# TRAINING EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

Compiled under the Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Online Hate Speech project

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# I. Introduction

Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Online Hate Speech project, funded by the European Commission – Directorate-General Justice, is a two-year project tackling the issue of online hate speech - in particular, targeted against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the participating 7 EU countries. The partnership includes Sofia Development Association (Bulgaria) – lead partner, Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM (Italy), the Languages Company (United Kingdom), Center for Peace (Croatia), People in Need (Czech Republic), Asociația Divers (Romania), Associazione FORMA.Azione (Italy), and Municipality of Agii Anargiri-Kamatero (Greece).

One of the project work streams focused on training events to empower target groups and promote peer-to-peer and civil society initiatives to counter online hate speech. In the period October 2017 – January 2018, project partners held trainings in Sofia, Athens, Perugia, Tîrgu Mureş, London, Osijek and Prague, with 60 participants at the average in each training. The trainings also contributed to the creation of networks of local, national and international partners to counter online hate speech through production and dissemination of positive messages, and aimed at  encouraging positive discourses and counter-narratives in order to limit hate speech against migrants and refugees.

Documenting lessons learned from the trainings aims to help the project team and stakeholders discover both strengths and weaknesses, and identify recommendations for others involved in similar future initiatives. Use of lessons learned is a principal component of an organizational culture committed to continuous improvement and adaptive management. Lessons learned mechanisms communicate acquired knowledge effectively and foster its usability.

The data collection method was post facto, after the training implementation in all partner cities and based on participants' feedback and the analysis of project partners. While more resource-intensive, this approach offers the benefit of bringing project beneficiaries and partners together for an extensive look into the trainings. The summarized data for lessons learned in the agreed format was subjected to review and verification by the project partners.

The report is structured in five sections (objectives, participants, programme, organization and outcome) and concludes with lessons learned.

## II. Training Objectives

**The training objectives were:**

- Empower target groups and promote peer-to-peer and civil society initiatives to counter hate speech;

- Create networks of local, national and international partners to counter online hate speech through production and dissemination of positive messages;

- Encourage positive discourses and counter-narratives in order to limit hate speech against migrants/refugees;

- Develop and test peer-reviewed training materials for target audiences.



*Training in London, UK*

**Trainings were held as follows:**

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|---|---|
| 27 September, 2017 | Associazione FORMA.Azione – Perugia; |
| 28 September, 2017 | Associazione FORMA.Azione – Perugia; |
| 2 October, 2017 | the Municipality of Agii Anargiri – Kamareto – Athens; |
| 4 October, 2017 | the Municipality of Agii Anargiri – Kamareto – Athens; Sofia |
| 31 October, 2017 | Development Association – Sofia; |
| 6 November, 2017 | Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights – Osijek; |
| 7 November, 2017 | Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights – Osijek |
| 14 November, 2017 | People in Need – Prague; |
| 23 November, 2017 | Sofia Development Association – Sofia; |
| 12 December, 2017 | the Languages Company – London; |
| 16 December, 2017 | Diverse Association – Tîrgu Mures; |
| 11 January, 2018 | the Languages Company – London; |
| 18  January, 2018 | the Languages Company - London; |
| 21 January, 2018 | Diverse Association – Tîrgu Mures; |
| 24 January, 2018 | People in Need – Prague. |

# III.    Training Participants

Based on mapping out the national context with assessment of the prevention and responses to hate speech incidents in each country and media content monitoring and analysis conducted in work stream one, each partner identified training participants: representatives of NGOs, media, schools, youth groups, internet service providers, administrators of social networks, migrant organizations, with good practices and examples of positive messages against hate speech. These organizations were invited to attend the training events in each country. Partners sought a balanced representation of all target groups. Gender balance was also a key selection criterion. Special efforts were made to secure the participation of migrants, refugees and third country nationals. In result project partners managed to involve representatives of over 20 countries of origin residing legally in the EU.

Most of the partners organized trainings for mixed groups, bringing together representatives of diverse target audiences. The UK partner held separate trainings for two major target groups in accordance with their training needs: for organizations working with refugees on helping those targeted by hate speech to engage with people; and for people working on education.

