

# WE CAN!

## Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives



Revised edition  
2017



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Taking Action against Hate Speech  
through Counter and Alternative Narratives

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Revised edition, 2017

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**Thorbjørn Jagland**  
Secretary General  
of the Council of Europe

## PREFACE

In today's Europe, hate speech is one of the most prolific forms of intolerance and xenophobia. This is especially the case online: the internet is frequently abused by those wishing to spread propaganda and vilify different groups or individuals. More and more, in mainstream political discourse, we see a toxic mixture of hate speech, fake news and "alternative facts" posing a serious threat to freedom and democracy.

These trends stand in stark contrast to the values and aims of the Council of Europe, which is dedicated to the spread of human rights across the continent. Our Organisation has taken a leading role in defining hate speech and helping ensure that those who use it are held to account. We place a great emphasis on education as the surest antidote to hate, working with our member States to teach young citizens the value of tolerant, democratic culture. Our No Hate Speech Movement has mobilised young people from throughout Europe to expose prejudice wherever they find it, working together for a more respectful digital space.

WE CAN! is the latest addition to our toolbox against hate. The most damaging examples of hate speech are often grounded in simple stories, which are repeated over and over again in different forms. The migrants "taking our jobs" narrative, for example. Or the consistent claim, made by radicals, that Islam is "under attack". Such narratives often remain unchallenged, either because they have become commonplace, or because they are delivered in sophisticated ways.

This manual will therefore help young people and educators confront, dismantle and replace hateful narratives. There are no short-cuts: the reader will not find in these pages a single statement, slogan, meme or caricature to counter all hate speech. You will, however, be guided in identifying the dangerous story-telling that chips away at our communities. Even more importantly, you will find tried and tested methods to propose powerful alternatives. Not simply telling different stories, but building and deploying more truthful accounts of the world around us which encourage others to challenge prejudice and think critically, and which deepen our knowledge and understanding of one and other.

The manual is a timely and much needed contribution and I wish you every success in putting it to good use.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Torbjørn Jagland".

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to this manual, in particular:

- Those organisations and individuals sharing their good practices, experiences and insights, especially the Belgian French Community campaign for testing a draft version of the manual, and to Marius Jitea for his contribution to the collection of good practices.
- Salvador Sala (Ad Hoc expert group on Competences for Democratic Culture), Gavan Titley (National University of Ireland), Anca-Ruxandra Pandea (educational advisor at the European Youth Centre Budapest) and all the participants in the working group on the scope of this manual.
- Participants and trainers in the training course 'We CAN!' held in March 2017 at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, and László Földi, online community manager of the campaign, for their feedback on the first version of the manual.

We have made every possible effort to trace references of texts and activities to their authors and give them the necessary credits. We apologise for any omissions or inaccuracies and will be pleased to correct them in the next edition.



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# THE MANUAL

This manual offers guidance to develop counter and alternative narratives to combat hate speech and promote human rights, especially in online environments. The manual proposes a set of online and offline communication and educational approaches, and tools to undermine narratives, which sustain and legitimise hate speech. It aims to strengthen the toolboxes of youth workers, educators and activists already engaged in human rights work and education or willing to be engaged. It is designed for and within the context of the [No Hate Speech Movement](#), a Council of Europe youth campaign for human rights online.

This introductory chapter explains the reasons for a manual on counter and alternative narratives as tools to address hate speech, especially with a human rights education approach. The chapter also describes the objectives of the manual, its intended users and how the manual contributes to the work of the No Hate Speech Movement. It also offers basic definitions of the main terms used: hate speech, narrative, counter and alternative narratives, which are explained in more detail in subsequent chapters. Finally, the chapter explains how the manual is organised.

## 1.1 | INTRODUCING BASIC CONCEPTS

### HATE SPEECH IN BRIEF

Hate speech, as defined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, Antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, as well as discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

For the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, other forms of discrimination and prejudice, such as antigypsyism, christianophobia, islamophobia, misogyny, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, fall clearly within the scope of hate speech.

## HATE SPEECH ONLINE

Hate speech online is a phenomenon of special concern. The Internet has created new spaces of communication and interaction but with fewer constraints: users can hide behind anonymity and distance to express hate to others. Moreover, hate can be spread and shared easily, for example, via comments or re-posts, taking a life of their own beyond the original post. The effects can be devastating on the intended target of hate speech but also affect society as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

## A BASIC DEFINITION OF NARRATIVE

Narrative in the English language comes from the Latin “narratio” or “narrationis” as is also the case for other Latin-influenced languages such as Spanish “narrativa” or Romanian “narativ”. Narrative appears in these language dictionaries as a rather formal term for a story or to refer to literary genres such as novels or prose. To narrate is to tell a story, to give an account of events or experiences, whether true or fictional.

Both terms, narrative and story, are used interchangeably when they share the same general meaning: developing a narrative or telling a story implies creating characters and a plot. This means creating the people and the roles they will play in the story as well as the sequence of events or actions. Narratives often combine real and fictional elements so that they resonate as plausible, interesting and convincing. For example, it is usual in children’s books for stories to have two main characters: a princess and a prince. The typical plot is that the princess is kidnapped and a prince rescues her, they marry and live happily ever after.

Stories often relate to predominant understandings and ideas present in society about how reality should work, and about what is considered possible and normal. For example, stories of princes and the princesses relate to the “bigger stories” or narratives of gender and power relations in society. A story of a princess presented as weak and helpless saved by a prince portrayed as strong and wise reinforces a narrative of unequal gender relations, strengthening a certain social expectation of gender roles. This is not always the case, however; other traditional stories show female characters as strong and they relate to the prince in a different way. There can be many stories with the same underlying narrative. At the same time, there can be many stories with different narratives, by altering the characters, the plot and the context.

### A FAIRY TALE

Aurora is a beautiful young princess who lives in a castle. A witch curses her so that she will one day prick her finger on a spindle of a spinning wheel and sleep for many years. When she is 16 she pricks her finger on a spindle and falls asleep. After 100 years, a brave prince finds her, falls in love with her and kisses her, breaking the spell. They marry and live happily ever after.

#### ***Narratives***

Narratives related to gender: princesses are rescued by brave princes. Women and men marry and live happily ever after.

Narratives related to political organisation: countries are ruled by wise and noble kings and queens who inherit power from their parents (monarchy).

A narrative is a logical, internally coherent report and interpretation of connected events or pieces of information that makes sense to the reader / listener. In the example of the prince and the princess, there are two levels of interpretation of what happened. One is that the prince is brave and saved the princess. But there is a bigger story and interpretation of gender relations within the story. A “small” story or fairy tale contains and conveys a value system, that is, ideas of what is considered good and normal behaviour.

The problem arises when all “small” stories tell the same “big” story and this is presented as the only narrative. For example, in many contexts unmarried women or same-sex couples suffer discrimination as they do not conform to the dominant understandings of how gender roles and relations should be. When one narrative is presented as the only right or normal one, denying alternatives or, in extreme cases, inciting violence against anyone who questions it, the fundamentals of a pluralistic and diverse society are at stake, starting with the right to freedom of thought, freedom of religion and belief, and so on. The problem becomes more serious in the case of violent and extremist narratives, including hate speech.

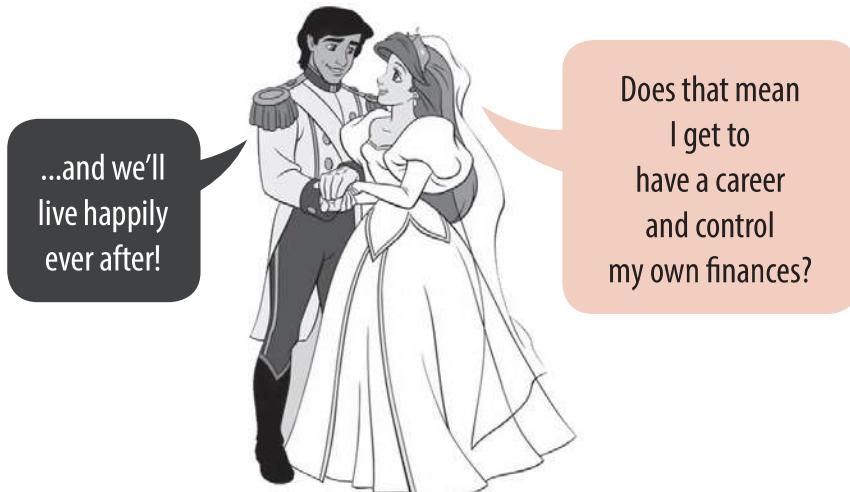


- What are the terms used in your language to refer to hate speech, narratives or stories?
- What do they mean?
- Are they different from or similar to the basic definitions offered here?

## A BASIC DEFINITION OF COUNTER AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

Speaking of counter and alternative narratives only makes sense in relation to what they are countering or being an alternative to. This manual focuses on narratives, which counter and propose alternatives to hate speech and the violence and discrimination it seeks to propagate, justify or disseminate.

Counter and alternative narratives combat hate speech by discrediting and deconstructing the narratives on which they are based. They also propose (alternative) narratives based on human rights and democratic values, such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality. They may do so by providing alternative and accurate information, by using humour and appealing to emotions on the issues involved, and by accounting for different perspectives and views. For example, an alternative narrative to prevailing narratives of gender inequality using humour can be found in the picture below where the princess character expresses she is confident and empowered to demand equality in the access to opportunities and resources.



Based on a meme by The Social Cinema<sup>2</sup>

The term ‘counter narratives’ is often used in short especially within work against violent extremism and terrorism, and emphasises the need to de-construct and weaken violent narratives that may seem attractive, especially to young people. The use of the term ‘alternative narratives’ stresses the importance of putting forward different accounts, and emphasises positive alternatives that are not just the negative image of the narratives they seek to counter and do not reinforce or accredit them by focussing on them.

The division between the two terms is often blurred in practice as a counter narrative presupposes or implicitly refers to an alternative narrative. In this manual both terms are used, counter and alternative narratives or one of them in short, depending on the emphasis. However, the manual departs from the idea that it is not enough to oppose, denounce and deconstruct a violent narrative. It is important to propose, develop and disseminate non-exclusionary human rights based alternative narratives.

This manual, as with the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, makes a conscious choice for a human rights-based approach. Any counter or alternative narrative should be based on two central ideas:

- Human rights are the basis of narratives combating hate speech.
- Human rights-based narratives play an important role in emancipatory and transformative strategies for young people, even more so for those who have been direct targets, or agents of hate speech.



- In what contexts did you first hear of narratives, counter and alternative narratives?
- What are common important narratives in your context?
- What do they tell you about power relations in your social context?

## 1.2 | THE NEED FOR THIS MANUAL

This manual was created with the convergence of several paths: firstly, the needs and experiences of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign to respond to hate speech; secondly, the current challenges posed to a culture of democracy and human rights and the efforts to address them; thirdly, the need to find appropriate tools to respond to violent extremism and terrorism, especially online, yet building on past experiences. This has obviously impacted on the manual’s objectives and the approaches it advocates for.

## TAKING STOCK OF THE NO HATE SPEECH MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN

Participants and organisers of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign engaged in an evaluation process and reflected on the methods and impacts of the campaign (2013-2015). One of the reflections was that campaigners had often focused on addressing the causes and general motivations of hate speech. For example, they combated hate speech through human rights education and awareness raising. They also focused on the medium of hate speech, for example, removing or reporting hateful content. Finally, they engaged the subject / sender of hate speech, for example, by starting judicial actions or discrediting anonymity.

However, fewer actions had focused on the content of hate speech. Counter narratives therefore seemed particularly useful and necessary for addressing and neutralising the text or content of the hateful messages. Hateful content would be neutralised by the emergence and development of other stories and interpretations of reality besides the one presented.

These reflections were taken into consideration when planning the Campaign's second phase. The strategy adopted by the Joint Council on Youth for the Campaign in the period 2015-2017 called for complementing existing reporting and educational tools with the use of counter narratives. An easy-to-use online tool should help campaigners to use counter and alternative narratives to respond more effectively to hate speech.

In February 2016, in response to these expectations, a group of experts reviewed the opportunities and challenges of developing this manual and using counter narratives as a strategic tool in the Campaign. The group, composed of youth and human rights workers, educators, academics and media experts, proposed the parameters, guidelines and identified the main contents of this manual. The manual was drafted collectively by group members who embellished its texts with examples of practices from national campaigns and partners.

The reflections on the Campaign's impact and follow-up took place in a context where Europe faced important challenges: the impact of austerity measures, the consequences of terrorist attacks and the increase of xenophobia and Islamophobia, to name a few. The complexities of the issues at stake and the questions arising from them are daunting for all, for political leaders, educators and young people feeling the need to address these questions. Answers are neither simple nor easy, and should not be avoided for that reason. Current challenges should be approached as opportunities for reflection and constructive action.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S MISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

At an institutional level, there has been a reinvigorated effort to promote and safeguard human rights values with the European Convention of Human Rights. New human rights standards such as those of the Istanbul Convention<sup>3</sup> (preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) and the Lanzarote Convention<sup>4</sup> (protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse) are evidence of a shared consensus among the 47 member states to extend and improve human rights for all.

These achievements are put into question by the terrorist attacks on European cities, which have directly impacted on thousands of victims. The Council of Europe has responded with an action plan that seeks to preserve human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the fight against terrorism in measures to prevent it, notably through the Action Plan on the Fight Against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism (2015-2017)<sup>5</sup>, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in May 2015. One of its main objectives is the prevention and fight of violent radicalisation through educational and social measures. The Action Plan highlights the importance of education and youth work:

*Action is needed to prevent violent radicalisation and increase the capacity of our societies to reject all forms of extremism. Formal and informal education, youth activities and training of key actors (including in the media, political fields and social sectors) have a crucial role in this respect.*

The Action Plan specifically mentions the need to provide counter narratives for the misuse of religion and the importance of reclaiming online media space as a place for civic engagement and democratic citizenship:

*A clearer understanding is required of the way social media and internet are used as a vehicle for radicalisation and greater emphasis must be placed on both preventing the spread of extremist views and the recruitment of terrorist fighters through new communication networks. An important part of the response will be to develop a convincing counter-narrative, drawing on grassroots initiatives, spread through the same communication networks.*

The Action Plan includes the extension and enhancement of the No Hate Speech Movement (2015-2017) providing:

*practical tools to national authorities wishing to train educators, youth and social workers and law enforcement staff, and in the production and wide dissemination of distribution items to children, young people, parents, and other adults through schools, universities, youth clubs and youth organisations.*

The development of this manual is part of this plan of action. It follows the long-standing commitment of the Council of Europe's youth sector to provide practical tools firmly based on a human rights framework to address all forms of hate speech, intolerance and discrimination. This follows in the footsteps of the All Different – All Equal youth campaigns against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance and on the achievements of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme, notably the *Compass* and *Composito* manuals.

## NEW TOOLS, YET BUILDING ON PAST EXPERIENCES

Though the term 'counter narrative' has become more known in the context of the work against radicalisation and violent extremism, using narratives, which aim to prevent violence and oppression, has a long-standing tradition in several disciplines and professional fields. For example, counter narratives as a method has been used in social work, psychology, political science, mediation and journalism. Peace scholar Johan Galtung (1996) coined the term 'cultural violence' to explain how any aspect of a culture or idea, such as stories, songs or language, can be used to legitimise direct or structural violence understood as structures that cause and perpetuate injustice.

Historically, oppression and injustice have been challenged discursively by appealing to common ideals of respect for human dignity as evidenced in the history of human rights movements. Narratives have been used by many organisations and social movements working to counter negative stereotypes and ideas that incite or legitimate violence. One example is the Anti-Defamation League, founded in 1913 in the US "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all". A second example is the work of the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam. It has pioneered the use of narratives in its educational programmes since 1957. Anne Frank's story and her book 'The Diary of a Young Girl' has been inspirational for many and widely used as an educational resource. More recently, in 2016 the [Radicalisation Awareness Network](#)<sup>6</sup> produced counter narratives to radicalisation and extremism in the form of, among other ways, video stories.<sup>7</sup>

This manual builds on these experiences and contributes to the development of the use of counter and alternative narratives with an explicit and central human rights education dimension.



- What do you need to learn to address hate speech in your context?
- What do the young people that you work with need (to learn) to take action?

## 1.3 | USING NARRATIVES TO ADDRESS HATE SPEECH

### HATE SPEECH IS BASED ON PREJUDICE AND NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

Prejudicial views are very difficult to change; the power of prejudice usually resists the test of reality as exemplified by countless conspiracy theories. For deniers of the presence of man on the moon, pictures of Neil Armstrong stepping on the moon could have been fabricated as there is no picture of the person taking the picture. Yet, prejudice cannot be fought with prejudice; it needs to be countered or balanced by facts and strategies which invite and motivate people to see other facets of the same reality and, hopefully, to interpret them otherwise.

### NARRATIVES REPRODUCE PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES

We often assume and believe that stories are true, especially if they seem credible and come from people we trust or people who are entrusted with political, social, economic or cultural forms of power. Many people seem to know someone who knows someone who met someone else who cheated to get social benefits. Even if statistics provide evidence that such fraudulent behaviour is irrelevant for the sustainability of social security, some people will continue believing that it is poor people or immigrants who put social welfare systems at risk.

### NARRATIVES ARE POWERFUL ONLINE

Narratives shape the way we think and understand the world; they obviously also circulate and proliferate online. Commonly, narratives online take a new life because comments can be made anonymously and under the assumption of impunity. They are influential because of their outreach and mobility across multiple platforms and online spaces. They are powerful as they contribute to defining what is perceived as normal and socially acceptable, for example, in the forms of jokes or videos shared when socialising online. Young people are easily influenced online due to peer pressure and over-exposure and reliance on online socialisation and communication tools. The impact of this is amplified if they are not Internet literate or media-aware. Without mediation, online narratives can seem credible and, in any case, impact young people's perception of the world, even if they seem exaggerated or artificial.

Narratives are also used to justify and incite to violence. Extremist propaganda uses narratives based on violent and exclusionary ideologies by presenting polarised views of the world (“them” against “us”) and appealing to feelings of fear, anger and resentment. Extremists use personalised tactics, which take young people’s needs and emotions into consideration. Communication online is made to be felt as direct and friendly, creating a sense of belonging and being part of something bigger and heroic. Research shows that negative stereotypes and extremist narratives contribute greatly to making violence acceptable and precipitating violent behaviour. Violent behaviour cannot be explained only by the presence of a hateful narrative but it is an important factor.

## **NARRATIVES PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS ONLINE**

Narratives promoting human rights have also occupied online space. Individuals and communities of activists use the Internet to spread and develop narratives of hope and human rights. Multiple examples of inspirational emancipatory narratives can be found in recent history such as the online campaign [HeForShe](#)<sup>8</sup> about gender equality or the No Hate Speech Movement, of which this manual is a part. In both cases, through online actions young people promote narratives based on human rights and democratic values of respect for difference, freedom and equality.

## **IS IT ALL ABOUT LOVE AND JUSTICE?**

The attraction of hate speech narratives is also that they are often based on ideals of love and justice: love for the nation, for the family, for God. Standing up against the majority and the almighty powerful and self-righteous people, whether they are state authorities, media, or intellectual elites, is attractive because it feels just, and justice is about undoing wrongs. The stories and myths of Robin Hood, Aladdin, or Zorro are archetypes of bravery, justice, and protecting the oppressed against the powerful or against the majority. Hate speech narratives cling to these feelings and ideals: the need to protect “our” women from invasive foreigners, to defend “our” traditions against cultural globalisation or to make justice for the innocent victims of a drone attack.

The thirst for love and justice can be appeased with similar stories of love and justice, which do not involve hate speech and violence. They may not necessarily appeal to the same people but they are nonetheless crucial to securing alternative views of life and the world.

## 1.4 | OBJECTIVES OF THE MANUAL

This manual supports the goals of the Council of Europe youth policy: to provide young people with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to play a full part in all aspects of society, including the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. In this sense, this manual aims to put young people, and those working with them in the driving seat of social action.

The manual complements Bookmarks as a resource to combat hate speech through human rights education and aims to contribute to the overall objective of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign of mobilising national and European partners to prevent and counter hate speech and intolerance, online and offline.

In this context, the main objective of this manual is to strengthen responses to hate speech, by countering, neutralising and preventing hate speech and occupying the online media space with positive narratives and examples of civil courage. This general objective can also be stated in the following specific objectives:

- To improve and scale up actions against hate speech using counter and alternative narratives as a tool
- To occupy the online space with alternative human rights-based narratives
- To stimulate analysis of the role of narratives both in contributing to the spread of hate speech and in strengthening human rights initiatives in the online space
- To share good practices of the use of counter and alternative narratives, especially from European contexts, and adopting a human rights education approach and involving young people.

This manual does not provide ready-made counter and alternative narratives to hate speech for obvious reasons: online hate speech has many instances and any response has to take into account several factors, including text and context and, of course, the language. This would not only be unfeasible in practice but also undesirable: human rights and campaign activists need to have autonomy and self-confidence to develop their own counter narratives, not necessarily to reproduce somebody else's – even if they are from the Council of Europe.

## 1.5 | INTENDED USERS OF THE MANUAL

This manual is intended primarily for young activists and participants of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, but also for any young activist and educator already working in the promotion of human rights or motivated to do so.

### YOUNG PEOPLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ONLINE

Young people are especially affected by hate speech, particularly hate speech online, because of the important role on the Internet and social media platforms in the lives of the so-called “digital natives”. Yet the fact that they know how to use online tools does not mean that they know how to protect themselves from online hazards and how to identify and respond to manipulative techniques and propaganda. Adolescence and youth are important periods for developing one’s identity and life skills, including Internet literacy skills. At the same time, young people have the potential to learn from a challenging experience, if supported. This can help them grow as individuals and as citizens. They can share their learning with their peers and lead innovative initiatives with enthusiasm, creativity and courage.

Educators and youth workers play a central role in supporting young people’s learning experiences. Educators are here understood in a broad sense, that is, those engaged in formal education, non-formal education and/or informal education activities. Educators are often perceived as teachers working in the formal education system, and to a lesser extent, in non-formal education such as youth workers in youth clubs or youth organisations. Here, human rights activists and campaigners are also considered important actors in education, although their actions may not be part of formal or certified education but mostly of non-formal and informal education activities.

The direct beneficiaries of this manual should be young activists and educators already working within the Campaign as well as educators, human rights activists and youth workers working with young people in human rights education or with an interest in it. Young people are thought to be the main protagonists and leaders of educational activists as they tend to know best the reality and language of young people in their contexts. Young activists are, more or less consciously, peer educators. The manual in other words is intended for educators, understood as those working in all educational settings:

## EDUCATORS

### **Non-formal education**

Educators working in non-formal education settings can support the No Hate Speech Movement or develop new human rights education campaigns using counter narratives as tools. Youth NGOs, youth centres and clubs, student associations and informal online groups can all develop initiatives to reach out to young people in their communities. These groups and associations are important spaces for young people's socialisation and democratic citizenship education. Non-formal education methodologies emphasise the importance of experiential learning and learner-centred approaches where young people can explore and learn in a safe space.

### **Formal education**

Educators working in schools, vocational training and higher education institutions can also profit from this resource. It contributes to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education within the framework of the [Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#).<sup>9</sup> Likewise, it is based on and promotes several of the Competences for Democratic Culture.<sup>10</sup> The role of educators is vital because they are often the first to detect hate speech affecting their students. This manual can contribute to specific subjects within the curriculum of social sciences, such as history, (global) citizenship or civic education. Special inter-disciplinary projects or extra-curricular activities can consist of developing a counter-narrative campaign on an issue of concern to the students, and engage the whole educational community.

In higher education settings, the manual can be of special interest to students of social work, education, journalism, media studies, art / film / theatre, sociology and political science, conflict and peace studies, gender studies and global studies.

### **Informal education**

Human rights activists, social workers, journalists, online community managers, local government officials and policy makers can integrate a narrative and human rights lens into their actions and public education campaigns. The power of informal education activities is best exemplified by the impact of media and entertainment on young people and can never be underestimated. Moreover, public spaces are also educational spaces. Artistic exhibitions in parks, murals in public spaces, museums and other cultural activities are forms of informal education and have proven to be important means of civic education.

The manual draws on the experience and traditions of youth work and human rights education in a European context, making reference to specific challenges, examples and practices across Europe. Yet, fully grasping the diversity of youth work and human rights education is impossible in one single book.

In a globalised world and within the framework of a campaign that is active on four continents, the manual also draws on experiences from outside Europe because narratives and counter narratives of online hate speech are not exclusive to the member states of the Council of Europe. It is hoped that the manual can easily (and critically) be adapted to be used in many different contexts and enriched through ongoing conversation.

## 1.6 | EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

The No Hate Speech Movement is a youth campaign for human rights, guided and nurtured by the principles of human rights education. This manual adopts an explicitly human rights education approach and is intended for activities with and for young people. From Compass, the manual for human rights education with young people<sup>11</sup>, we can summarise the following key dimensions of human rights education:

### **LEARNING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS**

It is important to have knowledge about human rights, what they are, and how they are safeguarded or protected through national and international human rights instruments. In the context of hate speech, it is important to know which and how human rights are violated or abused and which relevant national and international legal instruments apply.

### **LEARNING THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS**

The way educational activities are organised and facilitated have to be consistent with human rights values such as participation, freedom of expression and respect for diversity, and support the practice of human rights in education. The process of learning is as important as the content. It is human rights values, which need to be internalised and lived through a reflective and emancipatory process. This process can be an individual's self-reflective process or a group's reflective and action-orientated process based on the idea of 'praxis', a concept developed by Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire.<sup>12</sup> This means there should be a close interplay between reflection and action. Reflection leads to action and action needs to be reflected on.

## LEARNING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Learning needs to be action-orientated. Human rights education must support learners in applying human rights to their lives and in taking action, that is, promoting and defending human rights, including human rights online. Engaging in actions against hate speech can constitute a precious opportunity for an individual's development and the advancement of rights for a whole group or community.

The approach adopted is guided by the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education which emphasises the need to equip learners with the knowledge and skills for promoting social cohesion, value diversity and equality, and handle conflicts in a non-violent manner with respect for each other's rights. This includes media and Internet literacy based on the respect for different opinions and human rights principles, both offline and online.

### 1.7 | ABOUT THE NO HATE SPEECH MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN

The Council of Europe's core mission is to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Hate speech undermines this mission. Hate speech is a threat to democracy and to social cohesion. In addition to the role of the European Court of Human Rights to sanction hate speech instances which violate the European Convention of Human Rights, the Council of Europe also promotes online safety, addresses discrimination and promotes democratic citizenship competences through its various institutions and programmes. Educational resources such as Compass and Bookmarks, the programmes of the European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg, and the activities supported by the European Youth Foundation, provide numerous examples of these long-standing efforts to youth work and human rights education. Campaigns such as the All Equal – All Different campaign in the past, and the current No Hate Speech Movement play an important role in fostering partnerships and supporting actors in the member states to uphold and promote values of human rights and democratic citizenship. They are also important examples of the Council of Europe's commitment to combating all forms of discrimination and intolerance through a framework of human rights education.

The No Hate Speech Movement campaign stands for equality, dignity, human rights and diversity. It is a project against hate speech, racism and discrimination in their online expression.

The Campaign is also a tribute to youth participation and co-management. It was born from a proposal of the youth representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth and was endorsed by the Joint Council on Youth, which brings together the members of the Advisory Council on Youth and the governmental youth experts of the European Steering Committee on Youth.

## STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS OF THE CAMPAIGN

The Campaign is not run to limit freedom of expression online. Neither is it against hatred, nor about being nice to each other. The Campaign is against the expressions of hate speech online in all its forms, including those, which most affect young people, such as forms of cyber-bullying and cyber-hate. The Campaign is based on human rights education, youth participation and media literacy. It aims at reducing hate speech, combating racism and discrimination in their online expression and contributes to the prevention and rejection of all forms of violent extremism.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMPAIGN

The Campaign addresses and combats hate speech by mobilising young people as actors and multipliers for a culture of human rights and democratic citizenship, online and offline.

- To support human rights education activities for action against hate speech and the risks it poses for democracy and to the well-being of young people
- To develop and disseminate tools and mechanisms for reporting hate speech, especially its online dimensions, including through those at national level
- To mobilise national and European partners to prevent and counter hate speech and intolerance online and offline
- To promote media literacy and digital citizenship and support youth participation in Internet governance.

## NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

The campaign is initiated and run by the Council of Europe but it is based on national campaigns run in its member states. National governments were invited to initiate the setting up of National Campaign Committees, which operate their own national campaign platforms and online tools in the national language(s). Examples of practices of national campaigns can be found at [www.coe.int/youthcampaign](http://www.coe.int/youthcampaign).

## ONLINE CAMPAIGN TOOLS

### **Online platform** – [www.nohatespeechmovement.org](http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org)

This is an online platform for everyone interested in joining the No Hate Speech Movement. It contains testimonials through self-made videos, photos or other visual manifestations. Young activist-moderators work behind the site to ensure aspects of safety and respect.

### **Hate Speech Watch** – [www.nohatespeechmovement.org/hsw](http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/hsw)

This is an online database for tracing, sharing and discussing hate speech content on the Internet. Through the Watch it is possible to link in any hate speech content from the Internet. Moderators monitor and facilitate the site, creating focus topics every month based on the main interest of the online community. Special “take action” features are also available if the identified and discussed hate speech content requires further action.

### **Campaign co-ordination site** – [www.coe.int/youthcampaign](http://www.coe.int/youthcampaign)

This site provides campaign materials, resources and information about the national campaigns, European partners and a summary of the Council of Europe’s work on Hate Speech.

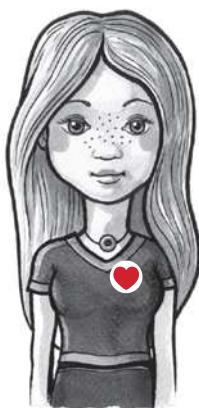
## 1.8 | STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The manual is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 define and explain hate speech, especially when it takes place online. Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the concept of narratives and define counter and alternative narratives. Chapters 6 and 7 are more action-orientated and offer step-by-step guidance to developing counter and alternative narratives in combating hate speech, by offering tips, examples, and practical tools.

The fictional story of a group of young people deciding to develop a counter-narrative campaign is used. The story is based on real cases of hate speech experiences and actions. It accompanies the texts of each chapter as in a journey. This is their journey of discovery, exploration, empowerment and action. It is not of course intended that this is the only way of approaching hate speech and hateful narratives. Examples used in this manual should not be copied uncritically. Each user and activist should design their own journey and plans with the young people they work with, and adapt the tools presented to their contexts.

The story starts with Oli. She is an 18-year-old girl who experiences hate speech. She searches avidly for answers to understand what hate speech is and what she can do about

it. Her friend Ale is the first to hear about this. He is a boy who has experienced hate speech in the past and has gone through an empowering process, which has made him an online activist. The two form the basis of a group, which decides to take action. Through their meetings with different people, they explore the narratives, travelling through the messages they received. They find out together about different ways of developing a counter narrative, overcoming the many challenges they face. They build on the resources available to them, but most importantly, on their true motivation and courage!



My name is Oli. I received emails saying things like "Start packing and go home". Even my friends make jokes about us online. I am scared but I also want to do something about it besides reporting it. Will you join me in my journey?

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

### Chapter 2: Hate Speech

This chapter defines hate speech from the point of view of human rights legislation, that is, as defined by national and international laws. It also proposes basic tools for the social analysis of hate speech.

### Chapter 3: Hate Speech Online and Social Media

Chapter 3 explains how hate speech takes place and expands online, especially through social media, and how social media platforms define and regulate hate speech. Social media platforms are actors in enabling or limiting hate speech, not only virtual spaces of interaction. This chapter explains why Internet literacy is needed and how to use social media when developing counter and alternative narratives to hate speech.

## **Chapter 4: Narratives**

Chapter 4 defines the concept of narrative and its role in promoting or limiting hate speech. It proposes practical tools for analysing and deconstructing social and political narratives and applies them to two examples, the xenophobic narrative They Steal Our Jobs, and the inclusive narrative of Barack Obama's Yes, We Can election campaign.

## **Chapter 5: Counter and Alternative Narratives**

Chapter 5 defines counter and alternative narratives as strategies of action. It distinguishes between short- and long-term strategies and situates counter and alternative narratives within the context of other forms of actions: human rights education, political advocacy, youth work and legal actions.

## **Chapter 6: Preparing for Action**

Chapter 6 offers reflections and tools to prepare for action. Action in polarised situations is challenging and sensitive in many ways, especially when involving young people. Thus, good preparation is crucial.

## **Chapter 7: Doing it Step-by-Step**

Chapter 7 contains a step-by-step guide to developing an alternative or counter-narrative campaign. It proposes four phases: assessment, design, implementation and evaluation, and a number of steps in each phase. It includes a series of tools and tips with illustrative examples.

## **Appendices**

The appendices include a number of additional, yet important tools: a set of frequently asked questions, a summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a summary of the European Convention on Human Rights, a sample of a workshop outline session, a list of annotated resources and a glossary.

## ICONS USED



### KEY IDEA

The manual offers insights on the topic from theory and practice. This icon indicates a key concept, point or message.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

These questions aim to help reflect on what the ideas presented mean in different personal, educational, youth work or activism contexts.



