

**“European Training Seminar for the Fight Against Fake News and Hate Speech Online”**  
**March 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> 2018, Berlin, Germany**  
**Narrative report**

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The European Training Seminar for the Fight Against Fake News and Hate Speech Online was held by the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM) in collaboration with Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (AAS) in Berlin, Germany, from March 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> 2018. During this event, EGAM partners discussed online hate speech and fake news in Europe and undertook a training in recognising instances of hate speech, monitoring and reporting it, and effectively fighting fake news. The Training Seminar also prepared the first EGAM-led European Monitoring Campaign on hate speech online.

**Project Coordinating Meeting for the European Commission Rights, Equality and Citizenship Funded Programme (Project Partners Only)** (Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2018)

*See ‘Framework’ Annex 1*

**“Concepts, Buzzwords, Real Problems: What is Hate Speech, What is Fake News?”**,  
**Plenary Session** (Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2018)

**Miro Dittrich**, monitoring expert at the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, led a seminar on the definitions of hate speech and fake news, and the different problematics that fall under the scope of the two terms. He also spoke of AAS’s choice to address both hate speech and fake news under the scope of toxic narratives, and respond to them with counter-narratives.

**Discussion**

Participants raised their concerns about the use of counter-narrative as an effective tool. Another concern raised was the use of the term ‘fake news’ during our two-year project, as the problem with fake news is not only the fictional side of the news, but the spreading of dangerous ideas and toxic speech.

**“Fake News and Disinformation: What is the State of Affairs?”**, **Plenary Session** (Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018)

**Discussion**

Participants discussed the delimitation between hate speech and freedom of speech as well as the methods proposed to combat fake news and hate speech online. In order to have a deeper understanding of the two matters addressed, participants presented their respective national legislations and best practise examples.

**Summary of presentations:**

EGAM’s “European Training Seminar for the Fight Against Fake News and Hate Speech Online” March 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, Berlin, Germany.



*“This event was funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of EGAM and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.”*

### **Latvian Centre for Human Rights, Latvia**

There are no clauses against fake news in the Latvian legislation. Research facilities are available for fake news but no tangible best practices ongoing as of yet.

### **Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia**

There is no law regarding fake news; there is only an Ethical Council for Journalists, but it does not have the power to monitor fake news. There is however a law against defamation which can be seen as a protection against fake news.

### **Bulgaria**

There are laws in place to regulate social media platforms however there are no initiatives to fact-check the news circulated on social media.

### **SOS Racisme, France**

In France, the owner of the website is responsible for moderating discussions on the platform. Various initiatives on fighting fake news exist in France, such as *hoaxbuster.org.com*, an online portal where people can report fake news, and where individuals can become hoax hunters with a critical approach.

### **Discussion**

The discussion between participants mainly focused on the definition of fake news or the lack thereof and how the lines between information and disinformation can sometimes be blurred.

### **“Hate Speech Online: What is the State of Affairs?” Plenary Session, (Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018)**

**Ulrich Kelber**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal German Minister of Justice, presented the German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) of 2017, where online platforms face fines of up to €50 million if they do not remove ‘obviously illegal’ hate speech and other postings within 24 hours of receiving a notification. According to Kelber, the biggest obstacle for courts in Germany is balancing freedom of expression with the reducing of hateful language and content online.

### **Discussion:**

One issue raised was that for the German government, deleting seems to be more important than the prosecution in court. Also, the current strategy of right wing parties is to be provocative and to elicit reactions. There is an obvious issue with the media and the diffusion of information and it is important not to let the right or the media shape the debate or set the agenda.

### **Hate Speech Online: Analysis, discussions and presentation of national legislation and best practises**

### **SOS Racisme, France**

#### **Legislation:**

As free speech is one of the pillars of French society, hate speech is often difficult to determine. In 1972, racism and discrimination became punishable by law, with imprisonment or fines. This allowed criminal proceedings to be started by associations.

**Best Practice:**

In 2016, SOS Racisme together with The French Jewish Student Union (UEJF) and SOS Homophobie organised a monitoring campaign on genocide denial, racism and homophobia on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Out of 205 reported cases during the testing, Facebook was the platform with the highest response rate (34% deleted). Twitter was found to be the worst platform to respond, deleting only 8 messages (4%).

**Latvian Centre for Human Rights, Latvia**

**Legislation:**

Incitement to hate is punishable under national legislation and comes under Criminal law along with crimes against humanity.

**Best-practice:**

NGOs have conducted research, awareness raising and trainings (young people, law enforcement, and teachers) in order to combat this phenomenon. The Latvian Centre for Human Rights has conducted monitoring campaigns in 2012, 2014/2015 and 2017 with the European Commission.

**Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Croatia**

**Legislation:**

The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech. Other laws include: Media Act and Electronic Media Act, they are both very old laws that have not changed much since the 90s.

