Relevance of Cyber Hate in Europe and Current Topics that Shape Online Hate Speech

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Project Research - Report - Remove: Countering Cyber Hate Phenomena

INACH

bringing the online in line with human rights

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Executive Foreword

This publication was written within the framework of the ***Research – Report – Remove: Countering Cyber Hate Phenomena*** project of the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH); funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. The duration of the project is 2016-2017, and its aim is to study, document and report on online hate speech in a comparative and comprehensive way; and to establish structures for a transnational complaints system for instances of cyber hate.

Hate speech is intentional or unintentional public discriminatory and/or defamatory statements; intentional incitement to hatred and/or violence and/or segregation based on a person's or a group's real or perceived race, ethnicity, language, nationality, skin colour, religious beliefs or lack thereof, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, political beliefs, social status, property, birth, age, mental health, disability, disease.

This report was completed with the participation of the different members of the Network and partners in the project, namely the Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (ZARA) from **Austria**, the Movimiento contra la Intolerancia (MCI) from **Spain**, jugendschutz.net from **Germany**, the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (LICRA) from **France**, the Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism from **Belgium** (now called Unia), and the Magenta Foundation from the **Netherlands**; who provided most of the data this report is based upon.

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I. Introduction

Hate speech has gone through an extraordinary transformation in the past fifteen years. The enormous boom in social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and the saturation of our daily lives by the media have made hate speech more pervasive and ubiquitous than ever before. People are met with racist, xenophobic, homophobic, anti-Ziganism and anti-Muslim hate online regardless of their will to engage in such discussion. The anonymity and low threshold of entrance of online forums, comment sections of news portals and social media sites provide fertile soil for cyber hate. Hence, cyber hate is burgeoning and becoming more and more violent, offensive and intrusive. This increase has been noted by a think tank named Demos also found out that the number of tweets that contained racial slurs increased by 4800 per cent from 2012 to 2015 (Miller, 2015), and by, amongst others, Andre Oboler, chief executive of the Australia-based Online Hate Prevention Institute, who stated the following;

"2015 saw a greater normalisation of hate speech in society than in previous years. Where previously a person might make a vague negative allusion to race, religion, gender or sexuality, by the end of 2015 the comments on social media were blatant and overt" (Wendling, 2015).

The ongoing refugee crisis that reached its peak in 2015, the growing threat that is Jihadi terrorism in Europe and the pre-existing issues of social and cultural cohesion and the piecemeal integration of the previous waves of migrants all exacerbate this phenomenon. Hence, hate speech and research on online hate speech have never been more relevant in the history of the European Union. Even governments realise that the political atmosphere that has been sliding towards the far-right and the economic, political and societal crises that the EU have faced in the past eight years (since the start of the great recession in 2008) have made people less tolerant, more anxious and more willing to express racist and other hateful views more freely in public and online.

Therefore, it is paramount to look into the levels of online hate speech, the trends that will shape it in the coming years, and the topics that have the most influence on cyber hate at the present. It is also pivotal to identify themes within the cyber hate phenomenon that need further research in order to be able to develop better systems for reporting, removing and prosecuting online manifestations of hate.

First and foremost, the 5 different types of discrimination, namely racism, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hate, anti-Ziganism and homophobia, will be scrutinized in detail before looking at the relevant topics that shape online hate speech today specifically.

II. An Examination of Relevant Types within Online Hate Speech

1.Racism and Xenophobia

The first type of discrimination that will be examined is racism. This concept has to be distinguish from "xenophobia" which can be defined as "an attitudinal orientation of hostility against non-natives in a given population". Xenophobia is like racism, but instead of fearing or distrusting people because of the colour of their skin or supposed race, you fear or distrust them because of their nationality, or because they are — or seem — foreign to you.

Racism is one of the most widespread and impactful form of discrimination there is. It is based on the belief and prejudice that humans belong to different races and that one's race is superior than another based on inheritable traits. This in turn means that people from different races should be treated in a different way. This can be done through political or social systems and actions, which may cause a part of the population to be refused certain rights and opportunities. Racial discrimination can also be compared to ethnic discrimination, which, according to the Preamble of the UN convention, both mean without distinction "superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and there is no justification for racial discrimination, in theory or in practice, anywhere" (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1969). The condemnation of this form of discrimination is developing as the time passes, and the world did go through major changes compared to the time of the slave trade, the apartheid and genocides in which it played a role such as the Holocaust, or the Armenian genocide, but a lot is yet to be done.

Racism is felt by minorities every day, whether it is in their working environment, social life or when they are confronted with the law. On the one hand, racism can represent actions which are made wilfully against one group of the population, in a violent or nonviolent way, which are usually considered to be against the law, and may be punishable by it. This can consist of attacking certain people due to their different "race" or blatantly refusing to let a person work or enter a certain environment due to their "race". On the other hand, it can also be done so in an unwilling or unintentional manner due to stereotypes that everyone possesses, which have been pushed on people through media and such.

Regardless of the way in which racism is expressed, the consequences are always the same, and people suffer from those consequences every single day. According to the Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (the Centre) in Belgium, the complaints they receive about hate speech have risen 21 per cent between 2013 and 2014, and 50 per cent of these complaints were made against cyber hate that targeted people based on their real or perceived ethnicity. Furthermore, their numbers underpin the trend that social media have become the dominant platform where these messages are being circulated, inasmuch as one-third of all complaints concerned social media sites (Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2015a; 2015b).

In Germany, Jugenschutz.NET also observed a rise in racist and xenophobic content online, especially on social media. populist right-wing parties, far-right extremists have started riding the wave that is the refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks in Paris. Such groups exploit the fears of the general public, playing on the negative stereotypes that are already in existence, strengthening

them to further their own agenda (jugendschutz.net, 2015a). Jugenschutz.NET is also observing a trend, where cyber hate towards foreigners is becoming more and more explicitly violent, calling on the audience to kill or beat up refugees and other people who do not look ethnically German (jugendschutz.net, 2015a). The myriad of arson attacks against refugee centres and shelters in the past year signals the physical manifestation of such vicious hate messages online (Paterson, 2016). The events that transpired in Cologne and other German cities during the new year celebration, namely Middle Eastern and North African looking man sexually assaulting hundreds of women, poured petrol on an already hotly burning fire; igniting a bitter political debate and putting the Willkommenskultur in jeopardy (Baumgartner et al, 2016).

LICRA in France received 191 complaints that involved racist and/or xenophobic hate speech, which represent 36.4 per cent of all complaints in 2015. The situation in France is even more sombre than in Germany, since the Front National - a far-right populist party -, the Identitarian Movement ("Groups Identitaires") and the French Fascist-Sphere (named "facho-sphère") all openly promote racist and xenophobic ideas, broadcasting such views to huge swathes of the public, normalising racist hate speech, whilst also desensitising the public and raising the threshold of offense to a meaningless level.

The Movimiento contra la Intolerancia (MCI) from Spain also reports worrying trends. The Youth Department of the Spanish Government (INJUVE) conducted a survey that showed that 15 per cent of young Spaniards would vote for a racist party. Moreover, a study conducted by CEMIRA showed that more than 12 per cent of Spanish people would not accept an immigrant as a neighbour, 90 per cent of the population overestimates the number of immigrants in the country and say that there are too many foreigners in Spain, 50 per cent of people perceive the influx of refugees and immigrants as an invasion, 30 per cent of them link immigration to rising crime rates and 13 per cent would expel people with African heritage from the country. Furthermore, one of the departments of the Ministry for Employment, OBERAX showed that there has been a major rise in explicitly racist attitudes towards immigrants within the general population, with 32 per cent of people holding racist opinions about immigrants in 2014; a slight decrease since this number peaked in 2011, but still a gigantic rise from the mid-1990s, when only 8 per cent of people had such opinions. Also, the number of people who showed tolerance and acceptance towards foreigners fell sharply from 51 per cent in 1996 to 33 per cent in 2014.

The numbers collected by the Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (ZARA) in Austria also show that racism and xenophobia are the backbones of cyber hate. ZARA recorded 83 complaints about online hate speech that targeted people based on their real or perceived ethnic background, but fall outside of antisemitism, anti-Ziganism or anti-Muslim hate. This is more than 61 per cent of all online complaints ZARA recorded for 2014. According to our Austrian partner, the refugee crisis brought a massive rise in anti-immigrant and racist hate speech. Extremists and other racist elements shared a torrent of fake news stories and other hateful content that were picked up by the mainstream media, reaching previously unseen numbers of people. Moreover, several companies that offered halal food had to withdraw such products because of general racist and xenophobic outcry. These trends can also be seen if we take a look at the numbers ZARA collected for 2015. First and foremost, ZARA received 232 complaints about cyber hate in 2015, an almost 60 per cent rise from 2014. Also, the number of online complaints related to racism and xenophobia rose to 175. This more than 75 per cent of all online complaints recorded by ZARA (anti-Ziganist, antisemitic and anti-Muslim instances of cyber hate excluded).

