



**POSITIVE MESSENGERS**

**Report**

# Mapping Out the National Context of Online Hate Speech

**in  
Greece**

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

Project reference number: JUST/2015/PRAC/AG/BEST/8931

Athens, 2017



This project is co-funded by the  
RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND  
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Authors/contributors:

**Elena Sierra**, Municipality of Agii Anargyroi-Kamatero

**Athens, 2017**

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## Acronyms

ACNE	Athens Network of Collaborating Experts
CHariSMA	Combating Hate Speech Multipliers and Ambassadors
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GHM	Greek Helsinki Monitor
GNCHR	Greek National Commission for Human Rights
HLHR	Hellenic League for Human Rights
NCRI	National Council against Racism and Intolerance
NCRTV	Greek National Council for Radio and Television
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHSM	No Hate Speech Movement
OHS	Online Hate Speech
RADAR	Regulating Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism
RCW	Racist Crimes Watch
RVRN	Racist Violence Recording Network
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report is part of the Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Online Hate Speech project which is co-funded by the RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP/JUSTICE PROGRAMME of the European Union. The project is implemented by a consortium of 8 organizations from 7 countries; one of the partners of the project is the Municipality of Agii Anargiri-Kamatero. The focus of the project is online hate speech (OHS), targeted in particular against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The main objective of the project is to strengthen the response of civil society at the national and EU level to OHS through active engagement of local communities in creating and sharing powerful counter-narratives against xenophobic discourse. More details are provided in the Introduction to the present report.

As part of the project, the present report attempts to map out the national context of OHS in Greece and thus provide an up-to-date picture of the situation in Greece with regard to OHS. To this end, the present report will firstly provide an overview of the national context, relating the issue of OHS to the current social, economic and political situation in the country. Subsequently, a short literature review will be provided, based mostly on reports on racist violence and discrimination in Greece. The present report also contains a general overview of legislation and regulations pertaining to hate speech. The issue of relevant statistics and tendencies will also be addressed. The report will also place special emphasis on specific initiatives against hate speech and particularly OHS in Greece. Finally, some good practices will be presented and recommendations will be given.

In order to map out the national context, that is the regulatory framework and societal responses to OHS, the methods selected for data gathering and analysis are qualitative. The qualitative methodology is necessary in order to examine and analyze the existing situation as well as to support assessment of the social and non-regulatory mechanisms that can help to counter the production, dissemination and impact of hateful messages online. More details about the methodology are provided in the Methodology section of the present report.

The main findings of the present report are the following:

- In Greece racist attitudes against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are pervasive. An important factor in this regard is the transformation of Greece from a high emigration country to a destination country for immigrant flows in the early 1990s.
- The current situation is characterized by the severe economic and social crisis that Greece has been confronted with since the end of 2009 and the refugee crisis that has been going on since 2013. Indeed, the problem of racism and hate speech in general as well as OHS exacerbated in the last few years, especially in 2014 and 2015, when the refugee crisis peaked.

- The findings suggest that racist attitudes and rhetoric in the last few years have been prominent in public discourse and have been promoted by some high-profile politicians, members of the Orthodox Church and some of the mainstream media as well as from more marginal media outlets. The rise of Golden Dawn to prominence has been crucial in the exacerbation of the problem of racism and hate speech.
- The legislative framework for combating hate speech seems to be adequate, especially since Law 4285/2014 was introduced, however laws and self-regulatory mechanisms against hate speech have so far proven rather ineffective.
- There is a problem with the under-reporting of incidents of hate speech in general. In addition, hate speech incidents are not recorded systematically nor are relevant statistics provided. This is especially the case for OHS incidents.
- Despite steps having been taken by the state to institutionally address the problem of racism, most of the work against racism and hate speech in Greece is done by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Civil society in Greece has been very active in the support of migrants and refugees and this extraordinary mobilization has become especially evident with the refugee crisis. Some initiatives by CVOs are reviewed in the present report. Some examples of best practices are also given. It is evident that EU co-funded programmes have played an important role in this regard.
- In order to effectively combat OHS, the problem needs to be highlighted and come to the fore. CVOs, often with European Union funding, have become active in this respect in the last few years but it is still a “niche” point of focus.
- There needs to be a comprehensive national strategy initiated by the Greek government to combat racism, hate speech and OHS that brings together the numerous CVOs active in the field and institutional mechanisms, so that there is co-ordination of resources.
- Political parties and other institutions as well as the media have to take a firmer stance against hate speech and OHS with codes of conduct and self-regulatory mechanisms that are strict and with sanctions being actually applied in practice.
- Systematic recording of incidents of OHS and statistics are necessary to monitor the situation.
- Important work against OHS can and should be done in the context of education. There are currently initiatives against OHS in education and these need to continue in a more systematic way.

(More recommendations are given in the relevant section of the present report.)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Project background**

The project is implemented by a consortium of 8 organizations from 7 countries: Sofia Development Association (Bulgaria) – lead partner, Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM - IUL (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).

This project tackles the issue of hate speech - online hate speech in particular, targeted against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the 7 EU countries. It addresses the need for more effective civil society response to online hate speech through sharing and disseminating best practices. The main project objective is to strengthen the response of civil society at the national and EU level to online hate speech through active engagement of local communities in creating and sharing powerful counter-narratives against xenophobic discourse. The project focuses on 1) building multi-stakeholder coalitions for developing counter-narratives to denounce hate speech and negative representations of migrants and refugees, and 2) disseminating the positive messages through media literacy and a public awareness campaign.

The project also aims:

- To compile and share best practices for countering the spread of online hate speech against migrants, refugees and minorities through awareness-raising campaigns;
- To provide new data on the nature, scope and impact of online hate speech targeting migrants and refugees, in order to aid national and EU authorities to develop more effective integration and anti-discrimination policies;
- To foster shared understanding and communication between the communities most vulnerable to hate speech and mainstream society in Europe;
- To educate and train the target groups about hate speech, media literacy, creation and dissemination of web content.

### **1.2. Objectives**

The first part of the research focuses on the national normative frameworks developed to identify, limit and counter hate speech online, the mechanisms for monitoring and reporting hate speech instances, and legal and non-legal measures to counter hate speech.

Specific research objectives:

- To provide up-to-date picture of the national context as well as comparative assessments on countering hate speech
- To identify key stakeholders, supporters, multipliers, to be involved in subsequent project activities
- To assess key civil society initiatives for countering hate speech and other forms of discrimination
- To identify best strategies for civic actors to counter hate-based violence on the Internet
- To develop methodological and technical tools for media content analysis on hate speech

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Research problem and aim of the research**

The research problem is defined by the main project objectives, namely, to strengthen the civil society response against the spread of online hate speech against migrants and refugees. Accordingly, the research has two main aims: 1) to describe and assess the effectiveness of the existing regulations against online hate speech in each partner country, and 2) to assess the societal responses against hate speech in each partner country in order to develop more effective strategies for civic actors to counter online hate speech against migrants and refugees.

### **2.2. Justification of the research**

While a number of studies on the regulatory framework on hate speech have been done in individual countries and across the EU, not enough has been done to establish the effectiveness of these regulations (or the need for new ones) in the case of online hate speech against migrants and refugees. The increasing migration flows to Europe in the past two years, coupled with the rising negative attitude to migrants and refugees create a new sense of urgency to look deeper into the issue and to generate the changes needed. In this regard, the research will provide the basis for developing powerful counter-narratives against xenophobia in an environment where migrants and refugees are becoming increasingly vulnerable not only to verbal assault but to physical violence as well. In addition, the study will allow for a critical assessment of social media's role in creating and spreading discriminative and xenophobic attitudes, and for a critical assessment of the most recent regulatory changes and cooperation agreements between national and EU public authorities and Internet intermediaries – organizations that mediate online communication such as Google, Facebook, to curb the spread and incidence of hate speech on the internet. Research findings will be followed with recommendations in the country reports and the integrated comparative report targeted at the relevant stakeholders.

