021. The report describes the various aspects of the online training course and awareness raising meetings and their main outcomes. It also provides some recommendations for future sustainable cooperation between participants and the Council of Europe.

The first phase of the educational activity was the training course “Combating Hate Speech through Human Rights Education” which was held online through zoom platform and each session lasted 2 hours and 30 minutes. The online training course took place in Armenia from 9 to 13 February 2021. It brought together 10 teachers of social sciences and 10 youth workers from different NGOs of all the regions of Armenia who teach or train human rights. The second phase of the educational activity were awareness raising online live-streamed meetings with invited guest speakers which took place in spring 2021.

All the visual and video materials related to these activities, as well as information about around 80 activities, including contributions made by the participants of the training course, can be found on the official Facebook page of the “Awareness raising activities on combating hate speech through human rights education in Armenia”

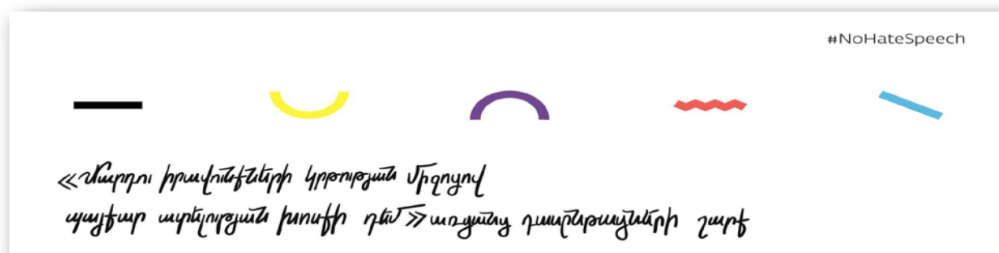
[Combating Hate Speech Through Human Rights Education](#)

RATIONALE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Today the rise of hate speech necessitates to speak and raise awareness of the danger, causes and consequences of hatred, the levels it can reach and how deeply it can damage society not only in Armenia, but in the world. Hatred is magnified online because there is a lack of constraints. Hateful online expressions leave their effects and spoil peaceful coexistence offline in societies. Young people are the most active social media users, information/content makers and promoters, but in many cases, they also promote hate speech without even being aware of it. There are very few educational activities and materials about hate speech in Armenia, yet this is one of the key topics in the social and political context - for this reason these educational activities were organised.

The online training course was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of human rights education as a main tool to combat hate speech online and offline in youth work and in schools for and with young people. Its objectives were:

- to develop participants’ competences in human rights education and raise awareness about the dangers of hate speech
- to analyse instruments to counter hate speech in Armenia
- to explore current challenges related to online and offline hate speech and learn how to identify and recognise them
- to analyse the dangers of hate speech through practical team work and develop actions where human rights education can help
- to learn how to combat hate speech creating counter and alternative narratives and effective counter messages using human rights language
- to support participants in developing educational initiatives and joint actions with and for young people after the online training course.



1. Cover photo of Combating hate speech through human rights education educational activity.

THE STORY BEHIND THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The entire project, both the training course and online awareness raising events, were implemented online taking into account the COVID-19 restrictions. In order to give visibility to this training course, it was planned to place on the Facebook page illustrations which would show the topics discussed and key messages of interest for a wider audience than the group of participants. To make this more engaging and youth friendly, two typical characters known in the Armenian reality were chosen for illustrations. They sent the key messages from the training course (through conversations, dialogues and clarifications like Q&A) to those who were not participants but were followers of the Facebook page.

The story of the characters was about the following: the sister Nrane and her brother Saqul (who is called Saqul because he is the youngest in the family) are very close to each other. Saqul behaves like many youngsters, he takes his friends opinions as “universal truth” and tries to be like them and not to be different as diversity and open mindedness are not welcome in the circle of their friends. They “believe” that “boys should be boys” and “girls must stay girls” they all need to fit in “their frame of understanding”. While on the other hand there is Nrane, a young human rights activist, a girl who believes in diversity and very much appreciates education and lifelong learning. She is not a typical girl as Saqul and his friends would like her to be because of her way of dressing, velvet hair colour and piercings, which are “not usual” for their society. But even with all her differences, Saqul and his friends are very much respectful towards Nrane, because despite her not being “a standard Armenian girl” she is still the one that everyone questions and they value her opinion as a well-educated and well brought up person. They do not know anyone smarter than her...

