



## The project

*Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line* is a project of the Council of Europe's youth sector to be run between 2012 and 2014. The project aims to combat racism and discrimination in their online expression of hate speech by equipping young people and youth organisations with the competences necessary to recognise and act against such human rights violations. Initiated by the Advisory Council on Youth, and endorsed by the Joint Council, the project stems out from the worrying rise in hate speech on-line. Central to the project's philosophy is the idea that on-line public space is public space – human rights apply there as much in the rest of society.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 97(20) on "hate speech" defines it as follows:

*the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering 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, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin".*

This definition places the discussion on hate speech, and its regulation, in the framework of human rights, anti-racist and anti-discrimination work conducted by the organisation. It is also the approach of the youth project herein described. The forms of hate speech covered by the project correspond to a variety phenomena, including antisemitism, disablism, homophobia, islamophobia, sexism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination of minority groups on various grounds. Hate speech on-line may or not be specifically targeted at young people, but the project will be particularly taking into account the on-line platforms and media where young people are most present (social networks, video-sharing sites, blogs, etc.).

Hate speech as such is not a new issue in the human rights debate. Its on-line dimension and the potential impact this offers, however, gives new reasons for concern among all those concerned with the future of human rights and democracy in our societies. While easier to monitor and counter in mainstream professional media, the challenge posed by hate speech on-line is the incapacity to monitor and measure its amplitude and impact and, especially, to prevent and react without seeming to infringe on everyone's right to freedom of expression.

Direct on-line hate speech is sometimes perceived as the visible tip of an iceberg whose invisible part, and by far the largest, includes sometimes mainstream Internet sites and posts which spread or promote ideas that pave the way for hate speech and, therefore, legitimate or "*justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred*". The project – and the campaign associated to it – includes therefore a dimension of countering specific hate speech on-line and another, broader and based on netcitizenship and human rights education, of raising awareness about the risks of speech that bashes the values of human rights, equality in dignity and intercultural dialogue which are at the core of open and tolerant societies.

The project *Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line* builds on the experiences of the 'All Different-All Equal' European youth campaigns and the capacity and competence of young people and youth organisations to act within online space.

The project stands for equality, dignity, human rights and freedom of form. It is a project against hate speech, racism and discrimination in their online expression. The working methods are based on awareness-raising, education and advocacy. It is a project for action and intervention.

The project relies on the mobilisation of European and national actors through a variety of activities such as training courses, development of educational materials, national seminars and conferences.

*Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line* is also a contribution to the Council of Europe' work on Internet governance and links with the work of the European Steering Committee on Media and Information Society.

The project is run under the authority of the Joint Council on Youth which has appointed a follow-up group for its implementation. In addition to representatives of the European Steering Committee on Youth and of the Advisory Council on Youth, the group includes also a representative of the European Youth Forum.

In preparation for the project, the Youth Department has carried out three mapping studies about the realities of hate speech and existing projects and campaigns.

A training course for bloggers and on-line human rights activists is currently being run. Its participants will be the first activists in the on-line campaign and can support the development of campaigns and activities at national or European level. A second course will be run in the Spring of 2013.

## **The On-line Youth Campaign**

Central to the project is the European on-line youth campaign against hate speech which will be designed and implemented with the agency of young people and youth organisations. This campaign will be multiplied in national campaigns and initiatives so as to be as close to young people as possible. National activities will federate various actors and organisations so as to make national authorities and actors aware of the need to take action. By definition, most of the campaign actions will take place on-line, but they should be supported and complemented by off-line activities.

The campaign will adopt a positive and pro-active message – a campaign for dignity and freedom of expression on-line – while having a clear stance against all forms of racism and discrimination on-line. Based on the approach that on-line space is public space, the campaign will combine awareness-raising, net-citizenship and medial literacy together with intercultural and human rights education elements.

Initiated by and carried out in the framework of the Council of Europe, most of the campaign activities will be carried out by European and national partners which will mobilise their members and activists to act on-line and off-line for the campaign and its values.

At the European level, the Council of Europe will provide the communication tools for the campaign: slogans and logos, visual identity elements as well as strategies and tools specific for on-line campaigning. These tools will be made available to partners at European and national levels for them to use in their own campaign activities.

The Youth Department will also carry out research activities in support of the project and liaise with other Council of Europe sectors concerned by the campaign.

A European survey about the perceptions of young people regarding hate speech on-line is currently being prepared. Its findings should influence the preparation of the campaign.

A dedicated Internet site will also be set up as soon as the branding elements of the campaign have been agreed upon.

Financial support for key activities and projects may be provided by the European Youth Foundation (EYF). Currently the EYF is supporting special projects for the preparation of the campaign at national level. The overall purpose of these projects is to motivate and enable governmental and non-governmental youth organisations to start preparations for the campaign at national level. Please consult [www.eyf.coe.int/fej](http://www.eyf.coe.int/fej) for more information.

