

## IGF 2017

### **- Session Title:**

WS 109 – How Counter Narratives Can Help Pluralistic Democracies to Flourish Online

### **- Date:**

Tuesday, 19 December 2017

### **- Time:**

12:50

### **- Session Organizer:**

Menno ETTEMA – Council of Europe (No Hate Speech Movement)

### **- Chair/Moderator:**

Menno ETTEMA

### **- Rapporteur/Notetaker:**

Irina DREXLER – No Hate Speech Movement Romania

### **- List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:**

**Ron SALAJ** – human rights activist, one of the authors of the “We C.A.N.! Taking Action Against Hate Speech Through Counter and Alternative Narratives” (in short: “We C.A.N.!”) manual of the No Hate Speech Movement (Council of Europe), discussed during the flash session

**Ingrid ASPELUND** – European Wergeland Centre, working on education for citizenship and Utoya Island programme

### **- Key Issues raised (1 sentence per issue):**

1. Incitement to discrimination and hate speech needs more than just legal action, and the No Hate Speech Movement of the Council of Europe has been campaigning against hate speech by raising awareness, promoting human rights education and pluralistic democracy, explaining why hate speech is a threat to freedom of expression and democracy.
2. Young people are very sensitive to hate speech and wish to respond, the new manual “We C.A.N.!” being thus created for them, for human rights activists, campaigners, trainers, NGOs, youth workers, educators.
3. “Do we respond to hate speech by creating more hate and more polarization, or more human rights?” is the essence of the “We C.A.N.!” manual.
4. After the terrorist attack on 22 July 2011 during the political summer camp on Utoya Island (Norway), the narrative used has been that of taking back the island, rebuild it, and use it again as a space for people to come together to discuss important topics, including for training courses, such as the one on counter and alternative narratives to hate speech held in October 2017 together with the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Center.

### **- If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each presentation:**

#### **1. Menno ETTEMA:**

He presented the background of the “We C.A.N.!” manual.

In 2013, the Council of Europe launched the No Hate Speech Movement, a youth campaign to combat hate speech online and mobilize young people to promote human rights online. The campaign works through national campaign committees in 44 countries, addressing hate speech through various means, but primarily through human rights education. The campaign has been looking into various avenues of action, becoming very clear that incitement to discrimination and hate speech needs more than just legal action. Therefore, the campaign is focused to a great extent on human rights education, on bringing people together, on understanding why hate speech is an issue and a threat to democracy, to human rights, to freedom of expression. Along the years, the No Hate Speech Movement team noticed that young people are very sensitive to hate speech, and wish to respond. To have more constructive contributions, the “We C.A.N.!” manual was developed, a step-by-step guide to recognize hate speech, analyze it and formulate a response that promotes human rights education, critical thinking and other key values that link to human rights education.

#### **2. Ron SALAJ**

He briefly summarized the manual.

The manual has an educational approach and was primarily intended for the audience of the No Hate Speech Movement: young activists, human rights activists, campaigners, trainers, other NGOs, youth workers at local, national, transnational level, educators.

There are 7 chapters, divided into 2 parts: one theoretical (background of the No Hate Speech Movement, hate speech, social media approach to hate speech, explanation of oppressive narratives, counter narratives and alternative narratives, with a look at not reproducing patterns of hate speech and victimizing) and one practical step-by-step guide (assess, design, implement and monitor how counter and alternative narratives – CANS – function in the field. Every phase has a number of steps and tools.).

The manual was launched by the Council of Europe in March 2017, and started being used at local level by national campaign committees of the No Hate Speech Movement in 44 countries, to run educational activities, study sessions and so on – on two tracks: young people and trainers.

### **3. Ingrid ASPELUND**

She briefly presented the “take back the island” approach after the terror attack on Utoya Island in Norway, on 22 July 2011.

Utoya has been used since the 1950s for young people who are politically engaged, having a long tradition for young people to meet and come together. On 22 July 2011, during a political summer camp for young people, 29 persons have been killed in an attack because of their political views, affiliation, policies promoted and actions, the perpetrator aiming at killing future political leaders.

Looking for a way to respond to attacks such as this one, the European Wergeland Centre chose an approach which was not about creating and spreading more hate, but telling other, alternative narratives.

The Utoya Island was rebuilt as a place for commemoration of the victims of the 2011 attack, and also as a place to honour them. The aim is to bring young people together to experience and create themselves counter and alternative narratives to hate speech, thus avoiding creating more polarization and hate.

In October 2017, a training course on the “We C.A.N.!” manual was organized on the Utoya Island together with the Council of Europe.

The second episode of a series of five short documentaries created by the EEA and Norway Grants during the training course in October 2017 was presented to the participants: <https://readymag.com/EEANorwayGrants/utoya/>

#### **- Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session (3 paragraphs):**

Although short, the session inspired participants to engage in the discussion over various approaches to combating hate speech, and content regulation on the Internet, pointing out that online issues reflect offline realities.

Cultural contexts and authority figures have been mentioned in connection to bad jokes online that might come as hate speech, pointing to gaps in education and the need to teach about positive traits and starting early with doing so, while also referring to the policy recommendation number 15/2015 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on hate speech.

Discussing what the best reaction to hate speech would be, it was also mentioned that no reaction is a bigger reaction, and that combating hate speech does not mean policing the Internet or policing people, but taking cases one by one. The “We C.A.N.!” manual has been referred to as a tool that helps people assess hate speech, reflect on the relevance of the channel that content is being promoted through, and whether a response should come or not – and, if yes, how a counter narrative and an alternative narrative can be created.

Some participants were also interested in learning why certain countries do not have at the moment an active national campaign committee of the No Hate Speech Movement officially recognized by the respective governments, offering themselves to help the Council of Europe in this respect.

A study from Zambia on emotional abuse, including hate speech, was also mentioned, with the root cause linking back to the formal educational system.

#### **- Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways (3 paragraphs):**

Referring to the existing gaps in formal education, the need to teach about positive content and start early was mentioned. Clarify the limit between bad jokes online and hate speech online, referring to content regulation on the Internet.

### **Gender Reporting**

#### **- Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session:**

25

#### **- Estimate the overall number of women present at the session:**

10

**- To what extent did the session discuss gender equality and/or women's empowerment?**

Women's empowerment and encouraging women to participate was mentioned by a participant from Zambia referring to a survey on safety education, conducted on the degree to which men and women experience mental abuse, including hate speech online and shaming.

Also, combating sexist hate speech has been mentioned as one of the topics covered by the No Hate Speech Movement, especially through a dedicated Action Day each March.

**- If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women's empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion:**

According to a survey on safety education, conducted by an NGO in Zambia and having 327 respondents, only 12% of women and 21% of men had learned about mental health from their basic education. Also, only 16% of women and 11% of men had learned about emotional health and safety in their primary education.