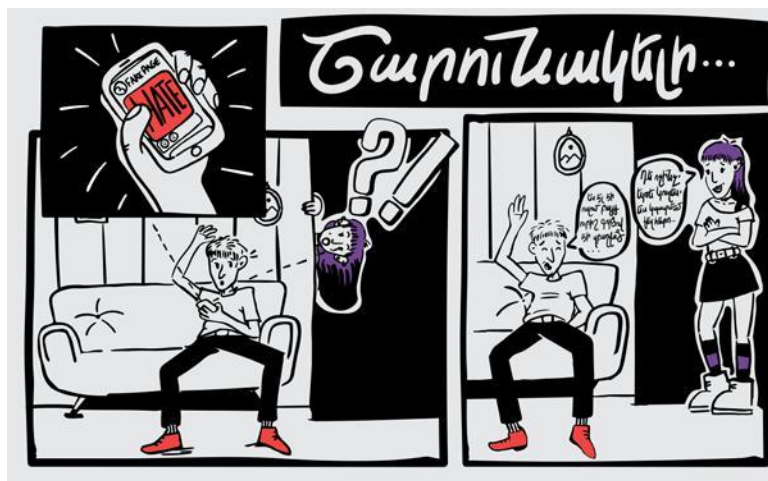
Saqul’s “activities” on a daily basis were to get into different social media platforms and conduct offensive chats with the support of his friends. They used to share fake news and hatred without even being aware of it. He and his friends used to have conversations using inappropriate language while communicating with other social media users. It happened many times that they supported the racist and homophobic views of other haters by making their points “stronger” without realising the harm it might cause...

One day Nrane found out about the educational activity and applied through the No Hate Speech Movement Armenia. She wanted to engage her brother in the educational activity too in order to give him the possibility of learning new good things and becoming more responsible in his actions. Saqul was interested, of course, but on the other hand, he truly thought that similar online educational meetings might be a “waste of time”. Instead, he got his preferences, spending many hours talking to his friends about “important” random things online or offline about which he told his sister. Nrane was sad to know about all of those things, but after a while she found a solution of engaging Saqul in the process of learning! She decided to share the gained knowledge with Saqul in a different way, by making examples about Saqul and his friends’ behaviour and indirectly started to hint at Saqul’s daily business on online platforms. Saqul started to reflect on what Nrane said. He became careful and started to rethink about writing and sharing any information on social media. But one of the most important things that happened was that Saqul started to multiply the information gained from Nrane by sharing the knowledge with friends.

More activities about their story can be found on [Facebook page](#).



2. Nrane informs Saqul about being selected for the TC.

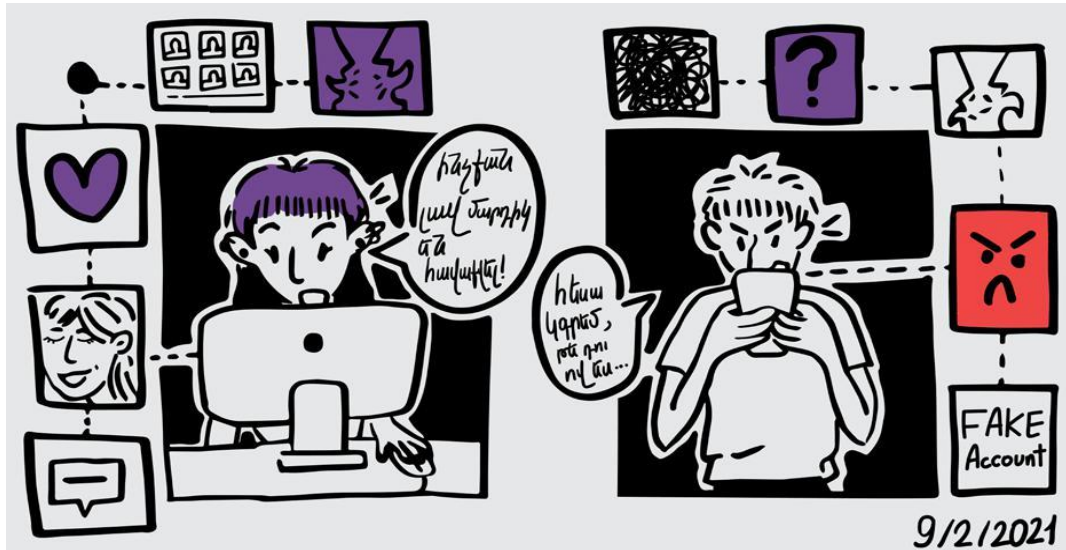


3. Nrane saw Saqul sharing hatred and decided to talk to him about the knowledge she gets from the training course on a daily basis, so that Saqul understands what he does...