The campaign will be launched in Spring 2013 and run through to the end of the year. A European campaign conference will be organised in Autumn 2013 to take stock of experiences and results. The conference may result in a prolongation of the campaign or other forms of follow-up of the project in the programme of activities of the Council of Europe for 2014-2015.

## **The preparatory seminar**

The seminar is a key event in the preparation of the campaign against hate speech. Its primary function is to involve and inform the partners and future actors of the campaign and to prepare the programme of activities of the campaign as well as support and communication structures. The seminar will result in guidelines and practical proposals for the campaign; some will be addressed to the Council of Europe (for decision of the Joint Council on Youth), others will be addressed to the actors in the future campaign.

The seminar's programme will explore the realities and dimensions of hate speech on-line, provide opportunities for exploring the specifics of on-line campaigning and agree on common approaches and specific features for the European and national dimensions of the campaign.

In line with the values of co-management and youth participation, the seminar should be first and foremost an opportunity for the governmental and non-governmental partners to prepare together the campaign and increase their ownership of the project.

### **Objectives of the seminar**

- To develop a common understanding of the realities of hate speech and the importance of addressing hate speech on-line, and to create a sense of urgency among the stakeholders of the Council of Europe's youth sector
- To further develop the main messages and approaches of the campaign
- To clarify the means and methods of the campaign in its European and national dimensions
- To elaborate proposals for the programme of key activities of the campaign and tools to be developed, including the roles of the European and national levels
- To associate the campaign preparations with the Council of Europe's work against hate speech and on Internet governance
- To develop communication, cooperation and partnerships among the national and European stakeholders of the campaign and to create a sense of shared ownership of the project and of the campaign.

### **Programme and working methods**

The programme of the seminar is currently being prepared by the Follow-up group of the project set up by the Joint Council on Youth and will be sent to all the participants ahead of the seminar. The programme will include:

- Presentation and discussion about the importance of addressing hate speech on-line and how to recognise it
- Discussion of the preliminary results of the European survey about young people's perception of hate speech on-line
- Sharing experiences about on-line campaigning and developing participants' competences for this purpose
- Introduction to the Council of Europe's work against hate speech, against racism and discrimination and in Internet governance and identify links with the campaign
- Preparation of the programme of activities of the campaign at European level and connection with national activities
- Practical workshops and capacity-building for activities and tools for the campaign
- Agreement of guidelines for campaigning and communication.

If possible (i.e. if ready), the campaign's message and visual identity will also be presented and discussed with its creators.

### **Profile of participants**

The seminar is primarily addressed to governmental and non-governmental representatives and youth leaders who seriously intend or expect to take a leading role in organising, mobilising young people or disseminating information in their countries, services or organisations. These may include, for example:

- Leaders and representatives of youth organisations and groups working with racism, discrimination, hate speech and online environments
- Representatives of national youth councils and international youth organisations
- Representatives of national and international organisations active for human rights
- Representatives of youth governmental services and decision makers in respect to youth policy and Internet governance
- Youth workers and education professionals involved with hate speech, racism, human rights and online technologies
- Bloggers and on-line human rights activists.

**All** participants must be:

- able to work independently in English;
- motivated to contribute to the seminar
- available for the full duration of the event and, most important,
- seriously intending to take an active role in organising national campaigns or projects in the framework of the European campaign.

### **Dates and venue**

The seminar will take place in the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg (France) from 10 to 12 October 2012. The work will start on 10 October at 09:30 and close on 12 October at 18:00.

### **Working languages**

The seminar will be held in English.

### **Financial conditions for participation**

Travel expenses and visa fees will be reimbursed (on presentation of the relevant receipts) according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who

attend the entire seminar can be reimbursed. The payment will be made either by bank transfer after the course, or at the end of the seminar in cash (in Euros).

Board and lodging will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg.

### **Procedure and deadline for application**

All those interested to apply for the seminar are invited to apply on-line in <http://youthapplications.coe.int> by **15 September 2012**.

### **Contact and further information**

For questions and further information, please contact us at [eyc.programme@coe.int](mailto:eyc.programme@coe.int).

### **Other relevant activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe**

The project Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line connects closely with other projects of the youth sector of the Council of Europe which contribute to the support the autonomy and equal opportunities for young people, namely:

- The Roma Youth Action Plan
- Human Rights Education and Active Participation
- Intercultural Dialogue with Neighbouring Regions
- Access to Social Rights for all Young People (Enter!)

Furthermore, a workshop on hate speech will be organised in Budapest from 23 to 25 November in cooperation with the EEA Norway Grants secretariat for project leaders from the 15 countries concerned by the EEA Norway Grants. Information about this activity will be published in due time.

For further information please visit: [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth).