

RAISE!

Raising Awareness for Inclusive Societies Expression

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Intellectual Output 4

Policy Recommendations to raise awareness
against hate speech and contribute to prevent hate
crimes

Authors

RAISE! Project Team

Ani-International (France)
Merseyside Expanding Horizons (United Kingdom)
United Society of Balkans (Greece)
Asociación Mar Violeta (Spain)
Promimpresa (Italy)
Novo Mundo (Portugal)

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Foreword

This document is a collection of recommendations addressed at local and European *policy makers*¹ to design and implement policies and actions aimed at preventing and contrasting *hate speech* and hate crimes and at increasing the sharing of common European values of mutual respect and inclusion of all.

After an in-depth research and careful consideration of the different understandings of hate speech in the participating countries, the partnership has elaborated and adopted a common **definition of hate speech** as: «*Any public speech, act, action and form of expression that expresses, propagates, incites, promotes, justifies or encourages hatred, violence, xenophobia, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, defamation, harmful acts, hostility or other forms of hatred towards a person or group based on certain characteristics such as race, nationality, ethnicity, age, disability, civil status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sex, or sexual orientation*».

This index of recommendations constitutes the attempt of the project at filling the gap separating policies and practice: it accounts for the perspective of the project *partnership*, of the *youth educators* and *young people* – including young *survivors* of hate speech – involved in the project, and that of *policy makers*, directly engaged in the elaboration of this document through a consultation process based on a co-production approach.

These recommendations represent the final strategy for the achievement of the foreseen project objectives, thus supporting: the sustainability of the RAISE! model and approach, its tools, learning materials and guidelines produced; the adaptability and transferability of the model to different countries and local youth environments, education sectors, issues relating to inclusion; the dissemination of the effectiveness of a creative approach and the use of narratives to combat hate speech.

The main aim of the project is to explore and develop innovative and effective practices to address hate speech in Europe, contributing to more equal, intercultural and progressive youth communities, thus promoting the creation of more cohesive and inclusive societies enabling all of their members, regardless of culture, religious

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term *policy maker* is intended as any organisation or leader of an organisation involved in strategic planning or in the position to influence the formulation of policies, plans of action, directives and guidelines. This includes representatives of public authorities and institutions at local, regional, national and international level; school directors and university rectorates; direction boards of companies and corporations; assemblies or members of associations, third sector parties and youth organisations.

beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and racial differences, to lead a dignified and fulfilled life that is free of discrimination.

Through the production of its *four Intellectual Outputs*² and addressing the three main target groups of *Youth Workers*, *Young People* and *Policy Makers*, the project has set out to:

- Understand, reflect and find effective education-based solutions against the rising hate speech phenomenon, and in particular to detect and address the difficulties and damages that victims of hate speech suffer at a psychological and sociological level;
- Foster the engagement of youth workers, professionals, educators and young people, as well as the active involvement of institutions, by providing them with practical tools enabling them to achieve higher levels of self-confidence and assert their identities and to contribute to the support and advancement of discriminated and disadvantaged groups;
- Carry out the development and implementation of project activities cooperatively and transnationally, as a conscious and active response to the unstable period and deep societal and political changes that Europe is going through, including the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, the pervasive rise of extremist ideas of nationalisms and radicalisation and the instability regarding migration policies and the fight against discrimination.

The partnership provides the opportunity for institutions and organisations to sign up to the principles outlined in the Recommendations and be awarded the RAISE! Label as a symbol that they have expressed their aligned interest and commitment to the core values of the project,, and are committed to support such principles and policies in their professional environment, in order to attempt fostering social inclusion and contributing to prevent hate crimes, thus activating a multiplier effect and ensuring a sustainable and durable impact of the project at multiple levels.

The RAISE! project stands against all forms of oppression, stigmatisation and hate. While recognising and being guided by the principle and fundamental right to freedom of opinion and expression, the partnership maintains that such a right must be reconciled with respect for human dignity and with the protection of the safety and rights of others.