POSITIVE MESSENGERS

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## Total number of training participants: 471

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of migrants, refugees: | **123** |
| Number of media representatives: | **35** |
| Number of representatives of public bodies: | **46** |
| Number of representatives of internet providers and ICT companies: | **9** |
| Number of young people: | **186** |
| Number of teachers, educators, youth workers: | **46** |
| Number of representatives of NGOs: | **86** |
| Share of men/women: | **39%/61%** |

*The sum of subgroup representatives exceeds the total number of participants since some trainees belong to several subgroups.*



*Training in Prague, Czech Republic*

## VI.  Training Programme

The *training content* was tailored to the needs of the various types of target groups to participate in the training. The agendas were set to encourage interactive training, allowing for peer-learning and dynamic exchange between participants. During the training participants also developed own examples of counter-narratives and positive messages, tailored to the national context, in the form of video spots, presentations, news article, photos, which were uploaded on the project platform and used for the public awareness campaign. The training content aimed to promote human rights online, helping to ensure that hate speech is unacceptable.  It also develops youth participation and citizenship on-line, including Internet governance processes.



*Training in Perugia, Italy*

*Speakers and trainers* at events were local or international experts on hate speech, social networks, advocacy campaigns, law. Selected trainers possessed conceptual and practical knowledge and training experience regarding human rights, hate speech, online activism, peace building, multicultural dialogue. The key speakers included:

*Maja Munivrana Vajda*, Associated Professor at the Chair of Criminal Law, Zagreb University, expert on hate speech.

*Tena Dundović*, Master of Laws, researcher in the areas of best practices in the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in European societies, labour and social rights of migrant workers in the EU, international protection.

**Georgi Lozanov**, Professor, Mass Communications and Media Department of Sofia University. Mr. Lozanov has been for two terms in a row the chairperson of the Bulgarian Council on Electronic Media – the body regulating media in the country.

**Nadya Obretenova**, journalist and producer at the Bulgarian National Television. She has long-term commitment to the theme of integrating migrants and refugees and has initiated numerous TV documentaries and show, as well as school programs on it.

**Bistra Ivanova**, Multi Kulti Collective's co-founder and chairperson, known for her dedicated work supporting foreigner's integration. She has been the national coordinator of European Commission's European Website on Integration since 2015.

**Bohdan Bláhovec**, one of the pioneers of Poetry Slam in the Czech Republic and he is a winner of many Slam Poetry awards. He runs lectures in film and communication workshops. He is also known as documentary filmmaker.

**Vlasta Urbanová** is a facilitator and lecturer of courses for teachers, students of pedagogical faculties and high school students in the Czech Republic and abroad. She is engaged in human rights education, critical thinking methodology and audiovisual methodology. She has been teaching for 23 years in Vocational High School for Engineering, Transportation and Construction in Liberec.

**Giovanni Ziccardi**, Professor at the University of Milan, lawyer and publicist specializing in online hate speech.

**Gabriella B. Klein & Koffi M. Dossou**, Vice President and President of Key & Key Communications, a non-profit association, specialised in intercultural communication, combating racism, discriminations and promoting integration.

**Alessandra Coppola**, National Coordinator of the No Hate Speech Movement in Italy.

**Radu Răileanu**, coordinator of the Annual Report on the Instigator of Hate Speech in Romania, edited by ActiveWatch.

**Iulia Vizi**, former journalist, advisory board member of the project "Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Hate Speech Online " with over 12 years of experience in the press and civil society in Tirgu Mures.

**Maria Koreck**, MA in conflict mediation (A.I. Cuza Iasi University), founding member and president of the Diverse Association, with extensive experience in intercultural education, advocacy and counseling on minority issues, especially Roma, and in the development of marginalized communities and NGOs.

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*Sara Wickert*, community activist working with refugees.

*Arun Devasia*, member of Hope for Hate organization.

*Eric Murangwa*, former international footballer, survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, founder of Survivors Tribune.

*Marian Carty,* experienced teacher trainer and educationalist, currently lecturing and training at Goldsmiths University of London.

*Anny King*, internationally known academic, materials developer and linguist, Churchill College, Cambridge.

*Dr. Georgios Kormas*, expert in charge of the helpline of the Greek Safer Internet Centre, providing services, support and counseling on internet use related issues.

