

A call for young bloggers and online activists to take action against racism and discrimination online

The Council of Europe Youth Department invites all young bloggers and online activists concerned by human rights violations, hate speech online, discrimination and racism to apply for the training course taking place between May and December 2012, comprising a residential seminar between 20-27 May 2012 in the European Youth Centre Budapest as a first stage in their involvement in a long term campaign against racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

Further information about the project, the training course and the application process can be found below.

The project framework: Young people combating hate speech online

Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line is a project of the Council of Europe's youth sector to be run between 2012 and 2014. The project aims to combat racism and discrimination in their online expression of hate speech by equipping young people and youth organisations with the competences necessary to recognise and act against such human rights violations. The project stands for equality in dignity, human rights and diversity. It is a project against hate speech, racism and discrimination in their online expression. Centred around a training course and online campaigning, the project stands for action and intervention.

Initiated by the Advisory Council on Youth, and endorsed by the Joint Council on Youth, the project stems from the worrying rise of hate speech on-line and the idea that on-line public space is public space – human rights apply online as much in the rest of society and freedom of expression is a core value of the project.

Hate speech as such is not a new issue in the human rights debate, its online dimension, and the potential impact this offers, gives new reasons for concern among young people and youth organisations. While easier to monitor and counter in mainstream professional media, the challenge posed by its online manifestation is the incapacity to monitor and measure its amplitude and impact. While the activity of static websites can be easily traced, most of the action is actually happening in the encounter spaces (i.e. social networking sites), which are far harder to monitor and analyse.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 97(20) on "hate speech" defines it as follows: "the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin", placing the discussion on hate speech and its regulation in the framework of anti-racist and anti-discrimination work conducted by the organisation.

The Council of Europe has developed significant amount of work on dealing both with hate speech and governing the Internet. The basis for the work of the Council of Europe work is that Internet is a public space that should be governed by human rights principles and values and should contribute to the development of a human rights culture. The organisation takes an active role in the Internet Governance global and regional fora; part of this work is the development of and Internet governance strategy and a Charter of Internet user rights. This is in addition to the framework provided by the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol which calls for the criminalisation of acts of a xenophobic and racist nature committed through computer systems. The Additional Protocol defines 'racist and xenophobic material' as "written material, any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocated, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual or group of individuals, based on race, colour, descendance or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors."

The project Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line builds on the experiences 'All Different-All Equal' European youth campaigns and the capacity and competence of young people and youth organisations to act within online space.

The project will mobilise European and national actors through a variety of activities such as training courses, development of educational materials, national seminars and conferences. The highlight of the project is the European youth media campaign which will be designed and implemented with the agency of young people and youth organisations. This campaign will include also national campaigns and initiatives in order to be as close to young people as possible. The campaign will adopt a positive and pro-active message – a campaign for freedom of expression on-line – while having a clear stance against all forms of racism and discrimination on-line. Youth from groups targeted by on-line hate speech – such as refugees and asylum-seekers, Muslims, LGBT and Roma – will play a particular role in the campaign. The network of young bloggers will form the core of the project and will play a central role in the preparation of an on-line media campaign.

Project objectives

- To mobilise young people, youth organisations and other stakeholders to promote human rights and take action against racism and discrimination in online space, with a particular focus on hate speech online;
- To provide young online activists and youth organisations with competences and tools, to take action for human rights in online space;
- To contribute to the democratic governance of Internet, by developing guidelines for policy and practice in respect to young people and youth organisations' role in making the online space a human rights space and ensuring youth's participation and contribution to the development

of Internet governance initiatives that the Council of Europe takes part in;

- To map different forms of hate speech on-line, their impact on young people and ways to address them;
- To promote research about the forms and consequences of on-line hate speech on young people;
- To create and train a network of 60 young European online activists in human rights, online campaigning against racism and discrimination and to support them in running a mini-campaign online;
- To develop and run a European youth media campaign against racism and discrimination having both an international and national dimension and provide online human rights activists with campaign tools and materials;
- To support the development of regional campaigns in the Balkans, Caucasus and Mediterranean area focusing on antisemitism, antigypsyism, aggressive nationalism and religious extremism.

Project activities

The project places young people and youth organisations at the core of action and initiative. It consists of a series of activities in online and offline space that complement and intertwine. The European youth media campaign will be supported by several other offline activities. The campaign will have an European dimension, but it is expected to have national and regional focus, therefore increasing the chances for real impact as racist and discriminatory content and speech is often distributed in local languages. The European campaign will focus on developing at-hand materials and tools for actions and on building a European-wide community of interest and action against racism and discrimination. The European campaign should therefore ensure that the voices, experiences and concerns expressed at local and regional level have visibility and role in shaping the European youth policy agenda. Essential to the campaign and the project is the training of online activists and bloggers that will be the core group in shaping and carrying out this campaign. The training in itself should also be seen as good practice to then be replicated at national level. The community of online activists gathered by the training course should shape and support the online campaign along with the other different features of the project: online survey, national and specialist seminars.

Outline of main activities in the project:

1 - **Online survey** will be conducted to identify the perception and impact that hate speech has among young people. The survey will be used to gather data, to build up a community of young activists and organisations and to focus the message of the campaign.