In the Netherlands, MDI recorded 580 complaints about racist or xenophobic cyber hate, almost 42 per cent of all complaints recorded by the NGO. 44 per cent of these were about anti-black racism, 17.7 per cent about Moroccans and 16 per cent of online hate speech targeted refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers. The above numbers from our partners and from the Netherlands show that racism and xenophobia still very much dominate the cyber hate sphere. Targeting different communities based on their real or perceived ethnicity or the colour of their skin is still one of the most ubiquitous types of online hate, if not the most omnipresent one.

The level of racist cyber hate is staggeringly high in all European partner countries, and, due to the refugee crisis and the fear of Daesh terrorism (issue that will be discussed in more depth later on in this report), racist and xenophobic hate speech online is more relevant, vicious and more widely consumed and accepted than any time in the past decade.

2. Antisemitism

The second type of discrimination that will be researched is antisemitism. It has always been and still is prevalent in the far-right extremist and neo-Nazi scene. However, in the past decades hatred against the Jewish community has become anathema among the general public and the mainstream political sphere. After the blood-soaked first half of the 20th century that saw millions of Jews being massacred this trend is not surprising. However, a troubling new trend has been on the rise in antisemitism that ought to be looked at. New forms of antisemitism are becoming more and more popular in several European countries, especially among some people originating from North African and Middle Eastern countries. Although this "new type" of antisemitism has its roots in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Western interventionism in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and Northern Africa; it shares most of its traits with the antisemitism that used to be historically omnipresent in Europe until the end of World War II (Hohenberg et al, 2014). Thus, antisemitism is the type of hate where radical Islamism, far-right extremism and the generic anti-Jewish sentiment in some circles of the public and the Muslim community meet (jugendschutz.net, 2014a; 2015a; 2015b).

Even though antisemitism, as it has been stated above, has been pushed to the background in the past fifty years, it did not disappear necessarily. Rather, in many cases it has been replaced by political antisemitism or anti-Zionism that often exceeds the limits of political criticism of the policies, military actions and attitudes of Israel towards the Palestinian people or other Middle Eastern countries, and ventures into the realm of hatred towards the Jewry as a whole (Hohenberg et al, 2014). All data from our partners in Germany, Austria, France, Spain and the Netherlands show that antisemitism and anti-Zionism that borders on general hatred against Jews are very prevalent among certain echelons of European societies. Furthermore, anti-Zionism is almost ubiquitous within far-left movements and extremist groups (jugendschutz.net, 2014a; 2015a; 2015b). Also, antisemitism always spikes when conflicts emerge in Gaza or the West Bank, whilst military operations carried out in Syria by Israel further worsen the situation and correlates with tidal waves of anti-Semitic online hate speech, memes and incitement to violence (Hohenberg et al, 2014).

According to our partner in Belgium, the Centre, antisemitism has been on the rise in the country since 2012 after a smaller dip in the numbers between 2009 and 2012. In 2012, the Centre recorded 88 reports of anti-Semitic hate speech and hate crime, which was a 42 per cent rise compared to

the previous year. In 2013 that number stagnated only to rise again in 2014 to 130 cases. The Centre also noticed a trend, where anti-Semitic incidents and hate speech are becoming more violent and the online public sphere, such as social media sites are playing a bigger and bigger role in the dissemination of such speech. This rise in more violent online hate speech culminated into a deadly shooting at a Jewish museum in May 2014 (Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2012; 2013; 2015b).

In Germany, jugendschutz.net.NET also reported rising cyber hate against the German Jewish community with social media playing a major role in recruitment and dissemination. According to our partner, this rise in antisemitism in 2014 can be linked to the conflict in Gaza that broke out in the summer. Interestingly both far-right extremists and Islamist extremists target Israel and the Jewish diaspora in their online hate speech, posting explicitly violent pictures that distort the truth or omit context completely, depicting the Jewry as a bloodthirsty and murderous people that kill Palestinians indiscriminately. Islamist extremists also use the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to recruit new members for their agenda through the use of cyber hate; raising the relevance of online hate speech to a national security level (jugendschutz.net, 2014a; 2015a; 2015b).

LICRA, our partner in France, reported 196 anti-Semitic incidents in 2015, which is 37.4 per cent of all incidents collected by LICRA. It is paramount to underline that in France, the past decade have been characterised by violent acts and crimes against the Jewish community. Since the Ilan Halimi case, Mohammed Merah's victims and the terrorist attack against the Hypercasher in January 2015, the last ten years have been marked by an ultra-violent strain of antisemitism. Furthermore, just like partners in other countries, LICRA reports that social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+ have started playing an overwhelming role, when it comes to the dissemination of cyber hate. More than 60 per cent of incidents LICRA recorded were posted on social media.

MCI in Spain also reports worrisome trends in antisemitism. Their numbers and other research carried out in Spain on the attitudes of Spaniards towards the Jewish community show that Spain has become one of the most anti-Semitic countries in Europe since the economic crisis in 2008. A study by the PEW Research Center in 2008 showed that 46 per cent of Spanish people had negative views of the Jewry, which is a larger than 100 per cent rise in such views since 2005. Also, Spain is the only country, according to this research, in which the negative views on the Jewish community outweigh the positive ones (PEW Research Center, 2008). In 2009, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published a study stating that Spain is the only country in Europe where the mainstream media is filled with viciously anti-Semitic content, and where opinion makers often cross the line between criticising Israel and blatant antisemitism, which both have driven the rise in antisemitism among the general public (Anti-Defamation League, 2009). Numbers show that this rise in anti-Jewish hate is a trend that seems unstoppable. According to another study from 2010 conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 58.4 per cent of Spaniards believe that the Jews are powerful because they control the mass media and the economy. This staggeringly high number is even worse among university students (a surprising development, since higher education tends to ameliorate racist tendencies), and it rises to a whopping 70.5 per cent among those who are interested in politics. Moreover, 60 per cent of university students said that they would not want a Jewish course mate. Another trend that is unique to Spain is the higher level of anti-Semitic sentiment among far-left people than their far-right counterparts. Furthermore, the Middle Eastern conflict plays a much lesser role in antisemitism in Spain, where only 17 per cent of people stated

that their negative views of the Jewry was influenced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. CEMIRA also found that 15 per cent of Spanish youth would expel Jews from the country if they could.

In Austria, ZARA recorded 15 anti-Semitic incidents of cyber hate in 2014, which is more than 11 per cent of all cyber hate incidents recorded by this NGO. The conflict in the Middle East works as a catalyst of antisemitism in Austria too, with people calling for the complete extermination of the Jewry and arguing that Hitler was not thorough enough. Showing that online hate speech is becoming more and more violent in Austria, turning into incitement to violence more and more often (Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013). However, ZARA recorded a drop in the number of antisemitic cyber hate incidents in 2015. The NGO received 8 online complaints relating to this type of hate, which is only 3 and a half per cent of all complaints recorded by them. This drop might be due to the rise of anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-refugee cyber hate that dominated online hate speech in Austria in 2015.

In the Netherlands, the numbers provided by our partners show that the level of anti-Semitic hate speech online and offline is quite high, whilst it is highly exacerbated by conflicts breaking out in Gaza. The Center on Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) reported 105 anti-Semitic incidents in only two months in 2014 during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. The Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet (MDI) recorded 273 anti-Semitic cyber hate incidents between January and August in 2014, observing a major spike in such hate speech during the Gaza conflict also reported a growing trend in incitement to violence towards the Jewish community during the conflict. Furthermore, the numbers collected by MDI show that social media is playing an ever-growing role in online hate speech (Hohenberg et al, 2014; Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet, 2014).

3. Anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate

The third type of discrimination scrutinized in this report is anti-Muslim hate. This term will be used in this report to describe hateful criticisms of Islam that go beyond the critique of a religion and uses the criticism of Islam to depict all Muslims as violent people who are all terrorist that want to destroy the West and completely "Islamize" Europe. The authors feel that the term anti-Muslim hate is less controversial and less open to malicious interpretation than Islamophobia. The term anti-Arab hate will be used to describe general racist tendencies towards people of North African and Middle Eastern descent and other places in the Arab world.

