Hate Speech
informative handbook
This handbook was published in the framework of the project Together which was implemented by the NGO Aequitas, in 2019, with financial support from the European Youth Foundation.

The European Youth Foundation cannot be held responsible for anything mentioned in the handbook or for any usage that might occur.
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Aequitas

AEQUITAS is a non-governmental organization in Cyprus that works on promoting human rights education, intercultural education and citizenship education.

OUR VISION

AEQUITAS' vision is to contribute to the creation of a society in which human rights are understood, protected and promoted with a view to strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultivating a sense of value for human dignity, ensuring gender equality in all spheres, achieving respect for cultural diversity, empowering people to become active citizens and, moreover, enhancing principles such as democracy and solidarity.

OUR MISSION

Aequitas’s mission is to implement all its activities on the basis of human rights principles as enshrined in international human rights documents. Aequitas also aims to raise awareness and educate individuals and groups on issues pertaining to human rights, intercultural dialogue and citizenship. In this light, AEQUITAS provides Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education and Intercultural Education to a wide range of target groups, empowers marginalized communities and individuals to know and uphold their rights, carries out awareness-raising campaigns on a variety of human rights issues, encourages human rights debate and carries out lobbying and advocacy activities for human rights issues. Moreover, Aequitas is the Cypriot NGO which participates at the monitoring exercise of the European Commission against online hate speech.

AEQUITAS has implemented an array of educational, capacity building as well as advocacy and lobbying activities and projects funded by institutions such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the European Network Against Racism and the Cyprus Youth Board.

www.aequitas-humanrights.org
Aequitas Human Rights Ngo
AEQUITAS NGO
Aequitas Human Rights Ngo
Aequitas NGO
The European Youth Foundation

WHAT IS THE EYF?

“The European Youth Foundation (EYF) is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial and educational support for European youth activities”. Namely, the foundation is only for youth NGOs from Council of Europe member states and European Cultural Convention Signatories (Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Holy See) – EFPSA being one of them.

The headquarters of the EYF are located in Strasbourg, France.

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

The EYF’s mission is to support “young people in getting closer to their objectives and their vision of a better future”. They aim to do this by offering guidance during the application process via 2-way communication, providing extended evaluation of content and methodology with respectful consideration of the NGOs’ work, and by transferring knowledge.

In addition, the EYF values diversity, flexibility, respect, approachability and teamwork.

THE EYF IN NUMBERS

- **1949**: the year Council of Europe was founded, to ensure that the atrocities of WW II never happen again, with the core values of human rights, democracy and rule of law
  - Note: The Council of Europe is a separate organization from the 28-member European Union
- **47**: the amount of member states in the CoE
- **1972**: the year during which the EYF was founded
- **15-30**: the age range of “youth” in the context of the EYF
- **3.7 million**: the annual budget of the foundation, which is mainly made up of obligatory contributions from each Council of Europe member state

Check out the EYF’s website for more
The project
TOGETHER

The project TOGETHER was funded by the EYF and was implemented by Aequitas in 2019.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

Implementation of four seminars during which we used a non formal education and learner-centric approach in order to explore the theoretical and legal framework of hate speech and to learn how to tackle it online.

The general objective of the project was to function as an initiative to combat hate speech (mainly online) against LGBTQI and migrants/refugees. Apart from the emphasis on human rights, there was a particular emphasis on the root causes and manifestations of hate speech as well as on the legal framework around the phenomenon and the ways to tackle it.

During the seminars we trained participants on the effective ways to report online hate speech in some of the most popular social media platforms.

OUTPUTS

In the framework of the project, we developed with the participants recommendations for educational and awareness raising purposes, which are relevant to:
1. The civil society and relevant stakeholders, and
2. the IT companies

During the seminars we explored possibilities for action to tackle the hate speech and we developed a strategy for action.
about this HANDBOOK

This handbook has been printed in Greek and English and was disseminated to Non Governmental Organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

The main focus of this document is present key information about hate speech, along with the recommendations of the participants as well as the strategy for action.

We hope that competent authorities, NGOs, charitable organizations and other relevant bodies and individuals will find this document to be a useful tool.
HATE SPEECH

Definition
There is no universal definition of hate speech. Recommendation (97) 20 on Hate Speech, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, is one of the few documents that provides a definition for hate speech holding that:

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.

Hate speech is based on stereotypes and social beliefs and intensifies the exclusion and stigmatization of a single person or a particular, usually marginalized group of individuals.