TRAINING COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

Tuesday, 9 February 2021

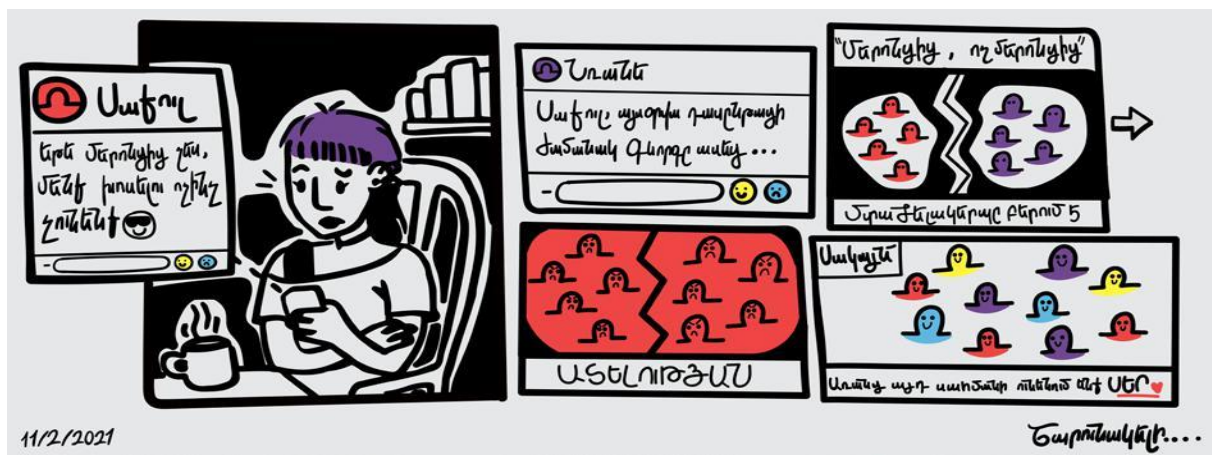
The online training course was kicked-off by the round of welcoming speeches of high level representatives who highlighted the importance of the topic and the responsible approach of educators in that. The invited key note speakers were from the Council of Europe office in Strasbourg, the European Union delegation in Armenia, the Council of Europe office in Yerevan, representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia as well as European activists representing the No Hate Speech Movement and the No Hate Speech Network. After the meeting participants had the chance to get to know each other and learn about each other's work in the field of human rights education. They were also introduced to the aims, objectives and rationale of the educational programme which started in February and ended in late spring 2021. Participants also had a session on the methodology of human rights education.



4. Nrane is happy that there are so many likeminded people and educators. At the same time Saqul actively comments, argues with fake social media users.

Wednesday 10 February 2021

Participants created their own definitions of hate speech in small teams. The official definitions and explanations of hate speech by the Council of Europe, ECRI GPR 15, United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech were introduced to participants as well as some countries' approaches and strategies on adoption of the definition of hate speech and concepts were discussed (Armenia, US, The Netherlands etc.). The second part of the day was dedicated to having a closer look at a hate speech and freedom of expression presentation based on Bookmarks manual (Chapter 5.3).



5. During the training course, when participants got a task to check social media and find cases of the hate speech by analysing the content, Nrane felt very ashamed to see that someone brought a case from a young people's discussion on social media and among them were Saquil's comments which were full of hatred and bullying...

Thursday 11 February 2021

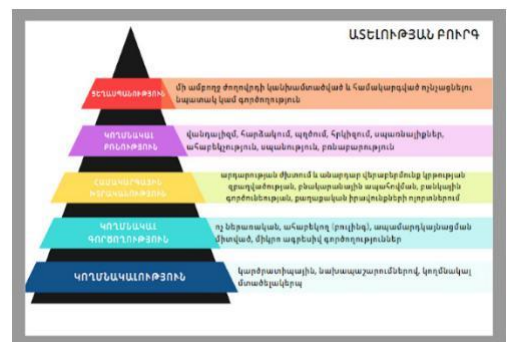
The day was started by brainstorming and analysing the causes and consequences of hate speech and by doing the task "Roots and branches" (Bookmarks manual) and discussing its effects on individuals and society as a whole.



The team was divided into smaller groups where they made their problem trees about hate speech.

The second part of the day was about introducing and discussing the "pyramid of hate", The different stages of the pyramid and normalisation of hatred and where it can lead if not reacted to in the proper way and time.

Educational manuals for working with young people and children "Compass", "Compassio", "Bookmarks" were introduced and the PDF versions were shared with the participants so that they can use them in their work.



6. Nrane is saying to Saquil that hate speech is very dangerous, if it is not stopped it might become bigger and bigger and might cause greater harm...