² Intellectual Output 1: EU Comparative research on hate speech; Intellectual Output 2: Raise! Toolbox for youth workers to build resilience of young people against hate speech; Intellectual Output 3: Raise Up Manual!; Intellectual Output 4: Policy Recommendations to raise awareness against hate speech and contribute to prevent hate crimes. *Please note that all outputs are available on the project's website and communication channels and on the Erasmus+ Results Platform in all partner languages including English.*

Methodology

The co-production approach chosen to develop the project recommendations is based on six Key Principles, namely: taking an assets based approach; building on people's existing capabilities; reciprocity and mutuality; peer support networks; blurring distinctions; facilitating rather than delivering. In fact, co-production implies the planning and delivery of activities or services in an equal and reciprocal relationship among professionals, beneficiaries, their families and their communities. Such an approach enables both services and the target communities to become far more effective agents of change³.

Therefore, the partnership has carried out an in-depth consultation process involving a total of 28 Policy Makers and 29 Youth Workers across partner countries, reached in different settings and modalities, ranging from in-person to online group discussions, to individual meetings, to phone calls or questionnaires.

The aim of the consultations has been to collect valuable input from the contributors, investigating the state of the art and the most common needs at institutional level throughout Europe in regards to hate speech, collecting best practices and suggestions to ensure the feasibility, adaptability and sustainability of the policy model produced. Such information has then been integrated into the recommendations that the partnership had elaborated, based on the individual and collective insight gained throughout the duration of the project and, more at large, in our personal and professional lives. Thus, this document incorporates and voices all of the actors involved in our project and in the fight against hate speech.

³ NESTA, "People Powered Health Co-Production Catalogue" (2012)

Our Policy Recommendations

1. Ensure proper prevention and counteraction measures at internal level

Focus on creating a **tolerant** and **inclusive** environment and organisational **culture** at the *internal level* first. Adopt proactive policies aiming to:

- a. Increase the understanding of the topics related to hate speech among employees and collaborators at all hierarchical levels, from directors to novices. Deliver sessions aimed at transferring basic concepts and then triggering active reflection on hate speech and means of contrasting it;
- b. Require the adoption of a **code of conduct** and ensure its effective implementation, also putting in place specific sanctions to address chronic and particularly serious violations of hate speech policies and rules, demanding that representatives and members of the institution or organisation refrain from intolerant behaviours and discriminatory statements, in particular to the media, and that they intervene in case such incidents occur;
- c. Set up a **team** in charge of conducting a periodic **self-evaluation** of internal policies, updating them based on good practices and incoming information, promoting the assessment and monitoring of the implementation of such policies and setting the course for **self-correction**.

2. Strive for cultural change: target public perception, invest in education, involve communities

Plan and implement **outreach strategies** aimed at improving the public recognition of the importance of **respecting pluralism** and of the dangers posed by hate speech, clearly stating its unacceptability, and investing in prevention by focusing on:

- a. Delivering appropriately designed information and **awareness-raising campaigns** and **events** aimed at combating misinformation, negative stereotyping and stigmatisation. In order to assess the needs present in the community and identify the most effective approaches (e.g. smaller events or larger campaigns, digital-based or print-based actions...), a preliminary *analysis* can be carried out beforehand, accompanied by a strong evaluation and monitoring of results. Events and initiatives such as *diversity festivals*, *art festivals* and *lecture cycles* focused on *migrants and refugees* or other vulnerable groups could be useful in order to valorise diversity. Even in the

case of inability to perform such actions on a larger scale, it could be possible to join and engage in campaigns promoted by larger institutions, give them visibility on institutional communication channels and adopt their materials and methodologies;

- b. **Education:** develop specific educational programmes and organise events in schools targeting teachers, children and young people of all ages and their families. Provide practical examples and stories in order to deepen their understanding of the topic and deliver workshops opportunities on the use of *alternative narratives*;
- c. **Involving the Third Sector and communities at large:** establish solid partnerships involving NGOs, associations and members of civil society to co-produce effective actions against hate speech.

3. Update your strategy and commit to real action

The phenomenon of hate speech is in constant and rapid evolution according to the fast paced rhythm of societal changes and the instant circulation of information. There needs to be a continual evaluation of the understanding of the phenomenon and a consistent reassessment of the measures against it, for instance through the establishment of a dedicated committee or the creation of an Observatory for community dialogue.