**Best-practice:**

Various national campaigns from: the Campaign of the Ministry of the Interior, the Croatian football Federation, the Government (National Plan for Combatting discrimination (2017-2022)).

**EKVILIB, Slovenia**

**Legislation:**

Hate speech is included in the Criminal Code and the 2012 Criminal Code.

**Best-practices:**

To tackle the problem of hate speech in Slovenia, the Peace Institute, a non-profit research organisation, established an independent conjunctive body to push for less hate speech in Slovenia.

**Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, Germany**

**Best practice:**

Amadeu Antonio Stiftung focus mainly on counter-strategies with one of their latest projects being a monitoring of toxic narratives in Germany (a report can be found [here](#)).

## **Amalipe Center, Bulgaria**

Institutions established to fight against discrimination in Bulgaria have not been effective or made conscious attempts to stop anti Roma discrimination.

## **Discussion**

Discussions focused on social media platforms' reactions to monitoring and collaboration. Certain social media platforms are enthusiastic to collaborate with NGOs, as they see it as beneficial for their public image.

*A full mapping can be found on Annex 2.*

## **“How do IT Companies think?” Plenary Session, (Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018)**

Focused on how social media companies deal with reporting, monitoring etc. This was then followed by a discussion on the impact that content moderating has on the people working for these social media platforms as underlined by the German Süddeutsche Zeitung ([SZ](#)) magazine 2016 report, which noted the lack of psychological support the social networks offered their minimum wage employees who are faced with disturbing content on a daily basis. The question of the social networks' commitment to their responsibilities both online and in their daily operations on the ground was raised during discussions.

## **Development of Methodology for Monitoring Campaign of Hate Speech Online, Plenary Session (Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018)**

*A full copy of the final methodology can be found in Annex 3.*

## **Methodology**

### **Background, context and definitions:**

Participants debated the definition of hate speech that would be applied throughout the duration of the project and decided to adopt the definition as outlined in the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 97(20). At present there is no EU legislation obliging online platforms to remove hate speech. It was agreed that national legislation would be taken into account but would not be a defining criterion. It was also decided that monitoring would not be followed up by legal procedures.

### **Implementation:**

Training and discussion was needed to ensure all participants were prepared and agreed upon the same criteria. It was decided that three social media networks be tested: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Definitions on 8 types of hate speech were agreed upon before organising the monitoring campaign.

*Find all 8 definitions of hate speech monitored and tested in Annex 4*

Doubts were raised that certain countries would not be able to cover all 8 types of hate speech online (eg. Genocide denial in Norway). Due to this and the lack of experience on monitoring of the majority of organisations, the minimum number of tests was therefore reduced from 100 to 48 tests and the deadline was extended from three weeks to six weeks after the monitoring. Organisations would have to provide screenshots and a translation with a short description of

the content. All content will be registered in an excel spreadsheet. It was also decided by participants that a non-deletion response still amounts to a response.

### **“How to build the Observatory?” Workshops** (Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018)

#### Objectives

The monitoring, reporting and analysing of content was identified as a key priority for a successful observatory. It was noted that giving a clear and understandable definition of hate speech, accessible to all, is fundamental in the fight against hate speech and finally that mobilizing more NGOs on the subject of hate speech was a core priority for the successful countering of hate speech online.

#### Governance

The Observatory should have a board of representatives of partner organisations. Working groups could be built for each monitoring area and it should include experts from each specific field.

#### Actions

Possible identified actions: launching projects for the changing of legislation; elaborating a pedagogical project or campaign on fake news, through school programs etc. and creating online tools that target students and interactive videos in order to approach a larger audience; focusing on counter-narratives to effectively fight hate speech.

#### Funding

The aspect of sustainability of funding is very important for the Observatory to continue working efficiently.

#### Institutional Partners

Creating links with institutional partners will allow the Observatory to have a wider reach throughout Europe and beyond.

### **“The European Observatory: Next Steps, Plan of Action” Plenary Session** (Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018)

#### **Following this first training seminar, the following list of outputs will be developed:**

Training, Hate Speech Methodology, Action plan for Fake News campaign, Handbook for national and European legislation, Narrative Report, Project Framework Report, Project Evaluation Report, Internal Communications Tool, Quality, risk and overview report

Following the first round of testing it was recommended that more external experts in Fake News were needed in order to give a better overview to the campaigns. During the training, the proposed dates for the next meeting were also discussed and it was suggested that this would take place in June or July 2018. The location of this meeting would be open to organisations to propose or alternatively Tallinn, London and Zagreb were considered as potential venues for the next meeting.

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**Online Resources:**

<http://www.egam.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EGAMOfficial>

<https://twitter.com/EGAMofficial>

Please do not hesitate to contact Christopher Metz at [christopher.metz@egam.eu](mailto:christopher.metz@egam.eu) or Andreea Oglagea at [andreea@egam.eu](mailto:andreea@egam.eu) for any further questions.