Friday 12 February 2021



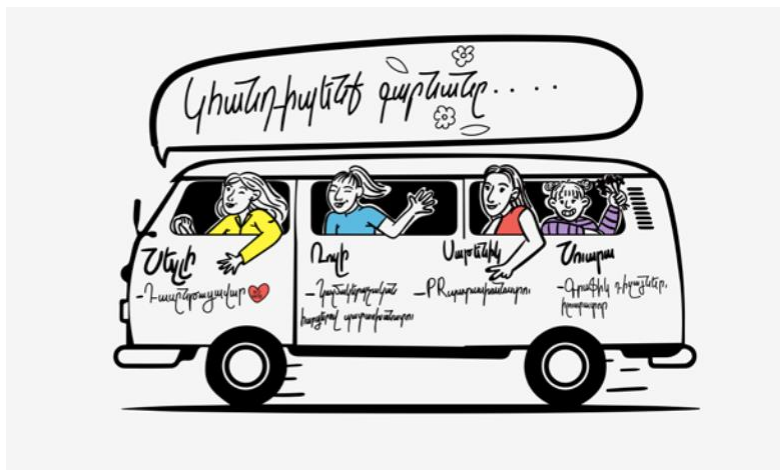
7. the trainer introduces the WE CAN manual and how to combat hate speech using counter and alternative narratives.

8. Nrane introduces to Saquil all the tools and methods called “steps and phases” and how to analyse fake news and learn how to define what is and isn't hate speech.

The whole day was dedicated to learning about narratives, storytelling, steps and phases on how to develop counter and alternative narratives and effective messages on how to address hate speech through human rights language.

The presentation was followed by practical works done in small teams of participants. They searched and collected hate speech cases from social media, developed in different contexts (political, social, cultural, historical etc.) by public figures and influencers. They deconstructed the hatred narratives through the 8 steps and constructed new human rights narratives/alternatives instead.

The final day of the online training course was about making action plans for future cooperation within the team and/or individually. Each participant sent the concept and the timeline of the planned activity, including the way they would implement within their community and with their target groups (high school students, young people).



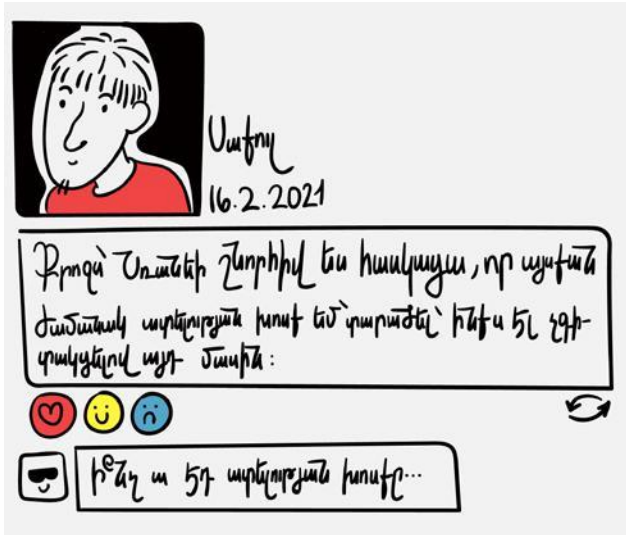
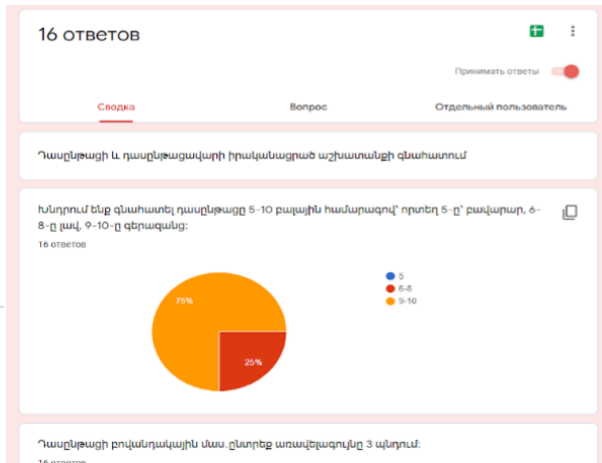
9. The training course team makes the evaluation and promises to get back in Spring 2021.



10. Opinions of participants about the training course.

TRAINING EVALUATION

16 participants filled in the online evaluation form and rated the efficiency of the online training course in the following way: 75% (excellent) / 25% (good). 100% of the participants showed their willingness and readiness to continue the course during spring 2021 and organise short term educational and awareness raising activities with the young people they work with. Most of the participants highlighted the need for accessible Armenian educational and promotional materials in schools and organisations, where young people and people in general would get comprehensive knowledge and understanding about hate speech and how to combat it online and offline. Participants suggested to continue the awareness raising educational activities and to cover wider audiences, teachers, parents and children in one classroom, and to continue (online and offline) and get mentoring help or educational supervisors, who could support and lead them during similar educational activities for the long term period.