In defining the scope of the research, the project team members have considered previous studies on hate speech done at national and EU level, as well as publications on discrimination, xenophobia, and racism. Given the tensions between hate speech and freedom of expression, as well as its intersection in issues of human rights, equality and dignity, and laws governing the media, the research will focus on various pieces of legislation that might be applicable to hate speech and online hate speech in particular.

### **2.3. Definitions used**

The research does not aim to engage in theoretical debates on the definition of the term “hate speech” or debates on the tension between freedom of expression and hate speech. For the purposes of this study, and given the lack of a common international definition of hate speech, the project partners have agreed to use the definition proposed by the Council of Europe: „The term, hate speech’ shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.”<sup>1</sup> The research will also take into account article 2.1 of the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime<sup>2</sup>, which states that "racist and xenophobic material" means any written material, any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocates, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual or group of individuals, based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors. Partners will also use as guidelines the definition of cyberhate and the forms and mechanisms used by those who spread or promote hate online proposed by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) “ADL defines Cyber hate as any use of electronic communications technology to spread anti-Semitic, racist, bigoted, extremist or terrorist messages or information. These electronic communications technologies include the Internet (i.e., Web-sites, social networking sites, “Web 2.0” user-generated content, dating sites, blogs, on-line games, instant messages, and E-mail) as well as other computer- and cell phone-based information technologies (such as text messages and mobile phones).”<sup>3</sup>

### **2.4. Research methods**

Given the main goal of the research, that is, mapping the national context (regulatory framework and societal responses to online hate speech), the methods selected for data gathering and analysis are qualitative. The qualitative focus of the research is justified in light of its primary aim,

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix to RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers on “Hate Speech.” Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 30 October 1997 at the 607th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

<sup>2</sup> Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (Strasbourg, 28.I.2003).

<sup>3</sup> From Responding to Cyberhate, Toolkit for Action (ADL), [http://www.adl.org/internet/Binder\\_final.pdf](http://www.adl.org/internet/Binder_final.pdf)

namely to get a deeper understanding and to support assessment of the social and non-regulatory mechanisms that can help to counter the production, dissemination and impact of hateful messages online. The methods to be employed for the research include literature review (including review of legal literature, academic and non-academic articles), and secondary data review (for example, content produced by NGOs, relevant public bodies, scholars, representative surveys, legal databases, national statistics reports).

### **3. NATIONAL CONTEXT FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1. National context overview and data on current social, economic and political situation in the country**

For the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greece was traditionally a country of emigration<sup>4</sup>. One could say that Greece being a country of high emigration was part of the national identity of the country. This situation changed completely in the early 1990s. The first foreign workers arrived in Greece as early as the 1970s (Maratou-Alipranti 279). However, the first massive inflow of immigrants to Greece occurred in the early 1990s. This particular migration wave transformed Greece from a traditionally emigration country to a destination country for migration flows (Amitsis and Lazaridi 25-26).

That first big migrant wave in the early 1990s was mainly the result of the collapse of the former socialist countries. Amongst the migrants that came to Greece in the 1990s, the Albanians were the most numerous. At the same time, however, Greece started to receive many migrants from African and Asian countries as well.

According to data released by the Ministry of Interior there were 557.476 immigrants legally residing in Greece in 2016. That number is significantly lower than the 621.178 documented immigrants living in Greece in 2011. In between 2011 and 2016 the numbers of immigrants legally residing in Greece have fluctuated. More specifically, in 2013 the number of documented immigrants in Greece went down to 405.306 but it went up again to 461.438 in 2014 and 527.264 in 2015 (Bitsika). To give a sense of perspective, the total population in Greece according to the 2011 Census was 10.712.409 people over the age of one (Hellenic Statistical Authority)<sup>5</sup>.

The transformation of Greece to a destination country for immigrants that started in the early 1990s is the first significant late-20<sup>th</sup> century development with regard to immigration to Greece.

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<sup>4</sup> That is, with the exception of the Greek refugee populations that came to Greece from Asia Minor at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the repatriated immigrants that arrived in Greece in the 1980s from the former socialist countries.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted, however, that the exact number of immigrants in Greece is hard to estimate. This is due to the fact that there is a large number of undocumented immigrants, i.e. immigrants who are not in possession of a residence permit. As a result, these people have to fly under the radar of the authorities, making it hard to estimate their number (Varouxi and Sarris 17). It is estimated that their number is considerably high.

The second and most recent significant development, namely the refugee crisis, occurred after 2013. After 2013, and especially between 2014 and 2015, migrant and refugee flows to Greece increased dramatically. Especially during the first ten months of 2015, there was a dramatic increase of refugee flows to Greece; the arrival of refugees has continued since.

The unprecedented and unexpected huge inflow of refugees in 2015 was part of the increasing refugee flows from the Middle East area towards Mediterranean countries. While in 2014 41.064 refugees arrived in Greece, the number escalated to 856.723 refugees arriving in Greece in 2015. Unfortunately, the number of deaths at was also very high. According to the data, 246 refugees lost their lives in the Aegean Sea in 2015 and 149 refugees went missing (Karamagkalis).

To give a more specific picture, between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2015, more than 660.000 people arrived in Greece on their journey from Turkey to the Aegean islands. The vast majority of them came to Greece in their attempt to flee war and violence in their countries of origin (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia). Furthermore, during the single month of October more than 200.000 people arrived in Greece, many of them passing through the island of Lesbos. In comparison, during the same period of time, i.e. from January to mid-November 2015, Italy received 141.777 people. About 50% of refugees came from Syria, 30% came from Afghanistan and more than 10% came from Iraq. These were people migrating in order to seek international protection (Triandafyllidou).

When Greece became a destination country for migrant flows for the first time in its recent history in the early 1990s, the racist attitudes and beliefs of a significant part of the population became evident. These attitudes and beliefs went hand in hand with racist rhetoric as well as real life racist treatment of migrants. This does not mean that Greek society as a whole was racist. It was, however, a significantly homogeneous society, in which whatever racism and xenophobia may have existed was relatively dormant<sup>6</sup>. After the beginning of the 1990s, it became evident that racism was pervasive.

Rapidly changing demographics can have an impact on the number and nature of racist crimes. Greece, a relatively homogeneous society before the 1990s, had an estimated 98% Christian Orthodox population/ethnic Greek descent population. In two and a half decades the country received approximately 1 million people from the Soviet Union, South Albania, eastern European, Asian and African countries. Together these groups currently account for more than 10% of the population (ENAR 9).

It can be argued that there is a tradition of racist speech in Greece. Traditionally, the Roma, the Jews, LGBT people as well as Muslims, even people with disabilities, were and still are the targets of racist rhetoric. With the arrival of a large number of immigrants in Greece in the early 1990s, the immigrants became the target of racist rhetoric and hate speech. This is especially so for the

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<sup>6</sup> Greece has also been a country where significant parts of the population have long cherished nationalist views and have subscribed to myths of some kind of national superiority.

Albanians who constituted the majority of immigrants arriving and living in Greece, but also for people from Africa and Asia. The refugee crisis of the last few years created novel tensions, caused heated debates and triggered more brutal and openly expressed hate speech incidents against refugees.

The issue of hate speech in Greece in the last few years should therefore be seen on the one hand in the context of the refugee crisis. On the other hand, it should be seen in the context of the severe economic and social crisis that Greece has been confronted with since the end of 2009. This is also pointed out in the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) 2014 Report on Greece.

During its visit to Greece, ECRI's delegation was informed by various interlocutors that the widespread problem of hate speech had increased substantially since 2009, in particular in the context of the rise of Golden Dawn. These views were confirmed by a review of the media, internet blogs and political discourse. Hate speech is mainly directed against migrants, Muslims and Roma, but also against Jews and LGBT persons. (17).

