



49th EPRA meeting

Sarajevo, 29-31 May 2019

Working group 3 – The Prevention of Hate Speech in the media with multicultural communities

Summary of the session and debate

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Working Group 3 on “The prevention of Hate Speech in the media in countries with multicultural communities” emphasized that, unfortunately, hate speech was very widespread throughout Europe, and that the online media landscape appeared to exacerbate the situation. In the online environment, we are witnessing the instrumentalization of emotions for propaganda and hate purposes, fueled by a variety of commercial and political interests, especially in relation to elections and holding power positions.

The Working group started off with a keynote speech by **Prof. Bojan Šošić** of the Academy of Science in Sarajevo, who, judging from the interest and comments of the participants, gave a highly interesting psychological perspective on this issue. Participants were offered a scientific framework for apprehending the issue of hate speech, particularly online. Perhaps the best way to describe it is with the following joke: an elderly woman calls the police, complaining about the constant public exposure of her neighbour. The police come and check the neighbour’s windows, but are unable to establish the allegations. Upon informing the lady of their findings, the police are confronted with her saying: well, yes, but you need to go into my kitchen, place the chair by the window, climb on it and then you will see.

Digital media, AI and algorithms have a profound impact on human behaviour. When individuals are continually being provided with content very similar in nature, whatever the nature of that content might be, which feeds into already established notions, this may lead to a distorted picture of reality. Against this backdrop, and also taking into account that the formation of paradigms has to begin early in human life, web companies have to cooperate and be transparent in their processes.

The second part of the working group included presentation of hate speech cases by [Georgios Anagnostaras](#), National Council for Radio and Television (GR) and **Lewis McQuarrie**, Ofcom (UK). Lewis also touched upon the issue of online challenges affecting regulatory aspects.

This first round of presentations was followed by an intervention of **Lejla Dervišagić** who highlighted some of the recommendations of the recent Council of Europe Zagreb conference in relation to hate

speech, recent Council of Europe's activities in the field of online media as well as landmark cases of the European Court of Human Rights.

The subsequent discussion focused even more on hate speech in the online environment, with particular emphasis on the role of the regulators. **Andrew Robinson**, BAI (IE), reported on the challenges related to the implementation of the new provisions of the AVMS Directive in this regard, and emphasised the need for close cooperation among regulators. Ireland started public consultations on the transposition of the AVMSD also including web companies and video sharing platforms. Some operators seem to be better placed to fulfill obligations than others, but all players highlight that hate speech is particularly challenging to address in an effective manner.

Gil Moureaux, CSA (FR), reported on the [draft bill](#) [proposition de loi AVIA] on online hate speech, the aim of which is to speed up the withdrawal of such content, impose fines to social networks refusing to cooperate and strengthen the CSA's powers. Adoption is envisaged by the end of the year.

Also feeding into the discussion was the participation of **Francesco Sciacchitano**, AGCOM (IT), who presented the recently adopted [AGCOM Regulation to prevent hate speech online](#). The regulation requires video-sharing service providers to implement measures to combat hate speech and to determine and report users who engage in hate speech. Specifically, a video-sharing service platform shall have to report to AGCOM every three months on such measures that have been carried out, specifying the manner and the systems implemented to monitor third-party content. There have been many comments on this regulation, most notably from video-sharing platforms, emphasizing that hate speech is a particularly difficult area.

There is no doubt that hate speech is prevalent and countering it effectively constitutes a major challenge. There is a clear acknowledgment by public institutions, on international and national levels of the importance of combatting hate speech online. Big players of the Internet have also recently been demonstrating some determination, often received with a dose of skepticism by other parties.

Online hate speech will continue to raise many crucial questions for media regulators in the years to come, especially concerning the role that NRAs can play in relation to online hate speech. Indeed, some of the legal measures to combat hate speech that are currently envisaged and have been discussed during the group - notably with the view to transpose the AVMS Directive – are likely to have an important impact on the role of NRAs with regard to online hate speech. Ensuring the delicate balance between legitimate measures to preserve security and order and the right to freedom of expression is of course essential.

Concerning tools and remedies, it was emphasized that algorithmic/AI intervention into hate speech was not sufficient as such and that human interaction was still very much needed - something that regulators who have been dealing with this issue for years are very much aware of. Finally, cooperation and the need for efficient self and co-regulatory schemes were also highlighted.