Since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, a surge of Islamist terrorism rocked the whole planet. Jihadi terrorist groups carried out several heinous atrocities in the US, the UK, Spain, France, Russia, Syria, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines and one could go on and on. The most recent attacks and developments in Syria will be analysed in detail later on in this report. Hence, it is hardly surprising that violence against Muslims in Europe, anti-Muslim sentiment, racist remarks against Arabs and online anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate speech have become everyday reality in most European countries; especially countries with large Muslim communities. Anti-Muslim hate is much less prevalent in Eastern Europe, however, with the ongoing refugee crisis this situation is slowly changing and racist and Islamophobic speech and opinions have started to gain traction in places like Slovakia, Hungary and other states in the Central Eastern European (CEE) region.

As such, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate speech has been on the rise for more than a decade now, and even though it has its ebb and flow, this upward trend seems to be unstoppable. Recent events poured enormous amount of fuel on this already worrying pattern. The attacks in Paris against the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket, the second round of Paris attacks in late 2015 that left more than a hundred people dead, the attack at Zaventem Airport and Maalbeek metro station in Brussels that left more than thirty people dead and more than three-hundred injured, the torrent of mainly Syrian refugees fleeing war seeking asylum in EU countries all exacerbated the pervasiveness, omnipresence and viciousness of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab online hate. The seemingly endless ability of the institutions of the EU to mishandle every crisis (e.g. the 2008 economic crisis that is still ongoing, the social crises with the mainly failed integration of immigrants and the ongoing refugee crisis) that have plagued Europe in the past ten years also hugely worsens the current situation.

Our partner in Belgium, the Centre, reports a slow but steady rise in cases of anti-Muslim hate. In 2012, the Centre recorded 255 cases of anti-Muslim incidents, 257 in 2013 and 260 in 2014. This trend is ushering in other developments in anti-Muslim hate speech, such as the change of focus from the ethnicity of the victims to their religion and culture. Members of the Muslim community in Belgium also report a growing level of discrimination against them in public spaces and the workplace, they are being refused service and harassed for wearing religious attire, such as headscarves or growing a beard. The internet and especially social media sites have started playing a dominant role in the spreading of hate speech against the Muslim community. In 2013, 65 per cent of complaints registered by the Centre were about anti-Muslim and/or anti-Arab sentiments in the media or on the internet. Furthermore, 90 per cent of complaints about harassment, hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination on the basis of culture or religion were aimed at the Muslim community (Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2012; 2013; 2015a).

Jugendschutz.net also reports disconcerting trends in anti-Muslim cyber hate and agitation online in Germany. Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms have been flooded with viral anti-Muslim hate and anti-Arab sentiment driven by a hate towards Islam, racism, xenophobia, the refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks on French soil. Far-right extremists exploit the brutal content shared by Islamist terrorist extremists online for their own agenda, depicting Muslims as vicious, bloodthirsty terrorists, who want to kill all "kafirs" and Islamise Europe. As it will be discussed in a later chapter, far-right extremists often use conspiracy theories, fake news stories and doctored images to spread anti-Muslim hate in a viral manner online, likening members of the Muslim community to garbage or athlete's foot, whilst trying to play on the fears of the public of terrorism. What is even more troubling is that fact that these hateful messages spread uncontrollably reaching (young) audiences, who do not seek out such content directly, planting the seeds of prejudice and negative stereotypes at a young age (jugendschutz.net, 2014b; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c).

LICRA from France also reports high levels of anti-Muslim sentiments. In 2015, LICRA recorded 137 anti-Muslim incidents, 26.2 per cent of all incidents recorded by this NGO that year. The worrying trend in France is anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate speech going mainstream, by being spread by politicians of the Front National, a far-right party that enjoys high levels of support among the general public and also by mainstream conservative political parties.

In Spain the situation is similarly perturbing. According to Platform against Islamophobia, claims of discrimination by members of the Muslim community have risen by 70 per cent in 2015.

According to the Spanish Interior Ministry, 40 per cent of received complaints of discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech was due to anti-Muslim hate. Furthermore, there has been a rise in actual physical attacks on Muslims and their properties, fuelled by the terrorist attacks in Paris. There is no real data to compare these numbers to previous years, but according to Spanish authorities, the level of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab incidents and hate speech had been already high in 2014. Besides Islamist attacks in Europe, the situation in Syria and the military successes of Daesh also act as catalysts for anti-Muslim sentiment among Spaniards.

In Austria, ZARA recorded 24 incidents of anti-Muslim hate online, 17.65 per cent of all online complaints for 2014. These anti-Muslim incidents include extremely vicious language and incitement to violence, such as the gassing and extermination of all Muslims (Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013). The trend of high levels of cyber hate against Muslims and the Arab community in Austria continued into 2015. ZARA collected 46 instances of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab cyber hate in 2015, an almost 100 per cent rise in only one year. Showing that the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks carried out by Islamist extremists in Europe are absolutely the biggest drivers of cyber hate in the country.

MDI received 219 complaints of anti-Muslim and/or anti-Arab cyber hate, 15.8 per cent of all complaints recorded for 2014. Almost half of the received complaints of cyber hate were about messages, videos, posts and pictures on social media platforms, underpinning the trend of the growing importance of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social media platforms as a means for racists and extremists to spread hateful messages and reach a larger portion of the public; even people who do not seek out such content specifically (Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet, 2014).

4. Anti-Ziganism

A fourth type of discrimination reviewed here will be anti-Ziganism. Since there are very few European countries without a smaller or larger Roma-Sinti community, anti-Roma sentiment is one of the most pervasive, most ubiquitous and most widely accepted type of racism in the EU. In this sense, contempt towards the Roma-Sinti communities in Europe is definitely amongst the most relevant types of hate. Discrimination and vicious verbal and physical attacks against the members of the Roma minorities are rampant and go widely unchallenged. Furthermore, holding and voicing highly negative and stereotypical views about the Roma (e.g. unable to integrate, all criminals, lazy, loud, dirty, etc.) is far away from being the prerogative of far-right parties and/or extremist groups. Most European societies, especially in the CEE region are highly desensitized when it comes to negative opinions about the Roma and the threshold where they deem such views offensive is very high (The Local, 2014; Aarts & Schwedt, 2003; Grunau, 2012; PEW Research Center, 2014; European Roma Rights Centre, 2015).

Institutional racism is the everyday reality for these communities. They are discriminated against in the educational systems, the job markets, housing markets and by almost all state authorities such as the police, social workers or child protective services (The Local, 2014; Aarts & Schwedt, 2003; Grunau, 2012; PEW Research Center, 2014; European Roma Rights Centre, 2015). Unlike anti-Muslim hatred, racism against other ethnic communities, homophobia or antisemitism, anti-Roma sentiment is even voiced and perpetuated by mainstream centrist parties and not just in Eastern Europe. Hate speech, especially online hate speech nowadays, provides the bedrock for

the aforementioned discriminatory environment. Hence, the relevance of anti-Roma and Sinti cyber hate cannot be overstated.

The level and prevalence of anti-Ziganism speech is staggeringly high, especially in countries with larger Roma communities, such as Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria. However, anti-Roma sentiment is far from being unique to such countries. Sinti, Roma and Traveller people face massive and widespread prejudice, discrimination and harassment in all European countries (The Local, 2014; Aarts & Schwedt, 2003; Grunau, 2012; PEW Research Center, 2014; European Roma Rights Centre, 2015).

For instance, the Roma population in Germany is estimated to be around 500,000. That is only 0.6 per cent of the whole German populace. Still, the Sinti and Roma community is among the minorities that are most discriminated against in the Bundesrepublik. According to a study by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency that was published in 2014, 22 per cent of Germans agree that the Roma should be deported from Germany, and only less than 4 per cent of the respondents found the Roma likable. Furthermore, according to research conducted by Wilhelm Heitmeyer, 44 per cent of Germans strongly believe that the Roma have an innate tendency for criminality, and 40 per cent of them stated that they do not like to be around Sinti and Roma people. It is unsurprising then that highly negative stereotypes about the Sinti-Roma community reign in the German media, social media sites and the public sphere. Germans generally see members of the Roma community as lazy, homeless and prone to crime. Also, according to a representative poll, three-quarter of the German Roma population had experienced hostility, hate speech and/or harassment in their neighbourhood, their workplace or public places due to their ethnic background (The Local, 2014; Grunau, 2012; PEW Research Center, 2014). Furthermore, according to jugendschutz.net, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other online media platforms are filled with cyber hate against the Roma community. Sentiments that describe the Sinti community as "poverty migrants", who are nothing else but moochers, exploiting the German welfare state. It is also noteworthy, that, although the aforementioned stereotypes and views about the Roma are commonly held, most of the respondents had never met a Romani or Sinti person in real life (jugendschutz.net, 2015a).