### TOOLS

Specific tools for analysis and action.



### TIPS

Useful hints and ideas emerging from practice and research on the topic.



### EXAMPLE

Ideas are presented with specific examples. This icon indicates a short description of the example.



### EXAMPLES FROM THE NO HATE SPEECH MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN

The manual illustrates the ideas for action with short descriptions of relevant, specific and recent examples of activities run by the No Hate Speech Movement campaign(s).



### CHARACTERS OF THIS MANUAL'S FICTIONAL STORY

The characters are a group of young people who decide to start a counter-narrative campaign in their high school, supported by their teachers and a youth worker. Their pictures appear throughout the manual to accompany a short description of their story, based on real-life examples of young people who experienced hate speech and decided to take action.

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- This manual offers guidance and practical tools to develop a counter and alternative narratives to address hate speech for any interested educator, activist or youth worker.
- Narratives operate offline and online and are powerful in challenging negative stereotypes and promoting human rights.
- The manual responds to the needs identified by campaign participants and the call for action as expressed in the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Action Plan, "The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism" CM (2015) 74.
- The manual proposes the development of counter and alternative narratives from an explicitly human rights education approach, building on the Council of Europe youth policies and its mission on human rights and citizenship education.
- Action is needed! You can develop a counter or alternative narrative campaign!

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> More information about hate speech online, Internet literacy and citizenship online can be found in Gomes, R. (ed.) (2013), Bookmarks: A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at [www.coe.int/youthcampaign](http://www.coe.int/youthcampaign), accessed 20 May 2016.
- <sup>2</sup> Meme adapted from 'The Sociological Cinema' can be found at <https://es.pinterest.com/pin/4433299603272919/>, accessed 16 February 2017
- <sup>3</sup> Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the "Istanbul Convention", available at [www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home](http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home), accessed 1 December 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as the "Lanzarote Convention", available at [www.coe.int/en/web/children/lanzarote-convention](http://www.coe.int/en/web/children/lanzarote-convention), accessed 1 December 2016.
- <sup>5</sup> Council of Europe's Council of Ministers CM/Rec (2015)74 of 19 May 2015, available at [www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/PRISONS/PCCP%20documents%202015/CM%20Action%20Plan.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/PRISONS/PCCP%20documents%202015/CM%20Action%20Plan.pdf), accessed 2 August 2016.
- <sup>6</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence (RAN), available at [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network/index_en.htm), accessed 1 December 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> Videos can be found on the section "Fight against Terrorism and Radicalisation", available at [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/videos/index\\_en.htm#08012624906b251f/c\\_](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/videos/index_en.htm#08012624906b251f/c_) and on their Facebook page [www.facebook.com/RadicalisationAwarenessNetwork/](http://www.facebook.com/RadicalisationAwarenessNetwork/), accessed 1 December 2016.
- <sup>8</sup> HeForShe Campaign, available at [www.heforshe.org/en](http://www.heforshe.org/en), accessed 21 November 2016.
- <sup>9</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, available at [www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education](http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education), accessed 27 August 2016.
- <sup>10</sup> Council of Europe (2016), Competences for Democratic Culture – Living Together in Democratic Culturally Diverse Societies, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- <sup>11</sup> Gomes, R.(ed.) (2012), Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People Council of Europe, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/eycb/Source/Compass\\_2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eycb/Source/Compass_2012_FINAL.pdf), accessed 22 June 2016.
- <sup>12</sup> More information on Paulo Freire's work and on the concept of praxis is available at [www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire](http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire), accessed 7 September 2016.

## Oli experiences hate speech and tells a friend



I received emails. "Start packing and go home." "You s\*&\*\$! This is our country." "Go or you will see." Even my friends make jokes about Rolonians on the school's Facebook groups. I am scared. What is this?



It is no joke. These comments spread and justify hatred, in your case, based on your origin. It is called hate speech.



# HATE SPEECH

This chapter presents a definition of hate speech, explains how the concept has evolved, and provides some tools to analyse it both in legal terms, as it is defined and regulated by laws and as a form of violence that takes place between people and groups. The fictional stories of Oli and Ale show typical cases of hate speech. Additionally, two examples of hate speech in a European context are presented.

## 2.1 | DEFINING HATE SPEECH

Hate Speech is commonly defined as verbal expressions, which are discriminatory towards people or groups due to characteristics such as ethnicity, origin and cultural background, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. However, hate speech also includes non-verbal expressions such as those contained in images, videos or any communicative form of online and offline activity, as included in the Council of Europe's definition, and evidenced in rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>1</sup>



Hate speech, as defined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, covers "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". (Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (1997) 20)<sup>2</sup>



For the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, other forms of discrimination and prejudice, such as antigypsyism, christianphobia, islamophobia, misogyny, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity fall clearly within the scope of hate speech.

Hate speech constitutes a violation of human rights and it is regulated by law in most countries based on international human rights law instruments. For example, most states in the world (168) are party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which states that "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) which prohibits all incitement of racism (177 states).



#### OLI EXPERIENCES HATE SPEECH

Oli receives emails from anonymous senders who know her email address, and "jokes" made by her friends online, on a social network platform that she participates in. They would probably not have dared to make these comments to her face. She experiences hate speech based on her origin. Oli's parents migrated from Rolonia to Marcadia looking for better economic prospects. She feels scared, puzzled and disappointed. People that she considers friends make discriminatory comments in the form of jokes. She feels hurt.

### THE ORIGINS AND CHALLENGES OF THE LEGAL NOTION OF HATE SPEECH

The origins of the need to limit freedom can be found in the Harm Principle. Freedom can be legitimately limited if an expression or act harms others. In 1859 the English philosopher John Stuart Mill argued in his text *On Liberty* that "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others". This principle has influenced the legal definition of hate speech and the justification to limit freedom of speech when expressions incite discrimination and violence against others.<sup>3</sup>

The formulation of what constitutes hate speech, and over what particular groups regulations should be applied, has been problematic, and legislation varies in each country. Defining and classifying hate speech depends on the content and tone of the expression, the intent of the person responsible for the expression, the context, the target of the expression and the impact on the targeted person or group.<sup>4</sup> The 2015 UNESCO report on hate speech in online environments acknowledges these challenges<sup>5</sup>

and points out the key challenge of enforcing definitions in practice when boundaries are often blurred. This is why it is important to consider the debates about the legitimacy and legality of limiting freedom of expression when preparing and designing strategies against hate speech. Defining and combating hate speech as a human rights abuse in legal terms is imperative, despite the challenges. Hate speech can be reported and be subject to sanctions depending on the existing legislation. Yet hate speech also needs to be understood as a worrisome social phenomenon that undermines the basis of democratic societies, such as respect for diversity, and its root causes need be addressed, otherwise only the “symptoms” may be mitigated.

## CAUSES OF HATE SPEECH

The underlying causes of hate speech as defined in Bookmarks are the “negative stereotypes, which see some groups, or individuals, as inferior, different, and less worthy of respect”.<sup>6</sup> This is why a broader approach to hate speech, taking into account its causes, is necessary and shows the importance of educational activities to undermine negative stereotypes and prejudices fuelling hate speech.

But why do negative stereotypes appear? This is a major question among activists and social scientists alike. Some researchers<sup>7</sup> have explained how groups have discriminated against others throughout history and how this discrimination was part of systems of oppression. Studies examined class distinctions, gender relations and colonialism, for example. In this historical process, ideas emerged that one group was superior / inferior to others and systems were put in place to justify and sustain these unequal social relations, for example, by limiting access to education on the basis of ideas that some groups are by nature less capable or apt.

Other researchers have pointed out that human behaviour is guided by needs of security, identity and freedom.<sup>8</sup> When humans perceive a threat and think their needs may not be met, they react. They do so by forming groups to ensure the protection and realisation of those needs. Narratives are used to create a group’s identity and contain basic explanations of why the group is in need of protection. Ideas of “us” v. “them” appear to reinforce groups’ identity and legitimacy. This is why hate speech does not always adopt derogatory or explicit hateful forms, but expressions about love, for example, “the love for our country”, “the purity of our land” or the “truth of our beliefs”.

## HATE DOES NOT BELONG TO ANY GROUP

Historical and social analysis helps explain why discrimination occurred, but only partially explains why hate speech keeps targeting some groups and not others. It can be dangerous to fix some groups as hateful and some as targets of hate speech. As researcher Sara Ahmed argues, hate does not belong to any particular group; rather it circulates creating attachments. Ahmed uses the term "affective economies" to suggest that emotions, particularly hate, do not belong to any particular group<sup>9</sup>. People have emotions, for example, feeling angry or joyful. But emotions are not owned as a form of static property like a house but as a form of capital. As capital that moves, emotions can also move between people, and sharing emotions creates attachments. Emotions can then be thought as a kind of economy: they move from person to person and also among groups, influencing who they are and what they do. So it can be concluded that there is nothing inherently hateful in people. Hate appears within the context of relationships between people and groups in historical processes of power struggles that the groups go through.



Hate speech needs to be understood as defined in legal terms and as a social phenomenon within the context of unequal social and power relations, in which stereotypes, emotions and narratives play an important role.



### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?

In her case, Oli could report it as there is a law in Marcadia that regulates hate speech. Yet she is puzzled about the reason for these comments and starts to think about their content, why they happen now and from whom they come from. She suspects they come from her classmates. How did they find out her email address? Oli's parents migrated to Marcadia looking for better economic prospects. Oli's father was offered a job in the food processing industry. There are many negative stereotypes about people from Rolonia, for example, that they are lazy and live off benefits. Recently the economic situation in Marcadia has worsened and there is high unemployment among young people. Some politicians have appealed to those fears using a narrative that suggests immigration as the cause of social ills. They propose change in the immigration laws. People from Rolonia feel unwelcome and powerless. Oli realises that it is not about her as a person, but that she is associated with a group that is depicted as foreign and threatening.



- What is your understanding of hate speech?
- What legislation exists in your country regarding hate speech?
- What negative stereotypes have you come across related to hate speech?
- What do these stereotypes say about power and social relations in your context?

## 2.2 | CATEGORIES FOR SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech happens in the context of unequal social and power relations which are not easily identifiable. To be able to identify exclusionary practices that reproduce unequal power relations certain concepts may be useful: privilege, intersectionality and normativity.



Hate speech can be understood as a manifestation of unequal social and power relations and as a mechanism for reproducing them. Inequality is reproduced in subtle ways, for example, by mechanisms that give different access to opportunities and resources to different groups, creating privileges for some and resulting in marginalisation for others.

### PRIVILEGE

Privileges are the benefits systematically given to members of certain social groups or people recognised as members of those groups, though people may not identify themselves with the assigned membership.<sup>10</sup> The most illustrative although simplified example is the social group of people recognised as men, who have disproportionately easier access to social resources and positions of power and authority in relation to other social groups, for example, women.<sup>11</sup>

### INTERSECTIONALITY

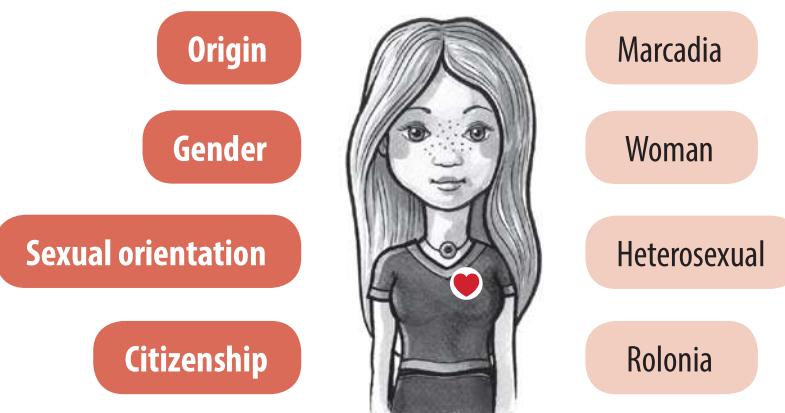
One is almost never solely privileged or marginalised. It is important to emphasise that a person does not belong only to one social group but has multiple identity affiliations at the same time. For example, a gay black male medical student may feel related to various social groups at the same time: males, “Black” or African culture, LGBT, university students in his country, with medical students across the world and so on. Based on multiple and intersecting identities, the privilege has to be thought through the perspective of intersec-

tionality. This means that a person is always on the intersection of multiple identities. One belongs to multiple social groups at the same time. For example, being male can imply some benefits, while being gay may not. Our benefits are defined in relation to others. For example, one group is privileged, white people, while others are not, non-white people.

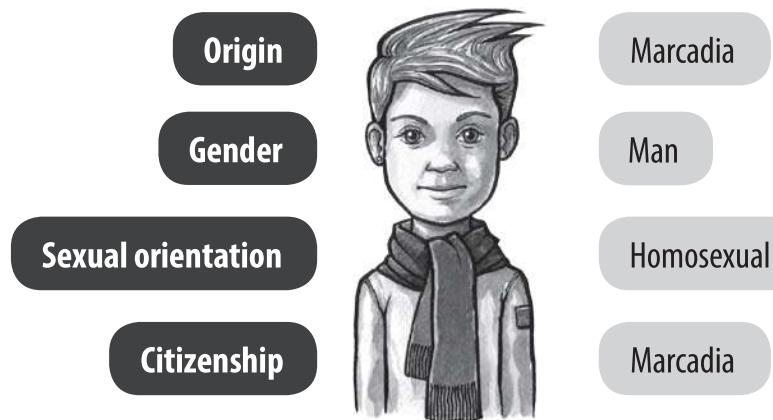
People's multiple cultural identities influence their social opportunities and their agency, which is, broadly speaking, their ability to affect and influence their life course and their actions.



- What are your identity affiliations?
- Have you ever been discriminated against or a target of hate speech?
- Do you feel you are privileged or have special benefits? If so, in which ways?
- What about the young people you work with? Do they struggle with identity issues? Do they experience discrimination and/or privileges?



Taking Oli's identify affiliations, we can see that her social position is at the intersection between being a heterosexual young woman, a citizen of Marcadia, and with parents who come from Rolonia. These affiliations influence her life trajectory. She experiences hate speech based on her origin, but she wonders whether she would have received the same treatment if she were a boy.



Taking Ale's identify affiliations, his social position is at the intersection between being a homosexual young man, and a citizen of Marcadia whose parents are from Marcadia, although he knows one of his great-grandparents came from neighbouring Norlend. These affiliations influence his life trajectory. He does not experience hate speech based on his origin but based on his sexual orientation.

## SOCIAL NORMS AND NORMATIVITIES

Hierarchical relations between social groups are established on the basis of social norms. Social norms are rules of expected behaviour of individuals in a social context. These social norms are a way of granting the status of privilege for those people or social groups whose everyday life practices and socially recognised positions approximate most closely social norms and ideals. These norms also reproduce the positions of being de-privileged and marginalised.

Social norms are reproduced and reinforced at all levels of social life, from interpersonal relationships to interactions within social institutions and organisations, and of course also in media representations. Individuals behave with the expectations of others in mind, anticipating possible reactions to their behaviour. Deviations from social norms are often negatively sanctioned through different mechanisms. One of them is hate speech. Hate speech seeks to reinforce social norms, which are being destabilised by deviations or challenges to them. At the same time, it is important to note that social norms are simultaneously reproduced and changed gradually, and in more or less depth, and this may not necessarily be opposed or lead to hate speech.



#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?



In Oli's case, she is expected to prove loyalty to Marcadia. She realised she stopped speaking Rolonian with her sister to avoid people laughing at them. She has learned to anticipate possible negative reactions and she gets the idea that Rolonian culture is less "cool" or inferior to Marcadian culture. She tends to believe that Marcadians deserve different treatment, and their privileges and advantages are normal.

Her friends explain to Oli that Marcadians also have "funny" clothes. It all depends on who judges. They tell her she should not be ashamed of her background but proud of it. They tell her to ignore those jokes and questions and that those making jokes are trying to impose on her a way of being.

## 2.3 | WHO IS TARGETED BY HATE SPEECH?



Hate speech predominantly targets social groups whose position in society is subordinated to others', or whose ideas and behaviour conflict with one prevalent system of norms.

While anyone can be a target of hate speech, in Europe there are several groups that are regularly targets of hate speech.



An online survey of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign carried out in 2015 identified the following groups as regular targets of hate speech: LGBT, Muslims, women, immigrants and ethnic minorities, Roma, Jewish, poor people, people with disabilities, Christians and other religious minorities. This is confirmed by other similar surveys and studies. Unfortunately, there is limited data on youth as targets of hate speech, but hate speech certainly targets young people as much as any other age groups and tends to have a deeper impact because of the vulnerability of many young people and of their exposure to online environments.

## TO KEEP IN MIND

- Understanding prevailing social norms is important in identifying whether these norms are presented as the only “proper”, “normal” and “good” ones in influential narratives, and if they explicitly deny diversity of ideas and perspectives. This understanding is necessary when defining the content and message of a campaign, as further explained in Chapter 7.
- Understanding the idea that individuals have multiple identity affiliations is useful for groups to build empowerment, empathy, common ground and bridges among groups when implementing campaigns. For example, experiencing discrimination based on one’s origin can help people understand what it feels like to experience hate speech on the basis of gender identity. Empathy is key when promoting openness to the ideas of others.
- Realising one’s privileges is useful in understanding how some social norms are taken for granted, and how unequal access to opportunities and resources can sustain marginalisation of some groups, and in itself be a threat to principles of equality and human dignity.

## 2.4 | TWO EXAMPLES OF HATE SPEECH IN EUROPE

Stories like Oli’s and Ale’s are unfortunately not so rare in Europe. According to the 2016 report of the Council of Europe’s Secretary General, there has been a general rise in racism and intolerance in Europe based on the findings of the Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and bodies:<sup>12</sup> “Europe is currently struggling with many serious challenges, including terrorism, migration and conflict. This is being successfully exploited by nationalists and populists in many places, and trust in national and European institutions is dwindling”.<sup>13</sup> In this section, two examples of hate speech in a European context are presented. These two examples are not intended to be representative of all forms of hate speech observed in Europe. Rather, they are included here to explain how hate speech is manifested in the context of particular power relations using the analytical categories described above.



### HATE SPEECH AGAINST REFUGEES

Hate speech targeting asylum seekers fuels tensions and prejudices nearly everywhere. For example, provocative online comments against refugees have increased practically all across Europe. Comments such as “refugees should drown” or “more asylum seekers’ homes will burn” could be found, sometimes making newspaper headlines. In fact, German police reported 906 attacks against asylum-seeker homes in 2015, ranging from burning to physical assaults, confirming the suspected continuum between online hate speech and hate crimes.

The Council of Europe has identified attempts in a number of member states to introduce laws, which risk contravening international standards, most notably targeting refugees and asylum seekers. The refusal by some states to live up to their international human rights and humanitarian commitments, such as the right to seek asylum, the inhuman conditions faced by asylum seekers and refugees and the lack of solidarity among countries of the same economic and political union, have contributed to a sense of moral confusion. This further fuels and legitimises aggressive nationalist and xenophobic movements, which nourish themselves on hate speech. The ambiguity of some mainstream parties and politicians adds further to the ethical and political confusion, as exemplified by fines and sanctions against people providing aid to refugees or the preference for refugees of specific ethnic or religious background, contravening national and international laws.

The “refugee crisis” can also be analysed through the perspective of unequal power relations, normativity and privilege. Refugees as targets of hate speech are in a weak situation in relation to European populations and governments. For example, they often do not speak the languages of the countries where they request asylum and are traumatised by their experiences of war. On the other hand, it is difficult for those Europeans opposing the entry of refugees to realise their own privileges. Those who are privileged do not feel that they are; on the contrary, they feel they are entitled to those benefits and advantages. Acknowledging one’s privileges means acknowledging the unequal “starting positions” in relation to others, for example, living in a safe and resourceful country in comparison to a conflict-devastated one. It means acknowledging the unfair and unequal relationship to those with no such advantages.<sup>14</sup>

Those who are in a dominant position, with access to symbolic and institutional power, are able to define social norms and sanction those who deviate from them. This has been the case when attacks against refugees denote racism and Islamophobia. There is an underlying idea in hate speech comments: there is one group, “us”, with perceived privileges and rights that are of superior interest, and there is another group, “them”, perceived as a threat to existing privileges and security.<sup>15</sup>



### HATE SPEECH AGAINST A ROMA FAMILY

The information about this example has been gathered within the context of a research project at Dublin City University. The names of the town and groups involved have been removed.

In November 2014, around 200 people gathered in front of a Roma family's home in a town in a western European country. The family comprised a single mother and her 7-year-old son. This family was insulted, threatened and asked to leave the town. Their windows were smashed and the police had to move the family to a nearby town.

Before this gathering, the mob hate had been fuelled over a period of seven months through online platforms. The idea that the town was becoming insecure as a result of the increased presence of Roma appeared repeatedly in online posts. The violent attacks on the family's home were facilitated by the fact that participants were part of a well-organised group, and part of a larger social movement.

In the months previous to the mob events, a special Facebook page against racism had been set up to counter the hate expressed online in this particular town. After the attack, the administrators of the Facebook page called for a rally at the main square of the town. People gathered according to what can be coined the "geography of hate", that is, where all groups positioned themselves reflecting their stance on the issue. The centre of the square was dominated by core anti-racist activists and by Roma representatives. There was a second group who could be defined as "the town lovers", slightly apart but surrounding the core group. The "town lovers" endorsed the narrative of a "safe city" of "friendly neighbours" but did not approve the mob. Finally, and dispersed among the crowd, a few individuals who declared they were mob supporters, although they did not confirm whether they had taken an active part in the mob.

Among all the groups that conform to this geography of hate, the group of the "town lovers" remains the most interesting in terms of hate speech. The narrative of the "town lovers" was constructed around the idea of a "decent town", "friendly among neighbours and secure", "with strong social values" and "where we all know each other". One citizen from this group declared, "I have been citizen of the world my entire life and I always adopt local cultures wherever I am going... they (Roma) don't".

As a result of these narratives, visible Roma, whose clothes differ from the local norm, were targeted as criminals. Unlawful activities occurring around the town, from shoplifting to aggressive activities, were immediately attributed to Roma. In this scenario, the narrative endorsed by "the town lovers" not only did not prevent the mob, but in fact sustained the hatred that led to it.

This example shows how deviations from social norms are being socially sanctioned. It also presents members of a privileged social group feeling the entitlement of benefiting from special prerogatives, for example, deciding who should be part of the town and who should not. Hate adopted clear forms of love. Power lied in the construction of the narrative. Any of the possible arguments that the town lovers displayed could not be legally categorised as hate speech, so, as a consequence, they would never be banned from social media, for example, or prosecuted.

Hate speech must be understood both as a behavioural subject to regulation by law and as a social phenomenon. Each understanding offers a different menu of actions for combating it.

### SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Hate speech is a term that has evolved. Its origins are legal and rights-based, but legal definitions encounter difficulties when prosecuting hate speech and are not enough to address the causes and content of hate speech.
- Hate speech constitutes a violation of human rights and can be understood as a manifestation of unequal social and power relations in society.
- Hate speech does not belong to any group; it emerges within the context of particular social relations. Hate speech appears when social norms and privileges are challenged.
- Hate speech mutates its shape. We can find it hidden in statements or discourses of love and justice.
- In order to address hate speech effectively, it is important to understand it both as a human rights violation and as a social phenomenon with deep causes.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM(Rec1997)20, available at <https://wcd.coe.int/com.intranet.IntraServlet?command=com.intranet.CmdBlobGet&IntranetImage=1658005&SecMode=1&DocId=582600&Usage=2>, accessed 27 August 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> For example, Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law".
- <sup>4</sup> ibid, pp 137-138
- <sup>5</sup> Gagliordone I. et al. (2015), Countering online hate speech, UNESCO, Paris, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002332/233231e.pdf>, accessed 27 June 2016.
- <sup>6</sup> See page 143, Gomes, R. (ed.) (2013), Bookmarks: A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at <http://nohate.ext.coe.int/Campaign-Tools-and-Materials/Bookmarks>, accessed 27 June 2016.
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- <sup>12</sup> Council of Europe (2016), State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law. A security imperative for Europe. An analysis of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, Secretary General's Report, available at <https://edoc.coe.int/en/index.php?controller=get-file&freeid=5949> or: <https://edoc.coe.int/en/fundamental-freedoms/5949-state-of-democracy-human-rights-and-the-rule-of-law-in-europe.html>, accessed 26 June 2016.
- <sup>13</sup> Council of Europe (2016), Thorbjørn Jagland: Europe's human rights and security at risk through populist nationalism, available at [www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/thorbj-rn-jagland-europe-s-human-rights-and-security-at-risk-through-populist-nationalism](http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/thorbj-rn-jagland-europe-s-human-rights-and-security-at-risk-through-populist-nationalism), accessed 27 August 2016.
- <sup>14</sup> McIntosh, P. (1988), White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies, Virginia Women's Studies, available at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED335262.pdf>, accessed 20 April 2016.
- <sup>15</sup> Researchers such as Debeljak have written about cultural homogenisation of Europe and the negative perceptions of the "outside". For more details, see Debeljak, A. (2009), 'In praise of hybridity: Globalization and the modern western paradigm', Eurozine, 23 November 2009, pp. 1-9, available at [www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-11-23-debeljak-en.html](http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-11-23-debeljak-en.html), accessed 20 April 2016.

## Oli decides to report the emails to the police

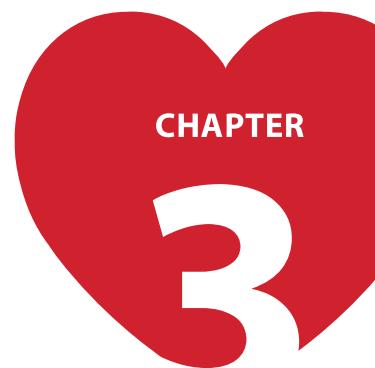


Do you have an idea where they came from? How many people are involved?



All of them use nicknames... so no way I can know. I received two emails but saw many similar comments online on Facebook groups of the school. I suspect even by some of my classmates.... They say they are jokes.

They think they are anonymous and that nothing will happen to them. But social media platforms have to provide IP addresses used by profiles that made the comments. We will start an investigation. You also need to report it to the social media platforms where you've seen it.



# HATE SPEECH ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter explains how the Internet and, especially social media, has changed the way we communicate, including how hate speech expands and “travels” online. Though social media platforms are only one part of the Internet, this chapter focuses on them for two reasons. Firstly, hate speech happens and expands largely through them due to their popularity, the kind of interactivity they allow and their elusive regulations. Secondly, it happens and spreads because young people use these platforms extensively. For example, European Union statistics show that it is mostly young people who use social media to engage in civic activities.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore important that human rights educators and campaigners understand how hate speech circulates online and how it is defined and regulated by social media platforms as part of the Internet literacy required to engage in effective counter-narrative campaigns.

## 3.1 | COMMUNICATION AND THE WEB 2.0

The Internet has changed the way people, and especially young people, communicate and interact, both in their interpersonal and social relations. The impacts have been greater with the innovations in the World Wide Web, allowing more interactivity and changing the nature of the content-producer / -consumer relationship. This interactivity has also changed the way narratives operate through media. Although there may be one broadcaster producing a story, the stories expand and take on new lives through the input of users. Narratives travel through different spaces such as films, TV, and online forums in so called transmedia narratives.<sup>2</sup>

It is undeniable that the tools that the Internet is offering have contributed to tightening the relationship among individuals and groups in the public sphere. For example, the Internet has enabled global activism and cross-border co-operation. At the same time, the Internet and especially social media platforms have been used as spaces and tools of hate. Although there are no statistics offering a global overview of the phenomenon, so-

cial media platforms and organisations created to combat hate speech have recognised that hateful messages disseminated online, are increasingly common.<sup>3</sup>

Despite all the benefits, social media needs to be seen critically as a new active participant in shaping communication processes. They ultimately have the power to make decisions over the content and the personal data that the users share. In the majority of cases, when a hateful comment is posted, the design of the social media, in the name of democratic open debates, allows the content to be discussed and speculated about.<sup>4</sup> For example, a racist comment is subject to endless debates about whether it constitutes a violation of hate speech regulations or not, inflating the debate endlessly without addressing the racism itself.

The integration between media and social and political processes is such that there are cases where the process takes a “second” life in social media environments, as in the case of hate speech. To an extent, social media allows and contributes to the creation of sustainable news, or, in other words, keeping issues alive on the agenda for longer periods of time.



- How has your experience with social media influenced the way you communicate with others?
- Have you observed or experienced any form of hate speech on a social media platform?

## INTERACTIVITY IN MAINSTREAM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Research has found that traditional media has profoundly integrated interactivity with its audience as a tool to keep interest and as a basis for content development.<sup>5</sup> People do not only passively watch TV or listen to radio; they actively send comments or participate through sessions of live tweeting. Young people in particular watch TV while tweeting on their smart phones and, at the same time, browsing for information that can get them closer to the event or show they are watching. They engage with hashtags that the mass media provides and the same hashtags are used to challenge mass media statements.

Mainstream media attempts to profit from the interactivity with the audience, yet with different degrees of success. One of the challenges faced has been the occupation of newly-created spaces by hate speech producers who have developed sophisticated tactics to advance their messages and have come up against no moderation of content or alternative views.

One example of this has been observed in the context of the attempt by the Swedish public broadcaster SVT to use social media during the 2014 Parliamentary elections.<sup>6</sup> SVT used “interactive practices”. The strategy was firstly to encourage social media engagement (Twitter and Facebook) around pre-set social topics such as healthcare or education and, secondly, to transform the audience’s feedback into new stories and areas of focus. What happened is that on every topic, for example healthcare or education, far-right supporters hijacked the discussions and posted only anti-immigration messages, occupying the newly created space. The discussions discouraged a balanced debate or exchange of views. Moderation was limited and insufficient. The study of the case concluded that moderation was “problematic due to the small number of staff at SVT dealing with social media content”<sup>7</sup>.

This example illustrates that newly created spaces are not necessarily and naturally spaces of democratic debate where everyone participates equally. They are rather arenas of power struggles that require proper moderation so that all opinions can be heard and expressed respectfully.



#### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?**

In the Swedish TV case, hate producers developed sophisticated tactics to occupy the online space deliberately. In Oli's case, it is unclear to what extent the threats were organised by a defined political group or whether they constitute a milder form of hate speech in which classmates re-posted jokes and hateful content.



Oli is disappointed as she was not expecting it from her classmates and other acquaintances. How did a space where she used to have fun and link up to other friends become a divisive space? Would some moderation of her school's groups on social media platforms have been necessary? Did teachers see it? Could they have done anything? Could have other friends made other comments to stop it and show solidarity for students from Rolonia?

Trying to calm her down, Ale tells her that most probably those posting the messages did not intend to hurt her in that way. They were probably not aware of the consequences of their actions and re-posted content without really distinguishing good from poor quality information, or realising that the statements lacked rationale, and how hateful they were. He also remembers those who did not join in the jokes. He confesses, “I saw them but did not dare to make a comment against it. I thought it was not worth it. But should I have?”

## 3.2 | HATE SPEECH, SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND COMPANIES

Social media platforms allow users to produce content, provided they accept their terms of use. Each social media platform as a privately owned company defines its terms of use or so-called “community standards”. These are important in relation to regulating hate speech. This section shows how a few popular platforms approach hate speech, what categories they consider in their regulations, how the user can maximise the tools to combat hate speech and ultimately what limitations these tools have. These differentiations are based on ongoing research, and are frequently subject to changes.<sup>8</sup>

### FACEBOOK

- The targeted group has to be individualised. While a statement such as “I hate Christianity” does not violate their community standards, “I hate Christians” would.
- Only material reported is reviewed.
- A mass reporting attack does not guarantee that the content will be removed.
- Except for ominous examples, it is more likely for Facebook to remove individual content than general pages or groups.
- Facebook has a display window on the right-hand side of each comment that offers readers the possibility to report it.
- Reports are reviewed by real people and feedback is supposed to be provided within 24 hours. Every report is dealt with separately. Content that has not been taken down after the first report may be taken down after a second report because rules may be interpreted differently.
- Many reports are made to Facebook but some reports are dismissed as not clearly violating the terms of use. For example, hate speech producers have re-branded some of their racist messages as patriotic so as to escape removal. Regulations are often ambiguous and hate speech producers have developed sophisticated tactics to advance their messages.
- Facebook commonly recommends the target of a hateful comment to block the user who produced it. It is first an individual problem rather than a social phenomenon that the company needs to take responsibility for. The rationale is “Don’t like racists? Block them and you will not see them”.

## YOUTUBE

- To criticise a nation state does not constitute hate speech but it is hate speech when the critique attacks a group of people based on their race or religion.
- YouTube does not encourage nor does it receive many complaints and reports of hate speech. The users are first invited to block, and then flag a video, and finally report it.
- On YouTube, the comments are regulated separately from the videos – so comments are reviewed by a team that looks after Google+, whereas videos are reviewed by a YouTube team.