11. Saqul appreciates the knowledge he got from his sister Nrane and wishes to be engaged in human rights educational activities later on

- 12 Nrane is happy that she could learn so many useful things in only 5 days, but she is even happier that she could make a positive change in her brother's ways of behaving and thinking.



AWARENESS RAISING ONLINE EVENTS

A series of online awareness raising events were organised in spring 2021 with the aim to highlight the importance of some specific human rights days with the following objectives:

- to stand for solidarity with the victims of hate speech and discrimination
- to prepare the participants for action days in order that they can organise thematic workshops with their target groups
- to make the online events live streamed for the public awareness
- to give a possibility for the followers to ask their direct questions to the experts and get answers during the live streamed meetings.

During the spring months there were several important International Action Days that were in the scope of the awareness raising events, including the Zero Discrimination Day, Women's Rights Day, International Day on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Hate Speech on the Grounds of Religion and Belief, Hate Speech Targeting People with Fewer Opportunities and Disabilities. The topics of the awareness raising events were selected based on the actuality of the topics and on the lack of knowledge about the issues in society. Guest speakers were invited for each awareness raising event who work in the field of the chosen topic as practitioners and are known for their valuable work. Before every event, there was an informative event publicised on Facebook about the educational activity in order to inform the wider audience about:

- the day and time of the event and the topic to be covered.
- the information about the guest speakers and their expertise.
- the duration of the introduction of the topic by the guest speakers with key highlights about the topic.
- the time for the questions and opinions to be raised by the followers.
- the project itself within which the awareness raising events were taking place.

Before and after action days participants of the first phase of the training course were organising their action days and workshops with the young people they work with. There were cases where additional, informative meetings were organised because of the interest in a particular thematic area in order to familiarise participants with the vulnerability of the topic and the need to address and highlight it more, such as Zero Discrimination Day and Women's Rights day for which instead of making an action day participants of the educational activity organised an action week. In the case of the Hate Speech, Targeting People with Fewer Opportunities and Disabilities, the action days lasted for 11 days.

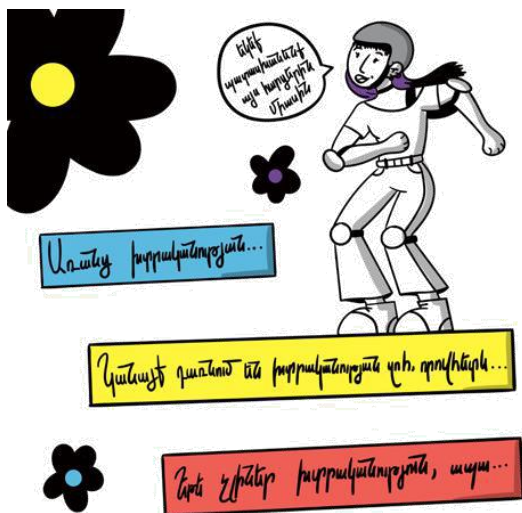
All the events were illustrated by the graphic designer in a creative way.

Detailed description on each action day will be followed on the next pages one by one.



13. The logo of the "Zero Discrimination Day" as a kick-off for the awareness raising action week.

On the Facebook page of the educational activity there was an illustration which contained 3 questions/statements to be answered by the wider public. Under the illustration those who wished could leave their opinion and comments by finalising the questions/statements.



Without discrimination...

Women become victims of discrimination because...

If there was no discrimination...

The [Answers for the questions](#) to the above mentioned questions/statements.

14. The illustration of the questions/statements to be answered by public

Awareness raising, online event on Women's Rights Day, 8 March 2021



15. Cover photo of the [Awareness raising, online event on Women's Rights Day](#) "Discrimination against women in Armenia: Is it a discrimination or a tradition?". On the cover there are Maro Matossian, the executive of Women Support Centre (left) and Nvard Piliposyan, the lawyer of the Women Resource Centre (right).

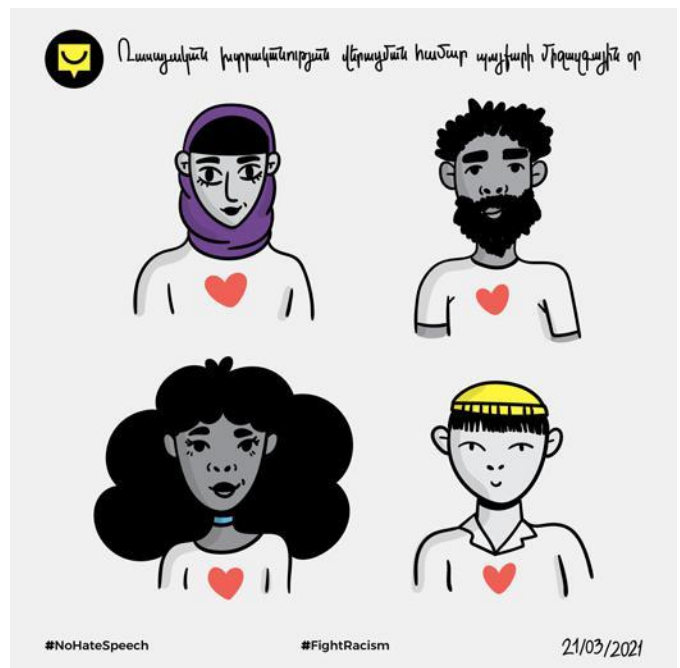
After the awareness raising meeting an internal meeting was held among participants and the team of organisers of "Combating hate speech through human rights education" in order to sum up the action week and to speak about their experience when organising the action week for and with young people.

