

EMIL – Media literacy and hate speech

Outputs from EMIL's meeting n°2 – 21 May 2021

I. Key points of the discussion about the role of MIL in the fight against hate speech

- Different forms require different responses: Hate speech covers various aspects and types of speech: from hateful/mean/distressing/offensive speech to more formally defined discrimination or incitement in relation to protected characteristics. Depending on the type of speech and what we really want to fight, some responses might be more relevant than others (prosecution, content moderation, counterspeech...).
- Role and limits of MIL: There is general agreement that MIL cannot be the silver bullet to eradicate hate speech but that a wide range of societal responses are required. MIL however clearly has a role to play in countering the impact and effects of hate speech on individuals. Counterspeech also overlaps with MIL quite a bit. In addition, societal norms around hate speech can be significantly supported by MIL, through the development of such norms and investment in education relevant to both MIL and norm setting.
- The scope of actions for media literacy in the field of hate speech could thus include:
 - Helping people identifying hate speech and develop protective mechanisms and resilience to hate speech;
 - Increasing people's understanding of the online environment and platforms' activities;
 - Engaging users with the tools and community standards that exist, so they can understand their own roles as individuals in reporting/calling out hate speech.
 - Focusing on media and communication methods: trainings for journalists, supporting diversity in newsrooms, how to communicate online...;
 - Researching to help actors (platforms, educators, moderators...) better understand hate speech, its effects and the impact of the interventions aimed at countering it;
 - Supporting other societal-wide responses.
- More research on the mechanisms of hate speech online is still needed:
 - Research can help understand how platform design can positively and negatively impact the prevalence of hate speech online.
 - More research into the impact of interventions is required (what does "combatting" hate speech really mean, and what works in this context).
 - Greater transparency by platforms can help feed into designing MIL interventions better.
- Assessing MIL initiatives should not prevent proactive approaches: Education and MIL in general is a complex matter, the impact of which cannot be assessed in a fully scientific way. While assessing what works is important, an evidence-based approach should not prevent stakeholders from developing media literacy policies/activities. Any general societal response to hate speech will be a long-term project, and that applies to MIL too. Even though impact or effects may not appear for a long time, that is not a reason not to fund/continue with grass-roots projects.

- Hate speech, coordination and EMIL: many international projects could be developed as a national version, and the reverse is also valid. EMIL could help link national networks to support such development.

II. Examples of initiatives (mentioned during EMIL's meeting & EPRA's thematic session on hate speech)

Raising the awareness of users and helping people develop protective mechanisms

- In Finland: A **national action plan** about hate speech: several ministries are planning to put in place various actions such as national campaigns or other actions to promote democracy.
→ *still at an early stage, more information will come later.*
- In Belgium, in the framework of the [No Hate Speech Movement](#) of the Council of Europe, Mediawijs published **posters and guidelines** on how to react to hate speech: <https://en.mediawijs.be/node/5288>.
- In Finland, KAVI (subordinate to the Ministry of culture and education), is organising **online courses on hate speech for public sector and civil servants**: what can you do as a civil servant to help counter the fear of people to get on social media?
- Also in Finland, the "Non-toxic - non-discriminatory gaming culture": a nationwide project in which gaming culture and gaming activities are developed into a hobby open and safe for all, free from hate speech and harassment. The nationwide project is coordinated by the City of Helsinki's youth services together with the project partners. The project is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- In Belgium, the [Weetewa Vlogging contest](#) with YouTube, MNM, De Ambrassade en Mediaraven, organised in partnership with an organisation specialised in conflict management: young participants could send videos on how they react to hate speech and the organisation was asked to develop tools on how to react online with the available tools.
- In Belgium also, the launch of the project [CyberSense](#) initiated by Ariel Trust, an Educational Charity based in Liverpool, will aim at providing children with the skills to recognise, respond to and report cyber-bullying.
- In Germany, [Klicksafe](#) (awareness partner of the Safer Internet Centre in Germany) also deals with the topic of hate speech by providing a wide range of information, materials and videos.

Focus on media and how to communicate

- Mediawijs is a partner of the European project "**Debate Your Issue**", a project developed within the programme Erasmus+ for 18-25-year-old people, invited to compete in spring 2021 in debates on several current topics like populism, media, migration, climate change, leadership, mobility, community building and the European Union in the world: <https://debateyourissue.eu/>