*Nikodimos Maina Kinioua*, representative of ASANTE NGO, working on migrant issues, which issues a free monthly magazine with African related content.

*Konstantina Vardaramatou*, social worker, academic expert of PRAKSIS NGO specializing in humanitarian and medical actions in support of vulnerable groups.

*Ilias Karageorgos* and *Katerina Kosti*, educators and theatrical specialists, organizing interaction activities, thematic role-playing and dramatizations.



*Positive Messengers in Romania*

***Training materials*** developed and disseminated during the trainings fall into 3 main categories:

- Providing information about legal & theoretical aspects linked to hate speech; human rights framework, intercultural dialogue, including the specially produced three "how to" videos: How to recognize online hate speech, How to report instances of online hate speech, How to counter online hate speech with positive narratives[1].

- Practical guidance on organizing campaigns, communication to stakeholders, creation and visualization of content, etc.

- Training materials incorporating findings and data from the national context and media monitoring analysis, in order to provide participants with the most up-to-date information on the topic and contextualize the efforts of each project partner.

Many of the partner organizations developed own resources based on real stories of refugees and migrants targeted by hate and hate speech. Thus for instance the Languages Company developed "A notorious example of hate – the story of Eric Murangwa", and Agii Anargiri Kamatero developed their own 10-minute video featuring needs and expectations of representatives of the local government, migrants, NGOs.

Other training resources were used as well. One of the main resources used was the CoE - Bookmarks - A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education



(2014). The trainings in the Czech Republic used screening of The Bristol Bike Project movie/Alistair Oldham (2009) and the Living Library resources of Amnesty International - human books, representatives of minorities, who are willing to share their stories and experience with prejudices and discrimination. The UK trainings used CPS videos and pictures of the "illegal immigrants go home" bus sent around London by Home office.

*Training in Osijek, Croatia*

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[1] Available at the project web platform: https://www.positivemessengers.net/en/

During the training, participant worked on developing their own examples of counter-narratives and positive messages, tailored to the national context (video spot, presentation, news article, etc.), which were uploaded on the project web platform[2] and used for the public awareness campaign in each country from December 2017 to September 2018 to support human rights through non-formal education and awareness-raising actions.

The trainings also served to develop and test collectively, with broad participation, project creative tools that would be used to raise awareness about online hate speech and mobilize popular support. Thus FORMA.Azione developed in cooperation with artists and creative specialists their Positive Messenger License, aimed at deconstructing hate speech and negative representation of migrants and refugees in an alternative way. Sofia Development Association developed and tested online quizzes suitable for distribution via Facebook. Diverse Association developed a thematic crossword and a glossary of specific words. The Municipality of Agii Anargiri – Kamareto developed a scenario to act out as a way of seeing and experiencing hate speech and moving to open communication. All project creative tools are available at the project web platform.

*Training in Athens, Greece*

## VII. Organization and logistics

Good logistical planning is one of the most crucial aspects of training delivery. If the participants are not comfortable physically and at ease psychologically, they will not benefit fully from the training content. There are two main factors: timeframe and location. Regarding timeframe, all partners selected to conduct 2 half-day trainings. The training locations were different and varied from hotel halls to municipal or NGO conference facilities to own venues.

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[2] https://www.positivemessengers.net/en/positive-messengers.html

Though training equipment differed depending on the specific training content, good internet connection was required because the focus of the training was online hate speech, and in addition some of the resources used were accessible online. The participants were highly satisfied with the training organization. 95% of Croatia trainees gave the highest mark for training organization and methodology applied, and in the UK, the organization of the meeting was rated as very good (3.5/4 with a majority of 'Excellents').

Whenever possible, the organization of trainings contributed to achieving the training objectives. Thus Sofia Development Association organized training refreshments to be provided by migrant cooks.

> " The multicultural lunch turned the theoretical knowledge into reality, and meeting the migrant cooks showed that online hate speech has real living targets. (Bulgaria) "

## VIII. Training outcomes

The objectives set were achieved successfully.