Many educational awareness raising activities were organised by the participants of the training course.



16. Saqul tells Nrane that what he found out about the 8th of March is very interesting. He says, "It happens that the 8th of March is the international Women's Rights Day... not the day of giving flowers to women..."?!

Nrane replies. "it is true! while receiving a flower is an added value to the day".



17. Cover of the International Action Day on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Awareness raising online event, Hate Speech and Racial Discrimination in Cyberspace, 21 March 2021

One week before the International day of elimination of racial discrimination, there was an internal meeting organised between the team and participants of the training course “Combating hate speech through human rights education” in order to raise awareness and highlight the importance of the day. The trainer organised the activity from the Bookmarks manual and made a PowerPoint presentation entitled “From bad to worse”. The latter helped participants to recognise the steps which might lead to hate crime. The link to the presentation => [Racial discrimination and the steps “from bad to worse”](#).

As a result of the meeting participants of the educational activity have organised numerous events and online meetings with their targets to raise awareness on the day and the topic itself.



18. Cover photo of the awareness raising online event “[Racial discrimination and hate speech in cyberspace](#)”.

On the cover photo is Samvel Martirosyan, an expert on cybersecurity and media literacy



19. Saqul and Nrane participating on the online awareness raising event “Hate speech and racial discrimination in cyberspace”.

Awareness raising online event, Hate Speech on the Grounds of Religion and Beliefs, 14 April 2021

An online awareness raising event was organised about hate speech and discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief. The invited event expert was Ara Ghazaryan, who is a lawyer and international expert on human rights.



20. Cover photo of the awareness raising online event “Hate speech on the grounds of religion and beliefs”

On the cover is Ara Ghazaryan, a lawyer and an international expert on human rights.

After the awareness raising online event, the participants and the team of the “Combating hate speech through human rights education” educational activity gathered to share their thoughts about the topic discussed during the live streamed meeting. The team practiced an educational task from Bookmarks. The aim of practicing the task was to learn about how to adapt “Bookmarks” activities and to make them doable for different target groups in the activities related to human rights education.

Follow-up activities organised in the schools based on Bookmarks manual

[follow up activity 1](#)

[follow up activity 2](#)

[follow up activity 3](#)

[follow up activity 4](#)

Awareness raising online event, Hate Speech Targeting Disabled People, 28 April 2021

An online awareness raising event was organised about hate speech and discrimination targeting disabled people. The invited expert of the event was Armen Alaveryan, the president of UNISON NGO. The day of the online event was chosen to be on the International Action Day called "World Day for Safety and Health at Work".



21. Cover photo of the awareness raising online event [Hate speech on the ground of disability](#) On the cover photo is Armen Alaveryan, the president of UNISON NGO.

After the online awareness raising event, the participants and the team of the "Combating hate speech through human rights education" educational activity gathered to share their thoughts about the theme and decided to organise other awareness raising action days.

The trainer of the educational activity introduced some templates for making posters of compositions, pictures or photos which could have been used as samples for young people when creating their own creative works in the schools and NGOs. The posters were entitled "For my friend" and "My will" and they aimed to encourage disabled young people to stand for their rights.

There were 11 action days organized within the thematic area. Every participant picked most convenient day and time and did competitions and awareness raising events in their regions.