## TWITTER

- Twitter can be considered the platform with the widest understanding of hate speech.
- It has developed policies for both users and advertisers.
- Hate speech is categorised within the area of abusive behaviour.
- Their reviews are strict and thorough.
- Some reviews are made by algorithms, not actual people, especially when it comes to illegal forms of porn.
- Twitter may not remove the accounts, but suspends them temporarily until the user provides adequate feedback in relation to the content published.



- Have you reported any form of hate speech in a social media platform?
- Do you know how to report hate speech online in your country?

## REGULATIONS OF HATE SPEECH IN SOCIAL MEDIA

When analysing regulations and community standards, it is important to clarify that, as regulations of private companies, they are not the result of public democratic decisions, nor endorse, or are based on national or international law. However, this may be changing due to pressure from activists and governments. The most used online social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and YouTube, are companies based in the United States of America whose norms and traditions on freedom of expression may result in weak hate speech regulation. These social media compa-

nies' regulations show that they do not monitor hate speech, although they may have protocols to address reported cases. If hate speech is not reported, hate speech can exist, circulate and spread. A post is removed after it has been reported and it has been demonstrated that it constitutes hate speech, as defined by the community standards. Additionally, social media platforms are actively redefining what hate speech means and changing their regulations.

Social media platforms respond to reported hate speech. They do not actively monitor content but react to reports and to the pressure of users and authorities. When it comes to hate speech, Facebook claims to remove content that directly attacks people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender or gender identity, or serious disabilities or diseases.

However, there is a paradox that all social media platforms seem to encounter. Their regulations affect the scope and spread of hate speech, so their role is important in the development of social conflicts, for example, those related to racism or xenophobia. Authorities have demanded that companies improve their regulations and monitoring mechanisms. Yet platform design is shaped to address hate speech at the individual level, that is, reacting to a report of hate speech made by a user and removing that content specifically. This characteristic needs to be taken into account when looking at how social media platforms could effectively contribute to the fight against hate speech. Are they neutral, passive or potential positive actors? To understand how they could contribute to limiting hate speech, it is important to understand their interests and limitations.

Social media platforms aim to keep a balance between freedom of expression and respect for community rules and, at the same time, advance their commercial interests, which are to increase outreach and use of their services. The content of the community standards is determined by a number of factors. It is shaped by influences and pressures of hateful groups who demand their freedom of expression, anti-hate groups who highlight the emergence of hate speech, and the staff of companies owning social media platforms.<sup>9</sup> This partly explains why policies in relation to hate speech are constantly changing. These policies enable or constrain the ways hate speech can be reported and mitigated.

Given these limitations, hate speech continues to exist and proliferate with a sense of impunity. Through sophisticated tactics, producers of hateful speech are able to promote hateful narratives, sustaining inequality, discrimination and the marginalisation of some groups. For example, platforms such as Facebook have been used by far-right groups such as Golden Dawn in Greece.<sup>10</sup> Their political pages have been taken

down. Their followers, in order to keep their activity, founded an untouchable space on pages using vague references to patriotism, as this is not assessed as problematic by Facebook for example, but the spaces still host xenophobic sentiments. Groups have learned to navigate through the terms of service and community standards, and through anti-racist and human rights groups' actions and reports, in order to maintain their activity and visibility on social media.

However, these limitations are being challenged by activists and governments. Hate speech negates the expression of different opinions and identities, and incites and legitimises hate crime. This constitutes a threat to democracy and human rights, so activists and policy makers are calling upon social media companies to take a more responsible stand and enforce better regulations. The Code of Conduct on illegal hate speech online between the European Union and four major companies, agreed in May 2016,<sup>11</sup> is an example of this awareness.

The way hate speech circulates and expands online shows how unequal power relations are also present in the very design of the platforms. This design determines the extent to which hate speech remains present, circulates and is structurally enabled. Reporting mechanisms are needed but are not sufficient to combat hate speech online.



Hate speech as a social phenomenon cannot be approached as the problem of one individual who complains, or be dealt with in one-to-one cases of reported hate speech (individualism), but as an issue of concern for our collective democratic co-existence. In this context, educational and emancipatory strategies, which use counter and alternative narratives to hate speech, become of crucial relevance. It is not a problem that affects only those who are directly targets of hate speech; hate speech online is a problem that affects us all.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTER NARRATIVES AGAINST ONLINE HATE SPEECH

Reporting and removing hate speech is as crucial as a strategy [in itself] as is an approach to combating it. But it is not sufficient. Firstly, uncategorised forms of hate speech, such as contextual hate or expressions of love (see Chapter 2), that fall outside what is regulated are more unlikely to be removed from social media platforms. Secondly, the causes of hate speech are not addressed. This is where education and the use of counter narratives and alternative narratives with a human rights and emancipatory lens can and need to be used. The causes and enabling factors of hate speech, such as negative stereo-

reotypes, can be addressed through a more holistic educational and awareness-raising approach to media online. Actions and campaigns can inform young people about the harm caused by hate speech, how it denies human dignity, and offer new and positive messages that build on ideas of a shared humanity, respect and equality.



#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?

Oli feels she is in a lawless space when she is online. Who takes responsibility for what she had to go through? The comments she saw on the school's social networking platform specifically mentioned people from Rolonia, so she submitted reports, but the content has not been removed. She also reported a video and the user does not appear online but the video has been re-posted from a new profile. The police found out that the IP address of the computer from where the messages were sent was one of the school computers, so now she knows the messages were most probably sent by her classmates. Through this experience, she has learned some ways to respond to hate speech but she feels it is not enough. She thinks education and awareness raising are very important.

### 3.3 | THE ROLE OF INTERNET LITERACY



Internet literacy [is] the ability to access, understand, critique and create information and communication.

Sonia Livingstone, Internet Literacy:  
'Young People's Negotiation of New Online Opportunities'<sup>12</sup>

Young people make extensive use of the Internet to find information and to communicate and socialise among peers through social media. Internet literacy skills and tools are totally relevant and necessary for young people, especially to enable them to identify hate speech and to respond to it. It is basic that young people learn to access and find information from different sources, analyse it critically, and be able to check its origin. Being critical of sources in an era of information overload is an essential skill to have.

The Council of Europe has stressed the importance of promoting Internet and media skills in recommendations (2006 and 2009<sup>13</sup>) which state that member states should have strategies to protect children and youth against content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm, to empower children, youth and educators to make the best possible use of information communication services and technologies, and to promote active participation in the new information and communications environment.

The level and scope of needed Internet literacy will depend on the role young people take in relation to hate speech, whether they are a victim, a bystander or observer, a hater or producer of hate speech, or if they want to become online activists and campaigners against hate speech, as explained in detail in Chapter 5 of Bookmarks. Here we summarise a few important skills related to Internet literacy especially relevant for campaigning against hate speech through social media:

## INTERNET LITERACY AS SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

### Accessing Information

Access and participation in social media platforms are not the same for everyone. The design of the media platform determines our interactions, for example, by selecting and prioritising the information we receive in the first place. Platforms filter the posts we receive based on our previous history and “Likes”, for example. An important competence is to be aware of this filtering process and to define beforehand one’s information needs and strategy to access information from a variety of sources.

### Analysing Information

Critical analysis skills are needed for interpreting messages coming from multiple producers, for example, individuals, informal groups, organised groups and traditional media. The analysis of the motivations of individual messengers becomes more difficult as they are often anonymous. Additionally, the analysis of exchanges and conversations among different actors is needed as often it is not one isolated or compact article or video that is shared, but a whole series of connected messages.

Internet literacy in relation to social media means not only understanding the content shared on the online platforms, but understanding also the nature of the platforms and the ideas behind their design.

### Analysing Social Media Platforms Design and Contradictions

One of the ways to respond to hate speech is by reporting it to the social media platforms where it appears. For reporting to be effective, it is important to understand what is considered inappropriate conduct in existing platform regulations, that is, the analysis of the “terms and conditions of use” and the “community guidelines”. One of the most important words in formal hate speech regulation are the words *threaten, direct* or *attack*. Regulations of hate

speech are only effective when there is a direct call for action or clear expressions of hate directed over the protected categories (for example, race or religion) and in these cases the tools offered by social media can be effective. It is important to understand the scope and limitations of existing hate speech regulations to know how to make the best use of them.

Social media have a particular set of rules for cases of cyberbullying, child pornography or direct death threats, which, in many cases, can lead to hate crime. For these cases the best action is to use the reporting mechanisms that the social media offer, but also and especially those in place by justice and police systems at the national level.

## CAMPAIGNING AGAINST HATE SPEECH ONLINE

While learning how to access, analyse and respond to information, including expressions of hate speech, is relevant for everyone, a more specific set of competences is needed to create messages and campaign online against hate speech. The Bookmarks chapter on Internet literacy concludes: "Campaigning on the Internet demands a particular set of skills, including those of publicising, promoting, building support and constructing different messages and narratives". In the next section campaigning skills, which can be particularly useful when using social media, are described. The following chapters offer more detailed guidance on how to construct different messages and narratives to address hate speech, including details on tips for publicising, promoting and building support for alternative messages.



### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?

Oli feels she knows how to use social media platforms but not really how to evaluate the information she reads and how to create messages through which she can express her concerns and participate meaningfully in debates. She only looked at the "terms and conditions of use" due to her negative experience and understood them thanks to the help of her friends working for a human rights association. She thinks it would be a good idea if young people could learn about this in school. But is this possible? Is this enough? She feels she is ready to take a stand against hate speech.

- To what extent do you consider yourself Internet-literate?
- What about the young people you work with? Are they equipped with skills to identify and combat hate speech online?
- What knowledge and skills in relation to Internet literacy do you think you or the young people you work with need most to engage in campaigning against hate speech online?

## 3.4 | CAMPAIGNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

### BAD PUBLICITY

Social media platforms are also sensitive to bad publicity, as when users organise themselves to demand changes in policies and removal of content. For example, under pressure from activists in relation to sexist speech on Facebook, the company expressed an intention to improve its systems to address sexist hate speech.<sup>14</sup>

### MANAGING COMMUNITIES

Educators and campaigners need to motivate and strengthen relationships among online supporters. It is useful if they can propose a common mission and goal and be able to moderate collaborative participatory processes.

### IMPRESSION AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

According to Tillman,<sup>15</sup> it can be useful to establish different accounts or blogs to manage different personas or topics to engage with different audiences and interests. For example, keep a personal account for your close friends and family, and open a different account for your online activism. It is important to be aware of how others perceive the profiles. The type of messages and content shared define the roles, the reputation and the impression made on viewers.

### PRODUCING AND SHARING CONTENT

It is important to be responsible about the content produced and shared. The content, format and tone used need to reflect the values that the campaign stands for and be the most appropriate for your intended audience. The timing and the choice of social platforms in which the content is shared also requires careful consideration.



#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN OLI'S CASE?

Through this experience, Oli has improved her Internet literacy. She has learned some ways to respond to hate speech, such as reporting it to the social media platforms where it appeared. But she feels it is not enough. Her classmates continue to post hateful messages. She is thinking she could be proactive and change the conversation online by making a video refuting some of the false assumptions in the messages and sharing her perspective, for example, about all the positive contributions that immigrants have made to the country. But how? Creating a new group? An online campaign? Would this be the most effective way to change negative stereotypes and stop hate speech?

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Social media has changed the way we, and especially young people, communicate and interact, both in our interpersonal and social relations.
- Social media is an arena where power struggles take place, in varying degrees of visibility.
- Hate speech producers have developed sophisticated tactics to advance their messages, knowing the rules and the gaps.
- Social media platforms are not neutral spaces of interactions; their terms of use and conditions constrain and allow hate speech. They should also be considered an important actor, whose decisions impact on the dynamics of hate speech online.
- To engage in counter narratives, educators and campaigners should be Internet-literate, including knowing how to interpret social media rules and use them when campaigning.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 A study concluded, for example, that "A slightly higher proportion of young people (than the whole population) carried out civic activities online while a much higher proportion of young people (than the whole population) made use of social networks." See the full report: Eurostat (2015) Being Young In Europe, European Commission, Brussels, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_digital\\_world](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world), accessed 28 July 2016.
- 2 Scolari, C. A. (2013). Narrativas Transmedia. Cuando todos los medios cuentan [In English Transmedia Narratives. When all mediums count, Planeta, Barcelona.
- 3 British Institute of Human Rights (2012), Mapping study on projects against hate speech online, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Training\\_courses/2012\\_Mapping\\_projects\\_against\\_Hate\\_Speech.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Training_courses/2012_Mapping_projects_against_Hate_Speech.pdf), accessed 27 August 2016; and interviews with Christine Chen, Senior Manager for Public Policy, Google, 2 March 2015, and M. Bickert, Head of Global Policy Management, Facebook, 14 January 2015, quoted in Gagliardone et al. (2015).
- 4 Titley, G. (2016), 'The debatability of racism. Networked Participative Media and Postracialism' available at <https://rasterfi/2016/02/17/the-debatability-of-racism-networked-participative-media-and-postracialism/>, accessed 27 August 2016.
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- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Quoted in Larsson and Christensen (2016: 16).
- 8 Siapera, E. and Viejo Otero, P. (2015), 'How Do Far-Right Movements and Parties Use the Internet and the Social Media? Digital Facebook Postcards, With Hate, Your Far Right', in Proceedings of the ISIS Summit Vienna 2015, 3–7 June 2015, Vienna, Austria, accessible at [http://www.academia.edu/25056928/How\\_Do\\_Far-Right\\_Movements\\_and\\_Parties\\_Use\\_the\\_Internet\\_and\\_the\\_Social\\_Media\\_Digital\\_Facebook\\_Postcards\\_With\\_Hate\\_Your\\_Far\\_Right](http://www.academia.edu/25056928/How_Do_Far-Right_Movements_and_Parties_Use_the_Internet_and_the_Social_Media_Digital_Facebook_Postcards_With_Hate_Your_Far_Right)
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Code of Conduct, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate\\_speech\\_code\\_of\\_conduct\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate_speech_code_of_conduct_en.pdf), accessed 2 December 2016.
- 12 In McPherson, T. (2008), Digital Youth, Innovation and the Unexpected, MIT Press, Cambridge.
- 13 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)5 "Recommendation on measures to protect children against harmful content and behaviour and to promote their active participation in the new information and communications environment", available at [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d0b0f](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d0b0f), accessed 28 August 2016.
- 14 Marne Levine, a Facebook vice president in charge of public policy acknowledged, "We have been working over the past several months to improve our systems to respond to reports of violations, but the guidelines used by these systems have failed to capture all the content that violates our standards. We need to do better ... and we will" available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/29/tech/social-media/facebook-hate-speech-women>, accessed 27 August 2016.
- 15 Tillman, K. (2010), Do Media Literacy, Digital Literacy, and Social Media Literacy Intersect? Edelman Digital, available at [www.edelmandigital.com/2010/04/01/do-media-literacy-digital-literacy-and-social-media-literacy-intersect/](http://www.edelmandigital.com/2010/04/01/do-media-literacy-digital-literacy-and-social-media-literacy-intersect/), accessed 25 July 2016.



## Oli still looks for answers and talks with her history teacher.



The police found out that the IP address of the computer from where the messages were sent was one of the school's computers. But why? Why do my classmates think like that? I was born here.



Hate speech thrives on racist and xenophobic attitudes. You are perceived as a member of a group, which is seen as foreign, or threatening. The roots of online hate are deep. The attitudes and social tensions in society make people feel they need to defend themselves. In this case, by attacking you.



Why? We are not threatening! They say we are stealing their jobs and that we live on benefits. But it is not true!



Yes, but they perceive you as such because of the negative stereotypes and prejudices. They hear biased stories over and over without checking the facts. They believe discriminating narratives because the stories resonate with their problems. It is not only about facts; it is also about emotions.

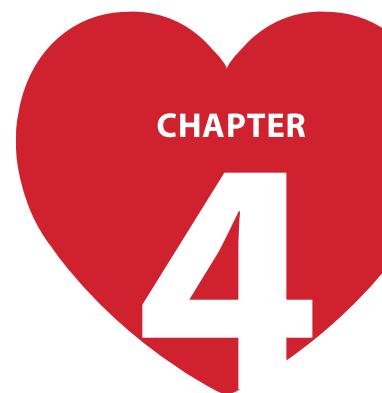


So you are saying that to stop hate speech we need to change their perceptions and address their emotions and problems? How do we do that?!



Maybe through a counter or alternative narrative... I know someone who could help you... Sara works for a human rights association. Would you like to meet with her? Maybe we can prepare a class together?

# NARRATIVES



This chapter defines what narratives are and their roles in social and political communication processes. Tools are presented to help analyse and de-construct narratives. Two examples illustrate how narratives can help justify discrimination and oppression or, alternatively, contribute to processes of emancipation and promotion of human rights.

## 4.1 | WHY TALK ABOUT NARRATIVES?

How often did you hear, "We need a more compelling narrative"; "What is the narrative here?"; "Their narrative is populist and fostering people's fear"? As with other "trendy" concepts, the term 'narrative' is used (also abused and misused) in so many different contexts and with so many different nuances that its meaning becomes blurry or suspiciously vague. Commonly, a narrative is a synonym of a story. Yet a narrative is more than just one story, true or fictional. This manual looks into those stories that are shared by groups and which contain beliefs and interpretations of events and of how reality works. These interpretations or collectively shared stories help us define how we live together. Do stories matter so much? Often we hear it is actions that matter, not words. So why is it necessary to talk about narratives?

### NARRATIVES MATTER BECAUSE THEY GUIDE ACTIONS

Narratives matter because they influence the way people think. They serve as a guide for their decisions and actions. For example, if people are made to think a certain group in society is threatening, they would tend to support security measures to prevent that group from harming them.

Confronting hateful narratives online is not an easy task for human rights defenders, politicians or educators. For example, despite the fact that the assumption that "migrants steal our jobs" was discredited by countless academic studies, statistical researches and economic analyses, this idea prevails among many. Though proven wrong several times,

this argumentation still fuels xenophobic speech. It has been used to justify discriminatory policies and incite actions against migrants, refugees and those supporting them. Narratives matter because they shape actions (or inaction).



"Studies show that stories often have greater impact than data"

Rational argumentation and hard data are often not enough to produce a change in the public discourse or to neutralise hateful assumptions. Scientists have researched the relationship between ideas, language and metaphors to explain how the human brain understands reality, creates connections between facts, and learns new things. Stories are fundamental. As Harvard historian Drew Gilpin Faust puts it, "we create ourselves out of the stories we tell about our lives, stories that impose purpose and meaning on experiences that often seem random and discontinuous".<sup>1</sup>

This does not only happen at an individual level: for hundreds of thousands of years, human beings were able to transmit knowledge only orally. And, without literacy, theorisation and abstraction (the kind of rational, data-based thinking discussed above) are not possible.<sup>2</sup> Before writing appeared, "stories were the primary way our ancestors transmitted knowledge and values"<sup>3</sup> in a word, culture.

Narratives are used to convey a sense of the world, of its rhythms and of its mysteries, and the place for humans in the whole picture. These narratives help with practical instructions on daily duties, what to do, when and why, for example, when to sow seeds and harvest crops. Stories connect what happens in society with what human beings are and what they (have to) do.

Although present-day men and women rely less on narratives or myths to work out when to sow seeds, the role of stories and, even more, their structure is still crucial. Narratives play an important role in the way the human brain understands and orders facts, and thus orientates human actions.

Defending human rights from discriminatory argumentations in the public discourse requires a deep understanding of how human beings socialise and communicate. At the basis of all this, we find narratives. Narratives contain pieces of information, which provide interpretations of reality, which are meaningful and relevant to the audience.



As narratives help constitute what people are and do, they have important emotional dimensions. It is not only what they say or contain, but also what they *mean* to people. The following three examples illustrate the idea that narratives are more than a series of facts but, rather, frameworks in which to understand and connect to reality.



### THE LIVING LIBRARY

The Council of Europe has often organised an activity in which people who have experienced hate speech and discrimination share their stories as if they were books in a library that could be opened by the readers, the visitors. Through listening to personal testimonies and being able to ask questions directly, participants become connected to a topic and insights at a more personal level. The pieces of information and pre-judgements they had on the topics are challenged and they gain new perspectives and insights, which make new sense to the "readers". The impact of listening to the stories was described as much stronger than reading a report about the issue<sup>4</sup>.



### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN VIDEO 'LOOK BEYOND BORDERS'

This campaign aims to break down negative perceptions about refugees in Europe. The video did not provide facts in a formal tone, for example, the number of refugees in European countries in comparison to those in other countries. The video instead presented a series of personal encounters, starting with four minutes of direct eye contact with refugees, followed by a series of conversations among them. Participants were shown asking spontaneous and honest questions, expressing their emotions through smiles, and using gestures to indicate listening attitudes and empathy. The tone was tender and the images emphasised our common humanity, beyond the existing political borders. The video was widely viewed and it was reported that it really built empathy towards refugees<sup>5</sup>.



### EMOTIONS AND SENSES IN DE-RADICALISATION STRATEGIES

Research on the methods and impact of de-radicalisation strategies has shown that state-led messaging was "logic-focused", that is, corrected facts and explained governments' positions and policies. However, this was ineffective as emotions and senses must also be involved in successful counter communication. Based on these findings, new efforts combine factual information with emotional appeal through the creative use of music and imagery.<sup>6</sup>



- Have you ever been convinced to change your mind about an issue? What made you change your mind?
- When in dialogue with the young people you work with, in which ways have you tried to bring in other points of view?



### WHAT IS THE NARRATIVE IN THE MESSAGES OLI RECEIVED?

Those sending the messages to Oli were guided by a narrative. They perceived Oli as part of a group they wanted to see out of their country. They believed that this group was in some way harmful for society. Based on what Oli told her friend and her history teacher, and existing real cases of hate speech expressions against people of migrant origin, the following narrative can be extracted:

*"Our country was great and prosperous. It has been invaded by foreigners. They do not respect our traditions or our laws. There is rising unemployment and they steal our jobs. Our people should be able to have jobs first; this is our country. There is nothing personal against individuals, but we must defend our country and our people."*

## 4.2 | SO, WHAT'S THE STORY?

### THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A NARRATIVE

The concept of narrative has different meanings and there is no one single definition. For example, some tend to use 'story' and 'narrative' as synonyms, but there is a difference. As Russian writer Nabokov stated, "If I tell you that the king died, and then the queen died, that's not narrative; that's plot. But, if I tell you that the king died, and then the queen died of a broken heart, that's narrative".<sup>7</sup> 'Then' is the key element: it puts the events in relationship to each other and gives a meaning to the story. Relationship and meaning are, in fact, two key elements of every narrative, together with its structure, characters and context.



#### DEFINING NARRATIVE

A narrative can be defined as a logical, internally coherent report and interpretation of connected events and characters. The report and interpretation combined give a meaning to the story, connecting singular happenings to a more general, collective story.

The following elements are found in every narrative:

- **Structure:** A narrative presents 1) an initial situation, 2) a disrupt moment, conflict or dilemma which changes that situation and sets events in motion, and 3) at the end, the conflict is resolved or transformed. Characters choose one way of overcoming the conflict. There is thus a 'before' and an 'after'.
- **Characters:** The main characters are often heroes or heroines, the protagonists. Very often, they are accompanied by antagonists, villains or enemies.
- **Context:** Narratives acquire a meaning in a broader cultural, social, and historical context, with defined rules and mechanisms.
- **Relationships:** a narrative is not simply a flow of unrelated events, but is about the connections between characters. Two characters can be linked by positive or negative relationships. In Nabokov's example, the queen-king relationship was so strong that the first died when the latter passed away.
- **Meaning:** Differently from plot, story and chronicle, a narrative presents a connection between the main characters, their behaviour and their actions (an individual story) to the general context and the bigger picture (collective story).

It is important to highlight that often some or most of these elements are implicit. The process of de-constructing a narrative is the process of bringing the implicit elements to light to make it changeable. Being able to analyse a narrative is an important skill when developing a counter or alternative narrative.

## **ANALYSING THE NARRATIVE IMPLICIT IN THE MESSAGES OLI RECEIVED**

### **Structure**

Original situation: our country was great and prosperous.

Disrupt moment: they invaded and stole our jobs.

Resolution: we must defend our country and foreigners should go.

### **Characters**

Presented as heroes (We): Those perceived as "pure" and "loyal" Marcadians: We are the heroes; we love and take care of our country.

Presented as villains (Them): Those perceived as not "pure" and "loyal" Marcadians because of their origin, looks or beliefs.

### **Context**

There is unemployment, social tensions, and a rise in crime. It is often assumed that there are a fixed number of jobs in one country, and if someone gets one, there is one less for the others. "Jobs" is, in this case, only a symbol; it can be linked to, or substituted by other elements such as health services, welfare or pensions.

## Relationships

Locals and migrants ("we" and "them") are connected by a negative relationship as the latter are "stealing" the jobs, not "taking", not "gaining", or other neutral or positive terms.

## Meaning

Even if Oli is only one person, she embodies a bigger enemy, and the listeners of the story also represent something "bigger" than only themselves, exactly like the hero of a story who, by defeating the enemy, defeats "evil" itself.

"THEM"



"WE"?



Often the elements of a narrative are implicit and we need to uncover them through a process of analysis. When all the elements become clearer, it is possible to think whether and how changes in them are possible; or in other words, to think how a new narrative, a counter or alternative narrative can be developed.



- What narratives related to your work or context can you think of?
- What structures, characters, contexts, relationships and meanings can you find in them?

## KEY DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Interest in narratives has grown in fields such as sociology, literature, economics and media studies. This so-called 'narrative turn' implied an increase in research to analyse and use narratives for different purposes. Some of these disciplines focus on the individual or familiar level of narrative; others, such as economy and sociology, devote more attention to the collective (group, community or national) level. This manual concentrates on the political and social dimensions of narratives.

The role of narratives is, in fact, extraordinarily relevant in framing an issue or aspect of reality, that is, setting the perspective from which to look at the political discourse: "the stories our leaders tell us matter [...] because they orient us to what is, what could be, and what should be."<sup>8</sup> What is and what could be: in a word, the frame in which human brains think of the world and of possible solutions to problems it encounters. Setting the scope of possibilities, or framing an issue in a certain way, determines what we intuitively consider possible.

Social and political narratives are those taking place in spaces such as parliaments, online debates, local council meetings and demonstrations. In other words, they take place in any space where issues of concern for the whole community are addressed. Most importantly, however, political narratives are those where the "aim is to influence public opinion toward support for a particular policy preference."<sup>9</sup> They present three key dimensions: the emotional dimension, the spatial dimension and the temporal one.

- The emotional dimension connects the audience to the story. Fear, hope and anger are the most relevant political emotions.
- The spatial dimension places those in the audience into the general context and frames their role within it. A successful narrative often foresees for the audience a role which is personally satisfying, and consistent with the plot.
- The temporal dimension, which links the past, the reasons and origins of the disrupt moment to the present and to the future (what will happen if the characters do certain actions). The temporal dimension is strongly connected to the meaning of the story.



#### **DIMENSIONS OF THE NARRATIVE UNDERLYING "PACK AND GO HOME"**

##### **Emotional dimension**

"We are suffering because of unemployment and crime"; "we fear the situation will get worse" (fear and anger)

##### **Spatial dimension**

"This happens to us in our country now."

##### **Temporal dimension**

"Our country was great and prosperous. Now it is not anymore. The reason for it is the arrival of migrants." "If we, today, get rid of them, then tomorrow, we will get our jobs back." Jobs represent prosperity and social status.



- How would you analyse a narrative in your context in terms of their emotional, spatial and temporal dimensions?

## NARRATIVES AS PUZZLES BELOW THE SURFACE

Social and political narratives influence public opinion. Slogans or speeches are only expressions of a narrative, the visible aspects or “pieces” of it. For example, Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* is not “the” whole Nazi narrative, but only one representative expression of it. A slogan or book is what can be heard or read.



### Hate speech messages: the tip of an iceberg

Narratives may not be so evident, as they are often not explicitly mentioned but remain implicit in messages. They need to be unearthed and spelled out for analysis. They are not artificially written by one person or a group. They emerge as a result of many debates and exchanges of ideas over long periods of time. Just as symphonies are not played by only one instrument, so too narratives are not the product of just one person or group's actions.

Narratives that structure our understanding of the world, such as national narratives, narratives of political ideologies or of religions,<sup>10</sup> are more complex, stratified and deeper, yet not impossible to analyse and understand. Though "big" political narratives are sustained in time and reappear in different ways and contexts, the basic elements and dimensions remain the same as described above. Thus, de-constructing these narratives is possible through the tools of analysis presented in this chapter and built on in Chapter 7.

## 4.3 | NARRATIVES AS FRAMEWORKS FOR ACTION: TWO EXAMPLES



Narratives help define our mind frames and "orient us to what is, what could be, and what should be".<sup>11</sup> Narratives also "define what is normal and what is legitimate, as well as the limits of what is politically possible".<sup>12</sup> In brief, narratives are strongly connected with efforts to sustain, reform or change social and political power structures.

Narratives can contribute to deepening polarisation and also incite hate in societies, as in the example of "They steal our jobs". But, importantly, narratives can contribute to the promotion of human rights and emancipatory processes as well. They can do this by breaking the divisive "we-they" dynamics, which implicitly or explicitly picture political choices as a zero-sum game, and by strengthening alternative narratives.

Alternative narratives can propose several options to resolving a problem, not only one solution, and in this way they help change negative stereotypes, appeal to democratic values, and call for co-operation and dialogue as a way of addressing problems and their root causes. Alternative narratives are based on human rights principles and values, promoting more freedom and equality, or, in other words, individual and social emancipatory processes.

Emancipation is an ongoing process and not a result that can be reached or acquired. For example, historical achievements such as the voting right granted to all men was indeed an emancipation for one part of the society but did not include women, who became protagonists of a different emancipatory movement and narrative later on. Narratives are tools in historical processes of liberation and societal development. The relationship between the structural and the narrative element of oppression / emancipation and the role of counter and alternative narratives are more deeply addressed in Chapter 5.



Narratives are important in defining, reinforcing or changing unequal social and political power structures, which sustain and legitimise hate speech and all forms of discrimination and extremism.



#### **"ISLAM IS UNDER ATTACK AND WE MUST DEFEND IT"**

In its simplest form, this is a narrative used by Islamist extremist groups to promote violence and recruit fighters, for example, to join the so-called Islamic State. The narrative appeals to both group and personal grievances by creating two characters: "us" who have been attacked and marginalised, and "them" an enemy that must be fought locally and internationally. A variation of the narrative is, "You are not welcome in the West because you are a Muslim and it is your duty to join our Caliphate as it is the only way we can defend Islam". These narratives resonate especially among young Muslims who feel marginalised and discriminated against.

Two examples of narratives are further analysed and deconstructed below in order to understand how slogans, memes, or other pieces of information are used.



#### **"THEY STEAL OUR JOBS": ANALYSING AN OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE**

The narrative underlying the hate speech experienced by Oli, summarised in the phrase "They steal our jobs", is an example of an oppressive narrative. This narrative is powerful and difficult to tackle, despite the many studies and research, which prove it wrong; it is often used to justify racist hate speech, hate crimes, or discriminatory policies. The sentence is not a narrative itself: several elements of the underlying plot are implicit and must therefore be unrolled to enable de-construction.

## CHARACTERS

The phrase “They steal our jobs” defines two groups in opposition to each other (protagonist / antagonist) and provides a justification of actions which “naturally” aim at a “positive” conclusion: the defeat of those invading and stealing. In Oli’s case, she was perceived as a member of the threatening group, and that justified the threats and discriminatory messages asking her to leave the country. This narrative has been used by political groups to propose anti-immigration and anti-immigrant policies as the only way to improve the situation. These policies are presented as the best way of acting to restore an original situation of prosperity. However, this kind of “happy ending”, even if addressing legitimate feelings of fear and concerns among the population, would not be addressing the power structures and inequalities as root causes of exclusion and resentment. It will therefore produce (or replicate) oppressive social structures and dynamics.

## STRUCTURE

As with all other narratives, oppressive narratives present the typical 1-2-3 structure: an initial status, a disrupt moment, and the search for a solution. In this case, however, disruption is caused by an agent (antagonist) marked by negative traits. The whole narrative is, in fact, framed as a “**problem-enemy-solution**” story and there are two main characters:

- the protagonist is “us”, the ones (not defined) whose jobs (“our jobs!”) are taken away
- the antagonist, or the enemy, is the “migrants”, performing the disruptive action.

## RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between protagonist and antagonist is made explicitly negative through the choice of the verb (stealing) used to define the antagonists’ actions. The temporal dimension is defined by the goal of the narrative: while before, the jobs belonged to the protagonists and now they do not any more, in the future, if “we” follow the logic of the narrative, we will get back the jobs (which psychologically represent prosperity and social status).

## EMOTIONS

In this narrative, the most powerful negative feeling is **fear**, “the negative emotion most commonly used to influence others”, which generates “desire for affiliation” as well as the need to protect “me and [what is] mine”.<sup>13</sup> The word “stealing” evokes fear; this connection is made possible and sounds logical within the cultural frame and the general context where the narrative takes place. The “common sense” created by the cultural frame says that, in one specific country, there is a fixed number of jobs, and if someone gets

one, there is one fewer for the others; the context, one of the invisible elements of the narrative, is the one of a general worsening of the economic situation. "Job" is, in this case, only a symbol: in different times, or countries, it can be linked to, substituted by, or stand for other elements such as health services, welfare, pensions and so on.