Mention of the "debt crisis" that was hitting Greece was made at the end of 2009. Very soon the country was under Troika supervision, a tripartite commission consisting of the European Union, the Central European Bank and the National Monetary Fund. The Troika imposed a number of austerity measures, to which the then Greek government agreed (as did subsequent Greek governments), as prerequisite for contributing international financial aid. As the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)/Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR) succinctly puts it, "These measures, which have required a sharp, immediate reduction in public spending, have been accompanied by an acute rise in unemployment and poverty, political turmoil, economic depression and social unrest" (9).

The economic crisis in Greece resulted in a multiple crisis in the political sphere. The political landscape became more unstable; there have been more frequent changes of government as well as social unrest. The crisis of legitimation of traditional politics and the subsequent instability favoured the rise of new political formations, often populist in character and of far-right leanings. There emerged multiple competing discourses in the attempt to explain the real reasons behind the crisis and to seek and propose solutions. In the attempt to explain who is to blame for the crisis, different discourses targeted different groups of the population; many of them targeted migrants, the traditional scapegoats.

FIDH points out that the crisis has had a negative impact on economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. As it is explained:

Such restrictions, coupled with reduced access to essential services and the state's manifest inability to cope, fuel mistrust in government. As authorities act without consultation or democratic oversight, and fail to respond to people's basic needs, their legitimacy is increasingly

eroded. This has in turn pushed people to seek refuge in extremist ideologies that purport to offer alternatives to the current system. States appear to be less and less able to contain such ideologies, sometimes tolerating them as a means of channelling frustration towards traditional scapegoats, such as migrants. (5)

As was mentioned earlier, the ECRI Report gives special emphasis on the rise of Golden Dawn<sup>7</sup>, which entered the Athens City Council in 2010 and the National Parliament in 2012. As the Report points out, the leadership and members of Golden Dawn have openly voiced their hatred of immigrants and Jews on many occasions. Praise of Nazism and Hitler, Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic hate speech are frequent occurrences<sup>8</sup>.

As will become evident in the following section, racist rhetoric has permeated even mainstream political and media discourse, mainstreaming and legitimizing racist attitudes. “State institutions, mainstream political parties and the media have all been blamed for legitimizing far-right rhetoric and organizations” (FIDH 46). The result is that racist rhetoric has become increasingly more open, vocal, extreme; relevant taboos seem to have collapsed. The very concept of multiculturalism has come under attack<sup>9</sup>. The proliferation of outlets for the expression of personal views on the Internet as well as the significant expansion of the social media in the last few years has amplified the problem.

However, it would be wrong to fail to mention that the aforementioned negative and racist views, discourses and practices do not characterize Greek people as a whole. As a counter-movement, numerous people, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), both formal and informal, have organized and expressed their solidarity to migrants and refugees by trying to counter hate speech and by aiding those in a vulnerable position in practice.

### **3.2. Literature review**

In general, there seems to be a lack of documentation and recording with regard to the issue of hate speech. This is especially the case with regard to hate speech online. In fact, according to ENAR, Greece is among the countries that NGOs are the only organizations collecting any significant data:

For several years there were no convictions of racist attacks in Greece and official reporting of racist crimes was irregular and showed very few numbers. Organizations and networks such as the Racist Violence Recording Network were able to gather evidence and figures that revealed that racist attacks were a serious problem in Greece. Civil society data were instrumental in shining a light on the government’s failure to address racist crime and in some cases mistreatment by officials themselves. (22)

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<sup>7</sup> A far-right/neo-nazi organization/political party.

<sup>8</sup> See also FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights), 23-24 for a more detailed account.

<sup>9</sup> This, of course, is an international phenomenon that manifests differently in different countries.

One major document that has recorded the condition of racism and hate speech in Greece is the aforementioned ECRI Report, published in December 2014.

With regard to the political sphere, the ECRI Report cites incidents of hate speech and racist propaganda in the Greek Parliament, pointing out that Golden Dawn has repeatedly used the Greek Parliament as a platform for its racist propaganda. The Report gives the example of a Golden Dawn MP who, during a plenary session on 18 October 2012, referred to migrants in Greece as “sub-humans who have invaded our country, with all kinds of diseases”, noting that there was no strong reaction by parliament to this extreme example of hate speech. On another occasion, the Golden Dawn party spokesperson read extracts from the infamous anti-Semitic forgery Protocols of the Elders of Zion during a plenary session on 23 October 2012 (20).

However, racist rhetoric is not limited to far-right political parties. The ECRI Report gives specific examples of prominent politicians that have expressed racist attitudes and have adopted hate speech. One such example is that of the then Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection who stated in August 2012 that “the country perishes. Ever since the Dorians’ invasion 4000 years ago, never before has the country been subjected to an invasion of these dimensions... this is a bomb on the foundations of society and the state.” These comments were made in the context of the Xenios Zeus operation, which had started in August 2012 and included racial profiling-based checks of the legal status of migrants by police on the streets. The term “bomb” was also used publicly in July 2012 by the same minister when referring to the center of Athens, where many irregular migrants and asylum seekers often rent and live in overcrowded apartments characterized by substandard living conditions, often deprived of access to public social welfare services. The Report notes that two days later Golden Dawn referred to the minister’s statement as a “vindication of (its own) position” (19).

FIDH also documents instances of hate speech against migrants, employed by prominent politicians, such as the pledge of the former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras during his campaign for the 2012 national elections to reclaim Greek cities from immigrants.

Anti-immigrant political rhetoric, policies fueling hostility towards marginalized groups, particularly migrants, and the failure of the state to meaningfully address racist violence and hate speech have thus also created fertile conditions for Golden Dawn support. By mainstreaming certain ideas and giving them political legitimacy, such policies and behaviours have legitimized the far-right rhetoric that traditionally builds on them. (45)

Representatives of vulnerable groups also explained to the representatives of ECRI that while racist comments in day-to-day life that migrants received could to some extent be discouraged and countered, the level and quality of hate speech takes on a frighteningly different dimension when people feel encouraged by political leaders who are echoing and promoting prejudices and resentments. The resulting acceptance of hate speech creates a general climate in Greek society that facilitates the increasing willingness to commit or tolerate acts of violence against these groups. (20)

Politicians are not the only prominent figures who employ racist rhetoric, however, as the findings of the ECRI Report show. For instance, anti-Semitic stereotypes in particular have permeated some parts of the Greek Orthodox Church. According to the Report, some of its representatives use hate speech against the Jews and LGBT people (18). Although the Report mentions racist speech against the Jews and LGBT persons, members of the Greek Orthodox Church have also often adopted an openly racist stance towards migrants and refugees. Of course, this is not characteristic of the Greek Orthodox Church as a whole. Apart from politicians and members of the Church, openly racist attitudes and discourses have also been adopted by sections of the media as well as artists and intellectuals.

The ECRI Report makes special reference to the media and the Internet. As it points out, “Hate speech is widespread in the media and on the Internet; it goes largely unchecked and unpunished. One of the reasons is the lack of effective self-regulatory mechanisms in this connection” (21). The Report also makes the connection between the rise of Golden Dawn and the favourable treatment of a large part of mainstream media: “The rise of Golden Dawn seems to have been facilitated by TV stations broadcasting interviews with its leadership in a life-style-show fashion, leading to trivialization, rather than providing in-depth information on its racist ideology and activities” (21). On top of that, “The anti-terrorism discourse in the media also often targets immigrants and refugees, as well as the Muslim community in general. Media play a significant role in linking criminality and terrorism with immigration, further fueling hate speech” (21).