2 - **Training courses for online activists and bloggers** will gather 60 young activists, already active in the online space and able to multiply knowledge and mobilise young people. The training will be based on blended learning and will

focus on such issues as: human rights, antiracism and antidiscrimination, online campaigning; building and activating online communities.

3 – **Study sessions** realised in partnership with European youth organisations and taking place in the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe will also support the project by aiming to support the share of practice and experience on the topic among youth workers, but as well to be a laboratory where new approaches and methods are developed and tested.

4 - **National seminars** will be organised in partnership with governmental and non-governmental partners in the project. The national seminars will support the European campaign and will have specific thematic focus agreed by partners.

5 - **Seminars** will be realised in partnership with other sectors of the Council of Europe involved with media affairs and democratic governance of Internet.

6 – **Youth media campaign** aims to create a community of young people motivated to discuss and act against hate speech online and to place the issue of hate speech on the agenda of youth organisations.

7 - **Educational tools and materials** will be created to support capacity building of youth organisations and online youth activists and action oriented tools that can be easily adapted to specific contexts.

8 – **A campaign conference** gathering all the stakeholders and participants in the project will be held in 2013. The conference will look at the overall achievements of the project and will focus on making policy guidelines proposals and ways to further the action of youth sector on the topic.

The training course for young bloggers and online activists

The training course will bring together young bloggers and online activists motivated and willing to further take action and play a central role in the campaign development.

The **course objectives** are:

- to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes of participants in respect to human rights and human rights protection particularly in online environments;
- to enable participants to recognise human rights violations online, particularly acts of racism and discrimination, hate speech online and supporting them in taking action against these violations;
- to associate the participants with the preparation of the media campaign and other activities in the project;
- to provide participants space and time to share different experiences of working in online environment and on topics of the project;
- to discuss and reflect on the types and forms that hate speech takes online and the effects it has on young people;
- to familiarise participants with the work of the Council of Europe in the field of antiracism and anti-discrimination, as well as in respect to Internet governance;

- to discuss and plan the next steps to be taken together in the framework of the campaign, supporting participants in initiating their online mini-campaigns;
- to set up a network of young activists and youth organisations aiming to be the core of the campaign.

The methodology of the training course

The training course is based on blended learning, combining a residential training seminar with distance online learning based through the e-learning Moodle based platform of the Council of Europe. The training seminar is based on principles of non-formal education, being learner-centred and highly participatory. The overall course will give participants the opportunity to experience, reflect and discuss issues related with human rights and human rights violations online, particularly in hate speech expression, but as well in respect to online activism. The entire course is designed as a mutual learning situation in which, with use of diverse methods, participants can compare their approaches and ways of action.

Contributions from different experts in the field together with experts of the Council of Europe in the fields of antiracism, youth work and internet governance will further support the course and participants' learning both during the seminar and through e-learning.

Following the course, participants will be involved in e-learning to further develop their competences and will act as main actors in the campaign to be launched later in the year. Participants will have a chance to contribute to shape the format and activities of the European wide campaign, and are expected to start initiatives reaching out to the communities they activate and work with and dealing with specific issues of concern in the framework of the campaign (i.e. hate speech against Roma in a particular region).

Participants are also expected to take part in the other different activities of the project, such as the national seminars or the development of the educational tools.

Profile of participants

The training course is designed for participants who are:

- aged between 18 and 30 years, exceptions can be made if justified;
- already young bloggers or young human rights activists, social media activists, young people involved in community benefit online projects with a proven capacity to mobilise and multiply information and opinion among other young people;
- committed to values of human rights and be interested to further take action against racism and discrimination in online environments;
- motivated to take active part in all phases of the project;
- have at least a medium level of digital competence, and are advanced users on social media;
- able to work autonomously in the English language;

- are either supported by a youth organisation and/or an informal group of activists or community online;
- have proven capacity to mobilise young people online around issues of their concern, but particularly related with freedom of expression, human rights, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, online campaigning and activism.

Application, procedure and selection of participants

All candidates must apply on-line, completing the application form under this link: <http://youthapplications.coe.int/>

Applications must be submitted by **19 April 2012**. If the participant is affiliated with an organisation, a letter of support from their sending organisation can be uploaded on the platform or sent separately by e-mail, fax or post to express support offered throughout the project to the participant and his/her initiatives.

The team will select 30 participants on the basis of the the profile outlined above. The selection will also take into account balance between sexes, geographical regions, different types of experiences, cultural backgrounds and organisations, institutions and projects. A waiting list may be established. Candidates will be informed about whether their application has been accepted or rejected, and if they have been put on the waiting list, by **25 April 2012**.

Deadline for applications

The application form must be submitted on-line, with the support letters if applicable, until **19 April 2012**.

Financial and practical conditions of participation

Working language

The common working language of the course will be English. Candidates must be able to use the English language independently in both written and oral communication.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa costs for all residential training seminars of the project are reimbursed upon presentation of the relevant receipts, according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire training course can be reimbursed. The payment will be made either by bank transfer after each course, or at the end of each course in cash (in Euros).

Accommodation

Board and lodging for the training seminar are provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

Enrolment fee

An enrolment fee of **60 Euros** is to be paid by each participant for each training seminar. This amount will be deducted from the amount to be reimbursed for travel expenses or paid at the EYC during the course.