## CONTEXT

Discontent about negative effects of globalisation, such as the deteriorating economic situation and perceptions of unstoppable migration flows, sets the stage for the majority group's fear to lose something it is sure to own, whether the crisis is actually experienced or only perceived. There is a widely shared perception among the population that there are a fixed number of jobs in one country, and if someone gets one, there is one fewer for the others. These perceptions appear as plausible, yet they do not correspond accurately to the way the job market works.<sup>14</sup>

## EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS

Fear and a sense of threat contribute to defining a protagonist (us), and to putting it at the centre of the story (spatial dimension), in this case as the victim. The mere expression of a feeling (of fear, or injustice), however, is a description, or the page of a personal diary: in order to work, a narrative must sound like a story, and the story of a victim needs a guilty person. The roles in the plot need to be clear, and "conflict is the strongest factor in making affiliation to a group accessible".<sup>15</sup> The fear generated by the threat strengthens the affiliation to the in-group and the mistrust towards the members of the out-group. The boundaries of the in-group (we) are clearly set from the beginning and are based on ethnic, racial or temporal grounds ("we were here first"). Exclusion is one of the main traits of this narrative: members of the out-group are excluded from the narrative in principle – or are "accepted" only under certain circumstances (everyone might find familiar expressions such as "they can stay / are welcome, if...").

## A NARRATIVE PUT IN MOTION

An exclusive / oppressive narrative can be recognised because the main group is mainly defined through the competition against an external group (the antagonist): the "other" is invested of the role of "enemy" in the protagonist's story and scapegoated for its problems.

Once the roles are clear, the narrative can be set in motion. A sense of threat, in fact, generates prejudices and emotional reactions; both lead individuals and groups to change their political behaviours.<sup>16</sup> An oppressive narrative contributes to defining the identity of the protagonists, negatively connotes their relationship to the antagonists

and then provides for a justification of political actions, which “naturally” aim at a “positive” conclusion: the defeat of the disrupting agent.



#### **ABOUT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE WORDS**

When using the words “positive” and “negative”, it is important to keep in mind the difference between form and content in political communication: messages can be positively framed and, at the same time, rely on negative feelings. For example, “terrorism is threatening us, but we are going to destroy it” includes a positive outcome (we are going to win) based on a negative feeling (fear); on the other hand, to say that “green energy could save our world from global warming, if only we could convince governments” implies a positive feeling (of hope), but also a possible negative outcome (success is not only unsure, but even sounds unlikely).

The xenophobic narrative behind “migrants steal our jobs” relies on a negative feeling but can be used to reinforce a party’s or a candidate’s position, as they will portray themselves as the only one able to reach a positive solution (“migrants steal our jobs – but I will push them back where they belong to”). When coming to the specific policies suggested by such a narrative, the spectrum is very broad. According to research,<sup>17</sup> for example, the “modern racist” is not openly opposing ethnic minorities or migrants as such (which would be socially unacceptable in several national cultures), but rather the social policies intended to improve the minorities’ and migrants’ social conditions (because, this is the main argument, these policies would discriminate the majority).<sup>18</sup>

The narrative behind the proposed policy (by a candidate, a movement, a party, and so on) creates the meaning of the story, showing the path to reaching the satisfying conclusion of the story every protagonist longs for. In the case of political narratives, the policy represents the (only) plausible way to reach the happy ending (and the candidate, or party, or policy maker, is the only valid actor to pursue this specific policy). In the case of oppressive political narratives, furthermore, this ending is happy only for the majority, which will see its privileges untouched, and the power structure unaltered.



#### **“YES, WE CAN”: ANALYSING A NARRATIVE TOWARDS EMANCIPATION**

Apparently, there is no narrative in Barak Obama’s catchy slogan “Yes, we can”: no structure, no temporal dimension, only one character (we), and a vaguely defined action (can). Yet the slogan was only the (visible) top of a complex and powerful narrative iceberg, floating just below the line dividing what was said from what was implicit.

Barak Obama’s “Yes, we can” did not appear in a vacuum and would have not been that successful without an implicit connection to broader collective narratives in the USA. The collective emancipatory narrative of the Afro-American

civil rights movement and the shared ideals of freedom, equal treatment and equal opportunities for all in the US Constitution, related to the master narrative of the universality of human rights, were present in Obama's campaign.

The following analysis of Barak Obama's 2008 winning narrative starts from the visible elements of his communication to show what kind of "story" hides behind it. The first visible element of the narrative was the subject of the action: "**we**". During the entire 2008 campaign, in public speeches and interviews, presidential candidate Barak Obama always and only talked in terms of "we", while the other candidates were stressing the individual level ("I can", "I will"). Obama's message was explicitly **inclusive**, involving his audience in the story.

"We" clearly becomes the main character, the protagonist, and has a clear position in the spatial dimension. At the same time, Obama's rhetoric was implicitly creating a potential (and not even mentioned) antagonist. George Lakoff, talking about negative frames, notices: "negating a frame [...] makes it stronger. There are implicit negatives, like 'I'm the honest candidate in this campaign'."<sup>19</sup> The slogan's logic was similar: "yes (we can)" implicitly creates a connection (relationship) with the antagonists, who are the ones claiming that Obama (and all his supporters) "cannot".

The relationship between the protagonist and the antagonist is indeed troubled, but the boundaries between the two groups are not fixed or given and do not represent any class, gender or ethnic division. More simply, while "we" believe that "we can", some others do not. In fact, no one amongst Obama's political opponents seriously dared to express it, leaving Obama's narrative difficult to engage with directly. Again, in Lakoff's words: "When you affirm your own positions and speak positively, you undermine the opposition implicitly [...] If they have to negate your positions, they will be helping to reinforce yours".

The implicit dialogue between the "no, you cannot" front and the "yes, we can" reply builds the structural element and the temporal dimension of the narrative: while someone thought, or said, that "no, this would be impossible", "we" think and claim that, actually, "yes, we can". Furthermore, there is a vertical connection between the micro, personal level and the macro, broader level: Obama's successful story serves as an example for the minorities (his main target), and believing in him means believing their own social redemption (meaning). This empathic connection to the candidate was characterised by a positive feeling of hope (emotional dimension).<sup>20</sup>

The following table closes the chapter by summarising and confronting the key elements and dimensions of a non-exclusive narrative (Obama's "yes, we can") and an exclusive one ("they steal our jobs"). Confronting the elements and dimensions of narratives is a first, fundamental step in an analytical process.

It is important to note that narratives rarely exist on their own; rather they are strongly connected (positively and negatively) to other narratives. The relationships among narratives and their role in the society are further addressed in Chapter 5.

| Narrative              | <i>Yes, we can</i>  | <i>They steal our jobs</i>  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Characteristics</b> | Inclusive / non-exclusive, specific   | Exclusive, collective   |
| <b>Elements</b>        |   |   |
| <b>Characters</b>      | "We" (implicitly also including "them")   | They (the migrants) – us (the locals)   |
| <b>Relationships</b>   | Conflicting: We believe that we can → someone believes we cannot  | Antagonistic: They stole something from us  |
| <b>Context</b>         | USA optimistic political culture, USA elections   | Economic crisis, increase in migration, high unemployment rates   |
| <b>Structure</b>       | 1. (Status quo): something is impossible<br>2. (Disruptive moment): we claim it is possible<br>3. (Ending): we will surely make it possible                         | 1. We had our jobs (golden age)<br>2. They stole the jobs from us<br>3. We will get the jobs back (we will go back to the golden age) if "they" are out                         |
| <b>Meaning</b>         | The USA is a country of opportunities. Hard work and optimism make everything possible. Obama's personal redemption story can become a model (from macro to micro). | Someone is threatening us. The golden age is gone or in danger. "We" can claim it back.   |
| <b>Dimensions</b>      |   |   |
| <b>Spatial</b>         | Everyone can join "we" and can be part of the story.  | Only those belonging to the in-group are in the middle of the story.<br>The in-group decides who can eventually join ("they can stay, but they need to adapt to our rules"...). |
| <b>Temporal</b>        | Before: someone thinks we cannot<br>After: we will prove that we can  | Before: we now lost our jobs (as a symbol of prosperity)<br>After: we will get them back as soon as the "problems" are solved (or eliminated)                                   |
| <b>Emotion</b>         | Hope  | Fear  |

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Human beings are not fully rational. We naturally see our lives and we understand the world in terms of stories.
- Nabokov: 'The king died and then the queen' died is a plot. 'The king died and then the queen died of broken heart': that's a narrative!
- Characters, their relationships, structure of events, context and final meaning / and then time, space, and emotions: that's a narrative!
- In non-exclusive narratives, there is no "us" against "them": individuals and social parts can co-exist and co-operate.
- In exclusive narratives, "they" are nasty to "us", so "we" exclude "them", because if "they win", that means that we "lose".

## ENDNOTES

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- 10 See, for example, Jean-François Lyotard on grand narratives, Lyotard J. (1979), *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Paris: Minuit.
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- 15 Smith E. R. and Mackie, D.M. (2007), *Social Psychology*, Psychology Press, London.
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Ibid
- 18 Brown, R., Capozza, D. and Licciardello, O. (eds) (2007), *Immigrazione, acculturazione, modalità di contatto*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
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## Oli and Ale learn about counter and alternative narratives



So, alternative narratives would be stories that show those groups are not necessarily like that? That they are different?



Exactly! Counter and alternative narratives are tools to change and undermine hateful or extremist narratives and reinforce human rights-based narratives. They do so by challenging negative stereotypes, by discrediting violent messages, for example, through humour or other methods to show that another interpretation of reality exists.



Can you give me an example?

Reversing roles to expose what it feels to be the target of hate speech and how funny or ridicule some stereotypes can be. Or creating a story in which characters behave differently from the way they behave in the narrative you want to discredit, for example, migrants not as invaders or terrorists but simply as nurses, teachers or entrepreneurs.

So, alternative narratives would be stories that show those groups are not necessarily like that? That they are different?

They can take many forms, and be as general or deep as you want. You do not need to be famous. You can develop a counter narrative too!

# COUNTER AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES



This chapter introduces counter and alternative narratives to hate speech highlighting the importance of developing and implementing them from a human rights perspective. The chapter explains how counter narratives can be used in different types of human rights work including advocacy, youth work and legal actions. At the same time, counter narratives are not the only method, nor the best one, for every situation. There are other methods and tools that can be used alternatively or in combination with counter narratives.

## 5.1 | INTRODUCING COUNTER AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

Counter narratives and alternative narratives aim to reach various target audiences depending on the context. Counter narratives aim to reach:

- a) those who may or already sympathise with extremist views, preventing their further involvement
- b) those who already hold extremist views, supporting individuals in changing their views and behaviour

Alternative narratives strengthen positive, inclusive and constructive ideas and aim to reach the whole population, including producers of hate speech who may be able to become acquainted with a new narrative altogether. Different types of responses are needed for different groups.

When asked how to respond to oppressive narratives, some would say: just don't! "Responding" to a narrative means implicitly accepting and reinforcing the narrative frame sustaining the oppressive narrative. So, what is a better strategy to undermine an oppressive narrative? It might sound tautological, but to counter a narrative it needs... another narrative, a challenging narrative, or a counter narrative and a new narrative altogether, a new framework for interpreting reality.



Counter and alternative narratives combat hate speech by discrediting, and deconstructing violent narratives that justify it and by putting forward non-exclusionary visions of the world based on human rights values such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality. They do so in a number of ways. Some provide facts from different and credible sources to put into question negative misperceptions. However, research and practice have shown that only providing more information or facts is often not effective. Narratives need to connect to people's understandings and the contexts of their specific lives, creating new meanings and relating to their emotions and needs. Often this can be done through the use of humour and satire, appealing to people's emotional connections to the subject, facilitating spaces of direct personal contact with people with different perspectives, or creating opportunities to experience a different alternative narrative altogether.



### USING HUMOUR

Neue Deutsche Medienmacher developed the campaign [A First Aid Kit Against Hate Speech](#) in Germany. As facts alone often do not work, they decided to use satire and humour in videos and pictures to counter hate speech. (<https://no-hate-speech.de/>)



### PERSONAL TESTIMONIES AND FICTION

The novels of French writer and anthropologist Dounia Bouzar describe with realism the process of the radicalisation of young people and their daily life once they joined ISIS (English acronym used to name the so-called "Islamic State"). The aim is to show the strategies used by recruiters and deconstruct the jihadist / radical Islamic narrative. One such example is her 2015 novel *La vie après Daesh*<sup>1</sup> (In English, Life after ISIS).

The term 'counter narrative' has become more known in recent years linked to governmental and non-governmental counter-extremism initiatives as evidenced in the work of the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the Institute of Strategic Dialogue and Hedayah, for example. However, counter narratives as a method of research and social change have been used in several fields and by many different types of organisations in relation to other forms of oppressive narratives. Research and practice come from the fields of developmental psychology, sociology, political science, education, cultural and media studies. More specifically, since the 1990s, narrative techniques have been used by social workers, educators, psychologists, journalists and activists to work with groups who had been targets of oppression and violence. Through counter narratives, people and groups were able to imagine and develop new alternative narratives

to the ones that were oppressing them. For example, these were alternative narratives of race and inter-racial relations, about the history and impacts of colonialism, of ability / disability, of gender roles, of ecology, of violence and peace.<sup>2</sup>



This manual builds on past experiences and uses of counter narratives and proposes an explicit and central human rights education framework in the development and implementation of counter and alternative narratives as a way to combat all forms of discrimination.

## 5.2 | COUNTER OR ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES?

Narratives are a flexible instrument that can be used for diverse purposes and with different emphases. Sometimes they confront another narrative in a rather direct way by referring to it and offering counter arguments and facts, and sometimes they seek to undermine hate speech by creating an alternative narrative altogether and stressing a different point of view. The first strategy responds to the name of counter narrative; the second, to alternative narrative.

The term 'counter narrative' is often used in short, especially within counter-extremism work. The use of the term 'alternative narratives' stresses the importance of providing different accounts and stressing what "we are for". The difference between the two terms is in any case blurred in practice as a counter narrative presupposes or implicitly refers to an alternative narrative. In this manual both terms are used, however, understanding that they adopt an approach based on two central ideas:

- Human rights should be the fundamental basis of any narratives combating hate speech.
- Human rights-based narratives play an important role in emancipatory strategies for those who have been both targets and producers of hate speech acts.

It is important to mention that the choice of emphasis (counter and/or alternative) is determined by the specific challenges activists, educators and youth workers face when opposing hate speech off- and online – and of course by the "original" narrative itself. Some use counter narratives as a practical tool to respond to a particular oppressive narrative in their communities, schools, cities or online spaces in a specific moment in time. At the same time, the threat posed by populist, nationalist, racist, and homophobic groups needs a direct answer, a strategy to address the underlying root causes of hate speech, such as negative stereotypes and inequality, and also proposals

and ideas of alternatives to violence. In this manual, several options and emphases are proposed, but ultimately it is up to campaigners to choose the most appropriate approach, message and tone of their campaign.



#### HOW COULD OLI USE A COUNTER NARRATIVE TO COMBAT HATE SPEECH?

Oli thinks that she could discredit the xenophobic narrative underlying the threats she received. She could explain that Rolonians are not a threat to society. For example, she could invite a famous and popular Rolonian-origin singer to participate in a campaign. She could organise a special seminar at her school presenting historical and current socio-economic facts and different points of view on the issue of immigration. For example: "Marcadia is a country where many communities have contributed to its prosperity. Among them, Rolonians have lived in the country for more than a century and have created jobs for many Marcadians. With the economic crisis, no Rolonians want to migrate to Marcadia." However, she is pretty sure some of her classmates know the facts, yet they keep making jokes and re-posting messages. What could be the most effective way of developing a counter narrative?

### 5.3 | COUNTER MESSAGING: OCCUPYING PUBLIC SPACE<sup>3</sup>

Counter messages are a short and direct reaction to hateful messages. They are a form of counter narrative, which can be used to directly de-construct, discredit and demystify violent extremist messages. They are often used as an instrument to block or to challenge concrete expressions of hate. The following two scenarios are among the most common where such an instrument can be extremely useful:

- an outburst of hate targeting a specific minority following specific events (discussion of law protecting a minority, specific historical dates, reactions against crimes allegedly committed by members of this minorities, and so on) which need a quick reaction
- a hateful narrative in a position of strength (due to the political landscape, or a well-rooted prejudice in society), which activists and movements want to weaken, or start to challenge.

The main objective of short-term counter narratives is to occupy public spaces, either online, such as producing memes mocking hateful contents, or offline by expressions of "love speech", including the subversion of hate speech on graffiti walls. Activists, educators and youth workers can at the same time:

- undermine the authority (and therefore the grasp) of hateful narratives or producers of hate in the society
- highlight the existence of organised movements countering the oppressive narrative.



#### THE HATE DESTROYER

The Hate Destroyer Mural in Helsinki 2013 by the No Hate Speech Movement campaign in Finland is an example of an activity, which transformed a racist, homophobic, and neo-Nazi narrative expressed in symbols and words on a wall. It did so by using the same space to paint new symbols and words next to, and over the original paintings. The new symbols and words propose a different narrative, that of love, and respect for diversity and human rights (A video of the activity can be found in <https://vimeo.com/72886961>).



#### GUIDE ON COUNTER SPEECH ON TWITTER

The campaign Get The Trolls Out produced a short Guide on Counter Speech on Twitter with useful tips on how to counter-message, for example, on choosing the tone and words for your messages, on how to use visual aids and on how to stay safe ([www.stoppinghate.getthetrollsout.org](http://www.stoppinghate.getthetrollsout.org))

## 5.4 | ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES: A PATH TO CHANGING ESTABLISHED DISCOURSES

Alternative narratives are actions which aim to undercut hate speech narratives by focusing on what we are “for” rather than what we are “against”. Alternative narratives may not challenge or refer to extremism directly, but instead attempt to influence political debates by proposing alternative proposals and ways of looking into social issues or problems, hence changing the frame of the discussion. For example, changing the narrative of families as a hierarchically ordered, reproduction-orientated system with divided gender roles is a strategy to undermine one of the most commonly used arguments to sustain homophobic or hetero-normative views.

Alternative narratives do not focus so much on the reaction to single events, but rather work to build an alternative mind-set to sustain the change they want to bring into society. Another important goal is to occupy public space by letting an alternative (coherent and structured) position be heard in public discourse.

Counter and alternative narratives co-exist: activists intending to produce changes in society will eventually need to go from reactions to emergencies, to the developing of

wider alternatives sustaining their actions; at the same time, movements engaged into a long-term path cannot avoid reacting to specific challenges, events or outbursts.

|                        | Counter Narrative   | Alternative Narrative   |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <b>How?</b>            | Directly confronting an oppressive narrative  | Aiming at creating an alternative vision of society   |
| <b>What?</b>           | Undermine authority and myths that oppression relies on   | Offer a “what we are for” as a different perspective to look at the issue from  |
| <b>Where and when?</b> | Small scale, shorter period of time   | Wide project, long-term   |
| <b>For example?</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debunking of discriminatory myths about a certain group in society through a public information campaign.</li> <li>• Former haters testimonies about the negative impacts of extremist movements on their lives.</li> <li>• Painting a mural celebrating diversity over racist comments on walls.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Different – All Equal campaign, a campaign promoting human rights</li> <li>• Reports on inter-faith dialogue youth meetings</li> <li>• Documentaries about the lives of refugees depicting them as human beings and not as criminals</li> <li>• Series of posters showing how fathers can also enjoy paternity leave and take care of children (a role often taken by mothers).</li> </ul> |

## 5.5 | A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO NARRATIVES

When preparing a counter or alternative narrative, it is crucial that human rights values, principles and characteristics are ensured throughout the action. The oppressive narrative should not be combated by reproducing it or using other oppressive narratives. (For more extensive information, resources and readings about human rights, please read Compass. Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People, especially Chapter 4: Understanding Human Rights.)



### WEDIACTIVISTS – SIMULATION BOARD GAME

This is a game, which informs participants about human rights values and principles and about the concept of digital citizenship. The game fosters attitudes and skills of democratic citizenship online and offline, such as critical thinking, creativity, empathy and responsibility (<https://www.lebij.be/index.php/no-hate/>)

## IT IS NOT THE INSTRUMENT BUT THE WAY YOU USE IT

Framing counter and alternative narratives from a human rights perspective is crucial and necessary. Not all narratives challenging an exclusionary or oppressive narrative are truly human rights-based. Means and ends need to be consistent with human rights. Furthermore, strategies need to challenge or modify the oppressive frame underpinning the narrative, without reproducing it. For example, if one narrative depicts a group as “bad” and the other as “good”, it is not enough to stop depicting one group as “bad”, but rather avoid the dichotomous and adversarial framing of relations between the groups. In brief, it is not the instrument’s nature, but rather its use, which makes a difference.



It is important to make sure that the counter narrative developed or used is safely grounded on human rights principles. There are three main rules to follow to build a narrative to promote human rights:

- 1 – It shall include no hate, no violence, and no discrimination
- 2 – It shall foster equality, respect and solidarity among individuals and social groups
- 3 – It shall promote an understanding of the equal dignity of all human beings; it shall promote critical thinking, fair dialogue and correct information.

## DO NOT LET HATE SHIFT: AVOIDING THE SCAPEGOATING MECHANISM



The first, basic rule for a narrative aimed at countering hate is that it shall not include any form of hate speech or discrimination itself, and especially not reinforce schemes of hate and scapegoating.



One obvious example is the famous slogan “do not hate the migrants, hate the bankers”. While the goal of the slogan is to move the attention of the public from the (supposed) burden that migrants exercise on welfare to economic inequality, the slogan clearly calls for a hateful, discriminatory action towards a group of people.

In many other cases, reinforcing the hateful frame is actually an unintended consequence.



One example is the kind of argumentation based on de-generalising: “people shall not blame all migrants for the terrorist attacks, since migrants come from so many different countries that it is useless to put them all in a box”. While apparently useful in the short term, this counter argument does not hit the psychological scapegoating mechanism at the basis of the narrative and its most common result is to specify the target of hate better (and with reinforced argumentations): “if it is not all migrants, it is for sure the Muslim migrants”. These “paths of hate” were observed especially after the terrorist attacks in European countries in 2015 and 2016, with hate speech concentrating on Muslim and male migrants (or perceived as such).



Human rights campaigners should be aware that counter arguments addressing the effects of hate, especially those focusing on diverting the attention from a specific target, do not challenge the underlying causes and the negative emotions at the basis, hate and fear. If negative emotions are not addressed, the “pattern of hate” will simply repeat itself targeting a different group.

## FOSTERING EQUALITY AND RESPECT

The second rule for building a human rights-based counter-narrative is always to promote respect for human dignity and solidarity among groups and individuals. Although the second rule sounds even more obvious than the first one, in this case the gap between intentions and effects might also be quite wide.



Often, xenophobic or racist positions against migration are justified through economic-based argumentations, such as “we cannot afford to feed them all”, “we do not have enough jobs or money for them”, and “they burden our welfare”. A very common reaction is “responding”: counter-arguing on the single sentences within the given narrative framework without an attempt to change perspective. In this case, this means using the same economic, “rational” and “cost-benefit balance” approach. “Migrants can help with the ageing European demography”, or “they do the jobs that Europeans do not want to do any more” are good and widespread examples of this counter position.

The problem with this kind of argumentation is two-fold. They may be highly ineffective because, independently from the kind of arguments used, political decisions tend to be based on values and beliefs, not only on interest.<sup>4</sup> Even worse, this supposed counter narrative is actually grounded on the same oppressive frame as its xenophobic counterpart. Considering people merely from an economic perspective, in fact, denies their fundamental dignity of

people on which human rights are based, and frames the issues of migration as either a problem or a solution, regardless of migrants' individual and collective needs and rights.

This does not mean that people's anxiety for the future and fear of losing economic well-being should not be addressed. At the same time, understandable anxiety or fear cannot be used to justify the reproduction or reinforcement of exclusive and hurtful narratives. Actually, the real target of a human rights-based counter narrative should be precisely these feelings, and not the single economic-based statements, which merely represent a rational façade of the underlying unconscious emotions. A counter narrative engaging only with the rational surface would, unfortunately, mostly reinforce the narrative cage of the oppressive system.

## BUILDING THE ALTERNATIVE: ENRICHING THE PUBLIC DEBATE

Finally, a primary goal of human rights-based narratives is to build alternative ways of thinking of and living in a society in order to challenge the mainstream public discourse.

It is mainstream narratives that set the rules for what is socially acceptable and culturally possible. In brief, they influence each person's and group's role and position within a society. While oppressive narratives tell a story where minorities do not have access to particular rights or cannot hold specific positions, human rights-based narratives that oppose them should aim at building, reinforcing and promoting alternative perspectives. Patterson and Monroe explain it clearly: "when narratives of culturally acceptable success are not available or are beyond imagination for a particular group, subcultures provide alternative ways to make sense of one's place in the world"<sup>5</sup>

When challenging an oppressive narrative, one should keep in mind that the final objective of human rights-based counter-narratives is not to manipulate the public discourse or simply to substitute the current mainstream narrative with a different one. Educators, activists and youth workers should work to occupy public space with strong alternatives in order to improve dialogue among different sectors, or groups, of a society, to challenge absolutist or totalitarian political narratives, and to foster a culture of universal human rights.

Every narrative selects particular events or characters and excludes others. Oppressive narratives neglect wide sectors of a community. Alternative narratives, on the other hand, aim at enriching the public discourse and the dialogue within a society by including more events, more characters, more perspectives and more data in the public arena. The final goal would then be fostering people's critical thinking.



Engaging in critical thinking means that we, as human beings, can reflect, decide, challenge and influence social norms and beliefs. Critical thinking allows people to enter into a “liberating process” from the oppressive narratives, as well as simultaneously enable people to re-construct new alternative narratives. In this sense, critical thinking becomes stronger and more coherent when multiple and diverse voices are engaged.



#### HOW COULD OLI'S COUNTER NARRATIVE BE A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED NARRATIVE?

Oli is hurt and sad, but she does not want revenge. She doesn't want anybody to have to go through this horrible experience. She wants everyone to understand that only by respecting one another can a peaceful co-existence be possible. Together with her group of friends, they base their actions on the idea that all people are equal and they do not want to repeat the same aggressive methods to put their ideas across. Their actions need to reflect human rights values of respect for the opinions of others and diversity.

## 5.6 | NARRATIVES AS ONE OF THE INSTRUMENTS IN THE TOOLBOX

### HAMMERING SCREWS

According to the popular “law of the instrument”, the way people look at problems strongly depends on what instruments they are currently holding in their hands. In Maslow's phrasing, “if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail”.<sup>6</sup> The practical effect is that assessing each situation in the correct way, and therefore choosing the most apt instrument to deal with it, is sometimes extremely difficult.



Though counter and alternative narratives can be used in different types of human rights work, including advocacy, youth work and legal actions, they are not the only method or the best one for every situation. There are other methods and tools that are used to combat hate speech that can be used alternatively to, or in combination with counter narratives.

Educators, activists and youth workers should not only think of narratives as the optimal tools to promote human rights. They have an entire toolbox at their disposal! Often, one strategy can use a combination of tools, with narratives being a central tool or simply being a more implicit value-based framework. Thus, one side of the story is to focus on all those occasions in which narratives are useful as the main tool in a strategy. The other is to stress all those cases in which narratives may not be the main tool.

Briefly stated, narratives help intervention in the public discourse, both at national, regional or local level, at work or within the family, online and offline. Since “the obstacle to convincing people is often not what they do not yet know but actually what they already do know”,<sup>7</sup> counter and alternative narratives offer a different framework within which to understand the problems society faces, which eventually leads to looking for different solutions. In fighting hate and violence, narratives are particularly helpful in:

- blocking, weakening or undermining the authority of hateful and violent narratives, social structures and political institutions
- organising, structuring and spreading knowledge and information in different ways, thus challenging the mainstream exclusionary political framework
- increasing consensus around specific legislations, inclusive policies, and social developments.

Narratives are by no means a substitute for:

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Often, the roots of exclusion in society are to be found in institutional discrimination, unequal access to rights, or lack of human rights legislation enforcement. Citizens, activists and movements can influence the political landscape by actively participating in their local, national and international spaces. This can be done, for example, by advocating for new legislation, which either aims at equalising minorities' and majorities' rights or at strengthening anti-violations laws, or for more focused targeting of social policies. In any situation, a powerful narrative can help increase the social consensus needed to influence policy makers, ensure the enforcement of improved legislation, and support the constructive transformation of conflicts.



### THE EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM (ENAR)

ENAR is a pan-European anti-racism network that combines advocacy for racial equality and facilitates co-operation among civil society anti-racism actors in Europe (<http://www.enar-eu.org/>).

## LEGAL ACTION

In several countries, hate speech and hate crimes are legally prosecutable. The protection of individuals and social groups is at the basis of modern state of law and minorities should be ensured defence against hate crimes. Furthermore, legal action can be a strong deterrent against violent groups and individuals. Well-aimed counter narratives can help legal actions by undermining the social relevance and support of hateful groups and individuals, pushing for systematic law enforcement, and encouraging victims and witnesses to testify.



### LEGAL ADVICE

In the Czech Republic, through the Internet helpline of the [Safer Internet Centre](#) legal advice is given to people targeted by hate speech, including support for filing a complaint. Hate speech is not a criminal offence in Czech Republic, but victims are still encouraged to report it to the police. Severe hate speech, especially in case of defamation (spreading false information about certain person that might cause him or her psychological damage) is most often taken up by the police.

## YOUTH WORK AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

In several societies or communities, members do not have access to quality education about human rights principles and values, and positive examples of peaceful conflict resolution. Youth work, when grounded on citizenship and human rights education, is a cornerstone for non-formal education. Alternative narratives can facilitate youth workers' activity by helping young individuals to find their places and their roles as agents for change in society.



### GLOBALL – YOUTH WORK IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM

Youth work initiatives have been organised in refugee centres involving youth workers and volunteers from Belgium at weekends. The activities consisted of a series of workshops, sports and theatre.<sup>8</sup>



- How could a counter / alternative narrative lens or campaign strengthen your work or be integrated into it?



### WHAT OTHER TOOLS COULD OLI USE TOGETHER WITH A COUNTER NARRATIVE?

Oli has reported the threats to the police and has activated the complaint mechanisms on the social media platforms through which she experienced hate messages. Sara's organisation engages in political advocacy and legal support to victims. Her group is also committed to strengthening the human rights education activities in their high school and organising non-formal education activities with a local youth organisation.

### SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Oppressive narrative and power: together they stand, together they fall!
- Narrative is a weak spot: hit it and the power structure collapses.
- Don't respond to oppressive narratives: it is not possible to dismantle an oppressive narrative using its own frame! Propose new frames!
- Counter narratives deconstruct and delegitimise another narrative; alternative narratives propose a different account or interpretation altogether, emphasising "what we are for", rather than "what we are against".
- Be aware: "if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail". Narratives are only one of the instruments in the toolbox! Political action, legal advocacy, youth work and non-formal education are part of the toolbox.

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For example, Glenn, W. J. (2012), 'Developing Understandings of Race: Preservice Teachers' Counter-Narrative (Re)Constructions of People of Color in Young Adult Literature', English Education, 44(4): 326-353; Harter, L.M. et al., (2006), 'Freedom Through Flight: Performing a Counter-Narrative of Disability', Journal Of Applied Communication Research (34)1; Bamberg, M. (2004), 'Considering counter narratives', in Bamberg M. and Andrews, M. (eds), Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense (pp. 351-371). John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- <sup>2</sup> Bouzar, Sonia (2015) La vie après Daesh, Ivry-surSeine, Éditions de l'Atelier/ Éditions Ovrières.
- <sup>3</sup> Briggs R. and Feve S. (2013), Countering the Appeal of Extremism Online. Institute of Strategic Dialogue, London.
- <sup>4</sup> Lakoff G. (2014), In Politics, Progressives Need to Frame their Values, available at <https://georgejakoff.com/2014/11/29/george-lakoff-in-politics-progressives-need-to-frame-their-values>, accessed 25 June 2016.
- <sup>5</sup> Patterson, M. and Monroe, K.R. (1998), Narrative in Political Science, Annual Review of Political Science 1: 315-331.
- <sup>6</sup> Maslow, A.H. (1966), The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance. Harper and Row, New York.
- <sup>7</sup> Reinsborough, P. and Canning, D. (2012), Beautiful Trouble, available at <http://beautifultrouble.org/theory/narrative-power-analysis>, accessed 27 August 2016.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://blog.nohatespeechmovement.org/worldplayers-youthwork-without-borders-2/>

## Oli and her friends prepare for action



So are you willing to start a campaign in your school? For example, through its social platforms' groups?

Yes, we are very motivated to do so. Only I am a bit afraid. What if they get angry at me and do it even more?



It is understandable, but you should not do it alone. It will not be Oli and Ale's actions, but a group's action.



We want to do something, but we are not sure about how to do it, where to start . . .

Indeed, it takes some thinking and preparation, but it is a matter of starting. Your teachers and I can help you. You also said Pim has organised campaigns before, right?

Yes, she will come to the next meeting

Great. I will send a copy of Bookmarks and a new manual on how to develop a counter narrative.