More information can be found on the following link => [Action days: "For my friend" and "My will"](#)



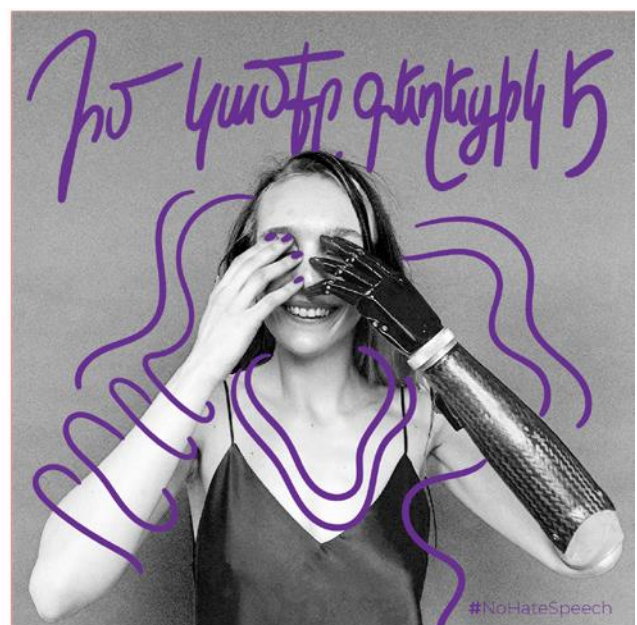
22. Illustration "my will is strong".



23. Illustration "my will doesn't have limits".



24. Illustration "my will is unbreakable".

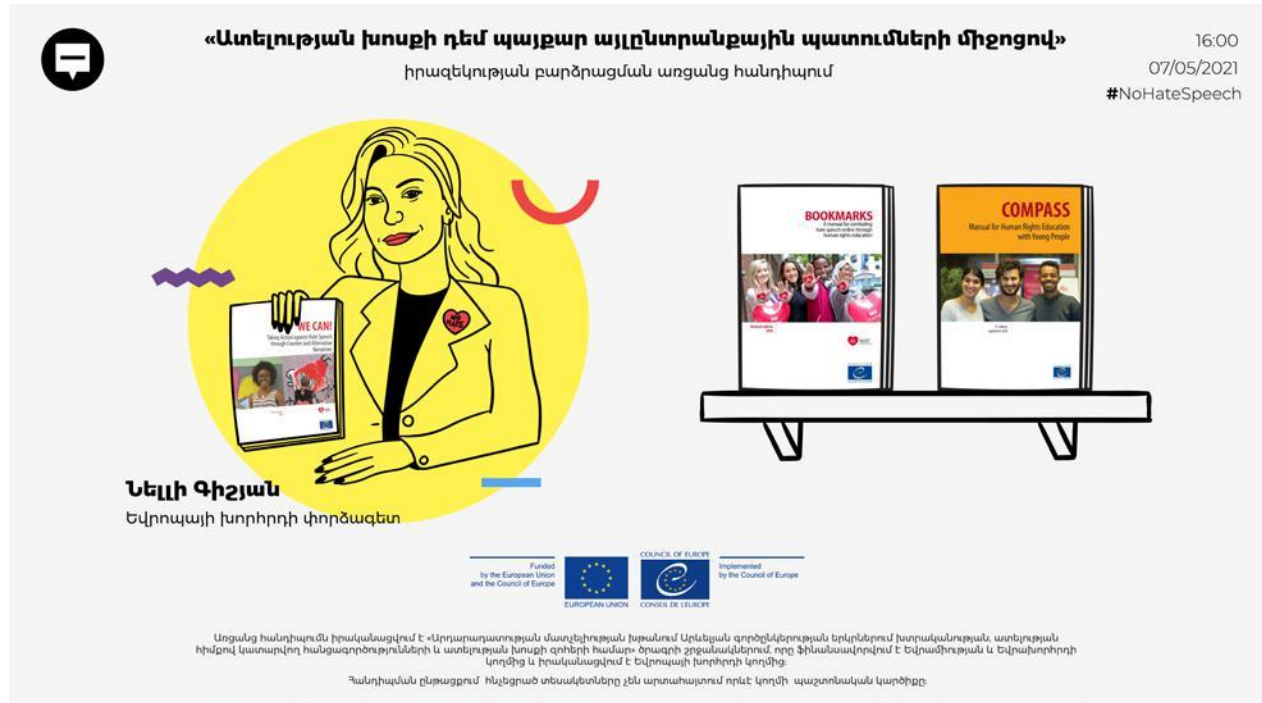


25. Illustration "my will is beautiful".

NB Some works are not shown but the information is accessible on the internal [Facebook group](#) of the project

Awareness raising online event, Combating hate speech using counter and alternative narratives, 7 May 2021

An online workshop was organised to raise awareness on how to combat hate speech using counter and alternative narratives. The expert of the online event was Nelli Gishyan, the trainer of the educational activity “Combating hate speech through human rights education”.



