‘COMBATTING HATE: TRAINING OF TRAINERS’
EUROPEAN YOUTH FOUNDATION
PILOT PROJECT

13.10.15 – 18.10.15
LIMASSOL, CYPRUS
Who we are:

AEQUITAS is an NGO in Cyprus that works on promoting human rights education, intercultural education and citizenship education. More particularly, AEQUITAS holds that these three interrelated areas are necessary characteristics for a democratic, tolerant and just society. In this light, AEQUITAS provides Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education and Intercultural Education for children, youth and adults, educates competent authorities on issues pertaining to human rights, empowers marginalized communities and individuals to know and uphold their rights, carries out awareness-raising campaigns on a variety of human rights issues and encourages Human Rights Debate and Education. For more information on our organization, please visit www.aequitas-humanrights.org.

European Youth Foundation:

The pilot project was funded by the European Youth Foundation. The European Youth Foundation is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial support for European youth activities. It has an annual budget of approximately 3 million Euros. Since 1972, more than 300,000 young people, aged between 15 and 30, mostly from Member States, have benefitted directly from EYF-supported activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation amongst young people in Europe by providing financial support to European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity.

Project Overview:

The pilot activity was a training of eighteen trainers aged 21-30 from the formal and non-formal educational sectors for purposes of empowering them to integrate the fight against extremism and hate speech online in their work. The project sought to enhance the participant’s knowledge of the issue of hate and extremism online and facilitate their understanding of the significance of human rights education and other innovative methodology as tools for combatting the
aforementioned phenomena and become inspired and empowered through the cultivation of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence to use this method in their own educational settings. This was achieved through a threefold approach. Firstly, participants explored the definitions of hate speech and extremism as provided for in European and international policy documents, case-law and law and were equipped with the knowledge to be able to determine whether a particular expression constitutes hate speech or extremist rhetoric online. In relation to the theoretical framework, participants considered the groups which are particularly targeted by hate speech including, *inter alia*, immigrants, LGBTI persons and disabled persons and the forms and manifestations hate speech takes. They comprehended the reason why an emphasis is placed on hate speech and extremism online, rather than other platforms. Finally, they considered the interrelationship between hate speech, incitement to hatred and hate crime. Secondly, participants explored human rights education as a means to promote solidarity and tolerance amongst people and combat phenomena such as hate speech and extremism. More particularly, they considered the aims, objectives and tools of human rights education and explored and implemented activities from Council of Europe handbooks, such as COMPASS and COMPANION, while a particular emphasis was placed on discovering the Manual for Combatting Hate Speech Online. Thirdly, the project enabled participants to explore other innovative methods that can be implemented within their own settings for the purpose of combatting extremism and hate speech online such as flash mobs and living libraries. During the activity, they had the opportunity to design, prepare and implement a flash mob for the local community on the theme of hate speech and extremism and prepared a video for the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Movement. Moreover, the activity constituted a microcosm of tolerance, respect and active citizenship with each participant embracing values that lie at the foundation of human rights education whilst simultaneously exploring and understanding the 'technical' side of the activities in the handbooks and other methods that can be used for promoting a human rights culture free from hate speech.
**Project Objectives:**

The overarching aim of this pilot project was to train trainers involved in formal and non-formal education on the subject of combatting hate speech and extremism online through human rights education and other innovative tools such as living libraries and flash mobs. Firstly, the project sought to endow participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the creation of a human rights culture whereby phenomena such as hate speech and extremism are eliminated. This was achieved through the implementation of activities from Council of Europe handbooks such as COMPASS and COMPANION in addition to a theoretical presentation on the meaning of human rights. In this realm, participants developed a sense of solidarity towards the groups particularly targeted by hate speech in a spirit of equality and non-discrimination. They were also endowed with a sense of justice and active citizenship to take a stance in the protection and promotion of victims’ rights and the combatting of hate speech more generally. Secondly, the project sought to enable participants to understand the theoretical and contextual framework of hate speech and extremism online by looking at relevant terminology, understanding the role of the internet vis-à-vis hate speech and extremism and comprehending
the Cypriot reality in this sphere, looking at causes, consequences and manifestations of the phenomena. In relation to knowledge, the participants considered the meaning of terms such as hate speech, incitement to hatred and extremism, considering different definitions put forth through international, European and national institutions. Further, they looked at ways in which hate speech is manifested and the vehicles through which this occurs, considering the characteristics of platforms such as the internet, political speech, music and lyrics. It is in this realm that participants understood why tackling hate speech and extremism online is particularly important in the framework of youth since the internet is the key way through which such speech is promoted. Participants looked at actual case studies so as to ensure a coherent understanding of the issue being dealt with subsequently enabling them to distinguish hate speech when faced with it. They looked at the common reasons which prompt such hate including race, religion and sexual orientation, considering semantics and notions and placing them within the broader context of an increasingly intolerant Europe. Further, participants considered the role of the far-right movement as an instigating factor for the rise in hate speech and extremism, looking at the reasons and consequences of this rise. In this realm, participants appraised related phenomena such as Islamophobia, the reasons for their rise, their effects on hate speech and the ways of expressing them. Also, they considered the psycho-social consequences hate speech can have on victims and also on democracy. Further, the project allowed participants to understand human rights and freedoms such as the freedom from racial discrimination and the freedom of expression and the balance between the two, a discussion which lies at the heart of any discussion pertaining to hate speech. Moreover, such themes were presented against the backdrop of international and European documents such as the Protocol against cybercrime and the European Convention on Human Rights. Notwithstanding that such issues can become intricately complex, the activity presented them in an interactive and simple manner which allowed participants to think about, discuss and subsequently articulate upon hate speech as a conjectural theme and an actual reality. Further, the project sought to empower participants, through a technical and conceptual education of human rights and other relevant methods, to adopt such tools within their work for purposes of combatting hate speech and extremism online. To this end, the activity trained the trainers on Council of Europe handbooks, with a particular emphasis on the manual against hate speech and also looked at
preparing, implementing and evaluating activities such as living libraries and flash mobs. In this realm, they understood the aims, objectives and desired results of human rights education, understood how to implement handbook activities, considered other innovative means to promote the combat of hate speech and extremism online and developed their confidence as well as knowledge and skills to carry out these activities within their own settings.