With regard to the Internet, it is indeed the case that one of the effects of the Internet and the dramatic increase in the use of social media, the proliferation of blogs, websites etc. in the recent years is the fact that racist rhetoric and hate speech are no longer limited to a few, controlled outlets that can influence a large audience in a top-down way (e.g. the media) but they become diffuse among society. The sources and the media have multiplied and everyday people, who in the past did not have access to a larger audience are now able to express their opinions more publicly. Communication has taken on more diffuse and informal forms; the Internet and social media should be considered to be some form of public sphere of its own. Especially in Greece, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter and a lot of people use social media, as well as blogs, as a way to express political and social views. One could say that there has been in the last few years a “war” of combatting discourses taking place on the Internet. It is not only racist rhetoric and hate speech that have found a new platform of expression; antiracist rhetoric, counter-narratives to racism and hate speech use the same platforms and media. The lack of documentation and recording of racist hate speech online therefore, becomes all the more evident.

The Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) is an initiative taken in mid-2011 by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for

Refugees in Greece (UNCHR) that was prompted by the absence of an official and effective data collection system as well as the need for coordination among organizations which recorded, on their own initiative, incidents of racist violence against people who seek recourse to their services. 37 NGOs and civil society actors comprise the Network along with the coordinators, i.e. the UNHCR and the GNCHR.

The Network records racist violence in general. However, there is some mention on hate speech as well as a reference on hate speech on the Internet. The 2016 Annual Report is the sixth one published by the Network. It should be noted that the Network's methodology is based exclusively on the victim's testimony, therefore the quantity of recordings depends on the victim's wish to share their experience. In this context, the Network recorded 48 incidents of racist violence in a public sphere in 2016. Three of these incidents occurred online. The 48 incidents mentioned are not related to hate speech only; some of them relate to property damages, arson etc. In addition, the targets were not exclusively migrants or refugees. Of course, this does not mean that the aforementioned numbers are in any way representative of the real problem of online hate speech. The Network's Report may not be able to record incidents of hate speech online in any way that is representative of what actually goes on in reality due to the restrictions placed by its methodology and due to other reasons that are explain in the Report. It is, however, able to provide qualitative analysis based on its observations and give a broad picture of the current state of affairs.

According the Network, the year 2016 was marked by the EU-Turkey Statement of March 18<sup>th</sup>:

The change in the welcoming attitude to refugees started to show when parts of the humanitarian corridor were closed and the political discourse on the refugee crisis became acute. Terms, such as "migration" and "migrants", instead of "refugees," reappeared in the terminology used by political leaders and other influential actors, with a dual negative effect: on one hand, it was suggested that all the people entering EU were migrants and hence the EU Member States do not bear the same legal obligations as for refugees. Furthermore, this point strengthened a position according to which States do not have any obligations towards irregular migrants. This theory degrades a series of rights and obligations arising from international conventions, while it deepens the relative "isolation" in which migrants legally residing in Greece were found due to the shift of the authorities' attention, as well as civil society, in the management of refugee and migrants flows. In any case, persons of foreign origin («ξένοι») increasingly monopolize discussions with negative content, while certain EU leaders use extremist language, and some others are tough in negotiations and aim to host as few refugees as possible. People receive the message that the refugee issue is a huge problem with only negative consequences. (1)

The Network's Report goes on to point out and record incidents of extreme reactions that were triggered by the public discourse on providing temporary accommodation facilities for refugees in Greece; tensions rising on the islands due to the apparent "entrapment" of thousands of refugees there and the consequent extreme acts of racist violence; novel reactions at the start of the school

year due to the Ministry of Education's plans to integrate refugee children in the education system and so on. However, the Report also notes that "Along with the signs of a changing attitude, an important part of Greek society continues to stand by refugees and other vulnerable groups" (2). On the whole, the Network's findings suggest that in 2016, recordings of attacks have decreased in comparison to those of 2015. However, this is a multifactorial effect and the Report explains the reasons behind this decrease (2). The Report also identifies trends such as the tendency towards the recurrence of organized or informal groups and the rise of serious attacks. Amongst others, it is acknowledged that "Fewer incidents of verbal abuse were recorded in 2016 as they are unfortunately considered by victims as routine, that they deemed there was no reason to be reported when not accompanied by physical violence" (3). These are some of the most important findings of the Network's Report concerning the issue of racism and racist speech.

On the whole, with regard to online hate speech there does not seem to be much documentation even though Internet use and especially social media membership have exploded in Greece in recent years and hate speech, quite often extreme hate speech, is very pervasive among users of far-right leanings especially.

With regard to the Greeks in particular, increasing numbers of people use it as a platform to express themselves publicly and comment on many issues. It has been argued that due to the special condition that characterizes Greek Media (economic concentration, lack of transparency, corruption and links to centers of economic and political power), Greek blogosphere quickly acquired a political dimension. It also became a medium of protest and criticism (Smyrnaiois). Initially, the Greek blogosphere was clearly progressive in nature due to the relative homogeneity of its members (mostly young people of high educational level). However, the subsequent mass use of online media by increasingly larger parts of the population meant that online media became important communication instruments for those that were aiming at manipulating opinion. Smyrnaiois makes the argument that thus started the emergence and consolidation of populism and intolerance that has reached mass proportion in the Greek Internet.

The Greek far-right made use of this development and is currently in a prominent position on the Greek-speaking Internet through a grid of websites (official websites, blogs and social media profiles in Youtube and Facebook for instance). Through this online network, the Greek far-right has managed to propagate its ideas successfully, sometimes openly and other times covertly (Smyrnaiois).

For his research, Smyrnaiois used social networks analysis and graph representation in his methodology. The subject-matter of his research were far-right blogs and website and not social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The findings of this research are very interesting in understanding the rise to prominence of the far-right on the Greek-speaking Internet. With regard to racist speech, Smyrnaiois points out that there are openly racist articles, however they are far

and few between. Most far-right blogs selectively publish news relating to immigration, Islam and criminality in a way that minorities (immigrants, Roma etc.) are targeted.

Online hate speech on social media like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube does not seem to have been researched. The picture is quite different on social media. For example, racist comments, often of an extreme nature, are frequently expressed by Facebook users. Facebook pages that promote hate speech have proliferated in the last few years. At the same time, both individual users as well as Facebook pages with anti-racist rhetoric are very active in combatting hate speech. Indeed, it has been pointed out that traditional as well as modern (social) media often contribute to the dissemination of hate speech (Gazakis, Syrri and Takis 36).

Traditional media seem to have played a significant and negative role in influencing and changing views and attitudes on migration. Gazakis, Syrri and Takis note that until 2010 social studies recorded a merely established negative view regarding immigrants among the Greek population as well as a lack of positive views of the role of the immigrant in society. This changed significantly after 2010. A large section of the Greek society, with the contribution of many media, internalized the view that the migration issue was a “social problem” or a “threat”. To this day, migration has been constructed and approached as a problem rather than as a sociocultural event (26).

The authors often point out that the media often highlight excessively the ethnicity or religious affiliation of the perpetrator of a crime as well as disproportionately display a deeply populist and violent speech which is full of racial hate, essentially legitimizing hate speech. Media coverage of issues relating to migrants and migration is often based on the contrast between a positive “us” against a negative “them”. Immigrants, refugees and “the others” are often represented not on account of their individual stories but as members of a group. And that group is deemed to be threatening rather than vulnerable. Stereotypes abound when it comes to the coverage of news where migrants and refugees are involved (36).

### **3.3. General overview of legislation and regulations on hate speech**

Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination incriminated the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or racial hate, of any encouragement towards racial discrimination as well as of all violent acts that turn against any race or group of people of a different colour or ethnic descent<sup>10</sup>. Law 1419/1984 added the ground of religion, Law 3719/2008<sup>11</sup> added the ground of sexual orientation and Law 4139/2013<sup>12</sup> added the ground of gender identity (Chalkia 1701).

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ministryofjustice.gr/site/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=lk2xQr3jlk%3D&tabid=132>

<sup>11</sup> <http://users.uoa.gr/~ggeorgiades/3719-2008.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hc-crete.gr/Media/Default/law/4139-2013-1.pdf>

The most recent antiracist law is Law 4285/2014 for combating some forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia under criminal law<sup>13</sup>. This most recent law stipulates stricter criminal sanctions for combating hate crimes and incitement to racist violence through racist rhetoric. In addition, this law stipulates that the hate motive should be taken into account at the start of the investigation and the start of the criminal trial and not afterwards, at the time of sentencing (Chalkia 1701).