# PREPARING FOR ACTION

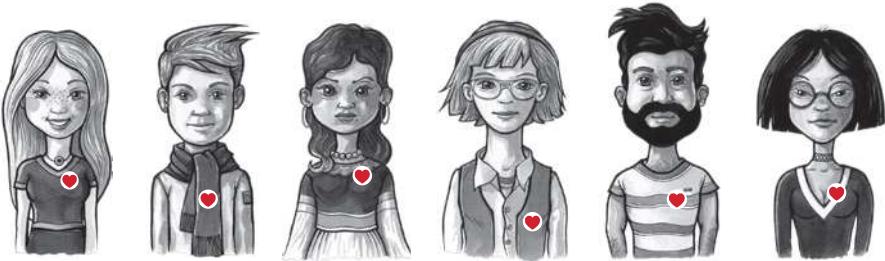
Counter and alternative narratives to hate speech contribute to addressing violence in its multiple forms and to building a culture of human rights and democracy. Engaging in actions through a human rights education framework is empowering, and it opens up many opportunities for young people to engage in individual and group learning and participation for social change. At the same time, engaging in actions against hate speech can be frustrating, emotionally burdening and even risky for one's own privacy and safety. Hate speech often appears in the public discourse with intimidating tones and often connected to verbal and physical direct aggressions by individuals and groups, such as informal movements and political parties. There are too many examples of continuums between hate speech and hate crimes, between verbal violence and physical violence. Hate speech is anything but free.

While challenges exist, this should not be discouraging. It is important to emphasise that any person can engage in actions against hate speech. It does not require a formal training or a certificate of specific competences! Yet, it is important that actions are carefully planned and that those engaging in them are as adequately prepared as possible. The necessary preparations will largely depend on the type of action and its specific context.

This chapter provides ideas on how to prepare for action. It suggests reflecting on the following questions:

- What does it take to engage in action?
- What does it mean to respond to hate speech through a human rights education approach?
- What are important competences that can help when engaging in action?
- Do we have a good understanding of the online and offline context and issues involved?
- In which ways are we ready to / do we prefer to engage?
- Are we prepared emotionally and do we know how to ensure our safety and well-being?

- Are we aware of the power of language and how to use non-exclusionary language?
- Do we ensure the legitimacy of our actions and respect the voices of those targeted by hate speech?



#### OLI AND HER FRIENDS DECIDE TO ENGAGE IN ACTION

Oli and Ale decide to convene a meeting to discuss whether they could start a campaign against hate speech targeting Rolonians in their high school. They invite their friends and altogether there are 10 of them. They are all between 16 and 19. Pim, as a member of a local youth association, has organised campaigns before. Marti is great at using social media, making videos and websites. Ahme is a superb writer, he writes with wit, and his writings are clever and funny. Lore plans to study law so she is interested in the legal aspects. Each one of them has a special motivation to join and want to contribute with their opinions and skills. Oli and Ale are not alone anymore.

## 6.1 | WE CAN DO IT!

Anyone can engage in actions against hate speech and develop a counter-narrative action or campaign. It only takes motivation and some preparations. When starting a campaign or action, it is important to know that:

- Citizens' engagement is crucial. We all can take action and everyone is needed.
- It is not necessary to be an "expert" in order to work on these issues. Every person has insights. For example, young people are often very aware of what happens around them and about the realities of their peers. Every person has special contributions to make.
- Actions are suggested in this manual, but there is no infallible recipe. Groups should try their own counter-narrative action and develop their own path.
- Engaging in action can be a valuable and life-changing experience in itself.
- Inspiration can be drawn from existing human rights movements and notably, from young people working against hate speech.
- Motivation, creativity and hope are the main resources needed!

## 6.2 | RESPONDING THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

(Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

In the context of the development of a counter narrative, this means that no action



Responding through human rights means that any action undertaken should be guided by and reflect the values and principles of human rights. These values and principles are recollected in numerous declarations and human rights conventions. For example, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights captures the essential principles: freedom, equality of dignity and rights of all human beings – and their duties towards each other.

should reproduce hateful, scapegoating or exclusion mechanisms. On the contrary, it should be based on a human rights framework and contribute to the promotion of human rights. This means that a human rights-based narrative should contribute to realising individuals and groups' freedoms and rights, that is, it should support their engagement in an emancipatory process.

Promoting human rights through narratives is necessary. If oppressive narratives remain unchallenged, human rights abuses will escalate further, reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices in society towards individuals, or groups, who, consequently, become more marginalised and isolated. In the worst cases, through a "snowball effect", hate speech contributes to the increase of hate crimes and multiple forms of violence.

A human rights approach should always be the main point of reference. Human rights are the basic standards without which human beings cannot live in dignity. They are universal; they are the same for all human beings in every country and are held equally by all people. They are about equality, dignity, solidarity, freedom, respect and justice.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Human rights are inalienable: this means that you cannot lose them, because they are linked to the very fact of human existence; they are existential to all human beings.

- Human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated: this means that different human rights are intrinsically connected and cannot be viewed in isolation from each other. They also complement each other: the enjoyment of one right depends on the enjoyment of many other rights and no one right is more important than the rest.
- Human rights are universal: this means that they apply equally to every person in the world, and with no time limit. Every individual is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction of “race” or ethnic background, colour, sex, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth or other status.

For more extensive information, resources and readings about human rights, please read *Compass. A Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*, especially Chapter 4: Understanding Human Rights.

### 6.3 | DEVELOPING COMPETENCES THROUGH ACTION

Engaging in actions against hate speech does not require formal training or one specific set of competences or skills. At the same time, engaging responsibly requires preparation, and the effectiveness and appropriateness of actions will depend to a great extent on the quality of the activities. Team work and co-operation with other people and groups are important factors in making sure that the knowledge and skills needed for counter-narrative action are present.

Importantly, engaging in action requires a pro-active attitude towards learning, in which young people are the protagonists. Taking action needs to be approached from an educational perspective as well. Planning and implementing an action constitutes a rich opportunity for working on specific knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The specific knowledge areas, skills and attitudes will mostly be determined by the needs of the participants, the type of action, its context and educational setting. In this manual, some indications on key competences are given to assist groups while preparing a counter narrative action. However, it is important to refer to specific educational materials on human rights and (global online) citizenship education competences, as detailed in the last section of this chapter.

The competences framework, *Living Together as Equals in Culturally Diverse and Democratic Societies*<sup>1</sup> developed by the Council of Europe is a key reference and tool in the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education and Democratic Citi-

zenship and Human Rights. This competences framework serves as a guide for curricula development both in formal and non-formal education across Europe. Democratic and intercultural competence is defined as:

*the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations.*

This framework proposes the following key competences:

### Values

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

### Skills

- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and pluri-lingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

### Attitudes

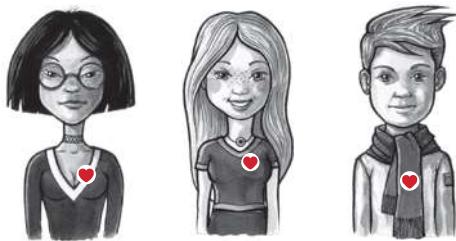
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

## KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)



- How do you assess your strengths and limitations in relation to these democratic citizenship competences?
- Which competences do you think are most important for developing and implementing a counter-narrative action or campaign in your context?



#### **WHAT COMPETENCES COULD OLI'S GROUP WORK ON WHEN DEVELOPING THEIR CAMPAIGN?**

Oli thinks that the values that the counter narrative should emphasise are valuing human dignity and cultural diversity. Obviously her classmates do not appreciate cultural diversity and do not understand how important this is for our individual and collective identity. How can she promote an attitude of openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs? Lore proposes a lecture about the different immigrant groups to improve everyone's knowledge and critical understanding of the world. Ale is not convinced; their classmates may not attend if it is not compulsory. They often know the facts, and yet they keep having xenophobic attitudes. He proposes organising a cultural festival. He thinks their classmates would be more open to a festival with music and food. Oli agrees. They feel there is a need to develop empathy and "break barriers" first, while still planning a sequence of activities.

## **6.4 | CHALLENGES WHEN CAMPAIGNING OFFLINE AND ONLINE**

Engaging in a counter-narrative campaign requires a thorough analysis of the context. Without understanding the social and political context of hate speech, both online and offline, it will be difficult for campaigners to assess the narratives that they want to counter. Not fully grasping the social dynamics may jeopardise the design of an appropriate strategy. The step-by-step guide to developing a counter narrative starts with a phase of assessment of the hateful narrative (see Chapter 7). Understanding the

context will help identify possible risks and challenges and result in better preparation for mitigating them. Some of the risks and challenges of addressing hate speech (online and offline) are the following:

- Hate speech can be difficult to understand. Its roots are deep. Hate speech is the result of many factors. It is often not easy to understand why it happens. Although there is research, there are limitations to our understandings of what happens in individuals' minds and groups' dynamics. Each case and context is unique and requires specific analysis. Avoid assuming that a new case is the same as others analysed in the past.
- Online hate speech producers may be hard to be traced and identified, depending on how far law enforcement is willing to go. This varies per country. It is important to be informed of the possibilities in each context. In any case, what is important is to be able to analyse the hateful narratives used and how best to reach hateful groups if they are your selected target audience for your campaign.
- Limited set up of social media platforms to monitor and regulate hate speech (See Chapter 3). Despite limitations, social media platforms can be "re-occupied" with alternative narratives.
- Limited analytical, communication and organising skills. It is important to be aware of the strengths and limitations of the group undertaking the action and be able to seek support whenever needed.
- Personal safety issues. It is vital to learn how to protect oneself and others involved, and to create a safe environment for constructive dialogue, support and action.

## 6.5 | TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Council of Europe No Hate Speech Movement campaign depends on the active engagement of many young people and supporters. There are many ways in which individuals and groups can work to combat hate speech using narratives as a tool.

In Bookmarks, various campaigning strategies have been grouped into the following categories:

- Education and awareness raising
- Addressing the hate speech already existing online
- Mobilising others
- Expressing solidarity with victims or common target groups
- Longer-term strategies

It is important to note that often these strategies overlap and several ones are used in combination in one action or campaign. Counter and alternative narratives can be used when implementing any of these strategies. For example, an alternative narrative can be publicised through social media and it may be used to mobilise others.<sup>2</sup>



It is important to highlight that the type of engagement and tools used need to be carefully chosen depending on the case, its context and the preferences and characteristics of the campaigning group. For example, while some may be prepared to engage directly with someone who has posted a hateful comment, others may not, and may prefer to work on sensitising the general public and promoting more generally an alternative narrative.

## SHOWING SOLIDARITY ONLINE AND OFFLINE

There are many discussions on whether changing the profile photo on Facebook or signing a petition online to support a certain cause, is considered “slacktivism”, a form of online activism which is regarded as requiring little time or involvement. These symbolic actions, for example, e-petitions, online donations and Facebook likes, represent signs of solidarity. While changing the Facebook profile into the flag of a country or the logo for a cause, people do not only show their solidarity or support to a people or cause, but they also engage in solidarity by showing their empathy and increasing the understanding among their network of friends, colleagues and family members. Offline solidarity actions, such as street marches, boycotting, theatre plays and concerts, are as important as the actions online. One is not better than the other; rather they are complementary. So, any type of solidarity that shares human rights values is good solidarity, whether it happens online or offline.

But solidarity is not the only way one should respond; equality and respect are two other values that remain equally important. Activists, youth workers and educators should be guided by the universal principle that “all humans are equal” – a principle that should be transmitted or reflected throughout any alternative narrative.



### WHAT KIND OF ACTIONS WILL OLI'S GROUP UNDERTAKE?

Oli has reported hate speech against Rolonians on the social media platforms she uses. She thinks it is necessary but insufficient in their case. At the same time, she has received signs of solidarity online and in person which boosted her confidence to start an action. She wants to change the negative perceptions of her classmates about Rolonians. She wants to promote a culture of human rights in her community so that nobody else has to go through what she and other friends experiencing hate speech have gone through.



- What is your previous experience with different types of engagement?
- What is your preferred way of engaging? And why?
- In which setting and how do you work with young people? What type of engagement would the young people you work with prefer, or be most appropriate for your context?

## 6.6 | EMOTIONS, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

Emotions constitute a crucial dimension in the narrative theory. Anyone preparing to engage in actions against hate speech should be well aware of their personal connection to the topic they are engaging with. Personal reflection and self-analysis, as well as discussion with other educators, activists or friends, can help to cast a light on the involved feelings.

It is important to stress that campaigners are not expected to be neutral towards the issues they face. On the contrary: it is important to feel connected to the topic – and its underlying narratives. Since emotions are fundamental cornerstones in the construction and de-construction of narratives, significantly more than a series of facts, empathy plays a key role in working with narratives.

In order to avoid reproducing hate or discrimination themselves, activists should have a clear idea of how much of themselves is at stake during a discussion or an action, and have a set of “red lines” they should not cross: what to say, how far to go with arguments and when to stop engaging, for example. It should also be emphasised that one eventually experiences events that could be in-/directly harmful for an individual and social groups one is a member of, especially when involved in addressing and fighting against hate speech through producing and using counter narratives. Therefore, self-care is an important part of doing activist and educational work, although it is

usually neglected or even stigmatised as selfish. On the contrary, it is argued here that self-care practices are fundamental in individual and social emancipatory processes. If those engaged in social change can take care of themselves, their actions would be more reflective and sustainable, making social change possible.

It is difficult to estimate how much one can be harmed by hate speech. This will depend on the social positions or self-identifications with certain social groups. Therefore, there are important differences in the injurious potential of hate speech, depending on the nature of the involvement in activism. For example, depending on 1) the involvement as a member of social group, targeted by hate speech, or 2) the involvement as an ally to those being targeted by hate speech. In the latter case, being exposed to hate speech that does not directly target an individual's personal circumstances has less damaging potential. In the case of hate speech targeting members of a marginalised group, the harm is potentially higher as they may be directly named and may have fewer personal, social and institutional resources to use in response.



With these considerations in mind, some tips are proposed on how to take care of one's well-being and safety, relevant for both online and offline engagements, regardless of their individual relative de-/privileged status.

## SET UP REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Firstly, one should keep in mind that this kind of work, either activism or educational work, is challenging: there are difficulties (as well as minor and major victories!) and as a member of targeted social group, one has to process the injuries caused by hate speech. It is important to be aware of the power relations in which hate speech takes place and the efforts made to transform power relations. In this context, it is important to gain a realistic view of social changes that are processual and slow in nature. Based on this, it is helpful to set up realistic expectations regarding the effects of actions and campaigns.



Every positive contribution, even if apparently small, is important when working against hate speech. For example, a small gesture can mean a lot to a person. Every action matters. Everyone can play a role.

## LEARN HOW TO HANDLE YOUR FEELINGS

A point of departure is to understand that feelings in the context of activism and committed educational work are real and legitimate. It is reasonable to feel desperate, hurt and/or angry when addressing hate speech, especially if it targets social groups that one is a member of. It is important not to feel afraid or ashamed to talk about one's feelings, especially when facing a difficult situation of producing and using counter narratives. It is recommended that organisations arrange mentoring and "safer-people" with whom to talk about it, even just to ventilate the (justified) anger. One should allow oneself to feel vulnerable in spaces and with people one can rely on. If needed, one should not hesitate to take a break for some time (an hour, two weeks, a month ...) and, if possible, be able to provide the same support to colleagues and communities.

## KEEP ENERGISED

While activism and committed educational work almost become a way of life and seem to encompass all spheres of our everyday life, they are not the only part of it. It is important that one is aware of everything else in life that is energising and inspiring. One suggestion is to make a so called "coping-bank", for example, a list of activities that fulfil, relax and replenish people and help them to feel well (again), and turn to it when feeling hurt and/or tired.<sup>3</sup> The processes of addressing power relations and tackling hate speech are long-term and the community of activists and educators need each other energised, empowered, safe and feeling well. For that, self-care through activities one loves, and self-compassion are necessary.

## DO IT WITH OTHERS

The need to work with others cannot be emphasised enough. This means building a team, a group and the necessary personal and institutional networks so that there is enough support, knowledge and an adequate division of tasks and responsibilities.



### HOW WILL OLI'S GROUP ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING?

Oli is scared but has the support of her friends, family and teachers, especially Ale, her best friend. He has gone through a similar experience and has learned a lot from it. Their History teacher has also been helpful. He has connected them to a local human rights association that is willing to support the group to start an activity at their school. They are not alone. Oli and Ale have become the leaders of a small group of young people who are determined to learn and plan an action seeking the necessary tools and support. This group is formed by both Rolonians and Marcadians of different origins and experiences but all sharing the idea that all people are equal and deserve fair treatment.



- What are the characteristics and needs of the young people you work with?
- In which ways can you support them to keep safe?
- At the same time, what kind of support do you need to play a supportive role for others?

## 6.7 | THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Language is an important mechanism with which power relations can be unintentionally reproduced. Language reflects our social norms and assumptions. Language does not only mirror existing social reality; it also functions as a mechanism of its reproduction through its characteristics and the ways it is used.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is important to understand how language reproduces unequal and unfair power relations so as to learn how to use language in a way that challenges that inequality and builds a new reality. This is key in the context of producing counter and alternative narratives to combat hate speech.

The first step is to reflect critically on established practices, for example, the way we speak about certain issues or the words we use. This is not easy as exclusionary language practices are taken for granted and they become invisible, though they may be everywhere. Then, when involved in producing and using counter narratives it is important that the language used does not reproduce existing asymmetrical power relations. For that, it is useful to have or to gain knowledge about those social groups

that are targeted by hate speech, to consult members of these social groups or give space for producing counter narratives to them.

Language practices can help sustain discrimination and reproduce unequal power relations by misrepresenting or describing inaccurately a certain aspect of reality. This is done by:

- repeatedly using some words to describe certain groups
- not having or choosing not to use certain words to describe a certain aspect of reality, such as group or issue making it invisible
- loading some words negatively or positively and always using them to describe a group.

These mechanisms are illustrated in the following examples:



#### **GENDER-BIASED LANGUAGE**

Word choices often reflect assumptions about gender roles. For example, writing "If an educator is dedicated, he will succeed" (use of generic male pronoun) suggests it is a male who will succeed. A gender-neutral alternative would be "Educators who are dedicated will succeed" (use of "they"). Using a gender neutral "they" or "he" and "she" simultaneously or even "she" in a generic form can expose the taken-for-granted use of the male pronoun. Another example of gender-biased language is using certain words to represent females and males which reinforce inaccurate stereotypic gendered attributes, for example, girls are timid and boys are brave.



#### **"ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS"**

Often referring to immigrants or asylum seekers, the term 'illegal immigrants' is used in the media. Using the word "illegal" suggests there is a "wrong doing" and that the person committed a crime. European human rights commissioner Nils Muižnieks explained: "People are not illegal. Their legal status may be irregular, but that does not render them beyond humanity" and proposes using "irregular migrants" for foreigners who enter this country without permission.<sup>5</sup>



### TRACKING THE LANGUAGE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

The UK-based organisations [Faith Matters](#) and [Tell MAMA](#) (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) has developed software to monitor hate speech online targeting Muslims. The software tracks and produces statistics on key words to look at the frequency of their use in language that is targeted towards Muslims and which takes place during Islamophobic incidences. The analysis of over 700 cases showed that some words (most commonly "Paki", "hijab", "paedophile", "paedo", "rape", "pakis", "bomb") are linked to the language of anti-Muslim prejudice.<sup>6</sup> This research shows how the language of Islamophobia has changed, especially how, by the collocation of words (two words that often appear together), language supports the violent narrative that male Muslims are inherently sexually deviant and hence they groom girls. The choice of negatively-loaded words in relation to Muslims contributes to portraying them as threatening and dangerous.



### "PEOPLE IN THE WRONG BODY"

When addressing hate speech targeting transgender individuals (for example, transsexual people, agender, bigender, queer-gender people), people often refer to them as people who were born in the "wrong body" [deleted text]. Using the word "wrong" suggests there is a "right" body to be born in. This means that it is considered normal that a person is assigned a gender at birth by a socially authorised institution (medicine) and that the person identifies with the assigned gender. Yet no-one is born "wrongly" as a man or a woman; they simply do not necessarily identify (or do not identify solely) with the assigned gender.

These examples show that language and linguistic practices function as an explicit or subtle mechanism for the reproduction of social reality and its hierarchical power relations. As the aim of counter narrative is to make these power relations explicit and to address them, it is important that we are aware of and acknowledge the existing social diversity and are capable of translating that knowledge and awareness into non-exclusionary language and counter narratives.



If you are not certain of how to make a counter narrative on hate speech targeting specific social group in a non-exclusionary way, consult members of this social group or other social actors experienced in working with them.



- What is your previous experience using non-exclusive language?
- What are the main challenges you face in this area in your context / language(s)?



#### OLI'S GROUP AND LANGUAGE ABOUT ROLONIANS

There are many ways in which Rolonians are referred to in jokes and colloquial language. Oli and Ale organise two sessions together with their language teacher about how exclusionary language works. The first session discussed gender-biased and gender-fair language. One of the exercises was to identify gender-biased language and to re-write the texts in a non-exclusionary manner. In a second session, the teacher asked the group to mention all kinds of terms used which could be associated with different groups in Marcadian society. They analyse them and realise that some terms have positive connotations while others have negative ones. And some terms did not come up at all. But why?



## 6.8 | ENSURING LEGITIMACY

Counter narratives should not reproduce existing inequalities and negative stereotypes but contribute to building fairer social relations. This is why it is fundamental to develop counter narratives with those who understand best those unequal social relations, especially those social groups that are targeted by hate speech. This means consulting them and engaging them in all phases. A human rights-based narrative emerging from an honest and open discussion with the target groups in a two-way process is usually much stronger than a narrative artificially crafted by a single group (or person).

Producing counter and alternative narratives needs to be based on a process that seriously takes into consideration the voices of those who are being marginalised and targeted by hate speech, the voices of those who are producing it, and an honest reflection on one's own privileges and biases. Without this process, a counter narrative may be developed with the so-called "blind spots". This means that some issues may be overlooked, the emphasis or tone may be inappropriate or the whole approach may be ineffective, or it may even be superficial and counter-productive.

Moreover, producing counter narratives from a privileged position and without the co-operation of a targeted marginalised social group also subtly reproduces unequal power relations. Some continue to be able to speak and some are not able to speak for themselves. This has ethical, symbolic and practical implications. Who is perceived as having the right to speak? Who decides the content of what it is said and the right to be heard?

It is important to remember that oppressed social groups are mostly perceived as disempowered and as victims by those in a position of power. It is precisely that perspective that legitimises the “right” of some to speak on behalf of others. If some are perceived as lacking power or abilities, this perception strengthens their subordinate position. In producing counter and alternative narratives to hate speech, a reflection about voice, and the importance of self-expression and self-representation should be central. This reflection should help those privileged social groups to know when they should step aside from, or avoid the position “to speak on behalf of” if unrequested.



#### **NOT IN MY NAME. MUSLIMS AGAINST TERRORISM CAMPAIGN**

Many Muslims are speaking up to counter the stereotypical equation of Muslims with terrorists and the fact that terrorism is not inherently Islamic and is, on the contrary, being implemented by extremist groups of different origins, religions and political beliefs all over the world.<sup>7</sup>



#### **HOW TO WORK WITH TARGETS OF HATE SPEECH**

Targets of hate speech are often isolated, emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed. Consider the following tips when working with targets of hate speech:

- Engage them when they are ready to engage. Support them and consider their needs first. Often this support can be best provided by those who have suffered hate speech in the past but have become empowered to respond to it.
- Create safe spaces for targets of hate speech to share their stories. Take into consideration any possible risks and issues of anonymity.
- Work in collaboration with targets of hate speech when developing the strategy, messages and the language to be used.

#### **HOW TO WORK WITH PRODUCERS OF HATE SPEECH**

- Depending on the context and if considered appropriate, create spaces for those producers of hate speech, especially milder versions of it, to meet in person the targets of their hate speech messages so that they can have an

opportunity to challenge their views. Note that this needs to be well-prepared and facilitated in order to respect the needs of everyone involved. Participants need to be ready for it.

- Work with former producers of hate speech. They have valuable insights and their testimonies would be credible and trusted by those interested in extremists' ideas, or already in the process of being radicalised.

#### **HATE SPEECH PRODUCERS MEET REFUGEES VIDEO**



A video journalist channel "IndexVideo World", based in Hungary, has used videos as a tool for dialogue between producers of hate speech and its targets. Specifically, in September 2015, when thousands of refugees arrived in Hungary, the channel took anti-refugee hate Facebook commenters to Keleti railway station in Budapest, Hungary, to meet face-to-face with the actual refugees who they were writing about. Through these meetings they were able to challenge their own assumptions and re-consider their attitudes.



- What kind of support would you need to make sure your campaign is designed and implemented in a participatory way, respectful of the needs and preferences of those targeted by hate speech?
- What could the opportunities and challenges be of working with the producers and supporters of hate speech in your context?



#### **OLI'S GROUP AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK**



In the case of Oli, it is she who took the initiative to speak up, supported by her friend Ale and other friends. Although Oli always felt the drive to do something, Ale played a key role in the process. He helped Oli to reflect on her experience and to feel confident to speak up. At the same time, he was the link to other Marcadian classmates, helping the group reflect on identity, rights and privileges. Oli also had support from her teachers, who were receptive, knowledgeable about hate speech and resourceful. Both her Marcadian language teacher and her history teacher were able to refer the group to other resource people and associations. The teachers and youth workers encouraged the group to develop actions but without taking up their voice. They adopted a necessary support role, yet this is their campaign. Oli and Ale took up the leadership of the group. But is this always the case?

## 6.9 | STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR ACTION



- Identify organisations that share the same cause and invite them to form a network or alliance of organisations. This type of model can be powerful and have a positive impact.
- Use informal events such as camps or festivals to involve citizens and youth, and establish local groups.
- Involve organisations and groups with diverse backgrounds: artists, musicians, video producers, technologists, educators, and so on. They can all contribute to developing effective counter narratives. Give them space and the opportunity to contribute.
- Use Internet technologies to organise more efficiently and cheaply online. Some of the platforms that can help collaborate online are:
  - for communication: Slack, Loomio, Skype and Google Hangout
  - for writing shared documents: Google Docs and Titanpad
  - for hosting shared materials: SpiderOak, Google Drive, and Dropbox.



### ACTION DAYS

The Action Days mobilise the national campaigns and European partners of the No Hate Speech Movement in joint activities on specific forms or targets of hate speech. Each Action Day has a programme of activities prepared with the online activists in co-operation with the national campaign co-ordinators and European partners – [www.nohatespeechmovement.org](http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org) – .



- What is your previous experience co-operating with other institutions and groups?
- What are the main challenges you face in this area in your context?



### OLI'S GROUP AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK

Oli's group's first and closest source of support is with their high school. Some members of the group also participate in local youth organisations. Teachers were able to link them to a local human rights association and to an official information point on hate speech. These institutions are part of national and international coalitions and initiatives in the region. Through these interactions, Oli's group is made aware of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign. This motivates them to deepen their commitment. They feel they are not alone and that they are part of a wider movement of people promoting human rights. Moreover, they know now who to turn to for information and inspiration on how to develop a counter-narrative campaign!

## 6.10 | CONSIDERING HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

Though motivation, creativity and hope are the main resources needed, before starting an action, consider the human and material resources you may need. This does not mean that you need to acquire extra funds or hire people. Firstly, it is important to determine what is actually needed to implement the activities, then assess all the resources available and look creatively for alternatives and options, for example, using existing spaces available for meetings, and looking for local sponsors to print materials and T-shirts, cameras or donated laptops. Again, motivation and commitment are the most important resources!



### VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering is a way of getting engaged and developing new competences. You can apply to volunteer with an association or, if you already work for one, you can invite and host volunteers. Volunteering is an essential part of contemporary societies, and its importance as an educational experience, a form of social participation, a factor of integration and an instrument for the development of active citizenship has long been recognised and called attention to by the European institutions.

If actions require more resources and become larger in scale and complexity, it might be necessary to consider applying for a small grant or joining an already existing local association or group.



### THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FOUNDATION

This is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial and educational support for European youth activities. It also supports youth-led pilot projects. [www.eyf.coe.int](http://www.eyf.coe.int).<sup>8</sup>



#### OLI'S GROUP AND RESOURCES

Oli's group is an informal group but they know each other quite well as most of them study together. They have the support of their school so they have a place to meet and have access to resource people who can advise them on both the content and the technical levels, for example, asking their teachers, including their computer science teacher. But they realise that they can do a lot with the resources they have. Most importantly, they have a safe place to meet, encouragement and support, their time and motivation! At the same time, they know that their local government offers small grants for youth organisations and they are exploring how to apply for one of them. Sara's organisation has also implemented a project with a grant from the European Youth Foundation.

## 6.11 | FINDING MORE INFORMATION

### HUMAN RIGHTS LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

- The [European Convention of Human Rights](#) has been ratified by every member of the Council of Europe. It protects a range of civil and political rights, including rights to privacy, security and protection from inhuman and degrading treatment. Although the Convention also protects freedom of expression, this right allows for restrictions when forms of expression are likely to endanger others or harm society as a whole.
- The [European Court of Human Rights](#) upholds the rights in the European Convention and decides on individual complaints of human rights violations. The case law of the court has provided an interpretation of "hate speech" which ensures that the worst abuses are not protected by the right to freedom of expression.
- The [Convention on Cybercrime](#) was developed by the Council of Europe, along with its Additional Protocols concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (2003 – No. 189). It is the only binding international treaty on the subject. It entered into force in July 2004 and lays down guidelines for all governments wishing to develop legislation against cybercrime.

### HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING BODIES

- The [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (ECRI) is a Council of Europe human rights body. It is composed of independent experts and issues moni-

toring reports, including reports on the problem of hate speech. Of special relevance are the revised ECRI General Policy Recommendations on Combating Hate Speech.

- The [Commissioner for Human Rights](#) has drawn attention to hate speech as a human rights concern (for example, in relation to Roma, refugees and asylum seekers). The Commissioner has also called for measures to be adopted against hate speech.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- [Bookmarks](#) – A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education,
- [Compass](#): Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People.
- [Developing Intercultural Competence through Education, Interculturalism and Multiculturalism](#): Similarities and Differences.
- [Internet Literacy Handbook](#)
- [Starting Points for Combating Hate Speech Online](#) – a research publication on hate speech online and a mapping study on campaigns against hate speech online,
- The Pestalozzi Programme modules on media education and intercultural learning.
- [Curriculum Development and Review for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#), Published together with UNESCO, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Organization of American States.
- [Wild Web Woods](#), an online game for children to learn basic methods of keeping safe online.

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Anyone can engage in actions against hate speech; it only takes motivation and some preparations.
- It is important to understand the complexity of the issues involved and social dynamics online and offline.
- It is key to be ready emotionally and be supported by a team or organisation. Engage with others.
- Language can reproduce negative stereotypes and exclusion; it is possible to use non-exclusionary language. By changing the language, reality also changes.
- Involving the targets of hate speech and former producers of hate speech is important in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness of your actions.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Barrett, M. (2016), Competences for Democratic Culture: Living Together as Equals in Culturally Diverse Democratic Societies, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- <sup>2</sup> For more details on the different types of strategies, see Bookmarks – A Manual for Combating Human Rights Online through Human Rights Education (Chapter 5.7, p. 179).
- <sup>3</sup> Khan, A. (2015), Activist Burnout Is Real – And You Probably Need to Read These 4 Ways to Manage It, Everyday feminism, available at <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/05/dealing-with-activist-burnout>, accessed 16 June 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> Mills, S. (2008), Language and sexism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- <sup>5</sup> For the full article, visit [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/23/dont-call-them-illegal-immigrants-says-europe-human-rights-commi/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/23/dont-call-them-illegal-immigrants-says-europe-human-rights-commi/), accessed 1 December 2016.
- <sup>6</sup> Tell MAMA Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks (2016), The Language of Anti-Muslim Prejudice or Islamophobia. The TELL MAMA Language Tracker, available at <http://tellmamauk.org/the-language-of-anti-muslim-prejudice-or-islamophobia/>, accessed 25 July 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> For more information, see: [www.facebook.com/Not-in-MY-Name-Muslims-Against-Terrorism-214632765363893/](http://www.facebook.com/Not-in-MY-Name-Muslims-Against-Terrorism-214632765363893/)
- <sup>8</sup> For more information, visit [www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation](http://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation)



## The group “WeCAN” is born and goes for its first action!



I feel we are now a group and we have plenty of ideas. We need to plan a first action.



Yes, but what do we do first? We have many ideas...

I think the first step is to understand what has happened and the ideas underlying the messages. What were they trying to achieve? And why did they do it?



We can analyse and analyse but we need to take action now.



We need to do both: to analyse and to do something. Our action is at the interface. Why don't some of us work with Ms. Hilde on this idea of narratives and hate speech online, and some of us find out more about actions done by the No Hate Speech Movement campaign?



Yes, let's go for it. #WeCAN is a good hash-tag! It is a positive idea we can promote.

Then are we now the “WeCAN” group?

Yes! Marti, can you create a group for us to work online?