**Participants:**
The participants were trainers/educators/members of formal and non-formal educational settings, for example NGOs, youth groups, youth organizations, schools and universities. Their ages ranged from 21-30.
Methodology:

AEQUITAS adopted a learning by doing approach and employed techniques of non-formal learning. Participatory activities such as team games, role play, group discussions and wall magazines allowed participants to be at the epicentre of the course. There was also co-operative group work that facilitated the understanding of intricate topics and allowed for the development of effective problem solving skills, whilst simultaneously ensuring the active participation of all. Throughout the training course, real life constituted a key learning device, which was depicted through the use of posts and discussions on social networking sites, blogs, forums and websites as a source of discussion material. In a nutshell, AEQUITAS strongly believes that human rights education in combination with other methods, such as flash mobs and living libraries, are strong tools for combatting hate speech and extremism online and, as such, the course sought, through non-formal methodology, to inform participants of the challenge of hate speech and extremism online, explore this reality within a Cypriot context and understand their role as formal and non-formal educators to take an active stance in combatting such phenomena through human rights education tools with a particular emphasis on the new CoE manual as well as other innovative methods.

Learning Outcomes:

Knowledge: Participants understood the concept of human rights and fundamental freedoms and what human rights seek to ensure whilst simultaneously grasping intricate topics such as the interrelationship between the freedom of expression, on the one hand, and the principle of non-discrimination on the other, all within the sphere of hate speech and extremism. They considered the meaning of hate speech, looking at different definitions put forth through international and European institutions, albeit lacking a universal definition. Further, they looked at ways in which hate speech is manifested and understood and why a particular emphasis is placed on hate speech and extremism online. They assessed actual case studies as this ensured a coherent understanding of the issue being dealt with subsequently enabling them to distinguish hate speech when faced with it. They looked at the common reasons which prompt such hate including race, religion and LGBTI but, also, albeit to a lesser extent in the Cypriot context, disability, considering semantics and notions and placing them within the broader context of an
increasingly intolerant Cyprus and, more generally, Europe due to the current socio-economic crisis. In particular relation to racism and xenophobia and homophobia and transphobia, participants considered the role of the far-right movement as an instigating factor for the rise in hate speech, looking at the reasons and consequences of its rise. In this realm, participants looked at related phenomena such as Islamophobia, the reasons for their rise, their effects on hate speech and the ways of expressing them. Also, they considered the psycho-social consequences hate speech can have on victims and also on democracy. Moreover, hate speech and extremism were presented against the backdrop of international and European documents such as the Protocol against cybercrime and the European Convention on Human Rights. Furthermore, they understood the meaning, objectives, outcomes and tools of human rights education, and comprehended its interrelationship with combatting hate speech and extremism online. They also learnt about how to design, implement and evaluate other innovative methods that seek to contribute to the aforementioned aim. A particular emphasis was placed on prompting participants to understand how they can use these tools in their own educational settings for the combatting of hate speech and extremism online.

Skills: In relation to skills, participants developed a wide variety of skills as promoted through non-formal education more generally. They developed their organizational and cooperative group work skills as the participants found themselves at the epicentre of the solidarity based activities which were conducted as part of a group rather than individually. They also developed their sense of initiative and creativity more generally and especially during activities, such as the campaign video and flash mob, which were entirely organized and implemented by the participants. They advanced their self-confidence as they were prompted through the solidarity, learner-centred activities as well as active listening during structured debates and discussions where participants listened and responded to different, sometimes conflicting arguments. They managed all this by adopting a positive approach to conflict, addressing it in a peaceful and tolerant manner. Moreover, they developed their training and facilitation skills, comprehending their role as trainers and facilitators of human rights education activities.
Attitudes: Participants embraced the values necessary for the creation of a human rights culture, such as respect, solidarity and non-discrimination as these are necessary pre-requisites for combatting hate speech and extremism online. More particularly, participants developed a sense of solidarity towards the groups especially targeted by hate speech in a spirit of equality and non-discrimination, looking at the differences between citizens of the European Union as its richness rather than its fall. They were also endowed with a sense of justice and active citizenship to take a stance in the protection and promotion of victims’ rights and the combatting of hate speech more generally. By exploring the above issues and being endowed with such attitudes, participants also created a sense of responsibility in relation to their own actions, taking care not to transcend into the realm of discriminatory speech. Moreover, by understanding the damaging effects of hate speech against, for example, particular religious groups and by appreciating the marvel and richness of today’s multicultural Europe, participants were endowed with a sense of human dignity of all irrespective of differences.
Outputs:
In the framework of this project, AEQUITAS is preparing a handbook for young people on hate speech and extremism and particularly meanings, definitions, forms and manifestations as well as causes and consequences of the phenomena through a human rights lens. This will also include relevant national help lines and ways to report hate speech online and will thus act as an empowering tool for victims and bystanders but, also through its awareness raising element, as a deterrent for perpetrators and/or potential perpetrators.

Contact:
For more information on the project, contact Natalie Alkiviadou at nalkiviadou@aequitas-humanrights.org or on +357 25 582333.