The Roma community in Spain faces similar difficulties. Their numbers are a bit higher than in Germany (official estimates put the Roma population around 750,000), their ratio still only reaches above 1.5 per cent within the general population. Yet, the Roma face discrimination and negative stereotyping on a massive scale in Spain. According to a study carried out and published by the CIS Barometer in 2005, 40 per cent of Spanish people would not want a Roma neighbour, a quarter of Spaniards would not want Roma children in their children's classroom. Another CIS Barometer research in 2007 showed that more than 50 per cent of Spanish people had little or no positive feelings towards the Roma; and a whopping 72 per cent of people who reacted positively to a homogeneous model of society said that they had little or no positive feelings about the Roma community. Furthermore, according to CEMIRA, 27 per cent of young people in Spain would expel the Roma from the country if given the chance.

In Austria, ZARA found that, although the Roma population in Austria is minute (somewhere between 15,000 and 50,000, probably less than 0.5 per cent), the NGO still documented 14 cases of cyberhate against the Roma in 2014. That is more than ten per cent of all cyber hate cases documented by the NGO. Moreover, ZARA notes that they cannot always categorise cases based on the real or perceived ethnicity of the victims, therefore they include several cases under the

racist and xenophobic label. This most likely signals that cyber hate against the Roma community in Austria is even more prevalent than these numbers may have us believe (Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013). However, recent geopolitical events, such as the refugee crisis and the threat posed by Daesh changed the cyber hate landscape in Austria in 2015. ZARA recorded only three instances of cyber hate specifically targeting the Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, an almost 80 per cent drop from 2014.

Our partner organisation in France, the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (LICRA) does not collect data on hate crimes and hate speech against the French Roma community specifically. Still, they were able to report multiple cases of cyber hate that targeted Romani people, or Romanians. Romanians are often mixed up with the Roma in France because of the wave of Roma migrants that arrived in the country from Romania since the latter joined the EU. Furthermore, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) have collected more than a dozen hate crimes against the Roma between mid-2010 and early 2015, whilst also documenting a multitude of acts of hate speech both off-, and online. What is even more disconcerting is the fact that several of these acts of hate speech were committed by the mainstream media or by politicians (European Roma Rights Centre, 2015). Finally, a research published in 2014 by the Pew Research Center found that 66 per cent of French people hold negative or highly negative views about the Roma, and this number rises to a staggering 76 per cent among people on the right side of the ideological spectrum (PEW Research Center, 2014).

5. Homophobia

The last type of discrimination explored in this report will be homophobia. Europe, especially Western Europe, made huge and positive strides when it comes to LGBTQ rights. Most countries in Europe allow the members of the gay community to marry or enter a civil partnership, gay couples can inherit from one another and in several countries they can adopt children. Italy is the only Western European country that does not recognise LGBTQ couples legally. The Italian government is preparing a bill that would offer gay couples some legal recognition and limited adoption rights. However, the bill is hotly debated within Parliament and massive demonstrations have been organised against it during the summer of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 (Lane, 2015; France 24, 2016). Eastern Europe is quite far behind its western counterparts, but most EU member countries in the CEE region have some kind of legal recognition of gay couples and some of them even allow adoption.

Seeing these major developments in Europe and the expansion of rights acquired by the LGBTQ community in the past decades, one often assumes that homophobia in Europe is a thing of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth. It has to be noted that there is a divide between Eastern and Western Europe in Homophobia. Eastern Europe is lagging behind Western countries and homophobic language and anti-LGBTQ sentiment is much higher in these countries. Poland, for instance, does not even recognize sexual orientation as a protected attribute when it comes to hate crime, hence authorities prosecute violent attacks against gay people as simple assaults and hate speech against gays can flourish both on- and offline (Lekus, 2015). Other Eastern European countries do have measures against homophobic hate crimes and hate speech, but homophobic slurs are deeply engraved in everyday speech and authorities are often less than helpful when it comes to the prosecution and removal of such sentiments (Der Spiegel, 2013; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013).

However, the situation in Western Europe and the EU as a whole is far from being perfect either. The biggest and most comprehensive study in discrimination and hate speech against LGBTQ people in the EU was conducted by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and was published in 2013. It showed that nearly half (47 per cent) of respondents experienced some kind of discrimination due to their sexual orientation in the past year, whilst almost a quarter of respondents had been attacked or verbally abused in the past five years. Furthermore, 6 per cent of the participants stated that they had been physically attacked in the previous year, often by family members (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013).

These instances of physical and verbal abuse have a huge impact on members of the LGBTQ community and shape their lives to a whopping level that involves self-censorship, hiding and developing a persona in the workplace, school or everyday life that suppresses their gay identity to present a more "acceptable" facade towards society. The psychological effects of these coping mechanisms are tremendously negative, and the level of suicides within the gay community, especially among teenagers, is much higher than within the general population.
This "camouflaged" behaviour among the LGBTQ community is very widespread everywhere in Europe. LGBTQ people refrain from showing affection to their partners in public, and mundane expressions of love, such as holding hands on the street is anathema for most of them, unless they want to be harassed or physically assaulted (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013).

Homophobic hate speech and anti-gay slurs in everyday speech are the bedrock of discrimination against the LGBTQ community. The level of acceptance among the general public towards anti-LGBTQ sentiment normalises discrimination against the gay community and desensitise societies to the troubles of LGBTQ people. Calling things "gay" (e.g. places, events, behaviours, etc.) or using slurs like "faggot", "poof" or "homo" as derogatory terms in everyday language (even against non-gay people) make homophobic language pervasive and very acceptable in most European societies, especially in the CEE region. The ubiquitousness of these denigrating terms raises the threshold of sensitivity against homophobia to a level where it becomes meaningless. People do not think about what they are actually saying when they use these terms and later they feel much more comfortable using them when they actually use them to attack members of the LGBTQ community.

The age of social media and the online communication boom did not help this situation at all. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, other social media sites, online forums and blogs are all filled with homophobic terminology. And, even though people use such slurs often to describe something that is uncool or effeminate and not actually against LGBTQ people, still they convey a message to the LGBTQ community that divides society into "Us" and "Them", where Us are the normal cisgender, heterosexual and heteronormative majority and Them are the abnormal - even perverted - people who are only worthy of scorn and contempt (jugendschutz.net, 2015a).

There is also a quality of homophobia that sets it apart from other types of hate, it often has religious under-, or overtones. The notion of the nuclear family with a father, a mother and children; and the religious belief that homosexuality is a sin are still deeply rooted in most European cultures. These beliefs and the challenge that the LGBTQ community inadvertently poses against the traditional notion of the family unit that is the very basis of society all fuel societal anxiety and homophobic sentiment. Therefore, the relevance of homophobic online hate speech

cannot be overstated. It is highly pervasive, omnipresent and destructive and it also fuels discrimination, incites physical violence against members of the gay community and forces LGBTQ people to live a double life that causes mental illness and other major issues in their lives.

Most of our partners do not focus on homophobia specifically, hence this chapter relies heavily on Europe-wide studies carried out by EU institutions and other research centres. However, MCI in Spain reported that, according to the State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals (FELGBT), 45 per cent of LGBTQ people have been discriminated against in Spain, and 38 per cent of them have been assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The latency of these cases is also highly troubling, since only 10 per cent of the victims reported the attack to the police. The numbers published by the Interior Ministry of Spain also show that homophobia is a major issue in the country. In 2014, 40 per cent of all reported hate crimes were committed against people due to their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. Other studies show that 30 per cent of Spanish students have participated in homophobic bullying, 65 per cent of young LGBTQ people have been subjected to verbal assaults, 30 per cent of them experienced social exclusion and almost a quarter of them have been assaulted. These high numbers are especially worrying and surprising, because 76.5 per cent of Spanish youth between 15 and 29 accepts and supports gay marriage.

Jugendschutz.net from Germany also reports that far-right Facebook groups and other far-right manifestations on social media are flooded with homophobic sentiments, memes and pictures. These pages, posts and tweets are generally denigrating towards members of the LGBTQ community, but often they turn into blatant incitement to violence, calling on the readers to "gas homosexuals", or kill them by other means. They depict gay people as sick, perverted, unnatural or freaks of nature. According to jugendschutz.net, this kind of homophobic cyber hate is ubiquitous on the far-right fringes of the web, but due to the nature of social media, they reach a much wider audience. Furthermore, besides antisemitism, homophobia is also a junction where far-right extremists and Islamist extremists meet, insofar as Islamist groups often post homophobic content on their social media pages, glorifying violence against LGBTQ people (jugendschutz.net, 2015a).

