

HIT – Hate Interrupter Teams: Youth counteracting hate speech towards migrants and minorities through participatory and creative campaigning (Ref. REC-RRAC-RACI-AG-2017)

Cyprus Report (Work package 2- D2.1)

INTRODUCTION

Legal Framework and Key Policies in Cyprus (Maximum 500 words)

Review the legal framework and legal instruments with regards to hate crime and hate speech and behaviour towards migrants.

What are the key policies and strategies, the leading organisations in this field?

In Cyprus, hate speech is a criminal offense. Specifically, the piece of legislation regulating hate speech in Cyprus is **The Combatting Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by means of Criminal Law of 2011, Law No. 134 (I)/ 2011**, which was adopted to transpose the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA.¹ This provides that any person who deliberately transmits in public and publicly incites, in any way, violence or hatred against a group of people or a member of a group, which is determined on the basis of race, colour, religion, genealogical origin, national or ethnic origin, in such a way to cause public disorder, or that has a threatening, abusive, or offensive character, is liable of up to five years of imprisonment and/or a fine of up to ten thousand Euros in case of a conviction.

Furthermore, in 2015, the Cyprus Criminal Code was amended to incorporate the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds within the realm of hate speech but provides for a lower punishment for such an offence, namely three years' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to five thousand Euros.² ECRI welcomed this development but underlined that the provisions in the Criminal Code set significantly lower penalties than for racially motivated hate speech, thus creating different standards for racist hate speech and homo/transphobic hate speech.

Further, the Ratifying Law of The Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, Concerning the Criminalisation of Acts of a Racist and Xenophobic Nature Committed through Computer Systems incorporates the aforementioned Additional Protocol of the Council of Europe into the national legal framework of Cyprus, criminalising the dissemination of racist and xenophobic material through computer systems.³

In Cyprus there are a number of grass-root organisations that are involved with the wellbeing of minority groups like KISA, Caritas, the Cameroonian Association, the African Diaspora, the Recognised Refugees in Cyprus and ACCEPT LGBT Cyprus, all of which play a major role in providing support of a more psychosocial nature with victims of hate crime.

¹ Council of Europe, (2016), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Strasbourg, p.11

² Ibid

³ Ibid

Leading actors in the field of HS prevention are:

The Youth Board of Cyprus was the national coordinator for the youth campaign No Hate Speech Movement of the Council of Europe from 2013 until 2017. The aim of the campaign was to reduce the levels of acceptance of hate speech and develop online youth participation and citizenship, including in Internet governance processes and it involved many young people in the implementation of the activities.⁴

AEQUITAS is an independent, non-profit organization based in Limassol, Cyprus which is very active in carrying out research, programmes and activities in the field of hate speech. The youth organization has implemented several youth exchanges and training courses on hate speech, human rights and discrimination.⁵

In 2009, the Ministry of Education created an Observatory against Violence to record and analyse episodes of violence in schools and separately record and assess all incidents with a racist and xenophobic content. The Observatory provides assistance to victims and to schools as well as advice to the media on how to portray such events. It also carries out educational seminars on issues such as conflict resolution and mediation in the school environment.⁶

Situational context - Cyprus (Maximum 500 words)

*Please provide an overview on the current situation regarding hate speech and behaviour, racism and xenophobia towards migrants;
Briefly reflect on how, in your country, hate speech and behaviour towards migrants can be said to contribute to social exclusion;
Explain the reasons for selecting specific case studies, your critical view on why they represent good practices that have the potential to be successfully adapted as strategies to support migrants affected by hate speech and behaviour through creative youth-led youth empowered activities.*

Racism, xenophobia and religious discrimination are on the rise in Cyprus. Hate speech and hate crime against migrants are rising and in May 2016, for the first time, the people elected two MPs from the neo-nazi party 'ELAM' – a sister organisation of Greece's Golden Dawn.⁷ Politicians and other public figures often employ hate speech in their public statements and the mainstream media make regular use of hate speech, especially against Turks, migrants and refugees.⁸ To date, the Cyprus Radio -Television Authority (CRA) has investigated and imposed fines in cases where there was a clear and immediate violation of the law. However, the CRA has not proceeded with imposing sanctions regarding indirect instigation of xenophobia and racist hate. For example, media tend to refer to newly arrived refugees as illegals "παράνομους – λαθρομετανάστες".⁹