The perpetrators
The perpetrators adopt negative stereotypes against certain groups or individuals, thus violating principles such as equality and respect.
The impact
The impact of hate speech includes discrimination, marginalization and alienation.

In particular, hate speech has detrimental effects on the individual or individuals who is/are targeted or the group with which they share the same characteristics.

In addition, hate speech creates community tensions and, as a result, is the damage done to society as a whole.

Hate speech and the internet
It should be noted that online hatred is increasing. The internet is a powerful tool where individuals can exchange information and promote their ideas and beliefs. On the one hand, this is a positive aspect of our societies today, on the other hand we must not forget that the internet also offers a framework through which users can promote hatred.

The difficulty of controlling the internet and the fact that most people dare to say more on the internet than in real life off-line has the effect of making online hate checking more difficult and perplexed.
Legal Framework

Hate Speech

Relevant International And European Documents


Under this Framework Decision, each Member State must take the necessary measures to ensure that publicly inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are punishable offences.

Council of Europe – The Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, Concerning the Criminalisation of Acts of a Racist and Xenophobic Nature Committed through Computer Systems

This which was adopted on 28 January 2003 and entered into force on 1 March 2006, is of particular importance when it concerns the dissemination of messages of hatred through the Internet. Under this Protocol, the States Parties must adopt legislative and other measures to address the dissemination of racist and xenophobic material through computer systems, racist and xenophobic motivated insult, racist and xenophobic motivated threat, denial, gross minimisation, approval or justification of genocide or crimes against humanity.

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Article 4 provides that States Parties:

- Shall declare an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred and the incitement to racial discrimination;
- Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 20(2) provides that:

Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.
Cypriot Law

The piece of legislation regulating hate speech in Cyprus is The Combatting Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by means of Criminal Law of 2011, Law No. 134 (I)/ 2011, which was adopted to transpose the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA. This provides that any person who deliberately transmits in public and publicly incites, in any way, violence or hatred against a group of people or a member of a group, which is determined on the basis of race, colour, religion, genealogical origin, national or ethnic origin, in such a way to cause public disorder, or that has a threatening, abusive, or offensive character, is liable of up to five years of imprisonment and/or a fine of up to ten thousand Euros in case of a conviction.

Furthermore, in 2015, the Cyprus Criminal Code was amended to incorporate the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds within the realm of hate speech but provides for a lower punishment for such an offence, namely three years’ imprisonment and/or a fine of up to five thousand Euros. ECRI welcomed this development but underlined that the provisions in the Criminal Code set significantly lower penalties than for racially motivated hate speech, thus creating different standards for racist hate speech and homo/transphobic hate speech.

Further, the Ratifying Law of The Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, Concerning the Criminalisation of Acts of a Racist and Xenophobic Nature Committed through Computer Systems incorporates the aforementioned Additional Protocol of the Council of Europe into the national legal framework of Cyprus, criminalising the dissemination of racist and xenophobic material through computer systems.
for social media platforms

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Community Standards and their respect**
   a. Improving the criteria that lead to banning
   b. Promotion of the complaint process

2. **How to be informed about Community Standards and encouragement for their respect**
   a. **No to long texts**
      i. The Community Standards page lists everything in headlines (eg hate speech, violence etc) and allows the user to click on any topic they wish to read more
   b. **Alternative way of getting information**
      i. eg videos, animations, images, games, stories, quizzes and simplified tutorials
         1. Images – for example, so many hate speech cases have been recorded. You knew that;
         2. Test – eg which photos violate Community Standards?
      ii. To be showing up on the timeline at regular intervals and have a notification option
   c. **Make it compulsory for users to be informed**
      i. Eg don’t offer them the ‘skip’ option.
      ii. When registering on the website and whenever they violate Community Standards
   d. **Raise their awareness on**
      i. Human rights
      ii. Impact of hate speech on victims and statistics
      iii. Definition of hate speech (a clear definition) & examples or mini quizzes to make sure that the user is aware of what hate speech is

3. **Reward good behaviour**
   a) Rewarding those who behave well (eg reporting content that violates Community Standards)
   b) Potential reward - points awarded over a given period and exchanged with 'gifts' / 'prizes' such as blocking ads for a week
   c) Keep them informed for all the steps taken by companies regarding a complaint they have made
4. **Penalty system as a way of dealing with a user who violated Community Standards**  
a) **Creation of a Strict Rule** - eg after every three notifications about violation of Community Standards, the user should watch videos designed to raise awareness. After the videos are over, the user goes through a quiz and has to answer relevant questions correctly in order to be able use their profile. If they continue with abusive behaviour, they will be deprived of the access to their account for some time.  
b) **Warning not to do it again and notification of 'punishments' if repeated**  
c) **Provide a full explanation of why content is removed from the platforms, which also aims to raise awareness**

