

**Mutual learning online regional conference  
on good practices and lessons learned regarding countering hate speech online  
14 – 15 October 2020**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

On 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the Mutual learning regional conference on good practices and lessons learned from countering hate speech online was organised online, bringing together experts and practitioners from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia and from other EU Member states to present their good practices and developments in combating hate speech online. It was organized within the project “BEHAVE – *SEE Beyond Hate: Learning and Acting to Counter Hate Speech Online in South East Europe*” in partnership of Peace Institute Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences – University of Ljubljana, Centre for Peace Studies, Croatia and Novi Sad School of Journalism, Serbia. The project is funded by the European Union within the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The conference was held in four separate thematic sessions, each hosted by one of the project partners. Speakers participating in each session were invited to the session according to the field of their work, previously recognized as good practices of countering hate speech online in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, and other EU Member States, presented in the project’s publication “[Countering hate speech online](#)”.

**Session 1: Response of the state – regulation, law enforcement and countering hate speech online; cooperation between state bodies and civil society**

14 October 2020, 11:00 – 13:00

Host: [Centre for Peace Studies](#), Zagreb, Croatia

Mutual learning online regional conference on good practices  
and lessons learned regarding countering hate speech online  
14 – 15 October 2020

BEHAVE  
ODG VOR

**Session 1:**

**Response of the state – regulation, law  
enforcement and countering hate speech online;  
cooperation between state bodies and civil  
society**

**Panellists:**

**Tommaso Chiamparino**, European Commission, Fundamental Rights Policy Unit, DG JUST »Overview of EU’s endeavours in countering hate speech online«  
**Lukas Gottschamel**, ZARA - Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, Schönbrunner, Austria  
»Experience with drafting online hate speech law in Austria«  
**Andreja Šurina Marton**, Deputy Director, State Attorney’s Office in Croatia, on the prosecution of hate speech (online) in Croatia  
**Brankica Janković**, Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Serbia »Experience and contribution of the equality body in Serbia to countering hate speech online«  
**Samo Novak**, Adviser, Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Slovenia  
»Challenges of regulation and prosecution of hate speech in Slovenia, and particularly on the role and experience of the equality body in countering hate speech online in Slovenia«  
**Eva Gračanin**, communication expert, Legebitra, on the cooperation of a LGBT civil society organisation in Slovenia with the Police within the EU-funded project [TRUST CO\(OP\)](#)

**Wednesday,  
14 October 2020**

**11.00 – 13.00**

**Host:**  
**Centre for Peace Studies,  
Zagreb, Croatia**

**Moderator:**  
**Cvijeta Senta**, Centre for  
Peace Studies, Zagreb

**Welcome remarks:**  
**Iztok Šori**, Peace Institute,  
Ljubljana



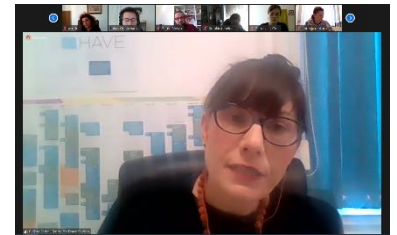
This project is funded by the Rights,  
Equality and Citizenship Programme  
of the European Union.



Session 1 was moderated by **Cvijeta Senta** from the session host **Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Croatia**. She opened the conference with welcoming words, project presentation, and the participants' announcement for the session. Six speakers were invited to share their experiences on the cooperation of state authorities with civil society and engagement of state bodies in combating hate speech online.



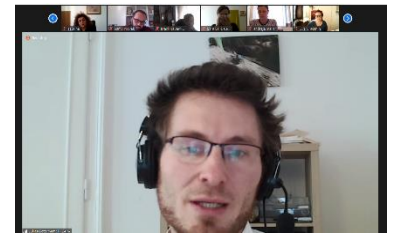
Cvijeta was joined in welcoming remarks by **Iztok Šori**, director of the Behave project coordinating **Peace Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia**. He introduced some important points about the ongoing project and announced and invited participants also to following three sessions of the conference.