Additionally, the CRA does not have the authority to monitor and impose fines on electronic media, a fact that results in the reproduction of hate speech online. Broad generalisations and stereotyping

⁴ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/45-initiatives-promoting-social-inclusion-and-raising-awareness-cyprus>

⁵ <https://www.aequitas-humanrights.org/>

⁶ Ministry of Education and Culture: Violence Observatory:http://www.moec.gov.cy/paratiritirio_via/

⁷ Aequitas, (2016), National Report - Supporting VET teachers and trainers to prevent radicalisations: analysis of needs, p.3.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ KISA, (2016), NGO follow-up Report to CERD,p.13.

only contribute to the dehumanisation of refugees and migrants in the public's consciousness and further deteriorates the violation of their human rights.¹⁰

The rise in immigration and the recent financial crisis have constituted trigger factors for deeper nationalistic and ethnocentric sentiment that, have for time immemorial, marred the country's development and inter-ethnic relations. In this framework, the educational system is not immune to racism, xenophobia and intolerance.¹¹ On the contrary, it has constituted a source of the promotion of radical, ethnocentric and nationalistic sentiments and attitudes amongst pupils.

There has been a significant increase in racist attacks (Promitheas, 2015) despite the adoption of N.134(I) (2011) to implement the European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA.¹² The recording authority that collects official data on hate crimes is the Office for Combating Discrimination of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Cypriot Police which has been operating since 2005.¹³

According to the official data provided by the police, the most frequent reported cases are based on the ethnicity and nationality of the group, followed by race and political views.¹⁴ Reports from civil society organisations and migrant communities show that the most vulnerable groups to hate crime are migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and Turkish Cypriots. However, this reality is not reflected in the official statistics of the Police on hate crime.

In terms of young people specifically, schools do not adopt necessary measures to promote the integration of migrants¹⁵ resulting in individuals expressing racist attitudes and even violence towards their different origin and migrant peers.¹⁶ KISA noted that it has received reports of racist and xenophobic bullying with a large number of migrant children, especially teenagers, dropping out of schools in whole or in part due to this bullying. An infamous example was an attack against a young person of African descent by a group of youngsters.¹⁷

Moreover, the rise in the number of migrant pupils has constituted a challenge for the schools, both in terms of ensuring effective integration of the pupils but, also, in relation to the need for adopting an intercultural approach in an increasingly diverse school environment.¹⁸ In this realm, migrant children face marginalization and/or segregation whilst the intercultural approach to the curricula and education system more generally is lacking and unstructured. In the Concluding Observations of the ICERD to Cyprus, the Committee expressed its concerns at the reports of racist incidents in schools against migrant children and called on Cyprus to ensure that measures are taken with a

¹⁰ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/05/13/un-wants-cyprus-prosecute-hate-speech/>

¹¹ Aequitas, (2016), National Report - Supporting VET teachers and trainers to prevent radicalisations: analysis of needs, p.3

¹² Ibid

¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2014), Report: Fundamental rights: challenges and achievements, p.27

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Makriyianni, Chara & Psaltis, Charis. 2007. The Teaching of History and Reconciliation. The Cyprus Review vol. 19, no.1: 43–69

¹⁶ Σημερινή, Η. 2008. «Την ξυλοκόπησαν άγρια 40 μαθητές ΠΑΤΣΙΣΜΟΣ-ΣΟΚ». Η Σημερινή. 20 Δεκεμβρίου. Προσβάσιμο στον σύνδεσμο <<http://www.sigmalive.com/files/filefield/0/5/9/simerini20122008.pdf>>

¹⁷ Aequitas, (2016), National Report - Supporting VET teachers and trainers to prevent radicalisations: analysis of needs, p.4

¹⁸ Research Institute Prometheus,(2015) Report "Rhetoric, Behaviour and Hate Crimes in Cyprus", p.37-38.

view to creating an environment of tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity in schools as well as in society at large.¹⁹

GOOD PRACTICES

Creative good practices in Cyprus on (the empowerment of young people towards the counteraction of HSBM)

(minimum 3 to be mentioned)

When searching for the good practices, you can consider a variety of areas and implemented strategies, such as academic action-research; grassroots programmes; social marketing and existing online strategies on raising awareness on HSB target at young migrants

Good Practice 1 (300 words) :

General description: When was the project implemented, who developed/implemented (profile of the entity/organisation), why, where?