5. **Others**  
a) **Continuous improvement of algorithms to make them more accurate in detecting hate speech cases**  
b) **Awareness of what each of us can do when we are a victim**  
c) **Promotion / encouragement of 'positive speech'**
for NGOs

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Informing the public**
   a. About: hate speech, human rights, need to take action against hate speech, racism, discrimination etc
   b. Via: Banners, videos, posters, media, seminars, online tutorials

2. **Partnerships with social media companies for**
   a. proper guidance and information to users
   b. improving Community Standards
   c. improving the treatment of victims and perpetrators

3. **Others**
   a. Inclusion of relevant material in a school class within the school that will inform about hate speech, human rights, the need to take action against hate speech, racism, discrimination etc.
   b. On-site visits to large companies for employee awareness raising
   c. Pressure on the government to take action
   d. Collaboration with experts
   e. **FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES**
      a. Pressure for even more action
      b. Requiring more transparency from social media companies about actions they take or do not take about illegal content
Strategy for
ACTION

The participants at the Together seminars used the ‘Campaigning Strategies’ chapter of the handbook ‘BOOKMARKS- A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education’ developed by the Council of Europe, in order to develop their own strategy.

This chapter presents five thematic areas for action
1. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING
2. ADDRESSING THE PREJUDICE OR HATE SPEECH ALREADY ONLINE
3. MOBILISING OTHERS
4. SUPPORTING OR EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OR COMMON TARGET GROUP
5. LONGER TERM STRATEGIES

Each area provides a set of ideas for action.

The participants of each seminar were divided into groups and each group had to work with one or two of the areas. For each area they had to select some of the proposed ideas and make them more specific - who, when, where, how, why, etc. They were also able to propose additional ideas. In the end, the participants had to decide which ideas appeared most likely to have an impact and were possible to materialize.

Below are the most developed and specific ideas of the participants

**EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING**

- Use blogs and social media sites to raise awareness about what people can do if they are victims of hate speech or if they witness examples.

  ➔ create a blog to post stories about
  a. inappropriate content we’ve seen and why we consider it inappropriate & what damage it causes
  b. actions to tackle inappropriate content
  c. actions for victim support
  d. ways to deal with hate speech and the psychological effects it can have on victims.
• Create a ‘mythbusting’ sheet for groups commonly targeted by hate speech. Post it to social media sites or create leaflets to distribute offline.
  → In the form of questions / games / quizzes or gallop on the street and in public places and with influencers
  → During the International Human Rights Day / Day Against Racism
  → related groups: hiv-positive, LGBTI, black, religious groups
  → related myths: LGBTI have a specific style, trans people are associated with prostitution, the headscarf is a form of oppression, etc.

• Use the language of human rights: raise awareness of the rights which protect us online and offline, and how human rights relate to hate speech online.
  → taking advantage and use of activities (eg from the BOOKMARKS manual) among friends, colleagues, etc.

• Tell stories about individuals who have been the victims of hate speech online or offline. Use this to disseminate information about the problem and build empathy for those targeted by hate speech.
  → Examples in school lessons (eg language, literature) for incidents
  → reading and analyzing a relevant story / fairy tale

ADDRESSING THE PREJUDICE OR HATE SPEECH ALREADY ONLINE
  Engage with individuals using abusive language: try to show them the impact of their behaviour on others
  → Inform them about the impact of their speech via chat.
  → Presentation of other similar incidents
• Post comments on sites which contain incorrect, biased or racist content. Send questions or complaints to the authors of any posts which show intolerance or racism
  → Documented correction
• Edit Wikipedia entries or other free content sites which offer inadequate or false information about common target groups of hate speech
  → informing the public about the fact that Wikipedia is not 100% valid and providing them with other valid sources of information per topic
MOBILISING OTHERS

- Call on others to condemn or report hate speech, express solidarity with victims, or engage in other actions
  ➔ UNIVERSITIES
  – Lectures on hate speech
  – Kiosks once a week to disseminate relevant information
  ➔ Speeches of people who experienced hate speech
  ➔ Post profiles / photos of people who promote hate speech ➔ NAME AND SHAME / PUBLIC OUTRAGE