In addition, one of the main reasons for discouragement of the people reached by anti-hate speech campaigns, is a mismatch in the messages they receive and their observation of common practices. Therefore, commit fully to actual change, lead by example and put your principles into practice. Establish a relationship with the public based on mutual responsibility, transparency and trust, and cooperation.

4. Address and leverage the role of media and of public discourse

Acknowledge the responsibility of both the author of expressions of hate speech on the one hand, and any responsibility of the media itself and of media professionals on the other hand.

- a. Foster the non-polarisation of opinion in general, especially if targeting specific groups or individuals; in particular, discourage the absence of nuance in media discourse, by promoting open-mindedness and critical reflection;

- b. Provide educational resources that promote digital literacy and media literacy among the public and particularly among youth;
- c. Demand more accountability from both media outlets or platforms and from users themselves, especially public figures or political leaders, in moderating the tone and modalities of their debate;
- d. Design media-based strategies and campaigns that not only combat the use of hate and the spread of all forms of discrimination, but also positively reinforce the values of diversity and acceptance.

5. Enable and encourage victims to report incidents and grant support to survivors

- a. Set up an easy-to-use and responsive system that facilitates the reporting of the use of hate speech, either from a target or an observer;
- b. Set up a properly staffed counselling and guidance service, helping to support victims cope and recover from the effects of hate and any trauma or feeling of shame suffered, by offering emotional and practical support specific to the individual's needs. If constraints related to available funding or human resources prevent such a service to be in place, establish dedicated partnerships and redirect survivors to institutions, organisations, independent charities or professionals that are able to provide it;
- c. Design and implement a strategy for actively seeking out and reaching survivors of hate speech;
- d. Set up legal counselling resources, ensuring that survivors are aware of their rights to redress and are able to exercise them.

In addition, offer survivors the opportunity to be actively involved in the campaigns and events your institution may organise as sources of information and real testimonies in regards to their experience of hate speech. This legitimises the action and provides them a platform and a voice to speak for themselves. At the same time, exercise caution and be sure not to put an additional unwanted burden on the shoulders of hate victims.

6. Organise lobbying initiatives to demand commitment, support and funding from authorities

Pursue public and private funding opportunities for the establishment of services and the creation of materials and content to enact the principles contained in these recommendations;

Connect, organise and set in motion movements of institutions, organisations and individuals to catch the attention of higher level policy makers and demand structural change, commitment and increased visibility for the issue of hate speech and discrimination;

Involve the Home Office and Justice Departments of devolved administrations and local governments to ensure that all police officers receive adequate training to correctly identify hate crime and acquire tools to respond to it and strategies to support victims appropriately. Also foster the community engagement of frontline practitioners, in order to facilitate a meaningful and continued dialogue involving different communities and different sectors of these communities.

Urge the establishment and refinement of a sound legal structure and practice, that can be relevant for various media and based on international instruments such as the *Rabat Plan of Action*⁴, improving the possibility of resorting to civil legal actions, setting up systems of compensation for victims and clarifying the responsibilities of all actors involved, and at the same time still defending the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

7. Provide access to information and self-improvement tools

Spread information and tools for self-regulation and self-correction of individuals and for bystander training, as a means of uncovering inherent biases, preventing individuals from using hate speech and combating its use. Focus on analysing and targeting the psychosocial causes of hate and operating a distinction, separating the vector of hate speech from the root cause of it. Sanction detrimental treatment or harassment but also provide reformative counselling and paths for perpetrators.

⁴ UN, "Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" (2013)

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ARCI and CITTALIA – Prism Project: *"Discorsi d'odio e Social Media – Criticità, strategie e pratiche d'intervento"*

Contacts



www.raiseproject.eu



@raiseeuproject



@raise_euproject



Marta Formato

@ erasmus@ani-international.org

W www.ani-international.org



Stacey Robinson

@ staceyrobinson@expandinghorizons.co.uk

W www.expandinghorizons.co.uk



Yannis Tsilsou

@ yannis.tsilsou@usbngo.gr

W www.usbngo.gr



Julia Fernández Valdés

@ asocmarvioleta@gmail.com

W www.asociacionmarvioleta.org



Emanuela Riggi

@ euprojects@promimpresa.it

W www.promimpresa.it/euprojects



Ana Rita Seirôco

@ geral@novomundo.eu

W www.facebook.com/wearenovomundo