The new legal framework that Law 4285 introduced was shaped by and in the end voted after several years of back-tracking and procrastination as well as after intense reactions coming from large and different groups of the population. These groups focused on the argument of the criminalization of opinion and freedom of speech. A novelty of Law 4285 is the expansion of the bases of discrimination that can be criminalized as acts of racism and xenophobia. This development annoyed groups of citizens who often victimized other groups, especially homosexuals; these groups also made reference to the issue of freedom of speech (Symeonidou-Kastanidou 1649-1651).

Law 927/1979 focused on the public expression of racist speech. Under Greek law an act is considered public when done in such a way that it can be seen by an indefinite number of people. The place where the act takes place is irrelevant. The place can be public or private; the important thing is that the place is accessible to the public. Nor are the means that the perpetrator uses relevant. Law 927 stipulated that a public act can take place orally, through the media, in written texts or illustrations and through any other means. Law 4285, however, explicitly added the use of the Internet as a place where a criminal act of hate speech may take place. This development reflects the increasing and extensive use of the Internet and of the social media in recent years as a means for the transmission of hate speech (Symeonidou-Kastanidou 1651-1652).

Despite the aforementioned laws, even in the case of racist crimes, so far the racist motive of the crimes has been acknowledged only twice. The first time was in November 2013 and it was about the case of the arson attack against a shop owned by a man from Cameroon in Athens. The second time concerned the case of the murder of Shezdah Luqman (Chalkia 1702-1703).

One critique of Law 927/1979 was that it was only applicable if race, ethnic origin or religion were the sole ground motivating an action. FRA's Thematic Situation Report gives the example of a dismissal of an appeal in cassation in 2010 by Supreme Court, concerning a publication of an anti-Semitic book "since the defendant was found not to revile Jews "solely because of their racial and ethnic origin, but mainly because of their aspirations to world power, the methods they use to achieve these aims, and their conspiratorial activities (11)."

More generally, prosecutors FRA met argued that under Law 927 it was very difficult to investigate bias motivation in order to use it as an aggravating circumstance in the assessment of penalties, therefore relevant provisions could not be applied in practice. The Supreme Court Vice-Prosecutor

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<sup>13</sup> [http://criminal.law.duth.gr/images/ratsismos\\_n\\_4285\\_2014.pdf](http://criminal.law.duth.gr/images/ratsismos_n_4285_2014.pdf)

pointed out to FRA that while the racist motive may be obvious in many cases, judges did not always consider it (11).

As was mentioned earlier, Law 4285/2014 changed that and now the hate motive must be taken into account at the start of an investigation and the start of the criminal trial and not afterwards.

Law 4285/2014, focuses on the criminalization of activities which are carried out in a manner likely to disturb public order, and which are threatening or abusive and not merely insulting. It makes a criminal offence the public incitement – either orally or through the press or Internet – to violence or hatred or any other act of discrimination against a person or a group of persons which can be identified in reference to race, color, religion, generational origins, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability, in a way that endangers the public order or contains a threat for the life, the freedom, or the bodily integrity of the above-mentioned persons. (Tourkochoriti).

The clause foresees heavy penalties which also apply to whoever creates or participates in an organization or union of persons that seek to accomplish the previous acts... It also foresees heavier penalties in cases where any of these acts were committed by a public official or other government employee during the exercise of his or her duties (Tourkochoriti).

It has been pointed out that, despite the improvements, Law 4285 follows a model based on combatting the dissemination of “insulting ideas” and does not really focus on the actual combatting of racist practices that are so evident in everyday life. It promotes the symbolic punishment of ideas without being in a position to actually stop their dissemination. The dissemination of these ideas will easily continue on the Internet. Thus, it turns the agents of such ideas into “heroes” (Gazakis, Syrri and Takis, 57).

Apart from the changes in the legal framework, some other steps have been taken to address the issue of racist violence more generally. On the initiative of the Athens Prosecutor’s Office, The Special Prosecutor on Racist Violence was appointed in November 2012 (FRA 11). In addition, in December 2012 two regional departments were created in Athens and Thessaloniki under Presidential Decree, as well as 68 anti-racist units, staffed by 197 police officers (13-14).

With regard to the media, in Greece public speech and communication are protected by the Constitution (article 14, Constitution). However, the legal protection of communication varies according to the medium used. Print media enjoy the highest protection so that no control can be exercised over their content, barring very few exceptions. On the contrary, control over digital media is much more feasible, under the guarantee however of the Greek National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) (Gazakis, Syrri and Takis 33-36).

The legislation regulating the operation of digital media is on principle sensitive regarding respect for diversity. The Code of Conduct for new and other journalistic and political broadcasts (Presidential Decree 77/2003, article 4), forbids the presentation of people in a discriminating way

or the dissemination of racist, xenophobic or sexist messages and characterizations and so on (Gazakis, Syrri and Takis 33-36).

### **3.4. Statistics and tendencies related to online hate speech**

It was mentioned earlier, that in Greece there is a lack of documentation and recording with regard to hate speech in general. This is especially the case with regard to OHS, which seems to be a niche point of focus. Public authorities do not record OHS systematically nor do they provide any statistics on the matter. Most of the recording being done is carried out by NGOs that collect data. Even so, however, there are issues of lack of resources while the data NGOs collect might be indicative of trends but they are not comprehensive enough to provide rigorous information.

In addition to the lack of any systematic recording and data collection on OHS, another problem has been repeatedly pointed out in various reports on racist violence and hate crime in Greece, namely the fact that hate crime victims are either reluctant or prevented from reporting hate crime incidents to the authorities.

“Fear of arrest and deportation discourages victims of racist violence who do not have a regular status from reporting incidents to the police. The negative attitudes of members of the police towards migrants and their unwillingness to investigate cases of racist violence against the latter effectively added to the impunity. In addition, there is inadequate support for victims, with the notable exception of some charitable non-governmental organizations providing assistance.” (ECRI 9-10). The Report further recommends that this Task Force should be composed of the relevant authorities, the Greek Ombudsman and the National Human Rights Commission as well as NGOs, so as to enhance the cooperation between the authorities and civil society. “The national strategy should, inter alia, include a situation analysis, an overview of existing measures, gaps and needs, and strategic recommendations on how to address them, including targets and measurable indicators” (10).

Reports such as the ECRI Report on the condition of racism and hate speech in Greece are very important in that they give a picture of the trends and changes regarding the issue of racism and hate speech in Greece. However, such works, although they include some figures, are mostly interesting for their qualitative findings. Such reports verify the findings of other studies that point to a dramatic increase in racist hate crime in Greece in the last few years due, in part, to the economic and social crisis as well as an exacerbation of the problem due to developments pertaining to the refugee crisis. They help us untangle the web of the multiplicity of factors that have promoted anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes and rhetoric as well as hate speech against immigrants and refugees. They point to the role of politicians, prominent public figures such as some members of the Greek Orthodox Church, the media (traditional as well as digital) and, of course, the rise of Golden Dawn. They also point to the underlying sociocultural and economic factors that have created this situation.

The RVRN was established in 2011 with the intent of compensating for the absence of an official and effective data collection system, as was mentioned earlier. The RVRN, however, records racist violence in general. This includes hate speech; however hate speech is not the specific focus. In its 2016 Annual Report there was only one reference to OHS.

Despite the figures the RVRN 2016 Annual Report contains, these are not adequate to give a statistical picture; they are however very useful in indicating trends. The RVRN Report highlights important developments regarding the refugee crisis in 2016 that created points of tension in Greece. These developments were mentioned earlier. It can be extrapolated that OHS incidents increased around these points of tension although there is lack of research to verify this notion.