- Use social media to draw followers to useful websites or exciting campaign initiatives.
  ➔ Stories on Instagram – for various successes and achievements of the No Hate Speech Movement

SUPPORTING OR EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OR COMMON TARGET GROUP

- Creating a hotline for complaints and psychological support
- Create support groups to bring together victims and people fighting hate speech.
- Creating groups of volunteers

LONGER TERM STRATEGIES

- Active involvement of the media
- Effort to work with different stakeholders in the framework of a strategy
- EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Relevant Bodies

**SUPPORT**
- **Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO)**
  Helpline: 1440 | 22-339001 | info@domviolence.org.cy | www.domviolence.org.cy
- **CARITAS Cyprus**
  8 Saint Marona Street, Flat 4, 1010 Nicosia | 22-662606 | Administration@caritascyprus.org
- **Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA)**
  27 Ezekia Papaioannou str., 1311, Nicosia | Helpline: 1455 | 22-751093 | Info@cfpa.org.cy
  www.cyfamplan.org
- **Cyprus Stop Trafficking (CST)**
  Nicosia | 22-771063 / 99-428952 | Cyprus.stop.trafficking@gmail.com / achristophidou@hotmail.com
  www.cyprusstoptrafficking.webs.com
  - **Cyprus Refugee Council (previously ‘Strengthening Asylum’ of the Humanitarian Affairs Unit of Future Worlds Center)**
    9 Stasandrou Str., Nicosia | 22-205959 | info@cyrefugeecouncil.org | https://cyrefugeecouncil.org
  - **STIGMA (Organisation for Protection for Protection of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Victims)**
    Limassol | 25-109139 | www.stigma-organisation.org

**RESEARCH NGOs**
- **Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)**
  22-795151 | info@medinstgenderstudies.org | www.medinstgenderstudies.org

**COMMITTEES**
- **Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family**
  Nicosia | 22-775888 | Familyviolence.a.c@cytanet.com.cy | www.familyviolence.gov.cy
GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

- Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)
  Era House, 2 Diagorou, 1097, Nicosia  |  22-405500/501  |  Ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.cy  |  www.ombudsman.gov.cy

- Social Welfare Services (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance)
  63 Prodromou str., 1468 Nicosia (Central offices)  |  22-406709  |  central.sws@sws.mlsi.gov.cy  |  www.mlsi.gov.cy/sws

- Department of Labour Inspection (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance)
  12 Apellis str., 1080 Nicosia (Central offices)  |  22-405630 / 631  |  director@dli.mlsi.gov.cy  |  www.mlsi.gov.cy/dli

- Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office (Police)
  22-808442  |  Domviol.childabuse@police.gov.cy

REFUGEES / MIGRANTS / ASYLUM SEEKERS

- Association of Recognized Refugees in Cyprus
  «New Genesis Centre», 17 Perikleous Str.  |  22730679  |  arrcycyprus@gmail.com

- Asylum Service (Ministry of Interior)
  22-445245 ή 22-445265  |  info@asylum.moi.gov.cy  |  www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/asylumservice.nsf

- UNHCR Representative in Cyprus (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
  2 Demetracopoulou str. 3rd floor, 1090, Nicosia, P.  |  80002777  |  iomnicosia@iom.int  |  www.iom.int

- International Organization for Migration
  Nehru Avenue, 1102 Nicosia (Nicosia Old Hospital area)  |  80002777  |  iomnicosia@iom.int  |  www.iom.int

- Civil Registry and Migration Department (Ministry of Interior)
  Chilonos, 1457 Nicosia (Central offices)  |  22-804518 / 22-804523 / 22-804402  |  migration@crmd.moi.gov.cy  |  www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- **Commissioner for Children’s Rights**
  Corner Apelli and Pavlou Nirvana Str., 5th floor, 1496 Nicosia | 22-873200 | childcom@ccr.gov.cy | www.childcom.org.cy

- **Youth Board of Cyprus**
  Athalassas Avenue 104, 2024 Nicosia, Strovolos, Sofocles Tower (3rd, 4th and 5th floor Central offices) | Helpline: 1410 | 22-402600/2 | info@onek.org.cy | www.onek.org.cy

- **Hope for Children (CRC Policy Centre)**
  75 Limassol Avenue, Office 201, 2nd Floor, 2121 Nicosia | 22-103234 | info@uncrcpc.org | www.uncrcpc.org

- **European Helpline for Children and Teenager Support**
  116111 | www.call116111.com

- **European Helpline for Missing Children**
  116000 | www.call116000.org