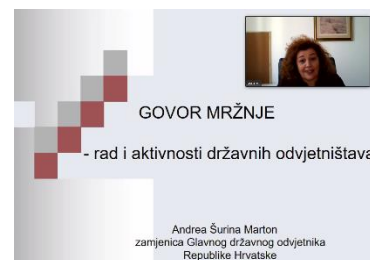
First panellist, **Tommaso Chiamparino** from **European Commission's Fundamental Rights Policy Unit**, presented an overview of work by European Union in countering hate speech. He pointed out activities regarding the [Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#), signed by several biggest social networks, which are being monitored by civil society organisations in cooperation with European Commission to evaluate their hate speech removal. He recognized it as a legitimate and fruitful cooperation of EU with civil society, social media, IT companies and national authorities. Additionally, EU tends to fund projects that are based on campaigns, education activities and awareness raising to counter hate speech and create inclusive society. In this manner, he recognized the Behave learning conference as a proof of effective work of EU's funded organisations.



Next speaker, **Lukas Gottschamel**, representative of **ZARA - Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, Schönbrunner, Austria**, talked about their experiences on cooperation with Austrian legal system in drafting online hate speech law as a good start towards a positive changes. ZARA, dealing with growing number of online hate speech cases, was recognized as a relevant civil society partner and was invited, together with some other Austrian NGOs, to contribute to a legislation process and were given a chance to have their say about the needed changes and possible difficulties. The legislation is still being drafted and it is expected that ZARA's suggestions will be taken seriously.

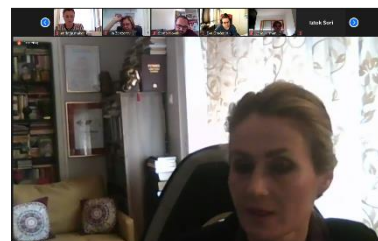


**Andrea Šurina Marton**, deputy director at **State Attorney's Office** in described challenges of (online) hate speech prosecution. Not only that not detected, but there are also several challenges of interpreting Criminal Code and Misdemeanour acts regarding terminology and definitions. Additional problem in processing hate speech online is users and lack of international legal assistance, especially from the improve effectiveness of countering hate speech in Croatia, State Office is carrying out various activities in cooperation with different stakeholders, including civil society.



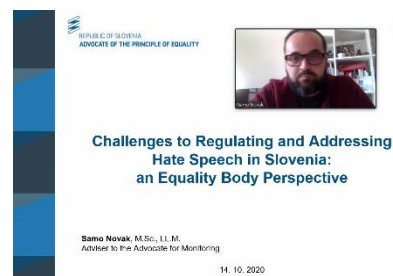
**Croatia**, most of it is Croatian unclear anonymity of USA. To Attorney's

**Commissioner for Protection of Equality in Serbia, Brankica Janković**, work as independent institution for protection from discrimination, speech, facing similar legal challenges as previous speaker pointed out Their activities include preventive actions with raising public collaboration with civil society and educational system, and protective combating hate speech, such as processing individual cases, issuing recommendations, warnings and addressing the police and



presented her including hate for Croatia. awareness, activities for public prosecutors.

From the similar field, **Samo Novak**, Adviser to the Advocate of the Principle of Equality in Slovenia, stressed that institutions in Slovenia are facing likewise problems in prosecution of hate speech as Croatia and Serbia, arising from the legislation being either unclear or ineffective. The Advocate has the power to make legally binding decisions in individual cases, but cannot enforce them, so their work is mainly doing research, monitoring, issuing recommendations, and offering legal assistance to victims of discrimination. He recognized the need for educating the public about the discrimination and existing institutions offering help, including the Advocate.