It has also been mentioned that the RVRN's findings suggest that recordings of attacks decreases in 2016 in comparison to those of 2015. 2015 was the year that the refugee crisis peaked, therefore this might be a factor behind such decrease. The Report itself gives more nuanced explanations in its attempt to identify trends, noting that this is a multifactorial effect. One such important factor that was mentioned earlier and which concerns the reporting of verbal abuse specifically was that victims considered incidents of verbal abuse as routine and deemed that there was no reason to be reported when not accompanied by physical violence.

The research by Smyrnaiois on the rise of the far-right in the Greek blogosphere, and which was mentioned earlier, is indicative of trends on the Greek-speaking Internet regarding the rise and expansion of populist and far-right rhetoric. However, there is need for research on social media and other forms of online communication since the fact that far-right blogs and websites do not seem to frequently express openly racist attitude and seem to have a different agenda, is not necessarily indicative of user comments on social media etc.

The lack of systematic recording of OHS incidents and of relevant statistics means that currently we can only rely on a qualitative assessment of the situation, identifying trends and providing explanations. It is certain, however, that Internet use, and especially social media use, has exploded in Greece in recent years as have the incidents of OHS. More research is needed with this niche focus, both qualitative and quantitative. Such research also needs to take into account the counter-narrative and the constant attempts to combat OHS by Internet users that promote anti-racism and tolerance.

Finally, to this day no sanctions have been applied in OHS speech cases targeting migrants and refugees. Law 4285/2014 does explicitly regard the use of the Internet as a place where a criminal act of hate speech may take place. However, perhaps it is too soon to draw any conclusions on whether the Law will be effective in tackling the issue of OHS.

## 4. SOCIETY RESPONSES

### 4.1. Specific initiatives

There is no comprehensive strategy on the national level for combating racism and xenophobia in general. This is especially the case for OHS. Some steps have been taken in the last few years, however. Presidential Decree 132/2012 established Police Services for Racist Violence across Greece in order to facilitate the reporting of incidents of racist violence against migrants<sup>14</sup>. There is a telephone number (11414) and a special online registration form so that possible victims can anonymously be facilitated to report incidents of racist violence (FRANET 34). Presidential Decree 178/2014<sup>15</sup> established a Cyber Crime Unit within the Greek police. The Cyber Crime Unit deals specifically with crimes committed on the Internet, including hate speech<sup>16</sup>.

Law 4356/2015<sup>17</sup> established the National Council against Racism and Intolerance as a consultative and advisory body, whose aim is to formulate policies against racism, to coordinate stakeholders and agencies for the harmonization of the legal framework with international and European rules and best practices and to develop initiatives in the Public Administration sector in order to achieve more effective protection of people and groups that are targeted on the grounds of race, colour, religion, descent, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

The NCRI is a recently established body whose effectiveness and actual impact in combatting racism in general and online hate speech in particular, remains to be seen.

It should be obvious by now that the role of CVOs in combating racism in Greece is crucially important. Especially in recent years, combating racism has become a distinct object of autonomous collective mobilization. CVOs have been at the forefront of specifically antiracist initiatives for years now, posing the issue of social solidarity and action with targeted awareness-raising campaigns (Gazakis, Syrri and Takis 46).

The establishment of the RVRN in 2011, as already noted in section 3.2, is an important initiative set up to compensate for the absence of systematic recording of incidents of racist violence as well as to fulfil the need for co-ordination among the various CSOs which recorded, of their own accord, incidents of racist violence. Among the incidents reported are incidents of online hate speech, although there is no special focus on them.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/inner.php/kat-astynomikos-astynomia/idrysi-leitourgia-uperesion/pd-132-2012.html?print=1>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.poasy.gr/web/attachments/article/2162/pd\\_178-2014.pdf](http://www.poasy.gr/web/attachments/article/2162/pd_178-2014.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> However, incidents of racist violence are in general under-reported. One reason is mistrust in law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. In the last few years, certain police operations, incidents of abuse of power by the police as well as the affiliation of a section of the Greek Police with the Golden Dawn have given cause for concern and generated a general climate of mistrust.

<sup>17</sup> <https://nomoi.info/%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A-%CE%91-181-2015-%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%BB-1.html>

Another important initiative is the establishment of the Racist Crimes Watch (RCW). The RCW is an initiative of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM). RCW aims to monitor the implementation of international treaties; compile reports on ethnic, ethno-lingual and religious minority communities, as well as report to the UN on the state of women's and children's rights in Greece, on combatting racism, on political, economic, social and cultural rights, torture; make reports and take up legal remedies in Greek and international judicial bodies; make interventions in governments and intra-governmental agencies; publish articles, books and leaflets, traditional as well as digital.

A specific aim of the RCW is to record racist crimes and report them to the public prosecutors for racist crimes. The RCW runs a blog which includes a category on racist speech (with news, articles etc.) as well as an "Archive of racist events"<sup>18</sup>. It also runs a Facebook page<sup>19</sup>.

Currently, there is a trial pending (on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2017) against Soti Triantafyllou, a writer-historian of neo-liberal leanings, after being sued for islamophobia by Panayote Dimitras, the administrator of the blog and Facebook page of the RCW<sup>20</sup>. The impending trial has already stirred some controversy as it touches upon issues of freedom of speech. Information on previous as well as pending trials mostly for hate speech and incitement to racist violence are recorded on the Facebook page of the RCW.

The RCW initiative, therefore, although it does not focus exclusively on hate speech (or OHS), and although its scope is not limited to migrants and refugees, it does place special emphasis on hate speech, quite often OHS and aims to combat it.

C.O.N.T.A.C.T. (Creating an Online Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics) is an ongoing European Union supported project that focuses on hate speech and hate crime of a racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic nature. The participating countries are Greece, Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain and UK. The HLHR is involved in the Greek side of the project. The aims of the project are: a) to set up a hate crime recording website and phone app; b) to train and raise awareness among relevant actors such as police and officials, media professionals, youth; c) to conduct research into online hate speech and its perception; d) to create a joint university teaching mode.

The project website<sup>21</sup> includes a section titled "Report hate" which provides an online form to report hate crime and hate speech. It also includes a "Live data" section which provides graphs and statistics about the hate crimes and incidents of hate speech that have been reported<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/about/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hatecrimesingreece/>

<sup>20</sup> Triantafyllou is being sued for an article she published on the digital edition of a free press magazine in November 2015. More specifically, the controversial phrase was a saying she attributed to Marco Polo, namely that "The fanatic Muslim is the one who chops your head off, while the moderate Muslim is the one who holds you while your head is being chopped off".

<sup>21</sup> <http://reportinghate.eu/el/about-contact-and-hate-crime/>

<sup>22</sup> Currently, the "Live Data" section of the Greek website contains no data.

Athens Network of Collaborating Experts (ACNE), a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in Athens is a partner in the European-Commission co-funded project “RADAR: Regulating Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism”, which ended in 2016. The project broadly aims to provide law enforcing and legal authorities, along with journalists and politicians, tools for correctly identifying the motivation that underlies crimes that are motivated by ‘racial’ hatred. The basic means of the project are open training activities, aimed at facilitating the identification of ‘racial’ motivated communication<sup>23</sup>. The RADAR project has generated an online platform<sup>24</sup> as well as a Guide for the understanding of hate communication and the provision of tools to combat hate communication.

In the context of another program, “Teachers4Europe Ambassadors”<sup>25</sup>, the teachers-ambassadors organized activities related to the Internet, online hate speech and discrimination. For example, the 4<sup>th</sup> General High School in Zografou, Athens, took part in the program during the 2015-2016 schoolyear. Although the program’s thematic units address a variety of different issues, the theme of the action organized in the 4<sup>th</sup> General High School in Zografou, focused on the Internet, OHS and discrimination<sup>26</sup>. More specifically, the students who took part in the activities focused on the issue of discrimination, the kinds of discrimination that exist as well as their protection by the EU<sup>27</sup>. As part of the activities, the students created padlets, learned about human rights and their relation to online hate speech through group play<sup>28</sup>, they made a Powerpoint presentation on the concept of online hate speech, the extent of the problem and the ways of combatting it and, finally, on the occasion of Safe Internet Day (9 February) they wrote an educational scenario on online data safety and the measures laid down by European Institutions<sup>29</sup>.