Outcomes: who benefited, in which ways, how and in which ways did it promote the empowerment of young people in counteracting HSBM, xenophobia and/or racism? How/by whom was the project evaluated?

Sustainability: was/is this a short/medium/long term project? How is the project sustained (is there a continuity? Which individuals/entities/organisations support the project and why?

In response to a report by the Ombudsperson on racist violence in schools, the Ministry of Education and Culture drafted **a Code of Conduct against Racism and a Guide for Managing and Reporting Racist Incidents in Schools** and officially presented it in June 2014. This manual is divided into two basic parts, the Code of Conduct to combat racism and the Guide for managing and recording racist incidents as well as a Table of Sanctions. The Code and the Guide have been prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the Curriculum Development Unit, with the contribution of the Anti-Discrimination Authority.

It provides advice on how to prevent and deal with racist incidents and violence committed within the school context. It sets out an antiracist policy, with a broad notion of "racism", and provides schools and teachers with detailed advice on how to prevent and deal with racist incidents and violence committed within the school context. It is expected to contribute to a decrease in bullying and discrimination based on any form of diversity through the promotion of empathy rather than punishment. The Code was applied on a pilot basis in five primary and two secondary schools in three cities during the school year 2014-2015. In the school year 2015-2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture suggested that all schools introduce the Code under the goal "sensitising pupils against racism and intolerance and promotion of equality and respect" in the context of the No Hate Speech Movement of the Council of Europe, and so far 75 schools have done so. This document was updated in January 2016. This document is openly accessible through the Ministry of Education and Culture's website free of charge

Available at:
[http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/4E90A39191DE8B85C2257E8100424C0E/\\$file/Kodikas_Symperiforas_Nov2015.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/4E90A39191DE8B85C2257E8100424C0E/$file/Kodikas_Symperiforas_Nov2015.pdf)

¹⁹ Aequitas, (2016), National Report - Supporting VET teachers and trainers to prevent radicalisations: analysis of needs, p.4

In order to increase its efficacy there should be several pilot runs of its use in several schools, for example, so as to see potential obstacles, good practices and issues that need to be changed or addressed. The pilot runs were implemented in Cyprus to ensure maximisation of the document's benefit to the anti-racist nature of the schools. as referred to above.

This document can be used in an array of formal and non-formal educational contexts such as primary schools, secondary schools, technical schools, vocational educational schools, colleges and universities and also in the ambit of non-formal education within NGOs, youth centres, religious groups and other organisations in which young people and/or learners come together.

Good Practice 2: (300 words)

General description: When was the project implemented, who developed/implemented (profile of the entity/organisation), why, where?

Outcomes: who benefited, in which ways, how and in which ways did it promote the empowerment of young migrants in counteracting HSBM? How/by whom was the project evaluated?

Sustainability: was/is this a short/medium/long term project? How is the project sustained (is there a continuity? Which individuals/entities/organisations support the project and why?)

The programme *Combatting Hate: Training of Trainers* (October 2015) was funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and implemented by the Limassol based youth organisation called AEQUITAS Human Rights NGO.

The programme contained two parts: the first part was the six-day educational training in October 2015 in Limassol, Cyprus and the creation of a handbook for young people on hate speech and extremism in Greek language.

The training was provided to eighteen trainers aged 21-30 from the formal and non-formal educational sector for purposes of empowering them to integrate the combat of extremism and hate speech online in their work. The overarching objective of the training was to facilitate the participants' understanding of the significance of human rights education and other innovative methodology as tools for combatting the aforementioned phenomena and become inspired and empowered through the cultivation of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence to use this method in their own educational settings. This was achieved through a threefold approach. Firstly, they explored the definitions of hate speech and extremism as provided for in European and international policy documents, case-law and law and were equipped with the knowledge to be able to determine whether a particular expression constitutes hate speech or extremist rhetoric online.

In relation to the theoretical framework, participants considered the groups which are particularly targeted by hate speech including, inter alia, immigrants, LGBTI persons and disabled persons and the forms and manifestations hate speech takes. Importantly, they comprehended the reason why an emphasis is placed on hate speech and extremism online, rather than other platforms. Finally, the participants did a flash mob in Limassol in order to raise awareness and sensitize the public on the topic of hate speech.