III. Relevant Drivers and Tools that Shape Online Hate Speech at the Present

The 5 different types of cyber hate have now been analysed and a clearer vision of how discrimination manifests in Europe is now acquired. An additional inquiry that could broaden the understanding of the discrimination phenomenon in Europe is to look at what specific and relevant drivers and tools shape online hate speech the most at the present. First of all, the refugee crisis and ISIS attacks will be scrutinized that are the two most major drivers behind cyber hate nowadays, followed by the conspiracy theories, anecdotes and memes that are the tools mainly used by racists and extremists to spread their agenda; and finally the trends within cyber hate. This will enable one to have an idea as to the trends that may transpire in the coming years, and may facilitate an understanding of which drivers and tools may be becoming more paramount than others in the future and will need particular and specific attention.

1.The Refugee Crisis and ISIS attacks behind the Rise of Cyber Hate against Muslims

The first theme that will be inquired into is the refugee crisis and ISIS attacks. The Syrian civil war is one of the most devastating human right crisis of the last decades. Almost half of the country, around 9 million people, have been forced to flee their homes since 2011. In total 4.3 million refugees have registered or are waiting to do so with the United Nations High Commission of Refugees, making it the world's biggest refugee population under the United Nations' mandate. The UN even predicts that this number will rise to 4.7 million by the end of 2016, which would make it the largest exodus since the Tutsi genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. More precisely, 6.5 million were displaced within Syria, more than 3 million have fled to the neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey, and less than 150.000 have declared asylum in the EU, out of which 33.000 have been promised resettlement by the member states, 85 per cent pledged by Germany.

This particular crisis has led to a crisis of its own in Europe, embodied in a wave of hate speech towards the refugees and Muslims as a whole, growing larger every day. Those problems arose when the number of refugees entering the EU grew and grew. The initial public response was not only negative as people were welcoming the refugees with open arms, and volunteering to help. However, the situation has increasingly got ever more hostile. The tensions are constantly rising, and the extremists' voices are getting louder and louder. Events such as the ISIS attacks in Paris, Brussels and around the world, or the Cologne incident during New Year's Eve that were already discussed earlier on in this report, kept on triggering gradually more people to either change their minds or to become more adamant as to the idea that the Syrian refugees represent a threat to peace in Europe and that they are not welcome here.

The correlation between an increase with cyber hate directed against Muslims and the Syrian refugee crisis and the ISIS attacks of the last years will be observed below. Specifically regarding the refugee situation, Oboler has observed that the increase of cyber hate towards Muslims had intensified to a great extent in Germany, perhaps more so than in other European countries. Indeed, Oboler stated Germany's neo-Nazis are promoting hate against refugees and Muslims in general. Moreover, he notes that the number of attacks against refugees, 576, has more than doubled in the last year compared to the previous one (Oboler, 2015).

Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg has also discussed this rise as she wrote a Facebook post on Monday 17th of January stating the following;

"in the past year, we've seen millions of people come together online to support refugees and stand in solidarity with the victims of terror attacks, but we've also heard voices of hate growing louder. With extremism damaging lives and societies across the world, challenging those voices has never been more important." (Petronzio, 2016)

Other examples of this rise of hate speech in correlation with the refugee crisis is that multiple local German politicians received threats of violence and/or death after they welcomed the refugees to their communities. German MP Ozcan Mutlu, of Turkish origin, received a message telling him (Netizen Report Team, 2015):

"it's time to get Auschwitz, Buchenwald, etc. working again – that's where you filthy Turks belong!"

Furthermore, there has been a growth of far-right movements all over Europe (growth which will be discussed more in depth later on), and the refugee crisis has magnified that trend. Indeed an article written by Spiegel Online International wrote that people from the centre of society are increasingly identifying with the far-right movement, regardless of the violence that increases and that goes with it (Spiegel, 2015).
An example of that could be what is happening, again, in Germany. In a survey performed by TNS Forschung, it was reported that 84 per cent of respondents believed that the refugees coming to Germany will cause "lasting changes" to the country. 54 per cent said they are distressed about the fact that the danger of terrorism is intensifying as the influx of refugees augments, and 51 per cent believe that crime rates will intensify. Lastly, 43 per cent are concerned that unemployment will rise (Spiegel, 2015). The correlation between the refugee crisis as a driver and the rise of hate speech directed at Muslims is therefore apparent.
As it was mentioned earlier on, the rise of anti-Muslim hatred was also fuelled, amongst other things, by the attacks that took place in Europe that ISIS has claimed responsibility for. The main incident that has driven Europeans to intensifying cyber hate against Muslims was the Paris attack of November 2015. This attack was constituted by a series of coordinated terrorist attacks such as suicide bombings and mass shooting which resulted in the death of 130 people. This attack represents the deadliest on in France since WWII and in Europe since the Madrid train bombings in 2004.

Many studies and reports showed an increase of anti-Muslim incidents after the attack. First and foremost, in France, the National Observatory against Islamophobia of the French Council of Muslim culture stated that almost a week after the attack 24 anti-Muslim acts were already registered (Bounoua, 2015). Furthermore, according to figures from the Scotland Yard the amount of hate crimes against Muslims tripled in the weeks following the Paris attacks (Gye, 2015). London police has also reported that they received 24 reports of anti-Muslim incident three days after the attack, a number which almost doubled (46) in the following week, which went up to 76 in the week after (Gye, 2015). Furthermore, the Independent made a report that stated that anti-Muslim incidents increased more than 300 per cent in the week following the attacks (Wright, 2015).

What is important to note is that it is not the first time that such an intensification has taken place, which, in turn, denotes a clear trend. For instance, right after September 11, anti-Muslim crimes in the U.S. rose to 1,600 per cent, after the 2005 London bombings, hate crimes in the city against Muslims rose up to 6 times, and finally within the three months following the attacks on Charlie Hebdo on the 7th January 2015, anti-Muslim incidents increased 281 per cent (Mark, 2015a) and 54 anti-Muslim acts were collected between the 7th and the 12th January by the Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie (CCIF) (Bounoua, 2015). Those examples show that there is a clear correlation and that the issue is an urgent one.

A last example of what has made matters worse is the Cologne attacks. During the 2016 New Year's Eve celebrations, there were widespread allegations of sexual assaults which included groping, thefts and at least three rapes that were reported in Germany, primarily within Cologne, but also in Hamburg, Frankfurt, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, and Bielefeld. Former Cologne police chief Wolfgang Albers, told the BBC that the sexual assault perpetrators were of "Arab or North African appearance" and called the incident "a completely new dimension of crime". Many were those who blamed the asylum seekers and for days the police and the press did not give further detail and called for the public not to make up their mind concerning the origin of the criminals before receiving further information. This, in turn, led to doubts evading thoughts and to a massive amount of criticism all around Europe. It was later revealed by the police, on January 24th, that 18 of the 31 suspects checked by the Federal Police on New Year's Eve were in fact asylum seekers, which evidently did not help the already shaky case of the refugees. The percentage of newcomers amongst the attackers is still not yet known to this day, but regardless, the events blew off the lid of the kettle that was already boiling underneath.

However, the real problems are much bigger than that and can signal a crisis that all or most EU countries will have to face in the coming year. The integration of such a huge number of refugees that arrived in Germany, Sweden and other countries will be a harrowingly hard task especially in such a suspicious and increasingly hateful environment where indigenous Germans, Swedes and others are already having major concerns about the future of their countries and societies. Indeed, as it was observed above, hate speech, especially on the internet, is growing, and there is no sign showing that this growth is in any way going to slow down or stop, on the contrary.

As this hate is in majority fuelled by far right parties and groups this displays another problem that should be taken into account. Crises such as this one always worked as a catalyst to extremist ideologies. Events such as the attacks in Paris, Brussels or Cologne will definitely act as petrol on an already hotly burning fire. Since Europe's slide to the political right has been a decade long trend at least, the events in Germany may give a further push into that direction; strengthening far-right and Eurosceptic parties - such as the Alternativ für Deutschland, the Front National or the Sweden Democrats - that already play a large role in European politics and policies. These possibilities for the future definitely beg for some EU-wide response and programmes that help with the refugee influx and with the integration of migrants that are already within the borders, in turn aiding the hate speech issue that is an ever growing one in need of a solution in an urgent manner.

2. Conspiracy Theories, Anecdotes and Memes as Tools to Spread Online Hate

The second theme that will be researched presently is the conspiracy theories, anecdotes and memes. Conspiracy theories have always been a part of far-right folklore. They provide the backbone of racist stereotypes, insofar as they tie together several racist stereotypes and narratives into one big theme that "explains" the reasons behind the "liberal, multicultural, leftist" world around extremists. However, with the rise of online communication and social media, conspiracy theories, fake news stories, memes and photoshopped images have become so prevalent in online hate speech that they can be seen as mundane for a jaded observer.