Greece is also one of the states where the “No Hate Speech Movement” (NHSM) campaign takes place. The Council of Europe initiated the NHSM campaign in 2012. The aim of the Campaign is to combat hate speech, racism and discrimination on the Internet and is part of the project “Young People Combating Hate Speech Online”. The Campaign seems to have been quite successful in that it ran for two additional years and the Tools the project has developed are being used in actions by different agencies<sup>30</sup>.

More specifically, the Campaign is initiated and run by the Council of Europe but is based on national campaigns run in the member states of the Council of Europe. National governments were invited to initiate the setting up of National Campaign Committees. National committees

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://win.radar.communicationproject.eu/web/project-2/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://lnx.radar.communicationproject.eu/web/htdocs/radar.communicationproject.eu/home/dokeos/>

<sup>25</sup> Teachers4Europe is an educational program initiated by the European Commission Delegation in Greece in 2011 with the broad aim of informing and training Greek teachers in issues related to the European Union. See <http://www.teachers4europe.gr/>

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.4lykzografou.gr/?p=4001>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx7qt4QxxEQ>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXghWMjIK2g>

<sup>29</sup> <http://blogs.sch.gr/deskyr/2016/05/29/%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B4%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%AF%CE%BA%CF%84%CF%85%CE%BF-%CE%B7-%CF%87%CF%81%CE%AE%CF%83/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/>

operate their own online Campaign platforms and online tools in the national language(s). The Council of Europe provides all Tools free of charge.

The Online Tools consist of a “No Hate Speech Movement landing page” which is an online platform for anyone interested to join the NHSM; a “Hate Speech Watch” which is an online database to monitor, share and discuss hate speech content of the Internet; a “Campaign coordination website” for organizations that want to join the Campaign and “Online Educational Tools”.

An example of the use of the NHSM Campaign and the Tools it provides can be found in the project “CHariSMA: Combating Hate Speech Multipliers and Ambassadors”. The CHariSMA project is based on the collaboration of the Youthnet Hellas, the Youth Social Rights Network and the Alternative Innovative Development organization. The aim of this particular campaign is to bring together teachers, trainers, young activists and youth worker so that they can share and communicate experiences using tools, methods and manuals to combat hate speech and bullying through education in human rights. The program uses the NHSM campaign and aims to have a multiplying effect<sup>31</sup>.

An example of an action organized in this context is the educational action Youthnet Hellas organized in Larisa from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. This particular action aimed at bringing together 24 teachers, young activists and youth workers in order to exchange views, to familiarize themselves with and to train in the use of tools, methods and manuals for combatting hate speech and bullying. In the context of this particular project, activities took place that promoted the ideas and priorities of the NHSM Campaign among local youth. Another aim was the creation of a team of activists to continue supporting and promoting the ideas and results of the NHSM Campaign on the local level even after 2017<sup>32</sup>.

PRAKSIS, an NGO whose aim is to combat social and economic exclusion of vulnerable social groups as well as to defend their individual and social rights, implements various programs for refugees. Amongst others, PRAKSIS is partner in the EU-funded project “Facing all the Facts!”. The project is set to run until October 2018. Eleven partners from seven different countries take part in the project; these partners are CSOs, members of the academia and members of the police. The broad aim of the “Facing all the Facts!”<sup>33</sup> project is to improve the recognition, recording of and responses to hate crime and hate speech at the national level and beyond by working across civil society and public authorities. In the context of the project, a video was created which concerns the acknowledgement of hate crimes and basically shows the need for specific tools and practices<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://projectcharisma.wordpress.com/>

<sup>32</sup> <http://socialpolicy.gr/2017/04/%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BB%CF%84%CE%AF%CE%BF-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%8D-charisma-combating-hate-speech-multipliers-and-ambassadors.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.facingfacts.eu/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://vimeo.com/162069189>

The Greek Center for Safer Internet<sup>35</sup> is the official representative of the European Organizations INSAFE / INHOPE that are responsible for policymaking for a safer and quality Internet. The Center was established in 2016 under the aegis of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas and is currently providing information, help and support to both young and adult Internet users through the SaferInternet4Kids.gr website. The Center also operates a Help-line (telephone line number: 210-6007686 and website address: [www.help-line.gr](http://www.help-line.gr)), through which specialized psychologists offer advice and support on specific issues. The Center also has a hotline (<http://www.safeline.gr>) where illegal Internet content, child abuse, illegal Internet use and hate speech can be reported .

The Sunday School for Migrants<sup>36</sup> is an migrant and Greek volunteers initiative whose main purpose is to provide free Greek language lessons to working migrants and refugees. The School is also active in the support of migrants and refugees in various ways. Amongst other activities, experiential workshops are implemented at the School with the aim to combat hate speech against migrants and refugees.

## 4.2. Good practices

### 4.2.1. Good practice 1

#### **Festival of Preventive and Educational Films on Security in Zagreb**

##### **Specific objective:**

The aim of the activity is to point out to students the problem of safety on the Internet

##### **Main organization involved:**

4<sup>th</sup> High School, Zografou

Despoina Kyriakaki, philologist

##### **Location:**

Zografou, Athens, Greece

##### **Detailed information:**

The practice is part of the *teachers4europe* program. The whole practice consists of 4 individual activities which took place in the context of the Modern Greek Language module of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. In the context of the subject of “Racism/Discrimination”, students created padlets focusing on the

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<sup>35</sup><http://saferinternet4kids.gr/>

<sup>36</sup><https://www.ksm.gr/contact/>

issue of discrimination and using material from the EC manual “Know your Rights. Protection from Discrimination”. They then made powerpoint presentations on the subject of OHS. The second activity was an experiential one and was about Human Rights and Hate Speech. The resource of the remaining two activities was the manual “Bookmarks” published by the European Council. Finally, a teaching scenario was composed with use of ICTs on 9 February 2016, Safe Internet Day. The focus was on online safety and personal data.

This Table presents the 1<sup>st</sup> Activity.

### **Activity 1: Racism/Discrimination unit**

In the context of the school module on Modern Greek Language, students created 3 padlets on the subjects of discrimination, the different kinds of discrimination, how we can protect ourselves from being discriminated against, who to get in touch with and what the reasons behind discriminations are. Also, how the legal framework of the EU protects the citizen and what the citizen’s rights over goods, work and services are<sup>37</sup>.

### **Activity 2: Powerpoint presentation on OHS**

4 students undertook the task of making a Powerpoint presentation with the aim of putting forward the theoretical basis of the definition; of describing the extent of the problem as well as the actions taken and the measures for combatting it. Reference is also made to the NHSM campaign, its aims and tools. Specific actions that young people may undertake are presented<sup>38</sup>.