The last speaker of the session, **Eva Gračanin**, communication **Legebitra**, Slovenia, presented their positive cooperation with the Police within the project **TRUST CO(OP)**. The idea for it findings that many hate incidents towards LGBTI persons have reported. Project is developing partnership with the Police to specialized units trained to address hate crime and to support Eva described participating police staff as very cooperative, but concern about possible negative impact to partnership following the change of the Police leadership and measures due to Covid-19 pandemic.



expert at experiences was based on not been form LGBTI victims. stressed the

Moderator Cvijeta Senta complimented the good practice as encouraging example and concluded with opening a discussion for quick questions and comments, where participants agreed there is quite some need for changes in regulation for countering hate speech (online).

## Session 2: Monitoring and reporting hate speech online

14<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 14:00 – 16:00

Host: [Faculty of Social Sciences](#), University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mutual learning online regional conference on good practices and lessons learned regarding countering hate speech online

14 – 15 October 2020

B4HAVE  
ODG4VOR

### Session 2:

#### Monitoring and reporting hate speech online

#### Panellists:

**Lora Vidović**, the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia  
»Occurrences of hate speech online in Croatia, based on the received complaints and conducted research«  
**Tina Đaković**, coordinator, **Dosta je mržnje**, Zagreb, Croatia  
»Experiences and lessons learned of the Croatian platform for reporting hate speech online 'Dosta je mržnje'«  
**Urša Valentič**, coordinator, Spletno oko, **Faculty of Social Studies**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
»Experiences and lessons learned of the Slovenian hotspot for reporting hate speech online 'Spletno oko'«  
**Stefan Janjić**, editor, **FakeNews Tragač**, Novi Sad, Serbia  
»Experience of the fact-checking platform in countering hate speech online and understanding the connection between toxic and false narratives online«

#### Discussants:

**Tom De Smedt**, **Textgain**, Antwerp, Belgium,  
on combining activism with AI technology in monitoring online hate speech in the project **DeTACT**  
**Slovenia: Veronika Bajt**, researcher, **Peace Institute**, Ljubljana  
on the experience with monitoring hate speech online in **e-More project** on EU level  
**Serbia: Aleksej Kišjuhas**, professor, **Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad**, on the research of online hate speech for the monitoring portal **H8index**

Wednesday,  
14 October 2020

14.00 – 16.00

Host:  
**Faculty of Social Sciences,**  
**University of Ljubljana,**  
**Slovenia**

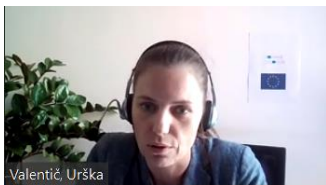
Moderator:  
**Urša Valentič,**  
**Faculty of Social Studies,**  
**University of Ljubljana**



This project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.







Session 2 moderator **Urša Valentič** from **Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ljubljana**, welcomed participants and shortly introduced the project, then announced four panellists and three discussants for the following session on good practices of monitoring and reporting hate speech online.

First, **Lora Vidović**, the **Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia**, presented research results on hate speech among youth, pointing many are constantly exposed to hate speech online, but most do not know who can they turn to for help or they perceive it not serious enough, so it remains unreported. She expressed the need for better policies



**Croatia**, out that not know enough, so it and legal

framework, but also more prevention activities in education and IT industry, with an emphasis on collaboration among sectors and including young generations in our work.

**Tina Đaković**, coordinator of **Dosta je mržnje** from **Zagreb, Croatia**, introduced their platform for reporting hate speech online, where they receive and examine reports and react accordingly – either send complaint to the body in charge to remove it or discard it if it is not hate speech, and answer compliant about the outcome. With this, they monitor hate speech online and help citizens properly react to individual cases. They are aware that removal is not the only solution, so they also work on raising awareness, creating counter narratives, and education. Some of the facing challenges are platforms that are not moderated and lack of research on trends and education for citizens and youth.



Similar platform is active in **Slovenia**, too – Spletno oko hotline was presented by its coordinator **Urša Valentič** from **Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ljubljana**. She talked about how the hotline works, presented some statistics of the reports received and highlighted their intensive collaboration with Slovenian police and international organisations, also within the Code of Conduct Monitoring. Because of the growing numbers of illegal content on social media, systematic preventive measures are needed, as well as addressing the responsibility of users and IT platforms.