Conspiracy theories are mostly spread by far-right or "populist" movements and parties to vilify and dehumanise certain communities. They want to securitize and depict these groups of people as an existential threat to the majority for some perceived reason. Since extremist groups and far-right parties work just as any mainstream or centrist political conglomerate, they always tweak these conspiracy theories so they will fit into a newly emerging trend or they will be aimed at some new group that ought to be denigrated for the political gain of the creators of the theory or anecdote. That is why new crises, moral panics or political events always spawn new conspiracy theories and fake news stories (Hungarian Spectrum, 2015). Hence, it is not surprising that the ongoing refugee crisis, the terrorist attacks that rocked Paris and the general feeling of crisis that plagues the European Union also launched a torrent of fake news stories, conspiracy theories and manipulative memes that attack the refugees from war-ridden Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in specific, and Muslim and/or Middle Eastern people in general (jugendschutz.net, 2015a; 2015c).

The creators of such media are distorting events, using photographs out of context, spreading news stories without any basis in reality and spreading hateful messages via powerful images to spread their point of view, gain popularity and garner support for their cause, which usually involves Europe returning to a state of ethnic, religious and cultural homogeneity. These anecdotes, conspiracy theories and memes depict asylum seekers and Muslims as subhuman beings that have neither the capability nor the will to integrate into European societies, thus they act as a colonising force that tries to turn the continent into a North African or Middle Eastern type state with Sharia Law and the lack of human rights. They also depict these communities as violent, sexist and intolerant (jugendschutz.net, 2015a; 2015c, Mark, 2015b, Draitser, 2015). For example, several fake news stories are circulating online in Germany about the alleged crimes and atrocities committed by refugees or immigrants. One story claimed that a group of refugees broke into a petting zoo, slaughtered all the animals and then ate them. The story was very rapidly debunked, but that did not matter. The creators of the story just changed the city where they claimed the events transpired and continued spreading it (Bartsch & Clauß, 2016).

These fake news stories always have common qualities. They are almost never first-hand accounts and they always tend to start changing as soon as they are challenged. Details are swapped, the place where they supposedly happened change, the name of the alleged friend to whom it happened also change, etc. In the age of social media and online hate speech, the aforementioned process of constant metamorphosis is not a problem. The online public sphere is so saturated with news stories and so volatile that debunking articles usually get lost in the constant chatter, whilst the fake news story can be spread like wildfire again and again, constantly changing to counter any type of effective challenge or counter-narrative to dispute it (Bartsch & Clauß, 2016).

Using photoshopped pictures and memes is also highly popular among the architects of online hate. These methods are especially effective since people do not even have to read a lengthy article or a longer Facebook post. They just have to look at an image to become outraged by the awful - and faked - deeds of refugees/Muslims/the Roma, etc. These means of hate speech provide instant gratification for the viewer, hence acting as an immensely simple and effective tool in the hands of the creators of the image (jugendschutz.net, 2015a; 2015c, Kleinfeld, 2015, Dearden, 2015).

Moreover, the spreading of "anecdotes" is omnipresent. There are thousands of tweets, Facebook posts and comments on the internet that try to "debunk" the "mainstream liberal" narratives when it comes to Muslims or refugees. Several of these anecdotes claim that the person or a friend of theirs heard refugees or immigrants saying that they did not flee from war, they just came to Europe for the welfare system; or that they despise the democratic culture and they want to change it, etc. These anecdotes are very tricky since there is no way of fact checking them and/or debunk them. They are just stories that someone has heard or experienced allegedly and the burden of fact checking falls on the general public that tends to believe most things that appear online without giving it a second thought (Draitser, 2015).

Obviously, besides the constantly changing anecdotes and conspiracy theories that reflect on current issues, there are several long-standing "traditional" conspiracy theories that are well-known and often believed in far-right circles. These theories have less pull among the general public that mainly focuses on, and voices its racist views about moral panics and crises that are ongoing; but they arguably have huge influence amongst the people who spread the above described fake stories and images. Thus, they can be just as important as the currently shared online propaganda for hate, because they fuel the need of far-right groups to securitize certain communities, which jumps the threshold to the general public's fears and insecurities.

Conspiracy theories, such as white genocide or the Jewish global conspiracy for world domination and the machinations of other shadowy global organisations like the Freemasonry or the Illuminati all influence these subcultures and - in return - these subcultures are vehemently trying to gain traction among the public to further their political agenda (Draitser, 2015). Due to the aforementioned reasons, the deeper examination of these conspiracy theories, their effects on the public's perception of certain communities and groups and their effects on trends in online hate speech is highly suggested.

3. Trends in Online Hate

The last topic that will be researched in this report represents the trends. All European countries differ when it comes to different types of cyber hate. In some countries, such as Spain, the level of antisemitism and anti-Semitic online hate speech is much higher than in other countries. In other countries - especially in the former Eastern Bloc - homophobia is much more prevalent than elsewhere. However, there are several trends in cyber hate that one can see when looking at all the data received from our partners in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands.

First of all, it is crystal clear that social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other video sharing platforms and Google+ have become the dominant means that racists, far-right and far-left extremists and Islamist extremists use to spread their propaganda, victimise certain minority communities and incite to hatred and violence against them (jugendschutz.net, 2015a;

2015b; 2015c, Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2015a; 2015b, Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013, Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet, 2014).

According to Jugenschutz.NET in Germany, websites have been rapidly pushed into the background when it comes to sharing and disseminating hate speech. In 2007, jugendschutz.net recorded 1635 incidents of cyber hate, whilst only 690 on social media. By 2014 this phenomenon turned around completely with jugendschutz.net collecting 4755 cyber hate incidents on social media sites and only 1417 on traditional websites (jugendschutz.net, 2015a).

LICRA's pieces of data from France corroborates the findings of the German partner. 63 per cent of all complaints about hate speech involved posts, pictures and other types of content on social media sites. Other partners reported very similar numbers about the distribution of online hate, with the importance of social media sites growing every year.

Other trends can be observed in the levels and the ebb and flow of cyber hate. All partners report very high levels of online hate speech within all hate type categories. Naturally, these numbers differ from country to country, some types of hate are much more prevalent in some countries than others and vice versa, but the common trend is clear. All partners report that recorded incidents have been on the rise in the past four to six years and either have been stagnating on that high level in the past year or grew even further (jugendschutz.net, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c, Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2015a; 2015b, Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013, Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet, 2014).

There are also observable trends that are hate type specific. For instance, there are always several current events that act as catalysts for different types of hate. Right now there are several ongoing global events that shape racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim hate. The two biggest events are the refugee crisis that started in 2015 and its end is yet to be seen. The other driver of anti-Muslim and racist hate is the rise of Daesh in the Middle East, the terrorist attacks that were carried out by their sympathisers in Paris and - especially in Germany - the Cologne "sex attacks" on new year's eve that were all noted earlier on. As it was pointed out in the previous chapter, all partners report that cyber hate against Muslims and refugees is on the rise, and that this rise in racist and anti-Muslim cyber hate has been followed by violent attacks on refugees and arson attacks on refugee centres (Gye, 2015, Paterson, 2016).

Similar trends can be observed in antisemitism, the driver behind it being the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that reignites periodically. Most partner countries report a rise in explicitly anti-Semitic online hate speech or anti-Semitic online content that masquerades as anti-Zionism. Furthermore, hate speech targeting the Jewish community always becomes a lot more vicious and violent during times when conflict emerges in Gaza (jugendschutz.net, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c, Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2015a; 2015b, Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, 2013, Complaints Bureau Discrimination Internet, 2014, Hohenberg et al, 2014).

Another trend that is especially relevant to this project is a trend within cyber hate itself. More and more extremists use memes, fake news stories, doctored images and catchy, but hateful pictures to spread their hateful propaganda. This trend is getting clearer and clearer, as jugendschutz.net (2015a, p.11) reports it:

"On right-wing extremist Facebook pages specifically attractive to young people, it is mostly catchy images instead of long texts that disseminate degrading posts against homosexuals. On many pages statements like 'You fag' were common practice and tolerated by the platform operator. Further degrading comments like gays are 'sick', 'perverted' or 'unnatural' quickly followed. Right-wing extremists rely on the dynamics of social networks and successfully trigger agitation again and again. For example, the right-wing extremist Blog PI News with a wide audience, contained posts like 'Now our whole country gets full of gays' without any direct defamation. However, numerous comments of users unleash a torrent of anti-gay agitation."

What is very disconcerting in this strategy and tactic changing trend is its immense success in reaching wide audiences and influence the general public, especially social media savvy youngsters. Communicating hate speech via catchy images fits well into our modern world, in which the flow of information is at breakneck speed and people do not like to read long dogmatic articles about "white genocide" or "Jewish world dominance". These little snippets of information are more than enough to influence people and plant the seeds of prejudice. Moreover, the original posters of these images practically outsource most of the work that they had had to do themselves a couple of years ago for their audiences, since their audience is the one that shares these images and disseminates them to even more people or actually make them go viral. In other words - thanks to social media -, it had never been easier, cheaper and less demanding to spread hate online.