Benefits derived by trainees:

## ⟹ *Knowledge*

A large amount of knowledge was gained in relation to developing a better understanding of hate speech, being able to define it, knowing more about human rights, non-formal education. Participants learnt about the connection between hate speech and human rights, hate speech and freedom of speech and the current trend for the normalization of hate speech. Participants also gained knowledge on the need for recognizing, preventing, and reacting to hate speech. Participants learned about new practices for tackling hate speech. They improved their media and social media literacy. Being part of an international project also meant participants could learn about the different issues being faced and the different successful strategies being employed elsewhere.

> " I have never heard of hate speech before this training but now at the end of the workshop I have a sound understanding of this phenomenon. (Romania) "

## ⇨ *Skills and competences*

Participants developed the skills to analyse situations better, including online; to identify instances of hate speech; to think critically by checking the facts, the source of the information, the context. They also gained skills in developing and disseminating positive counter narratives: story telling, choosing appropriate channels, visuals, messages. Participants almost unanimously considered that they were able to comfortably explain what hate speech is from a personal, emotional, social and even legal point of view. Participants



learned how to use the project platform tools like "capture picture" application, and the uploaded creative tools. For the expert target audience (such as the education experts in the UK) the training objective was not exactly imparting knowledge but rather networking, access to new resources and partners actively working on combating online hate.

*Training in Sofia, Bulgaria*

## ⇨ *Attitude*

" I learned not to judge people, avoid stereotyping and look for the positive. (Czech Republic) "

The seminar had a strong effect on the attitudes of the participants. Many felt a renewed empathy with regards to those targeted by hate speech, others gained motivation and were inspired to increase their involvement, and others still gained a stronger awareness on consequence of hate speech.

The majority of the training participants became aware of the online dimension of hate speech and its potential damage on democratic processes, and expressed willingness to get involved. Thus for instance over 55% of all trainees in Romania wanted to attend more training and networking events.

## ⇒ *New partnerships*

By bringing together diverse groups of training participants, a training outcome was the emergence of networks of local partners to counter online hate speech through production and dissemination of positive message.

> " This course helped to create a further development of new projects and initiatives to counter Online Hate Speech. (Italy) "

## ⇒ *Joining the Positive Messengers Coalition*

In result of the training over 80 participants joined the online Positive Messengers community and expressed their support for overcoming online hate speech. Overall, about 85% of the trainees said they would be interested in taking part in the project's social media campaign.

The outcome of the fourth training objective – to develop and test peer-reviewed training materials for target audiences, is presented in another project document: Guide with Training Materials, available at the project web portal.



*Positive Messengers*

# IX.   Lessons learned:

✓ Mixed participation of representatives of different target groups – young people, migrants and refugees, media professionals, ICT companies, public bodies – is very beneficial, however, it requires time to break the ice and establish confidence.

✓ Another difficulty to be expected working with a mixed group of trainees is the diverse levels of background knowledge and skills, particularly in case the skills to be developed are within the area of professional experience of some participants. This should therefore be accounted for in the training design.

✓ Adequate and sufficient time should be allocated for the ambitious agenda. Many trainees believed that 8 hours weren't enough for adequate knowledge acquisition and skills development and practice.

✓ Using online materials and techniques suitable for social media in trainings to combat online hate speech is critical. Training events like the Positive Messengers project ones were an exploration on how existing techniques could be applied to an online context but there is not yet a body of experience in the area.

✓ Getting trainees engaged in creating content to counter online hate is crucial. Call to action is important, since people sympathizing with the topic often have an urge to act.

✓ The use of techniques which provide the open and effective sharing of thoughts and ideas should be encouraged.

✓ Focusing only on legal and policy issues is not sufficient; use real stories and real people's insights. The better participants can empathize with online hate speech targets, the easier they can create value for them. Scenario-based trainings are very efficient as a form of storytelling, engage emotions, provide shared context and trigger memories.

✓ Providing opportunities for networking and input from training participants who actively work on combating online hate is most beneficial for mutual learning and fostering further cooperation activities.

✓ Good practices are inspiring and easier to identify with, therefore their replication is encouraged. However, talking about failure also provides a great platform for learning since it helps build capacity to fix mistakes.

✓ Most of the trainees expect to have access to more resources after the training. It is therefore recommended to build a pool of appropriate resources available before the training and to regularly update it after the training.