# DOING IT YOURSELF STEP-BY-STEP

This chapter is a step-by-step guide to developing a counter or alternative narrative campaign. It also includes a toolbox of tips, tools and tactics, with illustrative examples that should help when developing the counter narrative and undertaking appropriate steps to deconstruct oppressive narratives. Of course, this does not represent a guaranteed recipe for deconstruction of oppressive narratives, as by nature they are diverse and the socio-political contexts where they operate are diverse.

The step-by-step guide should not be taken as a strict and rigid framework, but rather as a “fluid” guide which can be adopted, “hacked”, and appropriated and adapted to be used in different local and national contexts. These guidelines should be taken more as a Do-It-Yourself toolbox that helps you – no matter whether you are an educator or part of group of informal local activists or belong to an organisation – to guide yourself through four phases of developing the counter narrative:

1. **Assess the oppressive narrative you want to counter.** Examining the oppressive narrative in detail helps you understand its dynamics inside, but also the context under which it is happening, its outreach and its media distribution.
2. **Designing the counter narrative** is the phase where you make strategic decisions, pick up techniques, tactics and arguments you want to use, and choose the media platforms.
3. **Implementing the counter narrative** is the moment where you put into action the intervention you designed during the second phase.
4. **Monitoring and evaluating the counter narrative** helps you see the fruits of your work, which is how your counter narrative is performing and what the impact of it is. This phase will also help to reflect on the work you have done and how to further adjust it, if necessary, through another iteration.

All four phases will operate under iterations, or action cycles consisting of a sequence of actions which are repeated to move closer and closer to the desired results. One iteration consists of four phases. Once you evaluate the first iteration of your counter narrative and you have identified that your objectives were partially achieved, then this means that you have to repeat the iteration (the four phases) until the objectives are achieved.



#### ITERATION EXAMPLE

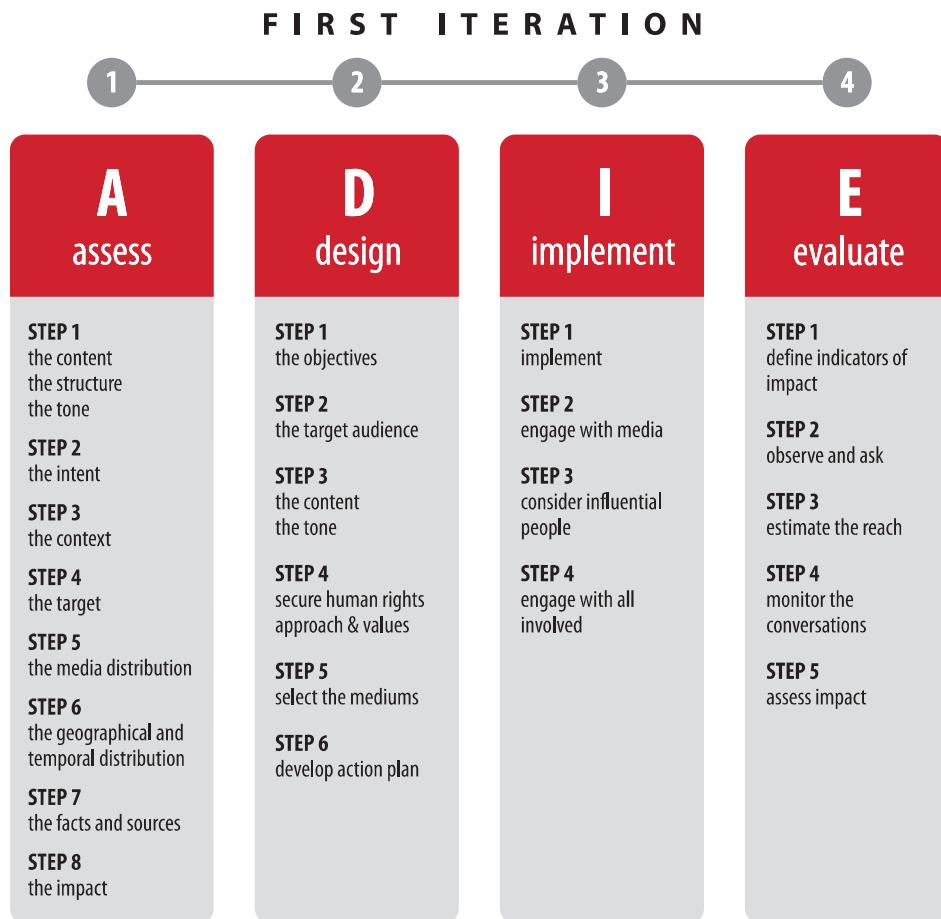
The Prime Minister of country X has given a strong statement against the Roma community during a prime-time live interview on a popular national TV programme. This has encouraged nationalist and conservative groups, organisations, individuals and parties to start a campaign against this community. The media (both printed, mainstream and online) are giving enormous space to this narrative.

A network of activists and organisations (that you belong to) has started a campaign to combat the oppressive narrative, and to encourage the Prime Minister to apologise and retract his statement.

After three months of campaigning, the Prime Minister apologised for his statement, but he still does not support the Roma community. Furthermore, he apologised not in a prime-time live interview, but instead, gave the interview to a local blogger who has a monthly audience of 100 visitors. Therefore, the campaign objective of the network supporting this community was only been partly achieved. Consequently, after the evaluation of the campaign results, it was decided that another **iteration** is needed in order to fully achieve the campaign objectives.

The following framework provides a summary of the step-by-step guide which includes the four phases: 1) asses, 2) design, 3) implement, and 4) monitor and evaluate.

Each phase is further broken down into steps, and each step is even further broken down into tips and tools that will help and guide you to accomplishing a successful iteration.



## 7.1 | PHASE ONE: ASSESS THE OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE

Developing effective counter narratives starts with an in-depth understanding of the oppressive narrative. In other words, you need to elaborately assess the oppressive narrative you want to counter. In order to do this effectively, this phase guides you through eight steps which contain tips, methods and tools to better assess the oppressive narrative and its dynamics. It's time to start now!



## ANALYSE THE CONTENT, STRUCTURE AND TONE OF THE OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE

This phase builds on Chapter 4 and proposes basic steps to assess the counter narrative you plan to engage with. The first step is to analyse the oppressive narrative in terms of the following elements:

- The content. This refers to the main issues, debates or topics involved.
- The structure. This refers to how the narrative is organised in terms of 1) an initial situation, 2) a disruptive moment or conflict, and 3) a conclusion or end situation.
- The tone. This refers to the manner or style in which an expression is made which may help indicate the aim of the narrative and its emotional dimensions.



When you analyse the content, the structure and the tone of the oppressive narrative, it is important to ask, but not limit, the following questions:

- What are the issues at stake? What topics are mentioned? Which concepts seem to be central, repeated or debated about?
- What is the underlying structure of the narrative? Was there an original situation that was disrupted by an event or conflict? What seems to be the conclusion or desired result after overcoming the conflict?
- What type of language is used (for example, formal or informal)?
- What is the tone used (for example, ironic, threatening, arrogant, violent, funny or abusive)?
- What is the textual evidence, or what are the most representative or illustrative texts, symbols or images which help you describe the narrative? It is useful to keep a record of them as sources and facts to be used for analysis, and in phase two “Design the counter-narrative”.



If you work with oppressive narratives online, such as online magazines or social media, you may need to highlight and save the elements above. Here are some tools that can help you highlight, extract and save textual evidence and other above-mentioned elements:

- Diigo ([www.diigo.com](http://www.diigo.com)) – is a tool that help you to highlight, tag, extract and save any online content or resource, and easily access it anytime, anywhere. All the content you bookmark can be saved privately or publicly.
- Amber ([www.amberlink.org](http://www.amberlink.org)) – is a tool for blogs and websites for keeping damaged URL links online. For example, if you added to your blog an online interview of a politician who made an antisemitic statement, but later it was removed from the web, your link will always remain accessible with Amber.



The text below is adapted textual evidence of an oppressive narrative. It is based on real comments made by a politician in a European country when asked about the rights of LGBT. The content, structure and tone of the narrative are analysed.

This is a question which makes one feel like joking, but I must avoid anything of that kind. I would propose anybody who makes public statements about this issue, do it carefully. This is a serious country. It is fundamentally based on traditional values. This is a tolerant country. Tolerance, however, does not mean that we should apply the same rules for people whose way of life is different from ours. We make a distinction between us and them. Tolerance means patience, tolerance means being able to co-exist, this is the foundation of this country's Constitution which unmistakably differentiates between a conjugal relationship between a man and a woman and other forms of relationships. As I said earlier, we will preserve this. By the way, I am thankful to this country's homosexual community. I thank them for not showing the offensive conduct as it has been the case in many European countries. Countries have to struggle with this and what happens in the end is that they achieve the opposite of what they want to accomplish. I truly think that here, despite the fact that the constitution clearly differentiates between marriage and other forms of relationships, the people with a style of life different from ours are safe. They receive respect. We respect their basic human dignity that they deserve. I believe that foreigners do not feel they are in a dangerous country. This is positive. This is the way we can live together. If we develop more rigorous rules or the community of homosexuals becomes more provocative, I believe the current peaceful, calm situation will not last. Who would benefit from this? We all gain if we can live together. I trust that as things are now, we can continue to live in peace.

- **Content:** The topics referred to are homosexuality, tolerance, and respect for this country's constitution.
- **Structure:** A country is serious and tolerant (original situation), accepting "offensive conduct" may damage this ideal situation (disruption or conflict), thus this "behaviour" cannot be tolerated (proposed conclusion).
- **Type of language used:** It is semi-formal language, used by a high-level politician during an interview. Adding the "joke" element in the first sentence may suggest that the LGBT issue is not a priority issue.
- **Tone used:** Interestingly enough, the tone is not aggressive. It puts bold emphasis on tolerance. But at the same time gives hidden oppressive elements such "traditional values" and how the person is "thankful" to this country's homosexual community "for not showing the offensive conduct".
- **The textual evidence:** The following textual examples can be used to build the counter narrative, and used as facts that this interview contributes to the strengthening of an oppressive narrative:

*"I would propose anybody who makes public statements about this issue, do it carefully." – What does the person mean with carefully? Is it an indirect threat?*

*"This is a serious country. It is fundamentally based on traditional values" – Is the seriousness of one country measured against traditional values? It is problematic how the person puts traditional values at the forefront of the country's seriousness.*

*"This is a tolerant country. Tolerance, however, does not mean that we should apply the same rules for people whose way of life is different from ours. We make a distinction between us and them. Tolerance means patience, tolerance means being able to co-exist, this is the foundation of this country's Constitution which unmistakably differentiates between a conjugal relationship between a man and a woman and other forms of relationships" – This overemphasis of tolerance is used as public relation spin to distract the attention from the main intent of this person's view on the LGBT community. The word tolerance is mentioned in almost every sentence. However, if you read between the lines it is different: for example, when the person says that the country's Constitution clearly differentiates the marriage between men and women, what about same sex marriage? Isn't that part of tolerance, too?*

*"I am thankful to this country's homosexual community. I thank them for not showing the offensive conduct as it has been the case in many European countries. Countries have to struggle with this and what happens in the end is that they achieve the opposite of what they want to accomplish." – Again, in the form of a public relations spin, the person thanks the community of homosexuals, but the true meaning of the thanks is negative: the speaker thanks them for not showing up on the streets and at public gatherings. Moreover, the person does not make clear what the offensive conduct is.*

*"I truly think that here, despite the fact that the constitution clearly differentiates between marriage and other forms of relationships, the people with a style of life different from ours are safe. They receive respect. We respect their basic human dignity that they deserve."* – This is the second time that the person refers to Constitution about the definition of marriage between men and women. This double reference indicates the clear intent of the politician on the LGBT community in this European country and how it is marginalised, but, after the reference to Constitution, the person tries to cover (again using public relation spin) the legal threat with sterile words of basic human dignity.

*"I trust that as things are now, we can continue to live in peace"* – The person closes the sentence with the idea of peaceful co-existence in this country.



## ANALYSE THE INTENT OF THE OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE

Here we look at the intent of the oppressive narrative. In other words, we examine whether the narrative is specifically meant to encourage hate, promote a call to violent action or hurt someone (emotionally or physically) – an individual or a group. You can read more about the importance of analysing the meaning of a narrative in Chapter 4.



Often, people speak or write, especially online covered by an anonymous face, without thinking twice. They say or write words that can hurt someone else. These words are sometimes intended to hurt someone. The following questions may help you analyse the intent of the oppressive narrative:

- What is the main intention of the narrative? What does it seek to do?
- Does it encourage hateful behaviours towards the targeted group?
- Is the oppressive narrative packaged in a form of stereotype, prejudice or racism?
- Why is the oppressive narrative produced? Why did it happen?


Discuss and analyse the questions above. Use the template below to capture the main points.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Main intention</b><br>For example: does it seek to legitimise a policy? Does it seek to convince the public about a certain action? | <b>Form of stereotype, prejudice or racism</b><br>For example: Is there antisemitic and sexist content in a post on a Facebook profile of a Jewish female student? |
| <b>Type of hateful behaviour that it encourages</b><br>For example: is there a call to "kill the Muslims"?                             | <b>Possible reasons for the emergence/persistence of the oppressive narrative</b><br>For example: is there an unresolved socio-political conflict?                 |



### ASSESSING THE CONTENT, STRUCTURE AND TONE OF A XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVE

The posts and messages received by Oli support a xenophobic narrative. In this narrative, Rolonians are depicted as a threat for Marcadia. It was a prosperous country and the arrival of migrants is presented as the cause of social ills, such as unemployment and insecurity. This conflict needs to be resolved and the proposal is to stop immigration and limit migrants rights. It is "us" vs. "them". If they do not go, then prosperity will not return to Marcadia. This structure is made evident in the textual evidence, "Start packing and go home", in an aggressive tone.



### ANALYSE THE CONTEXT

The context matters a lot. The current, historical, cultural contexts can indicate to you why certain oppressive narratives are happening at certain times.



A good context examination should be framed around these three main questions:

- What is the current social, political, and economic context?
- What is the historical context?
- What is the cultural context?



This template will enable you to analyse thoroughly the context, and capture any observation for different dimensions of the narrative's context. Complete the boxes relevant for your situation.

|                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Social context       | Political context |
| Economic context     | Cultural context  |
| Geographical context | Media context     |



#### THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA AGAINST ROLONIANS

There are many negative stereotypes about people from Rolonia in Marcadia, and also in neighbouring countries. For example, that they are lazy and live off benefits. Currently, the economic situation in Marcadia has worsened and there is high unemployment, especially among young people. Some politicians have appealed to those fears using a narrative that suggests immigration as the cause of social ills. They propose change in the immigration laws. People from Rolonia feel unwelcome and powerless.



#### ANALYSE THE TARGET(S) IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Oppressive narratives may target individuals or groups which are already excluded in some way, such as people with disabilities and asylum seekers. Often oppressive narratives build on existing prejudices and discriminations in society towards some groups, as examined in Chapter 2. The situation of groups targeted by oppressive narratives needs to be understood in the context of unequal social and power relations. For example, some groups enjoy their rights while others are marginalised.



Target audiences can be very different: from popular celebrities (for example, the winner of Eurovision Song Contest 2014, Conchita Wurst, has been the target of hate speech due to her transsexuality) to refugees and migrants (for example, some European politicians have claimed that migrants have brought diseases such as cholera and dysentery to Europe, as well as “all sorts of parasites and protozoa, which ... while not dangerous in the organisms of these people, could be dangerous here”).

Some of the *textual evidence* identified in the Step 1 may help you analyse the target audience and the social relations in which they are involved. At this stage, you have to look at particular individuals, or groups which are the target of the oppressive narrative.



Describe the target group by using the template below.

#### THE OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE TARGETS THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS:

a) individuals

##### Common targets of hate speech

- Asylum seekers and migrants
- LGBT
- Roma
- Religious minority
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

b) groups



#### ROLONIANS AS A TARGET

Rolonians represent a common target of hate speech but they are not the only ones; other groups of foreign-origin and religious minorities have been targeted in Marcadia. One example of textual evidence was the posts Oli saw and the messages she received, for example, “Start packing and go home”. Rolonians constitute one of the largest immigrant groups in Marcadia. They are accused of “stealing Marcadian jobs” but in fact, currently, and proportionally, more Rolonians are unemployed or sub-employed.



## ANALYSE THE MEDIA DISTRIBUTION

In this step we analyse the media distribution. In other words, we try to look at which media the narrative has reached, and whether the media has been a vehicle of its further distribution. Certain oppressive narratives can make headlines of some of the world's biggest media, while some others remain isolated at local or national level. Hateful narratives appearing in any kind of media can be dangerous, yet it is always important to consider the media distribution at all levels, local, national and global to better analyse the scale and all possible negative impacts.



To examine the media distribution better, we should look at three main elements:

1. What types of mainstream media have covered the oppressive narrative (e.g. TV, newspaper and radio)?
2. What types of online media have covered the oppressive narrative (e.g. social media: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., online portal / newspaper and online TV).
3. What levels has the distribution of oppressive narrative reached: a) local, b) national, c) international?



- Use online search engines such as Google, DuckDuckGo or Bing to research the online media, or use hashtags to see if the oppressive narrative is trending on social media. (For example, in 2012 the hashtag #UnBonJuif, which means #GoodJew, trended for several days in the French twittersphere containing numerous antisemitic jokes.)
- Run monitoring of mainstream media by watching (TV), reading (newspaper) and listening (radio) to the daily news. Highlight and archive any examples of evidence where the oppressive narrative appears.



### MEDIA, GEOGRAPHICAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF A XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVE

Oli received messages from people that knew her, her classmates. At the same time, she and her friends observed xenophobic posts in their high school's informal groups on social platforms. They re-posted other jokes and comments produced, not only in their town but in other areas of the country. The xenophobic narrative is present in national media almost every day. There is a debate about immigration policies. This debate is also happening in other countries in the region. Paradoxically, Rolonia is one of the countries in which xenophobia against migrants and refugees has risen in the past year.



### ANALYSE THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION

Understanding geographical and temporal distribution will help you see where and when the *hotspot* is, in other words, the place and time of the origin of the oppressive narrative, and in what geographical areas it is distributed, and when.



- Identify where the hotspot of the oppressive narrative is – where did it originate from?
- Identify the date or approximate time at which it emerged.
- Identify in what geographical areas the oppressive narrative is being distributed.
- Research which communities live in those areas and how they are being affected by such a narrative.
- Draw a time-line and look to see if there are any conflicts or events that the narrative can be related to (for example, present or historical) in the areas where the oppressive narrative is being spread.



- Use Storymap (<https://storymap.knightlab.com/>) or Mapbox ([www.mapbox.com](http://www.mapbox.com)) to map out and curate the geographical spread of the narrative. Both tools also allow you to add your own opinion, thoughts or context.



## VERIFY FACTS AND SOURCES

The oppressive narrative is built on myths and social norms. Challenging the oppressive narrative requires verified facts and sources. The Internet provides great space for resources and information; nonetheless, it is also difficult to deal with the tremendous amount of information and verify every fact and source. Therefore, double-checking the sources and facts used by the oppressive narrative is an important step towards coming up with a credible counter-narrative and with alternative facts and sources.



- Check out what facts are used in the oppressive narrative, for example, historical, cultural, religious or (apparently) scientific.
- Verify where the facts are sourced from, for example, from governmental bodies, independent or scientific organisations or religious institutions.
- If possible, get in touch with the institutions or officials to interview them regarding the facts that have been sourced from their organisations.
- Identify alternative facts from alternative sources.



- If you have encountered a sexist photo that aims to dehumanise the subject, try to research to find out if the photo was manipulated by using one of the following tools: ImageForensic ([www.imageforensic.org](http://www.imageforensic.org)) or FotoForensics ([www.fotoforensics.com](http://www.fotoforensics.com)).
- If you are researching facts and sources on Twitter, use TweetCred plugin (<http://twitdigest.iiitd.edu.in/TweetCred/>) which allows you to assess in real time the credibility of content on Twitter.



### FACTS AND SOURCES OF A XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVE

One of the facts often mentioned is that, decades ago, Marcadia's economy and employment situations were booming, that their cities were safe and their social services efficient. This is not the situation any more. It is argued that too many people have been allowed to live in the country and assisting migrants has overburden social services.



## ANALYSE IMPACT

The actual or potential impact on individuals, groups, or society as a whole is one of the most important considerations in assessing the oppressive narrative. The impact can be diverse: it can encourage suicides and hate crimes; it can lead towards discriminatory policies by state institutions or private companies; or it can marginalise individuals and groups.



The impact of an oppressive narrative can be analysed from different perspectives:

- From a quantitative perspective: the number of people and groups affected by and involved in supporting oppressive narratives.
- From a qualitative perspective: the way people and groups are affected, from being discriminated against, to being threatened or even attacked physically. Find out how it affected the lives of individuals, or groups. If possible, run interviews and capture their stories.
- To analyse the impact of the oppressive narrative better, try to identify its impact at the level of the individual or groups, as well as at the local, national and international levels.
- Find out if the oppressive narrative has led towards negative policy changes at local or national levels.



This work sheet will help you capture the impact of the oppressive narrative.

**At the level of individuals or groups:**

**At the national level:**

**At the local level:**

**At the international level:**



### THE IMPACTS OF XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVE

Oli was personally affected, as were a few other acquaintances, who are also of Rolonian origin. She was fearful and felt disheartened and powerless. Her family felt that way too, but asked her to remain silent. "If you speak up, they will hate us more," her father said. The Rolonian community is discriminated against in her town and nationally. Jokes were common but now there are more threats and insults. A politician defending the rights of immigrants was recently attacked physically when walking in his town. Figures suggest a 53% increase in reported hate incidents in comparison to the previous year.

## 7.2 | PHASE TWO: DESIGN THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

After detailed assessment of the oppressive narrative in phase one, where we identified the main elements of the oppressive narrative, its distribution, target groups and its dynamics, it is now time to design the counter narrative. In other words, this is the phase where you strategically use the outcomes from assessment and, based on those outcomes, you design your own counter narrative. This phase consists of six steps.



### DEFINE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The first thing to do is to define a vision for the emancipatory narrative that your target audience should support. This is the narrative that should replace the oppressive narrative of hate speech. From the vision, follow the objectives of the counter narrative, that is, the knowledge, values and attitudes about human rights and democracy that the counter narrative should promote to the target audience.



When defining a vision and objectives, avoid responding directly to the hate speech. Take a step back and ask yourself: *What would we like to see happening? What is our preferred alternative situation?* Here are some suggestions and possible pitfalls:

- **Be confident:** grab the audience's attention by providing an alternative.
- **Be empowering:** give room for action, allow self-identification of the audience with your cause, and provide positive role models.
- **Be realistic:** what can you achieve as change among or with your target audience in the upcoming weeks?
- **Be inviting:** leave space for your audience to explore alternative perspectives and reflect on them.
- **Be positive:** provide creative and emancipatory alternatives for the oppressive narratives.
- **Be brief:** try to define your vision and the objectives using single sentences.
- **Be specific:** the clearer your objectives are, the greater your chances are of achieving them.
- **Don't be defensive:** avoid emphasising the hate narrative you reject.
- **Don't victimise:** counter narratives that play on empathetic feelings of sorry and pity with the people targeted by hate speech will emphasise their role as victims.
- **Don't be naïve:** don't set goals that will be too difficult, take too long to reach, or seem too idealistic.
- **Don't preach:** don't present your ideas as ready-made solutions from the expert who knows it all and knows it better.
- **Don't (re)produce hate speech:** don't recall the hate narratives or produce new hate speech.

A clear definition of the vision and objectives helps you describe what you are trying to achieve with your counter narrative, and helps measure its performance when you promote it.

In this manual, we don't suggest any timing for the objectives, that is, whether they should be short-term or long-term, because this depends on many factors including, for example, the target audience, context or media platform.



#### "WECAN" GROUP'S VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Oli organised several meetings. After analysing the hate speech Oli received, the group decided on their **vision**:

##### **Students in Oli's high school value diversity as a strength**

The **objectives** of their counter narrative would be for the students of their high school to:

- Experience how diversity enriches young people and the country of Marcadia
- Learn about the long historical ties between Marcadia and other countries

- Critically reflect on diversity, to see its contributions and added strength
- Learn that non-discrimination is a universal human right
- Promote attitudes of tolerance and inclusion towards immigrant students attending the high school.

The group also discussed the type of activities they could organise to promote their counter narrative. They came up with four main interrelated activities over the course of two months: (1) sessions with their History and Language teachers about issues related to diversity, pluralism and hate speech in Marcadia; (2) a simulation game, such as 'Clash of Freedoms' or 'Play it Again' (from *Bookmarks*); (3) a photo exhibition by and for students; (4) online memes with empowering and personal stories to promote engagement between students at the high school using the hashtag #WeCAN. They believe that these activities will strengthen solidarity and appreciation of diversity as a strength among the school students.



## DEFINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

After we have defined the objectives, it's time to look at the target audience. We should clearly define who the target of our counter narrative is. A clear and good definition of the target audience will help you in the next steps to select appropriate media channels and techniques.



- Design your counter narrative with a specific audience in mind. Within any audience, people are diverse, with different attitudes, behaviours, thinking and roles.
- Try to understand and identify different groups or segments within the audience, such as teenagers, journalists, politicians from government or opposition parties, or pensioners.
- Decide whether your counter narrative will target those who are contributing to the oppressive narrative as producers of hate, those who are indifferent, or those who are targeted by the oppressive narrative.
- Create personas – fictional, generalised characters who represent the needs, behaviours and characteristics of a larger audience.



Use the template below to define the particular segments of your audience and create personas. Remember: this is a general template and you can always adapt it to local, national or international contexts.

**Politicians** (this includes every actor who is directly involved in politics: president, prime minister, ministers, advisors, opposition parties, mayors, etc.)

**Public sector & Universities** (this includes the broad sector of public service, such as teachers, doctors, public servants, etc. and the academic sector)

**Youth** (this includes the youth sector from all backgrounds, geographical areas, etc.)

**Civil society** (this includes particular individuals, or organisations, who are part of civil society)

**Media** (this includes any type of media representative: editor-in-chief, journalist, online blogger, etc.)

**Celebrities** (this includes famous people whose words are well heard)

**Religious communities** (this includes every representative of any religion present in the country)

**International organisations and missions** (this includes representatives from any international organisation and mission, such as UN agencies, embassies, Council of Europe and institutions, etc.)

#### Create personas

Add a picture or drawing



Name:

Religion:

Gender (if applied):

Place:

Ethnicity (if applied):

Occupation:

Nationality (if applied):

#### What audience segment the person belongs to (see above):

- Is the person a producer, a supporter, a target, indifferent or not involved with the oppressive narrative?
- Is the person related directly or indirectly to oppressive narrative?
- What attitudes, feelings, sympathies does the person hold?
- General interests (for example, what type of media does this person use? Which places does this person frequent most?)



### "WECAN" AND ITS TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience are young people, students of 15-19 years old, both female and male. Most of them are white and of Marcaian origin, but there are groups of different origins and religious beliefs. They estimate that about 30 students have posted and re-posted hateful messages. But many have silently supported these views. The indirect target audience are the families of the students, their friends outside school and the local community. Students are soccer and music fans, specially of the group "the Hives", and love spending time socialising online.



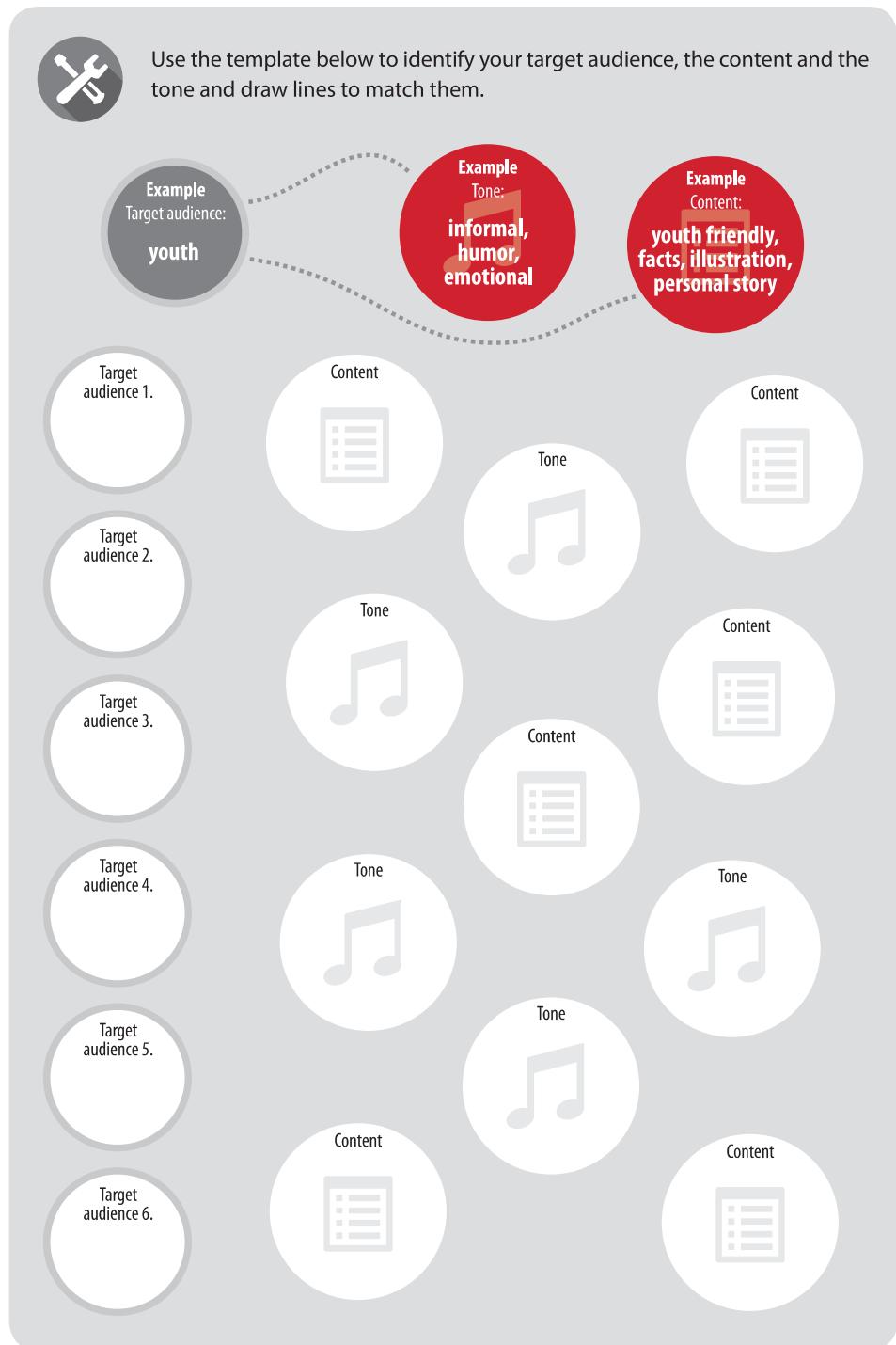
### DEFINE THE CONTENT AND THE TONE

In this step, we will look at how you define the content and the tone of your counter narrative. This depends significantly on to whom you will address the counter narrative and what the content and the tone of the oppressive narrative was (based on the outcomes of step one from phase one).



- Think about who will read your content. Will your counter narrative be directed to young people, politicians, or religious leaders? If you are directing your counter narrative to young people, then you should use youth-friendly language and avoid academic terminology. So, your content should be focused towards the particular segment of the audience that potentially may read and engage with your counter narrative.
- The tone is very important in terms of engaging with the audience. Based on the objectives you want to achieve (another reason why you should define clear objectives), adjust the tone to the different audiences you want to engage with and the contexts of your specific actions. For example, a video in which former extremists share their personal stories may use a sentimental tone, a comic may use a satirical tone, and a presentation for policy makers may have a formal tone.

To sum up: keep your objectives and audience in mind!





## SECURING A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

Securing human rights values and approaches is a crucial step in ensuring that you are not reproducing oppressive narrative through your counter narrative, and that you are, additionally, boldly emphasising the universality and importance of human rights. Your counter narrative should reflect heavily on human rights, and refer to human rights explicitly and how they are at stake or challenged by the oppressive narrative. Although this issue is thoroughly elaborated on in the Chapter 6 in this step we will make a quick checklist of some key points to be secured during the design phase.



### CHECKLIST:

- **Does it humanise?** Humanising everyone involved in an oppressive narrative is an important element that should be given emphasis during your counter narrative. One of the true dangers posed by oppressive narratives is dehumanisation of the individual, or groups. The process of dehumanisation aims at depicting a certain individual, or group, as less than human. Philip Zimbardo, in his book *The Lucifer Effect* (2007), described the process of dehumanisation that “begins with stereotyped conceptions of the other... conceptions of the other as worthless, the other as all-powerful,... the other as a fundamental threat to our cherished values and beliefs”. Therefore, ensure that this element does not remain neglected.
- **Does it promote solidarity?** Solidarity means showing your support and helping the targets of oppressive narratives. It takes different forms: from solidarity marches in the street to protecting women’s rights, and flash mobs in city centres to increased awareness for people with disabilities; from changing your profile photo on social networks to signing petitions. Those who suffer from oppressive narrative are usually in silence and isolated, which may lead to depression and suicide. Showing them solidarity and empathy is a fundamental value that you may want to ensure in your counter narrative.
- **Does it promote participation?** Participation is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. Active, free and meaningful participation is also a universal right for everyone who wants to participate in decisions which affect their human rights. For example, if your counter narrative is tackling the issues of refugees, you may want to ensure that they have access to information in a form and language which can be understood by them.