IV. Conclusion

It is now apparent, cyber hate is clearly a growing issue. Recent geopolitical and societal trends and events, such as the refugee crisis, the wars and terrorism in the Middle East and the economic crisis all have been acting as catalysts in an already hostile, racist and xenophobic online and offline environment. Online hate speech obviously has primary effects on certain communities, such as the Jewish diaspora, the Muslim community or the LGBTQ communities in EU countries. The members of the minority communities discussed in this report are victimised by cyber hate on an almost daily basis. However, even though these primary effects ought to be taken very seriously, the secondary and indirect effects of online hate are much more sombre and they should be a cause for concern.

Cyber hate aims to dehumanise and securitise certain groups of people based on their perceived ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, etc; and lately extremists and far-right political parties have been immensely successful in reaching these desired effects by spreading hateful online content. The dehumanisation and securitisation of certain peoples and religions in return leads to an enabling environment for offline acts of hate and violence towards members of such communities.

The recent attacks on refugee centres in Germany, the planned and actual attacks on refugees and refugee shelters in Sweden all show what this enabling online environment can do in a fairly short term of time. If people and the general public sees and consumes cyber hate on a regular basis - and nowadays due to its omnipresence on social media it is almost impossible to avoid it -, racism, antisemitism and other types of hate will become normalised for them. And that is what has been happening in the past years. People are less and less outraged or offended by hateful content, they have become desensitized to these issues and accept cyber hate as actual truths. They link immigrants to criminality, they link refugees to welfare state moochers, they link the Roma to crime, begging and homelessness, and they link LGBTQ people to the supposed demise of the traditional nuclear family.

Although cyber hate is not the only driver behind this rise in racism, xenophobia, anti-Ziganism, anti-Muslim hate, etc., it most definitely helps to normalise such views, making them much more acceptable to everyday people, who do not necessarily hold dogmatically far-right views on race or religion. Moreover, the online public sphere and social media have made it extremely easy and cheap for extremists to spread their hateful messages and agenda, raising the relevance of cyber hate and online hate speech to a previously unseen level.

That is why it is pivotal for authorities, EU institutions, European governments and other stakeholders to recognize the dangers presented by cyber hate and develop policies to fight it. If such policies are not developed and implemented in a timely fashion, the level of hate crimes will probably rise even further and the foundations of the multicultural, multi-ethnic and polyreligious European societies will collapse after having been cracked by the past decade. Cyber hate is definitely not the only thing that European countries have to face and tackle, but its relevance, high levels, pervasiveness, growing viciousness and its tendency to bleed into everyday life make it extremely dangerous to the wellbeing of all European societies.

Reference List

Some of the data in this report was cited from internal reports compiled specifically for the purposes of this paper and project by our partners. These partners are: jugendschutz.net (**Germany**), the Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (now Unia) (**Belgium**), the Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (**Austria**), the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (**France**), the Movimiento contra la Intolerancia (**Spain**) and the Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet (**Netherlands**). Since these reports have not been published anywhere, referencing them was deemed unnecessary by the staff of the International Network Against Cyber Hate.

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V. Appendices

The examples on cyber hate presented in these appendices were collected by our partners: jugendschutz.net (**Germany**), the Inter-Federal Centre For Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (**Belgium**), the Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (**Austria**), the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (**France**), the Movimiento contra la Intolerancia (**Spain**) and the Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet (**Netherlands**).

Appendix 1

"A user posts the following on the Facebook group "I mog Wels nimma" (I don't like Wels anymore- Trans.) at the start of this year. "We have to finish up with the Kanacken (German insult for people appearing to be of South-East European extraction- Trans.) vermin and the city government of Koits, etc., who sympathise with them. I'd be for a targeted resettlement someone a long way away in the east, for example, the Auschwitz health resort."

"A Facebook user posts a racist comment under a photo in December. The photo is to be seen on Volkshilfe (a social services organisation-Trans.) Upper Austria's website and shows three girls, two of whom have dark skin. The user writes: "Death to the Kanacken filth who get everything that their Kanacken hearts desire."

Four young adults take part in a discussion about migrants on Facebook in February. The comments made in this connection are directed against "foreigners" and especially Turks. The following comments are posted in the discussion: "They should all be put in the gas chambers." and "I'm a proud Tyrolean, Sieg Heil!"

"Anne-Sophie Leclere, an FN candidate in the Northeastern Ardennes region, compared in 2013 the Justice Minister Christiane Taubira to a monkey on her Facebook page. She confirmed on the French television. On her Facebook page, Miss Leclere placed a photomontage placing a picture of a baby monkey, with the caption: "At 18 months" next to one of Miss Taubira, with the caption: "Now". Quizzed by Envoyé Spécial (Special Envoy), an investigative TV programme that unearthed the montage, she said it had "nothing to do with racism" as "a monkey remains an animal while a black is a human". But she went on to say: "To be honest, I'd rather see her in the branches of a tree than in the government." "Quite frankly, she's a savage when she arrives with a devilish grin. But it's not racist."

"Mr. S forwards a comment to ZARA in April. He read the comment on a right-wing populist internet platform close to the FPÖ. The following postings could be found under an article titled "Afghans and Chechens wage gang warfare in Graz". The comment reads "Whip and deport!!!!!! Away with the Russians!!" and "Special sterilisation by Dr. Mengele and deport!!!!!!!"

Appendix 2

"The foreign minister Sebastian Kurz issues an appeal for peace in the Middle East on his Facebook page at the beginning of July. This appeal is followed by various anti-

Semitic and inflammatory comments. [such as] “We will only have peace when all the Jews have disappeared completely!! They didn’t even have a place to call their own in 1950 and now they are in Palestine and murder people there to get more space!! Hitler definitely did too little!!”

Guillermo Zapata was Councilor of the Madrid City Hall. He has been prosecuted for these tweets. The text says: “How to put 6 millions of Jews in a 600 (small car of SEAT)? In the ashtray”. In the second example he is referring to the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel: “Why Israel needs such a big space if its citizens are just a small bunch of ashes”.

The above examples are tweets after a Basketball match between Real Madrid and Maccabi Tel Aviv “Jews you are shit and you should be send to the crematory” “Now I can understand why Hitler hated Jews”

The following tweets, provided by LICRA, come from Jérôme Bourbon. He is the director of “Rivarol”, which is a famous French far-right newspaper. He has been condemned several times for antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

"Sad times: people believe neither in God nor in hell but they believe in gas chambers they never saw."

"@AimeAnuell @LisaLrm_@YKV13 I have no hatred but I don't want to be forced to endorse the Holocaust religion."

Low threshold on the internet: Young persons jump to racist statements e.g. 'only a dead Jew is a good Jew'.

Anti-Semitic join-in action: Neo-Nazis mobilize for campaigns via Twitter. (Source: Twitter)

Appendix 3

"Land of Museln (Derogatory German insult for Muslims- Trans.), Eurozone - mosques and minarets instead of cathedrals, land of benefit fraudsters - we're getting stupider, instead of cleverer - land of left-wing demonstrators, robbers, asylum thieves - bravely into new times, we're proudly marching to the precipice, - much beaten Austria."

"Mr. P [...] comes across the Facebook page of the "Austrian Defence League" (ADL) [...].
The comments support (among many other things), "the extermination of Muslims" and regret that "there aren't enough bullets for imams, Muslim associations, political parties and the media." The administrator himself suggests "holding a nail gun against Arabian refugees' heads and then feeding them to the pigs." His announcement, that he will throw a Molotov cocktail around the area where the muezzin calls, finds strong support among the other users."

"A comment is posted on a Facebook page for German speaking Muslims in Austria and Switzerland in the middle of July. The comment [...] reads as follows: "Heil Hitler! You're all filthy Muslim swine! We will gas you in concentration camps, you child fucking tramps. Your gay Allah and his arse fucking Mohammed won't be able to help you. And when I turn the gas taps on and kill you filthy Muslims, your Anne won't be able to help you either. The filthy whore is actually fucking in a brothel. Heil Hitler. You arseholes"."

Exploited for propaganda: Depictions of violence shall incite hatred towards Muslims. (Source: Facebook; original image unblurred)

Depictions of violence and quotations exploited for campaigning against Muslims and ruling politicians.