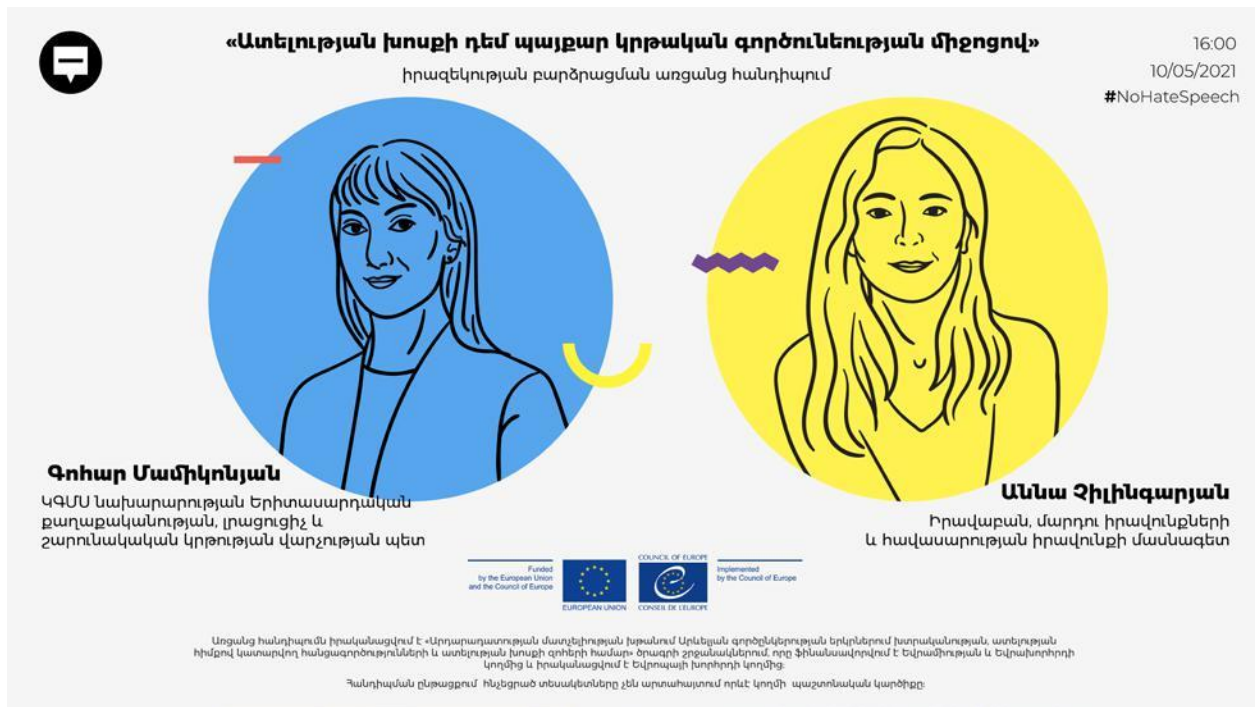
26. Cover photo of the awareness raising online event WE CAN “Combating hate speech through counter and alternative narratives” On the cover photo is Nelli Gishyan and illustrations of WE CAN, BOOKMARKS, COMPASS manuals.

After the online event, participants were introduced to Armenian version of the new handbook “Speak peace! Hate speech is not an option!” which might be used in the work with young people.

The handbook was introduced in three languages as some youth workers and teachers prefer English version or Russian version.

Awareness raising online event, Combating hate speech through education 10 May,

An online workshop was organised to raise awareness about how to combat hate speech using education. The experts of the online event were Gohar Mamikonyan, the Head of the Department of Continuing Education at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia and Anna Chilingaryan a lawyer and expert on human rights and equality.



27. Cover photo of the awareness raising online event “Combating hate speech through education”

On the cover photo are Gohar Mamikonyan (left) and Anna Chilingaryan (right)

After the awareness rising online event the team and participants of the educational activity further met to discuss their additional plans and possibilities of cooperation.

They were introduced to the draft handbook which is going to be released as a result of the joint cooperation between Ombudsoffice of Armenia and the Council of Europe. The participants of the training course “Combating hate speech through human rights education” were asked to have a look and leave some reviews, comments and suggestions. They were told that the handbook is prepared for educators and that their opinions are very valuable for the editors.

THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND CERTIFICATE AWARDS

The last meeting of the educational activity was held with the involvement of the guest speakers from the Council of Europe in Yerevan, as an organiser of the educational activity, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia and the No Hate Speech Movement Armenia, on 17 May 2021. The participants were asked to evaluate the entire training course, the online awareness raising activities and internal team meetings that were held after each live streamed meeting.

Most of the collected answers were:

- expressing their gratitude and willingness to have more similar initiatives and to continue cooperation in the future
- be aware about similar initiatives and participate in the Council of Europe's events
- the events passed too quickly and they wished they could have been longer than planned.

16 participants received certificates of attendance based on their active participation and 2 representatives from the No Hate Speech Movement Armenia got certificates of Gratitude for their support.



28. The team and the participants of the educational activity introduced by Nrane and Saqul.