- **Does it encourage intercultural dialogue?** Intercultural dialogue, as defined by the Council of Europe, stands for "dialogue between cultures, enabling us to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging". Ensuring that diverse cultures are represented in your counter narrative does not only culturally enrich the content of your counter narrative; it also breaks the myths and prejudices that "some" cultures are superior to other cultures. It serves also as an antidote to stereotyping, racism, xenophobia, intolerance, fear, rejection, discrimination and violence – all those characteristics which can threaten peace and the very essence of local and national communities.
- **Does it promote values of non-discrimination and equality?** Non-discrimination and equality means that all forms of discrimination in the realisation of rights must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. While designing the counter narrative, we should not fall into the trap of reproducing discrimination; that is, you cannot fight discrimination with discrimination. Special importance should be given to the most marginalised groups who face some of the most challenging obstructions to realising their full rights.
- **Does it empower?** Empowerment involves the process of supporting another individual, or group, often the victims of violence, torture, oppressive narrative, marginalisation, or discrimination, to discover and reclaim personal power and rights. Empowerment can take various forms: through education and training courses or by giving them access to speak to the public. Empowerment can be done in different places, for example, at school, at work, within the family or at neighbourhood level. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community level. Thus, ensuring that the targets of oppressive narratives, either individuals or groups, are being empowered through your counter narrative is an important step towards encouraging them to overcome obstacles in life and work, and actively engage with other people, institutions or society.
- **Does it encourage learning about human rights?** It is important to use, refer explicitly and appeal to existing relevant national and international human rights instruments. Hate speech constitutes a violation of human rights and it is regulated by law in most countries. Your messages will be strengthened if they refer to agreed standards and commitments, and will foster knowledge about human rights.



### "WECAN" AS HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

The students' group "WeCAN" led by Oli decided to start a campaign and organise different types of educational activities, starting with a school's music festival and participatory workshops in their school. The actions planned by the group aim to promote a culture of human rights and appreciation of diversity. The actions are focused on an alternative narrative, proposing what the group is for. The activities avoid depicting some as "bad" or "villains" and others as "good" or "saviours". Through the simulation games and participatory drama sessions at school, the group expects to create a safe space for reflection and dialogue about the issues, rather than directly responding to the comments online in a defensive mode. The activities aim to engage everyone involved, and reflect together about the alternative narrative: there is a need to communicate, we are all different, but we are all equal.



### SELECT THE MEDIA

Before the invention of the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), the media consisted mostly of newspaper, radio and TV. With the advent of the Internet, a whole new category of web-based applications and platforms have started to emerge. It is difficult to categorise media today as the majority of them are becoming more hybrid, in the sense that you can watch TV in its mainstream form on a television, but you can also watch it via the Internet (livestreaming) on a computer or smartphone, which may additionally include features such as real-time chatting, and so on. Nonetheless, the following is a provisional, very simple and broad categorisation of the media:

#### Mainstream media

- Television
- Radio
- Newspaper

#### Internet-based media

- Social media (for example, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, VKontakte)
- Websites, blogs and vlogs (video blogging)

- Online radio and podcasts
- Online newspapers

#### **Offline spaces**

- Public murals
- Posters
- Flyers / brochures

Each media has its own audience. Some of the audience segments, for example young people, have more tendencies to navigate and participate through Internet-based media. In this step, you will analyse and select the media that will reach your target audience but also serve as a means to distribute your counter narrative.

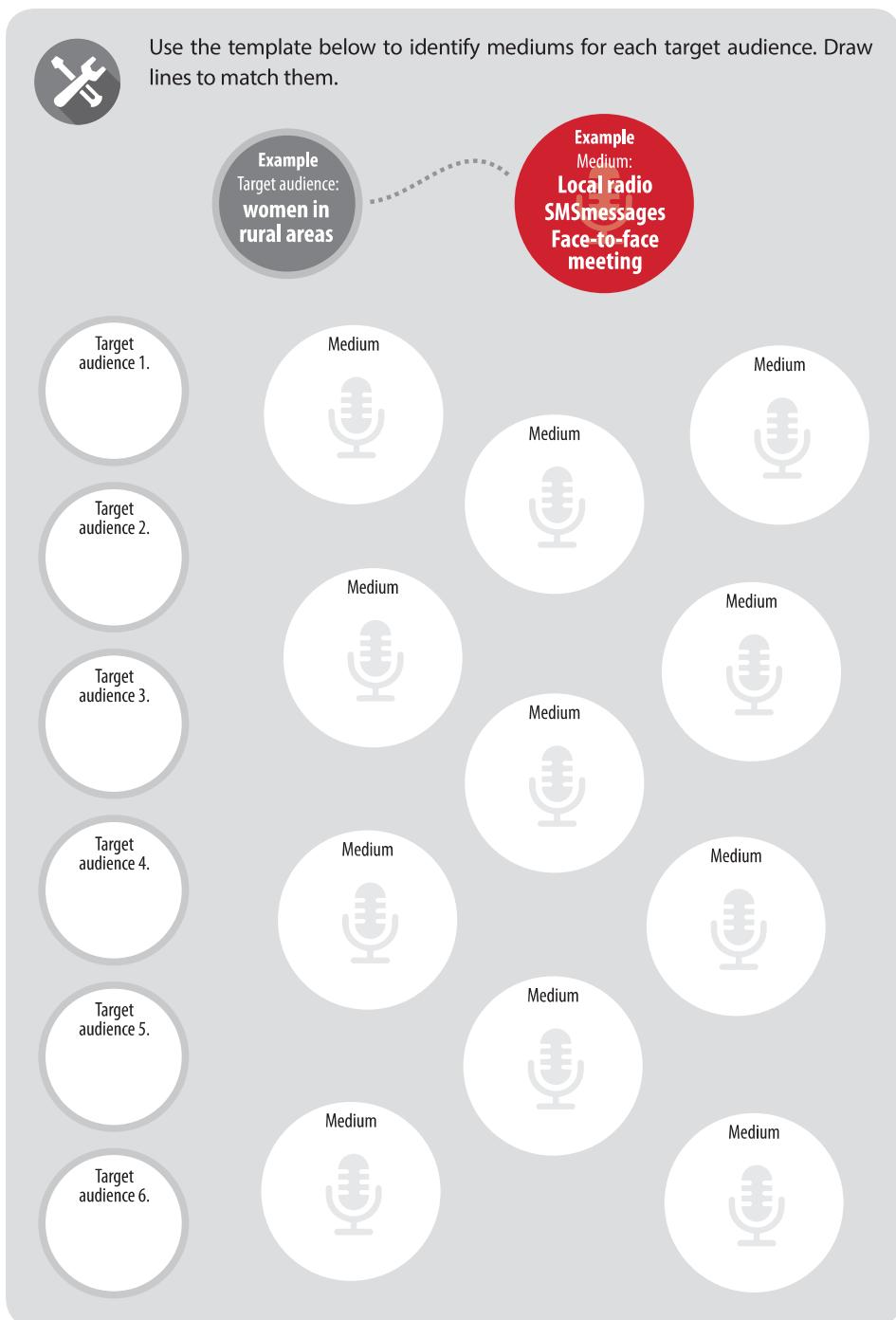


- Once you have identified the target audience (Step 2) and its particular segments as well as the content and the tone (Step 3), think about which media could reach your target audience.
- Identify which is the most appropriate type of medium that can serve as a platform to share and disseminate your counter narrative. It is often a combination of online and offline media, for example, a social media platform and street art in a particular location. Choose the most appropriate combination.
- Keep in mind the local contexts of your target audience. For example, you may not want to use Internet-based media to convey your counter narrative to a community who does not have Internet access.



#### **"WECAN" AND THE MEDIA**

The students' group "WeCAN" led by Oli decided to start a campaign and launch it by organising a school's music festival. The campaign would use social media platforms for the students and traditional local media to invite the local community to the festival. Marti is the group's online community manager. She has developed a website and created several groups on the main social media platforms where students socialise.





## DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

This is the final step of phase two, and it requires the development of a counter-narrative action plan. The action plan will bring together all the steps of phase two and will help you determine your journey of actions. The action can be developed for a short period of time (one to six months) or for long period of time (one to five years). Here we provide guidance for your action plan without determining the timeline of your counter narrative.



- At this point it's important you review again your objectives and see how much time you need to accomplish them, as well as the resources you will need.
- When developing your action plan, make sure you are as precise as possible. Always add the names of those responsible, the dates of deadlines, and so on.
- Ensure that the action plan is shared with your team and that everyone is aware of it, especially team members who will be directly involved.

 Use this template to develop your counter-narrative action plan.

| COUNTER-NARRATIVE ACTION PLAN                           |                               |   |   |   |  |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| ACTIONS   | RESPONSIBILITIES              | TIMELINE  | RESOURCES                                     | POTENTIAL BARRIERS  |  |
| Action 1: Arrange an interview on tv for refugee crisis | John Smith<br>Who will do it? | By when?<br>(week/month/year)<br><br>2nd week of may 2020 | A. resources available<br>B. resources needed | A. What individuals and organisations might resist?<br>B. Why? How?<br><br>A. The owner of the TV channel could potentially resist<br>B. Because he support anti-refugee groups and parties |  |
| Action 2:   |                               |   |   |   |  |
| Action 3:   |                               |   |   |   |  |
| Action 4:   |                               |   |   |   |  |
| Action 5:   |                               |   |   |   |  |
| Action 6:   |                               |   |   |   |  |
| Action 7:   |                               |   |   |   |  |

Use this template to develop your calendar.

| DEVELOP YOUR CALENDAR |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |             |             |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| day/week 1            | day/week 2 | day/week 3 | day/week 4 | day/week 5 | day/week 6 | day/week 7 | day/week 8 | day/week 9 | day/week 10 | day/week 11 | day/week 12 |
|                       |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |             |             |

Use this template to identify your promoters.

### IDENTIFY YOUR PROMOTERS

Promoter name:

What particular segments does your promoter belong to? (e.g. politician, religious leader, celebrities etc.)

Which target audience the promoter will effectively reach?  
And which target audience is valued?

What subjects of your counter narrative will the promoter engage with? Be precise! (e.g. legal status of refugees)

Has the promoter been engaged with similar initiatives in the past? If yes, explain how and what initiatives?

Is your promoter a voice trusted by the target audience?

What media does the promoter use? How often? What is their reach in the media? (e.g. number of followers online, etc.)

## 7.3 | PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENT THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

Once you have ensured all the steps for the design phase and you have prepared all the elements, it is time now to test your design phase by implementing your counter narrative. This is the phase where you engage with the oppressive narrative and start to challenge it. Here you start carrying out different actions you have prepared as part of your overall strategy to counter the oppressive narrative. This phase includes three steps which will help you to implement the counter narrative. The duration of implementation phase is not pre-determined here. It is up to you to decide how long the implementation phase will last.



### PREPARE A LAUNCH

The act of launching means to begin a new venture or phase and to introduce it to the public. The launch should mark the moment where your counter narrative meets with the public and you start to engage with each other. It is very important that the first launch aims to receive the public and media's attention, as well as grab their interest.



#### EIGHT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Set a date.** Decide on a date, time and a place (physical or online) for your launch. Make sure that the media knows about this, so that they come to cover your launch.
- **Find the perfect moment.** Sometimes you may have a great launching plan but precisely at the same date and time, a bigger event is happening in your town which will take the media's attention. Try to avoid launching your event with another important happening. On other hand, sometimes you might not be ready with your launch, but the existing circumstances that were created in a short time are perfect for launching your counter narrative. Don't wait: seize the moment, and launch the narrative immediately.
- **Make it interesting.** Your launch should also be interesting, sometimes provocative, and sometimes emotional. What can you do to make your launch interesting? Send out a "teasing" press release to call out media outlets; craft stories that give your audience a sense of emotion, the context, and so on.

- **Create desire.** Before you plan to launch the counter narrative, try to stir up the discussion, thus creating desire and anticipation among the public. This can be done simply by publishing blogs, holding livestream sessions, and so on. This will prepare the public for the launch of your counter narrative.
- **Get commitment in advance.** Try especially to get advance commitment from your supporters, whoever they may be: academics, celebrities, politicians, and so on. You need to ensure that you have their commitment, but also know precisely what and when they will engage during the launch.
- **Speak to your audience.** Speak their language, that is, if you are engaging young people, avoid academic, difficult-to-understand, language. Instead, use youth-friendly language, and creative visuals, for example.
- **Go where your audience is.** Again, if your audience is, for example, academia, then it is easier to reach out to them throughout universities and engage them through seminars or conferences. But this does not mean that this is the perfect way to engage religious leaders.
- **Your launch can be.... diverse:** it could be a comment or opinion piece from a prime minister who, for example, will publicly announce pro-LGBT law; it could be a concert to support a certain minority in your town and promote their cultural values, or it could be a TV discussion followed by video advert on sexism. So, there are no rules about what is considered a launch. Remember: the launch is the moment when you decide to put your counter narrative into action. And it's up to you how you decide to do it!



#### "WECAN" AND ITS LAUNCH

The students' group "WeCAN" led by Oli decided to start a campaign and launch it by organising a school's music festival. The media would be invited to cover the event. The main target audience are young people who are music and soccer fans, so it is an activity that was proposed and accepted by the group of young people themselves. Ale and Pim are in charge of the logistics. Ahme is in charge of the invitations and contacts with the media.



## ENGAGE WITH MEDIA

Engaging with media is a process that should accompany you throughout the implementation of the counter narrative. The media are the vehicles which will give you space to convey your counter narrative content and distribute it to reach the audience. A successful engagement with the media will ensure an efficient outreach of the counter narrative and broader reach of your audience.



### DOs

- Do identify what media your audiences use, listen to, read or watch. Is it national or local TV? Is it radio? Is it a daily newspaper? Or Internet-based newspaper?
- Do also find out what sections / shows of the particular media your audience is interested in: e.g. is it the sports show on cable TV? The morning show on radio?
- Do compile a database of journalists who can provide potential coverage.
- Do identify the show you want to go as well as its host. Schedule a meeting with the host / journalist and pitch the idea of the show (see under Tools about techniques of successful pitching).
- Do bring along some background information or a few pages from your website to explain what your organisation is all about and why it is important to give your counter narrative space in the media.
- Do organise meetings or events with journalists on issues that concern your counter narrative, for example, a training course on gender-based violence or a round-table discussion with different stakeholders.

### DON'Ts

- Don't reach out to the media through general invitations, using their general contact email account.
- Don't send out a pitch or press release with vague, general statements. Your story has to show, not tell, and you must convince the editor to cover the news that promotes your organisation rather than someone else's.
- Don't underestimate the importance of less prominent media such as community newspapers, local TV and radio, student journals, and so on. Sometimes these are the most efficient channels through which to communicate your counter narrative and reach a particular segment of your audience. Look at the entire spectrum of news media from different angles.



Use the template to plan your engagement with the media.

| ENGAGE WITH MEDIA  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Which media you are going to reach out to?  | <i>Example:</i> National TV "ABC"  |
| 2. Which section / show/ programme? Be precise!  | <i>Example:</i> The programme is called "inside story"   |
| 3. Describe the main features of the section / show/ programme?                        | <i>Example:</i> "Inside Story" is a weekly programme, which features in-depth stories for specific social issues. It lasts 30-45 minutes, every Wednesday from 18.00–18.45. It is held live in studio with other guests. |
| 4. Who is the potential audience?  | <i>Example:</i> Middle-aged citizens interested on social issues.  |
| 5. Who is responsible for the section / show/ programme? Add also the contact details. | <i>Example:</i> Programme Director is Amanda Dean. The host of the programme is John Smith.<br>Phone: 00009999000<br>Email: amanda@insidestory.sf<br>Twitter: @insidestory.sf   @amandaTV.sf   @johnTV.sf                |



Customise this database template for journalists.

| Name               | John Smith                       | Fatima Assaf  | Lina Svensson             |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Organisation       | ABC News, Australia              | Al Jazeera (mostly), Al-Monitor (sometimes), The National UAE (sometimes) | Sydsvenskan               |
| Media              | TV only                          | TV, newspaper, web  | Newspaper, web            |
| Reach              | National                         | International   | Local                     |
| Based in           | Sydney, Australia                | Various: Doha, Cairo, Beirut  | Malmö, Sweden             |
| Freelancer / Staff | Staff                            | Freelancer  | Staff                     |
| Email              | john.smith@abc.net.sf            | fatimassaf@gmail.vz   | l.svensson@sydsvenskan.ta |
| Twitter            | @johnsmith8.sf, 900+ followers   | @fatimassafTV.vz  | @linafina.ta              |
| Phone              | office: 226762, mobile: 07788112 |   |                           |

- Tips on how to pitch a story successfully through Message Map can be found at the following link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=phyU2BThK4Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phyU2BThK4Q)
- Use Alexa platform ([www.alexa.com](https://www.alexa.com)) to identify the audience numbers of online portals. (When you enter in the platform, scroll down and type the URL of the news portal under "Browse Top Sites".)



### "WECAN" AND THE MEDIA

The direct target audience of the "WeCAN" group activities are the students at high school. All students are invited to participate in the preparatory activities to organise a festival through their social platform, emails, posters on the main hall's board, and orally during classes. Oli and Ahme visited all classes. Oli did not feel confident going alone the first time. She was fearful they would think "or is it a Rolonian thing?" So Ahme went with her and they spoke together.

For the indirect target audience, the festival was announced through social media and mainstream media through the local TV channel, the local radio station, especially aiming to commit influential journalists, through posters in shop windows and at municipal centres. Local politicians of all parties were sent personal written invitations by regular post.



### CONSIDER INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Influential people are those who will reach the audience and potentially influence them. They will convey your messages and information. Influential people can be from diverse fields: politics, academia, sport, music, art, and so on. They usually have a high number of followers and, thus, are most likely to reach a large audience in a short time.



- Identify the right influential person who fits the topic of your counter narrative, for example, someone who has shown a life commitment to the issue you are addressing.
- Be careful not to engage influential people who, in the past, supported oppressive narratives and promoted hate speech.
- Think also what audience is most likely to be reached by the influential people and whether they can influence it. For example, if your counter narrative tackles the issue of religion, then you may consider involving religious leaders as your influencers.
- Before you connect with influential people, prepare a good, short pitch and some background information. Make sure you also precisely define what the duties of the influential person will be.

- Be careful not to overload people with information and tasks! Define their role and tasks realistically. Prepare all the materials beforehand. (For example, if the influential person is a singer who has a million followers on social networks, hand over ready-made Facebook posts and Tweets.)



Use the table below to engage with influential people.

#### HAVE YOU FOUND AN INFLUENTIAL PERSON TO SUPPORT YOUR CAMPAIGN?

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>1. IDENTIFY</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is your influential person?</li> <li>• What audience group will they reach and influence?</li> <li>• What topics/issues will they be engaged?</li> <li>• What media uses?</li> <li>• Describe any other background information from your influential persons</li> </ul>   |
| <b>2. CONNECT</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your pitch that will make him support you?</li> <li>• What will the duties of the influential person be?</li> <li>• What is the timeline of collaboration?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3. ACT</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and handover ready-made materials (e.g. facebook posts, tweets, infographics, etc.)</li> <li>• Hold regular meetings (i.e. bi-weekly, monthly, etc.)</li> <li>• Update the influential person with the outcomes, results, victories, etc.</li> <li>• Credit and recognise the contribution of the influential person</li> </ul> |

Use Klout ([www.klout.com](http://www.klout.com)) to identify the social media influencers.



#### "WECAN" AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

The main influential people who will support the festival are the members of the local group "The Hives", thanks to Ale's cousin who is a friend of the lead guitarist. They are very popular among all young people. Ms. Hilte had a connection to Silta, a nationally known singer of mixed origin, Rolonian and Marca-dian. Finally, the school's director contacted the mayor and the director of the local sports stadium.



## ENGAGE WITH EVERYONE INVOLVED

Behind every oppressive narrative there are people. Both the targets and the supporters of an oppressive narrative are human beings. It is about addressing hate, not blaming or attacking any group. Engaging with both groups can be challenging and difficult. Yet, engaging in such a transformative process can yield rewarding results.



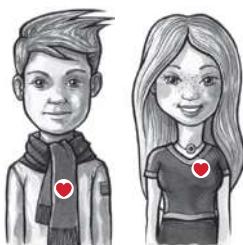
### Tips to engage with the supporters and producers of an oppressive narrative

- **Choose who to engage with carefully.** The producer or supporter of hate can be anyone: a young person, an old person, a politician, a friend, family member or a sports person. Some of them have a bigger influence in society than others. Choose who to engage with, carefully considering your objectives.
- **Boycott.** Sometimes it is the most efficient way to engage with the sites which publish and spread an oppressive narrative. Boycotting is a successful tactic to avoid sending visitors to their site.
- **Respond.** Identify what sources, information and facts the hate producer is using, and come up with alternative sources, facts and information. Post comments on sites which contain incorrect, biased or racist content. Send questions or complaints to authors / editors of any posts which show intolerance.
- **Report.** Use online reporting mechanisms or complaint procedures to alert website owners or TV show directors to examples of oppressive narratives. You can also collect information about the hate sites, newspapers, radio or TV shows registered in your country. Send this to your parliamentary representative.
- **Ignore the trolls.** The best engagement with the trolls is not to engage with them. Try to ignore them. Encourage others to do the same.

### Tips to engage with the targets of an oppressive narrative

- **Get in touch.** The targets of the oppressive narrative often suffer emotionally and psychologically. Try to contact them and express your empathy with them. It is important that you show that they are not alone. Explain also what they can do.
- **Organise.** The oppressive narratives are often built on false ideas, facts and myths. Encourage the targets of an oppressive narrative to come up with an alternative one, and publicise it wherever possible – on the Internet, on social networks or in mainstream media. Also organise a public action to show solidarity with other victims too.
- **Inform.** The targets of an oppressive narrative may not be aware of the action and methods they can undertake. Inform them about legal instruments, their rights, and also about the techniques to protect themselves.
- **Be careful.** Engaging with the targets of the oppressive narrative also means avoiding exposing them and yourself to further risks. This may cause more damage. Always ask those involved if they feel ready to engage, and in what ways. Do not push if they are hesitating, but ensure that they understand the possibilities of support which you and other organisations can offer.

Additional tips and examples on how to work with targets and producers of hate speech are described under Section 6.7.



### "WECAN" AND INVOLVING ALL GROUPS CONCERNED

The activities aim to create spaces for young people to reflect and have meaningful experiences, rather than to simply pass on the "right" information. The idea is to create a safe space for dialogue, for example, by planning an activity together or using a simulation game. Simulation games or role plays / role reversal put the group in similar situations to those related to hate speech, but avoid positioning people directly as the "perpetrator" and the "victim". The idea is to address the hate, and avoid labeling and humanising those involved. Oli and other young people who were targets of hate were offered support and advice by relevant professionals and people, from legal, emotional and educational perspectives.

## 7.4 | PHASE FOUR: MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

This is the fourth and the last phase of the guide. This phase covers the monitoring and evaluation of your counter narrative. It is an important moment to assess your impact and evaluate whether the objectives have been achieved. Ultimately, this is also the moment to reflect and discuss whether another iteration is necessary or not.



### DEFINE INDICATORS OF IMPACT

In order to evaluate the impact of your counter narrative, it is important that you define what the impact will look like, in other words, the specific changes that you expect to see happening as a result of your efforts. Your actions may have different effects, for example on people's opinions and behaviour, so you need to decide what kinds of effects or changes you want to monitor and what will tell you or indicate that these changes are happening, to what extent and in which ways. You may need answers to questions such as: Who was reached by the campaign? How did they perceive the message? How have their perceptions of the issue changed?

Evaluators often refer to the impact chain. In brief, it is assumed that after actions or activities such as disseminating a video or organising a seminar, these actions will have an effect on viewers' or participants' attitudes and perceptions, and, ultimately, that their behaviours will change partly or substantially as a result of that. For example, people may see certain content but this may not necessarily change their mind. These are a few examples of indicators, both quantitative (the extent of which a change is observed in numbers) and qualitative (the quality or type of change observed) at different stages in this chain:

| Level                    | Examples of indicators  |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Efforts or output</b> | Number of flyers and posters distributed<br>Number of "impressions", that is, how many times content appeared in a newsfeed or on a sidebar on social media platforms<br>Relevance of media in which your message appeared, for example, mainstream and widely-read, specific but very relevant for your target audience  |
| <b>Outcomes</b>          | <b>Reach or awareness</b><br>Number of visitors to an online portal<br>Number of likes, comments and shares which indicate the content was read and moved the viewer.<br><b>Changes in perceptions</b> through assessing the content of conversations online, for example, by analysing comments that show how people start having doubts about their extremist beliefs and indicate critical thinking skills, or comments that show they take a different point of view into account, express tolerance and respect<br><b>Changes in behaviour</b><br>Number of people who ask for assistance to exit extremist groups<br>People show that they can work with others having overcome prejudices and fears and adopt a language of human rights in their actions. |
| <b>Impact</b>            | <b>Changes in social relations</b><br>Number of hate speech comments decreases<br>Number of people joining extremist groups decreases<br>Number of young people participating in community building and human rights activities increases<br>Relations among communities show more trust and co-operation, for example, new organisations and groups are joined by people of different origins and affiliations, when previously they would not have.   |

You can read more about how to assess the reach of your counter narrative and how to monitor and analyse conversations online in Steps 3 and 4 of this phase.



- For an online guide and tools on monitoring and evaluation for youth organisations, visit **The Learning Curve** ([www.unoy.org/evaluationguide](http://www.unoy.org/evaluationguide)).
- For more information on how to develop indicators in educational activities, see **Educational Evaluation in Youth Work**. T-Kit No. 10, published by the Council of Europe – European Union Youth Partnership.
- For examples and more details on social media metrics of online counter-narrative impact indicators, see the **Counter-narrative Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook** and **The Impact of Counter-Narratives**, Institute of Strategic Dialogue and Against Violent Extremism (<http://www.strategicdialogue.org/>).



## OBSERVE AND ASK

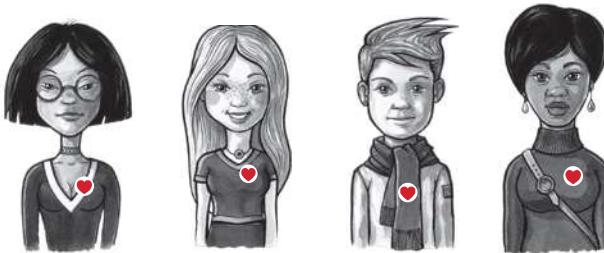
Observing carefully how your targeted audience is reacting to your campaign is a vital aspect of your monitoring and evaluation efforts. To obtain more insights, you can also gather information by asking different participants and observers, for example, through a survey or an interview. Surveys and interviews can be done face-to-face or through Internet-based tools and platforms. They can be done through writing, voice recording or video recording. It is up to you how you choose to do it. There are different survey and interviewing techniques. We will explore some of them in this step, and see how they can help you monitor and evaluate the impact of your counter narrative.



- The interviews should run with potential people who were part of your target audience. Try to identify who they may be and run interviews with them. For example, if your target audience were doctors who refused to treat refugees, then go in to hospital and ask for interviews.
- When you are approaching people, or groups for interviews, always explain what the interview will be about, how long it will last, and whether it will be published or confidential. Be honest with them. If they cannot make it immediately, try to reschedule an appropriate time or, alternatively, do it online.
- Choose the method of interviewing: by writing, voice recording or video recording. Always ask the interviewees whether they feel fine with the interviewing method. If you choose to run the interview through video recording, don't forget to prepare and test in advance the camera and microphone. Also make sure that you have an outline of guiding questions for the interview.
- Before you start the interview, record the date, time and location of the interview. In order to avoid any potential risk, ask the interviewees to sign a document where they agree to be interviewed under mutually-agreed conditions.
- Keep the interview short, straightforward and concise.



- For different interviewing methods and techniques, refer to Better-Evaluation ([www.betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/interviews](http://www.betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/interviews)).
- If you are operating in challenging environments and want to organise data collection, use KoBo Toolbox suite ([www.kobotoolbox.org](http://www.kobotoolbox.org)). It is a free and open source.
- Google Forms is a practical tool to design, collect and analyse information ([www.google.com/forms/about](http://www.google.com/forms/about)).
- FrontlineSMS ([www.frontlinesms.com](http://www.frontlinesms.com)) is another tool that allows you easily to send, receive, and manage SMS messages and data from anywhere in the world.



#### **"WECAN" MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY**

The group discusses what will indicate that their efforts are producing the changes they want to see:

- They will keep a record of the number and type of discriminatory comments that appear on their school's online social platforms.
- They will observe if classmates have changed their attitudes and way of relating to others, for example, if they stop making jokes about Rolonians and any other group that is perceived as different.
- They will do an anonymous online survey.
- They will propose a simulation game (such as 'Clash of Freedoms' in Bookmarks, a game in which two communities with opposing views on freedom of expression live together on the same island). They will observe attitudes during the game and the opinions expressed during its debriefing.
- They will meet periodically as a team to share and analyse their observations.



## ESTIMATE THE REACH

In this step you will estimate the reach, that is, the number of people that your counter narrative has reached. While in the first phase you assessed the media distribution of the oppressive narrative, here you will have a larger picture of the outreach of your counter narrative and the approximate number of people that were reached.



- Estimating the reach sounds like a scientific exercise but it is actually much simpler. To start with, make a list of media channels that you have used to distribute the counter narrative. Once you have the final list, try to estimate the approximate reach by using the tools below.



- Most of mainstream media, such as newspaper, TV and radio, can provide you with various statistics of their audiences and outreach. So, if you have been invited on to a TV show, ask the host of the show to provide approximate audience numbers. Do the same for radio and newspaper.
- If you are using billboards to promote your counter narrative, most of the companies who rent them have an approximate number of people who see the billboard daily, based on the location. Ask the company to provide the data.
- If you are using hard-copy materials, such as reports, magazines and brochures, count the number of the materials you have distributed.
- If you want to know more about the number of visitors of online portals, use the Alexa platform ([www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)).
- If you are running a website and want to know detailed analytics for the numbers of visitors, install and run Google Analytics ([www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)), although most blogging platforms, such as WordPress, provide analytics regarding the visits.
- If you are using social networks, most of them have integrated the analytic tool that provides detailed information about the reach.
- Hootsuite ([www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)) is a platform that enables you to integrate all social media channels onto one dashboard, monitor conversations and collect different metrics and analytics for your social media distribution.



## MONITOR THE CONVERSATIONS

Narratives cause reactions which are mainly manifested through conversations among people. These conversations can take the classical form of conversations between people or groups in physical spaces, or through Internet-based platforms. In order to see how the audience or the oppressive narrative is reacting to your counter narrative, you need to monitor the conversations online and offline.



- Go where your audience is and see what their reaction is. For example, if you have published an article on your website and shared it across other social networks, use one of the tools below to find out who shared your article. Find out also how your article is received by your audience.
- Although the Internet provides many more possibilities to monitor online conversations, don't focus only on online space. If, for example, you have disseminated a newspaper on issues related to antisemitism, go to the physical space too, and observe if people are reading it, and what their reaction to it is.
- Look also for any counter reaction to your counter narrative. Your alternative facts or sources might have disturbed the oppressive narrative and, thus, may cause a counter reaction online, in mainstream media or in physical spaces.
- Follow mainstream media regularly and find out whether other people are mentioning your counter narrative and in what context they are mentioning it. You may not be able to follow 24 hours, but identify the potential shows and programmes which may react to or use your counter narrative. Furthermore, if you have used billboards or other static spaces to distribute your counter narrative, monitor them and see if they were used, painted or vandalised. If yes, keep a record of them by taking photos.



- Search engines such as DuckDuckGo and Google can provide real-time updates on different content and trends on the Internet. Use one of the search engines for broader monitoring.
- Facebook search is another tool that can help you filter your search based on hashtags (i.e. #humanrights), places, interest, and so on.
- Netvibes ([www.netvibes.com](http://www.netvibes.com)) is a real-time social media monitoring tool that allows you to filter, analyse and collect a broad range of information by monitoring, for example, topics, hashtags and accounts.
- Keyhole ([www.keyhole.co](http://www.keyhole.co)) is a hashtag tracker for Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. It shows how many people posted with your hashtag, along with the number of retweets, likes, impressions, and so on.
- Social Mentions ([www.socialmention.com](http://www.socialmention.com)) is a real-time social media search and analysis platform which collects user-generated content; you can use it without the need to sign up for an account.
- Tweetdeck (<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>) is a tool for real-time monitoring, engagement and organising. It allows you to monitor multiple accounts and hashtags at the same time.