- In Belgium, the [News in the Classroom](#) project: transformed now in a regular programme used in classrooms, the project brings journalists and media in schools to explain the processes behind news and information. It was extended to secondary schools also, with the launch of a competition between classes and schools on news and actual information. The idea is to exercise, train students to express their views without using hate speech.
- In Belgium, the [rePresent project](#) by Mediawijs: A dialogue between young people with a migrant background and journalists to understand how they feel represented in media, exchange and provide editorial tips for journalists.
- The European [No CAP project](#): Resources and material for teachers and students for the prevention of polarisation in Flemish education (offline trainings, guidance, partnerships with museums, institutes, EDMO...). It includes also the [EDUbox](#), an interactive tool with “a small piece of theory, informative videos, some practical exercises and a large discussion format 'Together through one door', in which young people learn to discuss polarizing topics with each other”, developed by VRT NWS with the Hannah Arendt Institute, Mediawijs, Tumult and the Flemish Peace Institute.
- In the French-speaking Community of Belgium, **public media broadcasters** have adapted their programmes during the week against **cyber-bullying** to focus on this issue: https://www.rtbf.be/tv/detail_les-medias-de-la-rtbf-se-mobilisent-pour-lutter-contre-le-cyberharcelement?id=10752554
- In Germany, the Northrhine-Westphalian regulatory authority LfM is conducting **training for journalists on how to moderate hate speech** on the web and has **issued guidelines for journalists** to deal with hate speech: <https://www.epra.org/attachments/53rd-epra-meeting-living-with-hate-speech-presentation-by-lfm-nrw-de> (EN)
<https://www.medienanstalt-nrw.de/themen/hass/hasskommentare-moderieren-lernen.html> (DE)
<https://www.medienanstalt-nrw.de/themen/hass/leitfaden-fuer-redaktionen-zum-umgang-mit-hassrede.html> (DE)
- In North Macedonia, **guidelines for hate speech monitoring** have been developed by the regulator, based on the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights: <https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Guide-to-monitor-hate-speech-FINAL-9.pdf>
→ *This monitoring helped to some legislative change in 2018 to open the list of legal grounds to prosecute hate speech.*

Research & networks

- In Sweden, The Swedish Media Council has run the national campaign ‘No Hate Speech’ since 2013 and is the Swedish Safer Internet Centre since 2020. The Council has recently compiled an **international research overview of net hate/net bullying among minors**, underlying the cognitive mechanisms at play: <https://www.epra.org/attachments/53rd-epra-meeting-living-with-hate-speech-presentation-of-the-swedish-media-council> (EN)
<https://www.statensmedierad.se/rapporter-och-analyser/material-rapporter-och-analyser/utsatt-pa-internet> (SE)

- In Switzerland, launch of a **dedicated working group**: Youth and Media created a working group to facilitate networking and collaboration; it has 13 members now, from the specialist unit for racism to the Federal Office of police and the Federal Office of public health. Besides the networking aspects, the goal is to keep the subject on everyone's priority list and support each other (discussing possible measures, finding partners for collaborations etc.).
- In Switzerland as well, a research **report on the topic of online sexism and hostility towards LGBTIQ community** among children and adolescents was commissioned by Youth and Media: available in [German/Italian/French](#).
- In Switzerland, a research **report on online racism** was commissioned by the special unit to counter racism: available in [German/French/Italian](#).
- In Northern Macedonia, a **research report "Political and Economic Foundations of Disinformation and Hate Speech in North Macedonia"**, was published by the Macedonian Institute for Media in 2020 (EN). The Research is part of the project "[RESILIENCE: For Media Free of Hate and Disinformation](#)" supported by the European Union
- In Finland, the Ministry of Justice published a research report "Utilisation of artificial intelligence in monitoring hate speech" in April 2021 ([\[FI\]](#), [summary \[EN\] / \[SE\]](#)). The aim of the monitoring is to gain an overall picture of hate speech. The report is produced by the project Facts Against Hate coordinated by the Ministry. The aim of the two-year-long project is to intensify work against hate crimes and hate speech.

Other societal-wide initiatives

- [SELMA](#) (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness): a two-year project co-funded by the European Commission which aims to tackle the problem of online hate speech by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance, and respect. They also published a toolkit on hate speech: <https://hackinghate.eu/toolkit/>
- **#IAmHere**: A civil society initiative, based on a network of volunteers with more than 150,000 members in 14 countries, who intends to change the overall tone of online debates by counteracting hate speech and misinformation on social media, supporting the targeted and victimized and protect freedom of speech and democracy: <https://iamhereinternational.com/#1595258675289-49ca9606-7077>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-48462190> **#IchBinHier**
- The [Slovak Council for Broadcasting and retransmission](#) is one of the mentors of the European [Open Code for Hate-Free Communication](#) (OpCode) project launched by 'NEVER AGAIN', Poland's leading anti-racist organisation: it aims at countering online hate speech using a multidimensional approach consisting of monitoring, analysis, taking action, developing free and open software solutions for moderating user generated content, and by engaging in advocacy and network consolidation. Organisation of an online hackathon:

<https://www.codeagainsthate.eu/>

- The Knight Institute “Reimagine the Internet” series of seminars held in May 2021: six recorded sessions on topics such as social media and disinformation designed to spark some conversations about how we could design new internet spaces that could lead towards healthier discussions, communities, and societies to feature some of the most promising efforts in this direction. <https://knightcolumbia.org/events/reimagine-the-internet>

III. Upcoming resources

- In Switzerland, a **study on hate speech** is currently being carried out by the Swiss regulator [OFCOM](#) (e.g. on topics such as the extent and forms of hate speech in Switzerland, the role of hate speech in opinion forming or the trust of recipients in different sources of information and news); it is expected to be released next year.
- In Croatia, the scientific conference “[Comments, Hate Speech, Disinformation and Public Communication Regulation](#)” organised by the [Agency for Electronic Media](#) and the scientific review Media research will take place on **16-17 September 2021** in Zagreb.

→ *Topics to be covered are: Legal aspects and freedom of speech in the regulation of public communication, fight against disinformation, hate speech in the public media space, hate speech in the citizens’ comments, readers’ comments as a form of political participation, the role of self-regulation in regulating disinformation and unacceptable forms of speech, methodological approaches in scientific research of misinformation and comments on the Internet (big data), network tools for collecting, analysing, and visualising online forms of discourse and analysis of sentiment in offensive and insulting speech....*