### **Activity 3: Experiential Activity: Human Rights Competition**

16 students took part in the activity, in groups of 8. There were also 2 co-ordinators. The participants are called on to present different human rights to the rest of the team in any way they can (signs, pantomime, sketches) but words. The aim is to obtain understanding of human rights on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Rights; to examine the protection of human rights on the Internet and how they are related to OHS. Before this activity, the teacher introduced the subject by posing questions about human rights, who also reviewed the results at the end<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> The three padlets can be found in the following links: <https://padlet.com/despkyr2/792z2bkusj8l> ,  
<https://padlet.com/despkyr2/vkgvccis7646> , <https://padlet.com/despkyr2/ymj0d46ggalc>

<sup>38</sup> Video with the padlets for the presentation of hate speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx7qt4QxxEQ&feature=youtu.be>. See also Despoina Kyriakaki’s blog:

<http://blogs.sch.gr/deskyr/2016/05/29/%CE%B4%CF%81%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%82-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%AF%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%BF/> and the school website:

<http://www.4lykzografou.gr/?p=10264>

<sup>39</sup> See the following links for more details: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXghWMjlk2g&feature=youtu.be>,  
<http://www.teachers4europe.gr/goo.gl/2zpeZC>, <http://www.4lykzografou.gr/?p=4001>

#### **Activity 4: Teaching scenario on the Internet**

##### **The Internet: Its use, its dangers and protection from them in a European perspective**

This teaching scenario with the use of ICTs is an attempt to extend the subject module of the Internet by making use of digital literacy and by placing the issue in a European perspective. Its objective is to raise awareness among students regarding online data and the possible dangers to them. Also, to introduce the term *OHS*, the measures laid out as well as the EU decisions concerning the Internet, the citizens, data and Internet use. Students had to explore online sources, work on them and end up compiling coherent texts of an informative nature<sup>40</sup>.

Four different practices are presented here as part of a whole, that is the way they were designed. The main stakeholders and beneficiaries are high-school students.

Placing these activities in a coherent whole raises awareness and understanding of the issues of human rights, OHS, online safety and responsible use of the Internet in a European Community framework. The issues addressed are interrelated and students are made aware of their interrelatedness. The importance of such activities in a school setting derives from the fact that in order to fight OHS, one has to educate and raise awareness among the younger generations and current or prospective Internet users.

##### **Resources needed:**

School manual Modern Greek Language

Internet access/hyperlinks

Word processing program

Youtube Application

Browser

Pens and papers

As long as there are PCs and Internet access, the rest of the required materials are low-cost and most written resources can be downloaded for free.

##### **Timescale (start/end date):**

The programme could last four days (each activity done on a separate date, taking up a few hours per day) or two to three days.

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<sup>40</sup> See the following links for more details:

<http://blogs.sch.gr/deskyr/2016/05/29/%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B4%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%AF%CE%BA%CF%84%CF%85%CE%BF-%CE%B7-%CF%87%CF%81%CE%AE%CF%83/>,  
<http://www.4lykzografou.gr/>

### **Evidence of success:**

The activities on the whole were considered successful because they raised awareness on issues of discrimination, OHS and Internet safety through a connection with students' daily life. The activities involved the use of social media, therefore were directly relevant to students' everyday lives and issues they encountered every day. Therefore, students who participated were more interested and motivated to learn about these issues and to acquire the tools to fight OHS. The students' digital skills were also enhanced as were their autonomous learning, communication and cooperation skills.

### **Potential for transfer:**

This practice can be done in any school environment and adapted accordingly. As long as there is access to computers and Internet access, the cost of carrying it out is not significant. The "Bookmarks" manual, being the product of NHSM, is translated in many European languages. It is also possible to expand and disseminate the aforementioned practices; e.g. activities can be adapted and students from other schools can get involved too. The possibilities to expand and disseminate the results are mentioned in some of the links provided.

Raising awareness of OHS issues and providing students with tools to combat a phenomenon which they encounter in their everyday lives and is therefore of direct interest to them are perhaps the most important factors that guarantee the success of such practices and activities.

### **Further information:**

<http://www.teachers4europe.gr/results/projects-2015-2016/projects-2015-2016-secondary/1210-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%AF%CE%BA%CF%84%CF%85%CE%BF,-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%AF%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82,-%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%BC%CE%AF%CF%83%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B8%CF%81%CF%8E%CF%80%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%B1-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%CF%8E%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1>

### **Contact details:**

**Name:** Despoina Kyriakaki, teacher philologist and member of teachers4europe

**Organisation:** 2nd High School, Zografou / teachers4europe

**Email:** <http://www.teachers4europe.gr/contact-us>

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Online hate speech is a symptom or a consequence of wider processes. Therefore, the measures that should be taken should also address the sources of the problem as well as a variety of other issues. That is not to say that combating OHS is not important; on the contrary, as online communication is increasingly becoming a major form of communication that disseminates messages and shapes attitudes and practices, special care should be taken to combat OHS.

The link between the rise of hate speech and public discourse in Greece has already been noted; politicians and other prominent figures as well as the media have reinforced racist attitudes and intolerance against migrants. The ECRI Report notes that “this situation is not adequately addressed and there is widespread impunity for acts of hate speech and insufficient official condemnation” (9).

There is need for political parties to take a firmer stand against racist discourse and develop a conduct of conduct in that respect. The ECRI Report refers to the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, who called on the Greek political parties and the national Parliament “to adopt self-regulatory measures to counter and sanction intolerant, xenophobic and racist speech used by politician, for example by amending the disciplinary measures that may be imposed on MPs under Article 77 of the Greek Parliament’s Standing Orders accordingly” (20).

The Media need to create an effective self-regulatory mechanism to prevent racist comments in newspapers, on television and on the radio (ECRI 21). The Media could also benefit from training and awareness-raising. The RVRN recommends:

Training and awareness of management and journalists, editors and newscasters of electronic, paper and television media, with regard to the coverage of racist crimes and to the elimination of negative stereotypes against certain groups, through special training activities and guidelines. (25)

Although the Ministry of Education is involved in several initiatives against racism and intolerance, it is very important that it establishes initiatives in all school levels to raise awareness against racism and discrimination and to promote the acceptance of diversity. Gazakis, Syrri and Takis recommend that such initiatives should be targeted not only to students but to teachers as well. They further point out that the Ministry of Education should take a firm stand against any racist or fascist threat in the school environment and should also make sure that educators are institutionally protected when teaching acceptance of diversity and antiracism so that they can carry out their task without fear (62).

Part of the initiatives the Ministry of Education could launch should focus on OHS explicitly. Students of all levels are or will be citizens in digital as well as physical environments and should learn how to use online media with safety and responsibility. Indeed, policy interventions at the level of education can be crucial in combating OHS.

Currently, there are a number of campaigns taking place against hate speech; the NHSM movement campaign is the most prominent one and it targets OHS specifically. There is need for awareness-raising campaigns to continue; the present Positive Messengers project is part of this. However, there is also need for a broad-based public campaign to be launched by the Greek authorities. This is something the ECRI Report recommends. The aim of the campaign should be “to denounce racist attitudes as contrary to Greek values and interests and to promote an inclusive and multi-cultural approach towards Greek identity” (10). A significant part of such a campaign could (and should) focus on OHS.

As is evident, CVOs currently play a crucial role in the fight against racism, intolerance and hate speech. There is a very large number of them with the objective of supporting migrants and refugees in a variety of ways. Quite a lot of them carry out their task on their own resources. The ECRI Report recommends that the Greek authorities create “a Task Force to develop a comprehensive national strategy to combat racism and intolerance” (10).

Victims of hate speech ought to be encouraged to report to the authorities. To achieve this, there is first of all need to be no ground for fear of deportation or arrest. There is also need to build trust towards the authorities and this calls for the extermination of racist attitudes and practices among members of the police among others.

The RVRN has recorded incidents of racist violence involving police officers and the FRA Thematic Situation Report refers extensively to police practices that promote racism and intolerance as well as issues of lack of trust to the police by migrants. The ECRI Report recommends “that the authorities provide for a body, independent of the police and prosecution, entrusted with the investigation of alleged cases of racial discrimination and racially-motivated misconduct by the police” (25).

Public officials in general, and especially the new anti-racism police units as well as the competent judicial authorities, are in need of further training, especially as regards OHS. The Cybercrime unit could also prioritize racist OHS and target it effectively. It is indeed on RVRN’s persistent recommendations that there is continuous training and education of law enforcement officials with regard to racist crime (18).

One of the recommendations of the ECRI Report pertaining specifically to hate speech is the setting up by the Greek authorities of a national monitoring mechanism for incidents of hate speech (18).

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