Quick, catchy message: Disgusting comparison ('Islam is part of the reality of Germany; Athlete's foot, too') shall underpin the rejection of Islam. (Source: Facebook)

Derogatory connotation: Putting Muslims and garbage on an equal level, dissemination via Twitter. (Source: Twitter; Original not pixelated)

Appendix 4

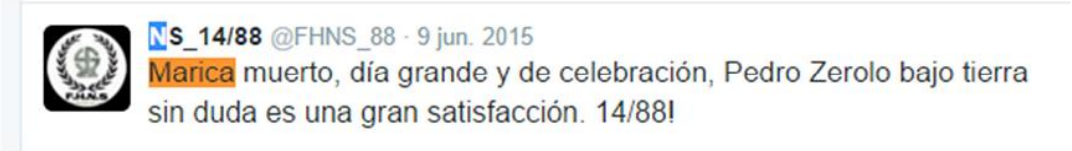
"Various media outlets report at the beginning of September on an attack by about 20 people on a group of Roma who are passing through Bischofshofen.

The attack is preceded by a verbal hate campaign on the internet. Before and during the attack, various members of a public Facebook group discuss the several ways in which they can drive away the camping Roma. Some of the members of the Facebook group, which numbers around 2,500, call for violence against those Roma camping next to a ski jumping ramp. Comments include, “in the evening, we should meet in front of the ski-jump with boards, stones, cudgels, iron bars, etc.... and then storm them from every side and beat the disgusting filthy folk home”, “we need the final solution” and also includes demands for “extermination”. There are calls for arson attacks and it is also announced that the group will attack using firearms.”

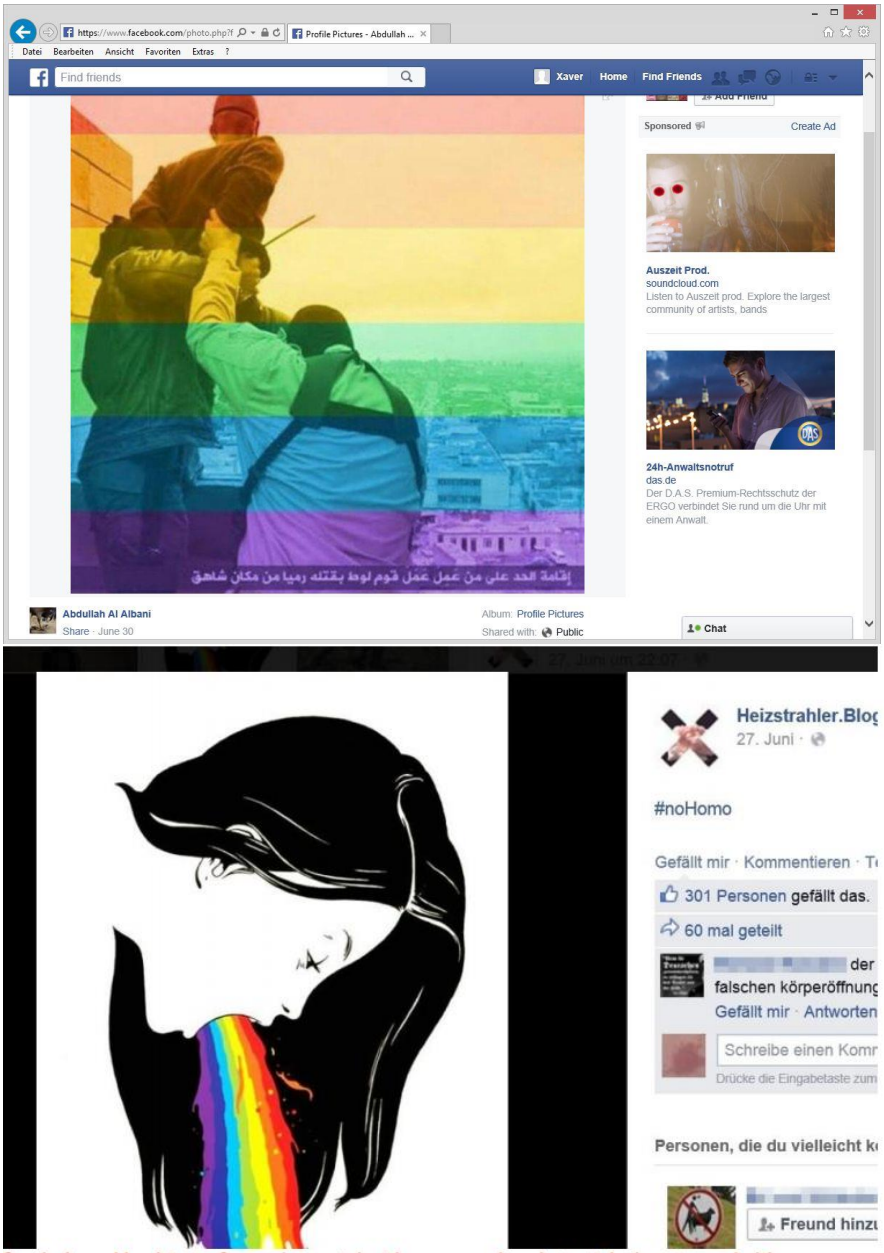
Denigration of Sinti and Roma: Numerous inciting collages and comments ("Gypsie monstrosity") (Source: Facebook; original image unblurred)

jugendschutz.net documented inciting statements against Sinti and Roma on many Facebook pages. Here, right-wing extremists exploit current debates and link their posts to discriminatory clichés. For example, they mark an image of a street full of garbage in a residential area with the sarcastic comment: 'I ask myself why I bring my trash to the container? Experts show us how to do it.' The comments are followed by references to Roma, claims for 'getting rid of the experts' or for 'guaranteeing cleanliness at its finest with Cyclone B'.

Appendix 5



On the occasion of the death of Pedro Zerolo, leader of the gay community and member of Parliament: “Fagot dead: great satisfaction he is buried”.



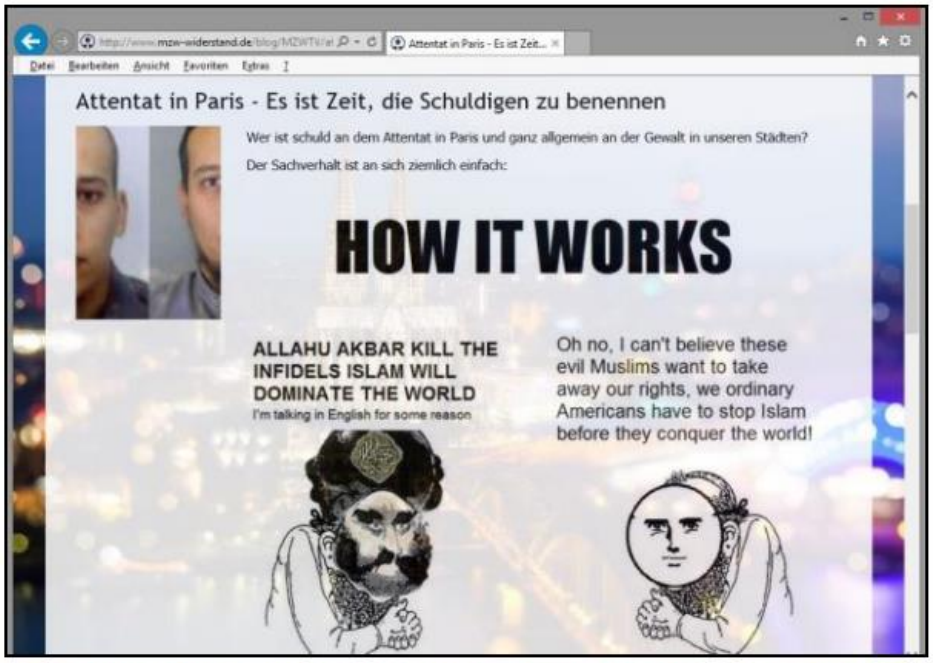
Symbols and hashtags: Campaigns against homosexuals using catchy images and pithy sayings. (Source: Facebook; original image unblurred)

Appendix 6

Violent fantasies by way of an answer: "I have a bullet for every refugee". Everyday reality on numerous Facebook pages against asylum seekers. (Source: Facebook; original image unblurred)

Appendix 7

Photo collage on Facebook: Demonization of Islam with depictions taken out of context. (Source: Facebook; Original not pixelated)



Neo-Nazi blog: Conspiracy theories imagine Jews being the main perpetrator backing the terrorist attacks.

le trublion acide
@lacuriosite85

Suivre

certaines photos sont des preuves
un jour, combattant de #EI
le lendemain, #migrants
qu'en disent les bobos ? 😏😏😏

13:02 - 5 Sept 2015

151 42

“An amalgam between a migrant and a member of ISIS. September 2015 tweet: “some photos prove this info: a day, a member of ISIS, another day a migrant. So, what do you thinks the hipsters (“bobos”)?” The photo montage has been created by Associated Press. But, they presented the migrant not as a jihadist but as a refugee who applied for asylum in Netherlands. This man was active for a time in the Syrian rebellion.”