In the framework of this programme, AEQUITAS also prepared a handbook in the Greek language for young people on hate speech and extremism. The handbook provides meanings, definitions, forms and manifestations as well as causes and consequences of the phenomena through a human rights lens. In the handbook are also included relevant national help lines and ways to report hate speech online and thus acts as an empowering tool for victims and bystanders but, also through its awareness raising element, as a deterrent for perpetrators and/or potential perpetrators.

<https://www.aequitas-humanrights.org/portfolio/combating-hate-training-of-trainers-october-2015/>

Good Practice 3: (300 words)

General description: When was the project implemented, who developed/implemented (profile of the entity/organisation), why, where?

Outcomes: who benefited, in which ways, how and in which ways did it promote the empowerment of young migrants in counteracting HSBM? How/by whom was the project evaluated?

Sustainability: was/is this a short/medium/long term project? How is the project sustained (is there a continuity? Which individuals/entities/organisations support the project and why?)

The online platform 'Say No to Hate Speech' has been developed in the framework of the project '**Say No To Hate Speech: Young People Empowered**' funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and implemented by a youth-led organization based in Limassol, Cyprus called Aequitas Human Rights NGO. The platform was launched in 2016 at the EU House in Nicosia and is still operational.

The platform contains information on hate speech including a fact sheet on hate speech and resources relevant to the understanding of hate speech such as the governing national legislation and reports/documents drafted by national and supra-national organizations on hate speech. Such information is useful for young people, their parents or guardians, those working with young people and other individuals and groups who wish to find out more about hate speech. In addition, the platform includes educational resources that can be used with young people, by formal or non-formal educators, for purposes of combatting hate speech and/or developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for a human rights culture where solidarity and equality is embraced. In an effort to make this platform a youth-friendly tool, twenty young people gave their ideas and feedback on the platform's design and content.

Furthermore, the organisation operated an online chat system from 2016 until end of 2017 and which offered information for victims of hate speech as well as support and information for others such as parents, guardians and friends of victims. The chat system was available in Greek and English for internet users living in Cyprus.

The principles which lie at the core of the chat system were:

- Confidentiality
- No judgment
- No discrimination

- Data Protection/ Anonymity (you only need to insert any username to access the chat. An email is only required for leaving a message for the psychologist outside working hours).

<https://www.notohatespeech.com/>

CONCLUSION

Brief Assessment of current situation, space for improvement and way forward.

Despite the available laws prohibiting hate speech, law enforcement agencies systematically fail to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice.²⁰ As a result, the phenomenon continues to increase and spread with evident negative consequences in the Cypriot society.

Although the number of hate crimes is small, hate speech against migrants occurs more often.²¹ The high number of hate speech occurrences lies in a variety of different contributing factors such as the rise in immigration, the recent financial crisis and the fact that Cyprus is a conservative society. The structure and the relations upon which power is built and embedded do not change easily and they create specific stereotypes.²² The CRA does not have the authority to monitor and impose fines on electronic media, a fact that results in the reproduction of hate speech online. Broad generalisations and stereotyping only contribute to the dehumanisation of refugees and migrants in the public's consciousness and further deteriorates the violation of their human rights.

As it has been indicated, several efforts have been taken in the field of prevention and tackling of hate speech against migrants both at state level and grassroots level. However, a lot more can be done. For instance, the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture which created and then piloted the Code of Conduct against Racism and a Guide for Managing and Reporting Racist Incidents in Schools, did so in only a few schools and then it was presented as a suggestion that schools can use it without using any levers to ensure its implementation.

For HIT, the educational resources produced by AEQUITAS such as the handbook and the online platform which contains a number of informative booklets can be used as a base to further enrich the material to be provided to the Hate Interrupter Teams in the training phase. The online platform and chat system as well as the trainings provided to young people to deter hate speech against migrants are good practices which can serve as inspiration to create youth-led innovative and creative campaigning. With the exception of the Ministry's practice, the rest of the good practices, had the active involvement of young people and their input and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration when designing the HIT campaigning and dissemination activities.

²⁰ KISA, (2016), NGO follow-up Report to CERD,p.14.

²¹ Speech by Yiannos Katsourides, (2014) at Conference 'Interpreting the Past, Present and Future of Cyprus'

²² Ibid

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