## ASSESSING IMPACT

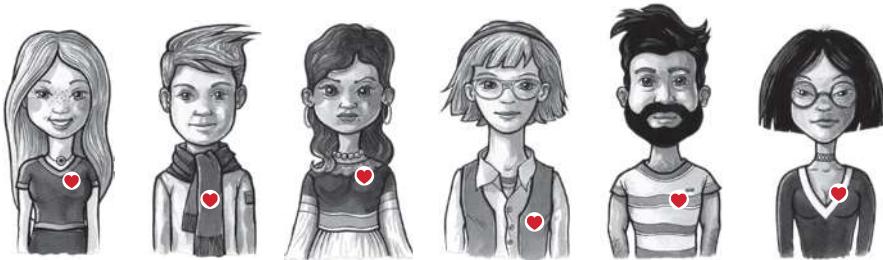
This is the last step of the last phase of this guide. After you have received first-hand information from your target audience through interviews, and after you have estimated the outreach, it is the time now to reflect on your counter narrative's impact and evaluate the achievements. This is the moment where you come back to the iteration and decide if it is necessary to repeat another iteration, that is, to re-visit and implement all four phases again. It is important, though, to emphasise that if you do decide to run another iteration, then you should adopt the four phases based on what you have learnt, and from the failures and outcomes of the first iteration.



- Measuring and evaluating the outcomes is critical to the learning cycle. Without a good evaluation of the impact a counter narrative has made, there is often not enough information about the direction or objectives for the next round of iteration. Measuring the outcomes helps your team understand what worked well and where intervention is needed.
- Evaluation should not be a hurdle for the team. By viewing this phase as an opportunity for learning, outcome measurement can be a rewarding experience for everyone.
- The evaluation process is iterative – return to the interviews you ran and the estimate reach. Use stories, feedback and data to discover which medium, content, and speaker have been the most successful and which not. Keep a note of every outcome!
- At the end, identify and decide if it's necessary to run another iteration of the counter narrative based on the outcomes of the evaluation.
- Don't forget: to challenge oppressive narratives and have impact sometimes takes a long time. You need patience and persistence. Keep going!



- BetterEvaluations provides a broad scope of evaluation methods, techniques and templates ([www.betterevaluation.org](http://www.betterevaluation.org)).
- Use one of the Evaluation toolkits developed by FSG / Reimagining Social Change<sup>1</sup>
- Feedback commons developed by Keystone also provides useful tools that will help you evaluate – [feedbackcommons.org](http://feedbackcommons.org) –



### "WECAN": WHAT'S NEXT?

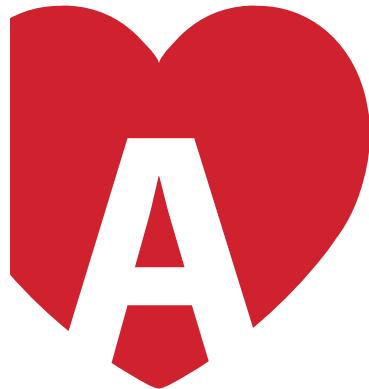
After the activities, Oli organised a team's meeting to plan follow-up activities. Some shared they observed a change in attitudes and perceptions in themselves and in other classmates. They now felt empowered and enthusiastic to do similar activities after the summer break. The groups on social media platforms were full of comments and pictures of the festival and the trip to Strasbourg. However, there were some students and politicians who did not participate. How would it be possible to reach them? What could the group learn from this experience? The group learned a lot at many levels, from learning to cope with discrimination to a wide range of skills. But the fears and anger remain latent and social issues are still unresolved in their country and region. They need to keep going, and they need go deeper. It is time for a new iteration but feeling assured, yes, we can do it!

### SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER IN 5 POINTS

- Some phases and steps are suggested to support you to develop a counter- or alternative-narrative campaign. If Oli and her friends could do it, you can do it!
- It starts with assessing the oppressive narrative you want to counter and de-construct.
- It continues by designing and carefully planning your actions. There are many tools to help you plan your campaign. Plan carefully.
- Implementing the campaign implies launching or presenting it to the public, and engaging with all relevant stakeholders and with media.
- Reflect on the effects of your actions and what you learned. Think about what will indicate that you achieved your goals. Take your lessons learned into account when planning a new iteration of your campaign or other possible actions.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> [www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/impact-practical-guide-evaluating-community-information-projects#download-area](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/impact-practical-guide-evaluating-community-information-projects#download-area)  
and [www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/trustee-evaluation-toolkit-0](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/trustee-evaluation-toolkit-0)



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **Do counter narratives specifically address radical and violent Islamism?**

Counter narratives address any form of violent extremism, be it right-wing, left-wing or religious-based extremism as they all share the idea that it is legitimate to use violence to pursue political or other goals. Extremisms do not tolerate the ideas of others. Counter narratives aim to discredit and demystify the idea that violence is a legitimate tool and promote the idea that respect for difference and human dignity is necessary. Although the term 'counter narrative' has become more known in the context of the work against radicalisation and violent extremism, including Jihadism, using narratives aiming to prevent violence and oppression related to race, gender orientation or origin has a long-standing tradition in several disciplines and professional fields.

#### **What are the target audiences of counter and alternative narratives?**

Counter narratives and alternative narratives aim to reach various target audiences depending on the context. Counter narratives aim to reach a) those who may or already sympathise with extremist views, preventing their further involvement "working upstream"; b) those who already hold extremist views, supporting individuals to change their views and behaviour, for example, through one-to-one messaging and support to exit extremist groups. Alternative narratives strengthen positive, inclusive and constructive ideas and aim to reach the whole population, including producers of hate speech who may be able to become acquainted with a new narrative altogether.

#### **Does being proud of a country make me a supporter of an oppressive narrative?**

No. Being proud of one's country and expressing it does not make one a supporter of an oppressive narrative. The traditions, heritage and symbols of one's country are part of our identity and of feeling attached to a particular community. What makes a person a supporter of an oppressive narrative is denying others their right to express pride for their country, community or idea, and proposing that one group or idea should be considered superior to those of others.

#### **How do I address my concerns about migration, unemployment or lack of housing without expressing hate speech?**

It is important that you express your concerns and ideas and use all available channels of democratic participation. There are organisations working to address these challenges. You can support or join one of the organisations that you feel best approaches the issues you are concerned with. Additionally, you can also improve your understanding of these issues. Often, there are multiple factors at play. Contact organisations and researchers who are working on these issues from different perspectives and political positions and get informed. If you can, take a course on these issues, start your own research or join a social studies programme.

**Why should I involve targets of hate speech when developing counter and alternative narratives?**

Involving the targets of hate speech will make your counter-narrative campaign more legitimate and effective. Targets of hate speech can provide valuable information and, if involved, the messages may be more credible. Contact organisations and support groups that can assist you and link you up to them. Work with those who are prepared and ready for it. Establish an honest two-way process of communication. A strategy is usually much stronger when it is developed through consulting a variety of perspectives.

**Why should I involve former extremists or haters when developing counter and alternative narratives?**

Those who have been involved in extremist groups, so called “formers”, and those who were producers of hate speech in the past, but changed their attitude are a key group to work with if they are open to it. For example, if former skin heads share their negative experiences and exit experiences with those already active or supporting extremist ideas, it will be more credible for them than if they hear the message from others who did not have such a first-hand experience. They know what they are talking about and what it feels like to be in that situation.

**Now I understand that I “liked” hate speech, what can I do to avoid it in the future?**

Realising that hate speech harms others is an important first step. In the future, do not re-post or share messages without checking their reliability or if they contain negative stereotypes about other groups which deny their human rights. Join a human rights group or start one. Learn more about human rights and link up with the No Hate Speech Movement campaign.

**Do I need special training to start a counter-narrative campaign?**

No. Any person can engage in actions against hate speech! It does not require formal training nor to pass an exam to prove one has specific competences. Yet, it is necessary that actions are carefully planned and that those engaging in them are as adequately prepared as possible. The necessary preparations will largely depend on the type of action and its specific context.

## APPENDIX 2 | UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (Summary)

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
2. Everyone has the right to be treated in the same way, irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, property, birth, or other status.
3. Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.
4. No-one has the right to treat you as a slave nor should you make anyone your slave.
5. Everyone has the right to be free from torture and from inhuman and degrading treatment.
6. Everyone has the right to recognition by the law.
7. The law is the same for everyone; it should be applied in the same way to all.
8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy when his/her rights have not been respected.
9. No-one has the right to detain or imprison you unjustly or expel you from your own country.
10. Everyone has the right to a fair and public trial.
11. Everyone should be considered innocent until found guilty.
12. Everyone has the right to have their privacy (including home and family life) respected.
13. Everyone has the right to live and travel freely within state borders.
14. Everyone has the right to go to another country and ask for protection if they are being persecuted or are in danger of being persecuted.
15. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
16. Everyone has the right to marry and have a family.
17. Everyone has the right to own property and possessions.
18. Everyone has the right to believe whatever they wish (including, but not confined to, religion).
19. Everyone has the right to say what they think and to give and receive information freely.
20. Everyone has the right to join associations and to meet others in a peaceful way.
21. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, which should be chosen through free and fair elections.
22. Everyone has the right to social security.
23. Everyone has the right to work for a fair wage in a safe environment and to join a trade union.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.
25. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and of their family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.
26. Everyone has the right to education, including free primary education.
27. Everyone has the right to share in their community's cultural life.
28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised.
29. Everyone must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.
30. No-one has the right to take away any of the rights in this declaration.

## **APPENDIX 3 | THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS PROTOCOLS**

**(Simplified version of selected articles)**

### **SUMMARY OF THE PREAMBLE**

The member governments of the Council of Europe work towards peace and greater unity based on human rights and fundamental freedoms. With this Convention they decide to take the first steps to enforce many of the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Article 1 – Obligation to respect human rights**

States must ensure that everyone has the rights stated in this Convention.

**Article 2 – Right to life**

You have the right to life.

**Article 3 – Prohibition of torture**

No-one ever has the right to hurt you or torture you. Even in detention your human dignity has to be respected.

**Article 4 – Prohibition of slavery and forced labour**

It is prohibited to treat you as a slave or to impose forced labour on you.

**Article 5 – Right to liberty and security**

You have the right to liberty. If you are arrested you have the right to know why. If you are arrested you have the right to stand trial soon, or to be released until the trial takes place.

**Article 6 – Right to a fair trial**

You have the right to a fair trial before an unbiased and independent judge. If you are accused of having committed a crime, you are innocent until proved guilty. You have the right to be assisted by a lawyer who has to be paid by the state if you are poor.

**Article 7 – No punishment without law**

You cannot be held guilty of a crime if there was no law against it when you did it.

**Article 8 – Right to respect for private and family life**

You have the right to respect for your private and family life, your home and correspondence.

**Article 9 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion**

You have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. You have the right to practise your religion at home and in public and to change your religion if you want.

**Article 10 – Freedom of expression**

You have the right to responsibly say and write what you think and to give and receive information from others. This includes freedom of the press.

**Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association**

You have the right to take part in peaceful meetings and to set up or join associations including trade unions.

**Article 12 – Right to marry**

You have the right to marry and to have a family.

**Article 13 – Right to an effective remedy**

If your rights are violated, you can complain about this officially to the courts or other public bodies.

**Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination**

You have these rights regardless of your skin colour, sex, language, political or religious beliefs, or origins.

**Article 15 – Derogation in time of emergency**

In time of war or other public emergency, a government may do things which go against your rights, but only when strictly necessary. Even then, governments are not allowed, for example, to torture you or to kill you arbitrarily.

**Article 16 – Restrictions on political activity of aliens**

Governments may restrict the political activity of foreigners, even if this would be in conflict with Articles 10, 11 or 14.

**Article 17 – Prohibition of abuse of rights**

Nothing in this Convention can be used to damage the rights and freedoms in the Convention.

**Article 18 – Limitation on use of restrictions of rights**

Most of the rights in this Convention can be restricted by a general law which is applied to everyone. Such restrictions are only allowed if they are strictly necessary.

**Articles 19 to 51**

These articles explain how the European Court of Human Rights works.

**Article 34 – Individual applications**

If your rights contained in the Convention have been violated in one of the member states, you should first appeal to all competent national authorities. If that does not resolve the problem for you, then you may appeal directly to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

**Article 52 – Inquiries by the Secretary General**

If the Secretary General of the Council of Europe requests it, a government must explain how its national law protects the rights of this Convention.

## Protocols to the Convention

**Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 – Protection of property**

You have the right to own property and use your possessions.

**Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 – Right to education**

You have the right to go to school.

**Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 – Right to free elections**

You have the right to elect the government of your country by secret vote.

**Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 – Freedom of movement**

If you are lawfully within a country, you have the right to go where you want and to live where you want within it.

**Article 1 of Protocol No. 6 – Abolition of the death penalty**

You cannot be condemned to death or executed by the state.

**Article 2 of Protocol No. 7 – Right of appeal in criminal matters**

You may appeal to a higher court if you have been convicted of committing a crime.

**Article 3 of Protocol No. 7 – Compensation for wrongful conviction**

You have the right to compensation if you have been convicted of committing a crime and it turns out that you were innocent.

**Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 – General prohibition of discrimination**

You cannot be discriminated against by public authorities for reasons of, for example, your skin colour, sex, language, political or religious beliefs, or origins.

## APPENDIX 4 | SAMPLE WORKSHOP OUTLINE

This is a workshop outline that provides background information for facilitators on how to run workshops with young people on developing counter narratives. It is divided into 4 phases, which can be run separately or in combination with each other.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>GROUP SIZE</b> | Any   |
| <b>TIME</b>       | PHASE 1: 60 Minutes<br>PHASE 2: 90 Minutes<br>PHASE 3: 90 Minutes<br>PHASE 4: 45-60 Minutes   |
| <b>CASE</b>       | Please identify a case of oppressive narrative that you want to use as an example during the workshop.  |
| <b>MATERIALS</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart papers, post-its and markers</li> <li>• Copies of evidence or information about the oppressive narrative case</li> <li>• Copies of the guide (Chapter 8), that is, the phases and steps proposed</li> <li>• Any additional visual material (photos, videos) is welcome</li> <li>• Projector, sound speaker and other digital devices (for example, camera, tablet, smartphone) are assets</li> <li>• A big space with tables and chairs.</li> <li>• Familiarise yourself with the guide and with the additional tips and tools.</li> <li>• Tell the group before the session about the topics of: counter narrative, oppressive narrative, alternative narrative, etc. and tell them what you are going to do during the workshop; guide them through each phase.</li> <li>• Identify a case of oppressive narrative. It can be a case that can respond to the participants' context or something else. Look at the Bookmarks or the No Hate Speech platform for cases.</li> </ul> |

**PHASE 1 – Assess the oppressive narrative:** In this phase you will examine the oppressive narrative in detail. It will help you understand its dynamics inside, but also the context under which it is happening, and its distribution.

**PHASE 2 – Design the counter narrative:** This is the phase where you make strategic decisions, pick up techniques, tactics and argument you want to use, and choose the media platforms.

**PHASE 3 – Implement the counter narrative:** Do not get confused and scared – we are not going to ask you to implement the entire counter narrative. Within the context of a workshop, it is proposed that you consider running a “simulation” or “role play” of the counter narrative and put into action the intervention you designed during the second phase, or at least parts of it.

**PHASE 4 – Monitor and evaluate the counter narrative:** This will help you see the fruits of your work, that is, how your counter narrative is performing and what the impact of it is. This phase will also help you to reflect on the work you have done and how to further adjust it, if necessary, through another iteration.

### INSTRUCTIONS: BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

1. Run the phases one by one. Start with the phase 1 and end with the phase 4. Do not start with phase 2, 3 or 4.
2. Each phase is designed to be run within a mini-workshop. If you see that the groups have finished earlier than the suggested time, feel free to finish the process earlier.
3. Don't handover a copy of the complete guide to participants, as you may distract them with the rest of steps. Prepare separate copies of each phase and distribute them for each mini-workshop.

4. Each phase is broken down into tips and tools. Familiarise yourself with them. If you have expertise in a certain step or tool, feel free to adapt and contribute further.
5. Print the ready-made templates that come with the guide. In absence of a printer, try to copy them onto a flipchart.
6. Please remember that only phase 1 contains an example, whereas the other phases do not have examples. This was done purposely so as not to overload the reader at this stage.
7. Familiarise yourself with the themes of narrative, oppressive narrative and alternative narrative. Always use examples to illustrate the concepts, as often they seem abstract.
8. Familiarise yourself also with the topics of hate speech, stereotypes, prejudices, sexism, and so on. Use Bookmarks<sup>1</sup> to find more information and materials.

### **INSTRUCTIONS: DURING THE WORKSHOP**

1. Before you start the workshop for phase 1, encourage a discussion with participants about the topics of oppressive narratives, hate speech, stereotypes, prejudices, and so on. Ask them how they affect human rights and what the connections are.
2. Explain to them what they will do: provide a brief overview of the Guide and how it is structured. Tell them that each phase will consist of a mini-workshop, and that they will be working together to develop a counter narrative.
3. Always start with phase 1 and explain to them step-by-step what they have to do. Explain also the Tips and what Tools there are in the guide that can help them.
4. Some phases and some steps may not have tools (for example, phase 2, step 4), but explain that the checklist is as important as the tool or the tip.
5. Provide detailed information for the case they will work with. Ask participants for clarifying questions and ensure everyone understands the phases and the case.
6. There are two approaches that you as facilitator can take to facilitate the mini-workshops:
  - guide participants through each phase and step, and facilitate the findings, the work, discussions and outcomes
  - leave them to work independently, but keep a close eye on their work, and check in regularly on how the process is going and if they need help.
7. After each phase, run a quick debrief. Alternatively, you may also consider running one general debriefing session at the end of all four phases. Remember, though, that the participants may be tired and overloaded, so you may need to refresh their thinking.

### **DEBRIEFING**

Give participants some time at the end of the workshop to look at the work they have done. You could begin by going round the group, and asking everyone to use one word to describe their feelings.

- How was the first phase? If it was good, explain why? If it was not, explain again why?
- What were the main challenges? If they are solved, ask how.
- What was missing from the guide that you think may help it?
- What else would you add to the guide to make it more complete and understandable?
- Which parts did you like most? Which parts did you not like?
- Any other general comment?

### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-/connexions>



## APPENDIX 5 | ANNOTATED RESOURCES

This appendix lists and briefly describes useful resources: publications and online tools that could be useful when implementing your counter- or alternative-narrative campaign.

### Council of Europe publications

- Council of Europe (2014), **Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users**

This guide is to be used by individuals and to be relied on when facing difficulties in exercising their rights: help governments and public institutions to discharge their obligations to protect, respect and remedy human rights; be a kick-starter for national discussions on protection and promotion of human rights of Internet users and their empowerment in Internet environments; promote corporate social responsibility by encouraging the private sector to act responsibly and with respect for the human rights of individuals that they contract with.

Available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/internet-users-rights/guide](http://www.coe.int/en/web/internet-users-rights/guide)

- Council of Europe (2012), **Compass**. A Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

Compass is a key reference manual for people involved in value-based youth work and non-formal education. It is currently available in more than 30 languages, ranging from Arabic and Japanese to Icelandic and Basque. This publication, first published in 2002, has been updated and was republished in 2012. It supports the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Its version for children is called Composito.

Available at: [www.coe.int/compass](http://www.coe.int/compass)

- Council of Europe (2011), **Living together. Combining diversity and freedom in 21st century Europe**. Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland, asked an independent "Group of Eminent Persons" (the Group) to prepare a report on the challenges arising from the resurgence of intolerance and discrimination in Europe. The report assesses the seriousness of the risks, identifies their sources and makes a series of proposals for "living together" in open European societies. The report concludes with 59 "proposals for action", the first 17 of which are labelled "strategic recommendations", while the remainder, "specific recommendations", address mainly the European Union, the Council of Europe, and their member states.

Available at: <https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/2011/KYIV%20WEBSITE/Report%20on%20diversity.pdf>

- Council of Europe – North South Centre together with the Global Education Week Network (2008), **Global Education Guidelines**. Concepts and Methodologies on Global Education for Educators and Policy makers

This is a guide to understanding and practising global education. The guide raises important issues about the responsibilities of educators in raising global awareness, and knowledge on worldwide issues across the curriculum and in non-formal projects and activities.

Available at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/GE/GE/GE-Guidelines/GEguidelines-web.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/GE/GE/GE-Guidelines/GEguidelines-web.pdf)

- Council of Europe (2006), **Internet Literacy Handbook**

This is an online learning tool for parents, teachers and young people to develop their skills in using the Internet. The handbook contains 25 fact sheets. Each sheet presents a specific theme related to the use of Internet.

The sheets point out ethical issues and security, and provide advice on how best to use the Internet for educational purposes. It also provides ideas for practical activities in class or at home, presents best practices in terms of the use of Internet and offers many definitions and links to websites giving practical examples and other detailed information.

Available at: [www.coe.int/t/dghl/StandardSetting/InternetLiteracy/hbk\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/StandardSetting/InternetLiteracy/hbk_en.asp)

- Gomes, R. (ed.) (2013), **Bookmarks – A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education**

Bookmarks is published to support the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign of the Council of Europe for human rights online. Bookmarks is useful for educators wanting to address hate speech online from a human rights perspective, both inside and outside the formal education system. The manual is designed for working with learners aged 13 to 18 but the activities can be adapted to other age ranges.

Available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks--connexions>

- Jackson, R. **Signposts**. Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education Signposts provides advice on how the study of religions and non-religious world views can contribute to intercultural education in schools in Europe.

Available at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/resources/signposts\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/resources/signposts_EN.pdf)

- Titley, G., Keen, E. and Földi, L. (2012), **Starting Points for Combating Hate Speech Online**

This publication contains three studies about online hate speech and ways to address it.

Available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/starting-point>

- Weber, A. (2009), **Manual on Hate Speech**. This manual clarifies the concept of hate speech and guides policy makers, experts and society as a whole on the criteria followed by the European Court of Human Rights in its case law relating to the right to freedom of expression.

Available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/manual-on-hate-speech>

## Manuals

- Brown, R. (2015), **Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech**, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

This guide offers activists, religious and civil society leaders the strategies and tools they need to prevent dangerous speech from influencing audiences. The guide is organised into a reference book and three workbooks, which are designed for use in workshops or with small groups.

Available at: [www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20160229-Defusing-Hate-Guide.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20160229-Defusing-Hate-Guide.pdf)

- **Communication Tool**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Helsinki

This book is a guide to using comics as a campaigning tool and as a participatory communication method. Grassroots comics refers to comics made by socially active people themselves representing genuine voices, rather than made by campaign and art professionals.

Available at: [www.worldcomics.fi/files/8413/6517/4053/grassroots-book.pdf](http://www.worldcomics.fi/files/8413/6517/4053/grassroots-book.pdf)

- Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line Defender (2009), **Security in a Box**

This is an online guide of tools and tactics for digital security, especially built for human rights defenders.

Available at: <https://securityinabox.org>

- Tuck, H. and Silverman, T. (2016), **The Counter-narrative Manual**, Institute of Strategic Dialogue, London. This manual was created to help anyone looking to respond proactively to extremist propaganda with counter-narrative campaigns, and is intended as a beginner's guide for those with little or no previous experience of counter-narrative campaigning. It takes readers through the main stages of creating, launching and evaluating an effective counter-narrative campaign. It can also be used alongside an online Counter-narrative Toolkit.

Available at: [www.counternarratives.org](http://www.counternarratives.org)

## Research and Analysis

- Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., Brannen, J. (Eds) (2008), **The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods**, SAGE, London

This Handbook includes chapters on each phase of the research process: research design, methods of data collection, and the processes of analysing and interpreting data. Especially relevant are the chapters 'Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis' by Antaki, C. and 'Analyzing Narratives and Story-Telling' by Hyvärinen, M.

- Fielding, N., Lee, R.M., Blank, G. (2008), **The SAGE Handbook of Online Research**, SAGE, London  
This handbook's chapters show the wide variety of online social research. The chapters related to digital text content analysis, virtual ethnography, online surveys and online social networks are particularly relevant. These research methods can be used when analysing the content, context, and impact of narratives online.
- Saltaman, E. and Kirt, J. (2016), **Guidance for International Youth Engagement PVE and CVE**. Youth Responses to Resolution 2250 and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. London: Institute of Strategic Dialogue and YouthCan  
This report offers insights from a survey conducted among youth workers aged 16-33 about the drivers of violent extremism in their contexts, and about current methods in the prevention of violent extremism, especially for engaging communities and empowering youth. Two of their key conclusions are 1) there is a strong belief that social exclusion and feelings of marginalisation are driving youth to embrace extremist ideologies; and 2) strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism should include educational programmes to enhance vital skill-sets such as critical thinking, respect for human rights, digital literacy, and a sense of global citizenship, and build on already existing networks and structures.  
Available at [www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/YouthCAN-UN-PVE-Survey.pdf](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/YouthCAN-UN-PVE-Survey.pdf)
- Silverman, T. et al. (2016), **The Impact of Counter-Narratives**. Insights from a year-long cross-platform pilot study of counter-narrative curation, targeting, evaluation and impact, Institute of Strategic Dialogue and Against Violent Extremism, London  
This report describes the development, deployment, and evaluation of three counter-narrative campaigns by AVE and Jigsaw (an incubator within Alphabet that uses technology to address geopolitical issues) with additional in-kind and financial support from Facebook and Twitter. The campaigns analysed were Average Mohamed, ExitUS and Harakat-ut-Taleem. The report shows that people going through a process of personal de-radicalisation were willing to reach out and contact an organisation on social media in response to a counter-narrative campaign. Available at: [http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Impact-of-Counter-Narratives\\_ON-LINE.pdf](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Impact-of-Counter-Narratives_ON-LINE.pdf)

### Inspirational stories

- Burillo, A. et al. (eds) (2014) (2014). **25 Stories for Peace**, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, the Hague  
This is a collection of 25 inspirational stories of positive transformations written by young peace builders from various countries. The stories in themselves constitute an alternative narrative of young people as positive agents of change, rather than as victims or perpetrators of violence as they are commonly portrayed by policy-making and academic discourses on the role of youth in conflict situations.  
Available at: <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/25-Stories-Publication-Final-for-web.pdf>
- Fischer, D. and Altynay B. (2013), **Stories to Inspire You**, Transcend University Press, Oslo  
This is a collection of short stories, mostly using humour, which all refer to peace building at the interpersonal and at the social level.
- The **Culture of Peace News Network** (CPNN) is a project of the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace, initiated by the United Nations, where positive news of alternatives to violence and achievements towards a culture of peace are periodically shared online and through a newsletter.  
Available at: <http://cpnn-world.org>

## APPENDIX 6 | GLOSSARY

### **Alternative narrative**

An alternative narrative is a human rights-based narrative which combats hate speech by putting forward a non-exclusionary narrative based on democratic values such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality. This means providing a different account and interpretation of reality.

### **Argument**

A reason given to support or disprove something.

### **Argumentation**

The set of reasons provided to support or disprove something through logical reasoning so as to persuade someone.

### **Cisgender**

Those people whose gender identity and gender expression match the sex they were assigned at birth and the social expectations related to their gender. For example, a person whose assigned gender at birth is female, and she identifies as a woman.

### **Counter narrative**

A counter narrative is a human-based narrative which combats hate speech by discrediting, and deconstructing violent narratives that justify it. They refer more or less explicitly to alternative narratives, that is, non-exclusionary narratives based on democratic values such as openness, respect for difference, freedom and equality.

### **Character**

A person or actor in a literary piece such as a book, a theatre piece or a novel. There are usually main characters who are protagonists (heroes and heroines) and antagonists (villains or enemies).

### **Discourse**

A mode of organising knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts, as history or institutions.

### **Distribution**

This term refers to the extent to which a narrative is present and visible in different online and offline media.

### **Extremism**

In the simplest terms, extremism can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary or common. Political agendas perceived as extremist often include those from far-left politics or far-right politics, as well as fundamentalism, and fanaticism. Extremism involves categorical us-versus-them thinking, often fuelled by a dense, closed-off environment of like-minded individuals. Approving of the use of violence, including against civilians, can further alienate an individual from society; it also marks an important stage in which the individual can become psychologically prepared to use violence. It is different from radicalism. Extremists accept and promote violence as a legitimate means for obtaining political goals without necessarily becoming fighters themselves.

### **Frame**

This is a perspective, the lens or angle through which to approach an aspect of social reality. This perspective is guided by a set or system of accepted facts and ideas which help one to make clear the meaning of an observed part of social reality.

### **Hate speech**

This covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism 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 crime**

Criminal offences that are motivated by hate or bias against a particular group of people. This can be based, among other things, on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances. It is also called 'bias crime'.

**Heteronormativity**

This is the belief or assumption that all individuals are heterosexual. (When the partner's gender is other than the individual's, then the person is categorized as heterosexual.) This assumption operates on the idea of gender binarism as the norm, privileging heterosexuality and heterosexual individuals. Heteronormativity deprives non-heterosexual individuals (lesbians, gays, bisexual, pansexual people). It is closely related to cisnormativity, which privileges cisgender individuals (those who identify with gender that was assigned to them at birth) and it consists of gender binarism which acknowledges only two mutually exclusive genders (man, woman) that are marked with asymmetrical power relations (men being the privileged ones). Cisnormativity thus deprives transgender, non-normative cisgender individuals and intersexual individuals.

**Iteration**

This is a procedure in which repetition of a sequence of actions or operations yields results successively closer to a desired result.

**Jargon**

Often a derogatory way of describing difficult or strange language which uses words known only to the members of a certain group.

**Narrative**

Narrative is often a formal way of referring to stories and storytelling. It is a logical, internally coherent report and interpretation of connected events. Narratives are present cultures transcending a particular moment and space. They are rather stable and collectively shared interpretations and explanations of social reality in which emotions and meaning play an important role.

**Meme**

This is commonly known as an amusing or interesting picture or video that is spread widely through the Internet. It can also be an idea, behaviour, style, or usage that spreads from one person to another in a culture.

**Metrics (Social media)**

This refers to systems of measurement to estimate the impact of social media activity on user's behaviour. For example, there are tools and software to gather data on the time a user spends on a webpage and the number of content shares or "Likes".

**Outreach**

This term describes the efforts to make known an initiative or narrative to a specific intended audience. This term is used in the context of youth and community work to describe in which ways a group has been informed about an issue and encouraged to get involved.

**Plot**

A series of events that form the story in a novel, theatre piece or movie.

**Privilege**

This refers to a benefit which is systematically given to members of certain social groups or those recognised as members of those groups. The most illustrative although simplified example is the benefits men have in relation to women, for example, the salary gap between men and women, that is men often earn more than women for the same amount and quality of work.

**Radicalism**

This is what challenges the legitimacy of established norms and policies. It does not, in itself, lead to violence. For example, it includes individuals who reject the values of a society but adhere to the law and attempt to bring about change through political dialogue. Whether radical communities are brewing grounds for violent extremism, or important partners for prevention, radicalism is currently the topic of an intense political debate.

**Rhetoric**

The art or skill of speaking or writing formally and effectively, especially as a means of persuading or influencing people.

**Slogan**

A word or phrase that is easy to remember and is used by a group or business to attract attention.

**Terrorism or violent extremism**

This encompasses violent behaviours that originate in an ideology shared at least by a limited group of individuals. Violent extremism includes the willingness as well as training, preparation and the actual conduct of violent acts against civilians. Terrorists show a severe disconnect from society and devalue or dehumanise their victims. Historically, individuals turned to terrorism when they saw no other possibility to achieve a specific political goal.

**Sources**

- No Hate Speech Movement Campaign Glossary – Council of Europe  
[www.nothespeechmovement.org/hate-speech-watch/glossary](http://www.nothespeechmovement.org/hate-speech-watch/glossary)
- European Institute of Peace  
[www.eip.org/en/news-events/eip-explainer-understanding-radicalisation](http://www.eip.org/en/news-events/eip-explainer-understanding-radicalisation)
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary  
[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary)

**O**nline hate speech has become a major form of human rights abuse, with serious, sometimes tragic consequences, both online and offline. Hate speech cannot be allowed to proliferate without being challenged and exposed in its nature: prejudicial views on social groups combined with fake news which feed phobias and fears, seem attractive as narratives. Narratives give a meaning to information presented because they connect with what people believe, or want to believe in. Their widespread presence online accredits their claims for legitimacy.

But narratives are rarely the truth and never the whole truth. When they are used to oppress people, as in hate speech, the fundamentals of a pluralistic and democratic society are undermined, and the lives and dignity of people are at risk.

Counter narratives are thus needed to discredit and deconstruct the narratives on which hate speech is based. Alternative narratives are also needed to reinforce positive values and perspectives which support human rights and democratic citizenship, such as solidarity, respect for diversity, freedom and equality. Young people need to occupy online public space with positive narratives based on hope and love.

This manual presents communicative and educational approaches and tools for youth and other human rights activists to develop their own counter and alternative narratives to hate speech. It is designed for working with young people from the age of 13, and is based on the principles of human rights education and youth participation.

Anyone can take action against speech. By providing insights into hate speech and human rights, and a methodology for producing counter narratives, *We CAN!* makes that action easier, more effective and positive.

The Council of Europe launched the No Hate Speech Movement campaign to mobilise young people for human rights online and to combat hate speech. Education plays a central role in the campaign. This manual complements *Bookmarks - A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education*, also published by the Council of Europe.



[www.coe.int/youthcampaign](http://www.coe.int/youthcampaign)

ENG

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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