Another good practice is coming from **Serbia**. **Stefan Janjić**, editor of **Fake News Tragač** from **Novi Sad**, shared his experiences within fact-checking platform, drawing parallels between xenophobic fake news and hate speech. They are analysing online content and exposing examples of disinformation that is in big part presented as hate speech based on nationality or migrant status. Even though they react as soon as possible, many people are sharing negative fake news and spreading hateful emotions that are stronger and more widespread than their counter narratives and common sense explanations. One of the solutions they also work on is educating and training public, especially teachers and students about media literacy and fake news recognition.



Following panellists, three discussants had a slightly shorter presentations of their work on monitoring hate speech online. First, **Tom de Smedt**, **CTO at Textgain** from **Belgium**, gave us an insight into their work on technology tools for automatic search for hate speech. They are building computer algorithm that calculates if certain message online is likely to contain hate, based on previously identified words expressing hate. It can perform better than person, but is challenged by yet unknown hateful words, sarcasm and possible bias in algorithm.

**Veronika Bajt**, researcher at **Peace Institute** in **Ljubljana, Slovenia**, shared the experience with monitoring hate speech through e-More application designed for reporting hate speech easily. Unfortunately, it did not work well since very few people agreed to use it and it received very few reports. Additionally, researchers working on it were exposed to insults on a personal level. Veronika pointed out that actions need to go beyond removal, that Social Science experts should be included in planning activities, and that there is a lack of resources to provide sustainability of projects.

Professor **Aleksej Kišjuhas** from **Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, Serbia**, presented findings of another monitoring portal – H8index. They found that there are many fake news with elements of hate narratives in Serbian media, arousing fear, paranoia, hateful and discriminating feelings using typical sensationalist reporting. Mostly such narratives are deeply political and ideological, and additional challenge is that those are pro-government media outlets, one of the most popular in country. Publishing such content causes viewers to become desensitized for real threats and prone to hate.

Participants concluded the session with a discussion where they agreed there is a need for cooperation with authorities, IT companies and media, and for additional support to civil society in form of funding.

### Session 3: Countering hate speech online: Self-regulation of media and social networks, and the role of media regulatory authorities

15<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 11:00 – 13:00

Host: [Peace Institute](#), Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mutual learning online regional conference on good practices and lessons learned regarding countering hate speech online

14 – 15 October 2020

BOHAVE  
ODGAVOR

#### Session 3:

Countering hate speech online: Self-regulation of media and social networks, and the role of media regulatory authorities

#### Panellists:

**Louisa Klingvall**, **European Commission** on implementation of the Code of Conduct in countering illegal hate speech online

**Fergal Browne**, **Facebook**, Policy Stakeholder Engagement Manager on Facebook policy and measures

**Asja Rokia-Zubčević**, co-editor of the **Council of Europe report** on media regulatory authorities and hate speech on good practices and challenges of media authorities in implementing regulation regarding hate speech

**Ilinka Todorovski**, **Ombudswoman, RTV Slovenija**

on possibilities and experience of the ombudswoman at the public media in combating hate speech online

**Kaja Jakopič**, editor of **RTV Slovenija web site**

on instruments introduced and activities implemented by the editorial team to counter hate speech online

#### Discussants:

**Slovenia: Urška Valentič**, coordinator, Spletno oko, **Faculty of Social Studies**, University of Ljubljana

on collaboration with media in self-regulation and with EC and FB in using self-regulatory mechanisms

**Serbia: Miloš Vlahović**, editor of **b92.net** on own view and experiences with self-regulation of online media, including comment section

**Slovenia: Tomaž Gorjanc**, Head of the Electronic Media Department, **Agency for Communication Networks (AKOS)**, **Electronic Media**

**Department** on approach to and experience with regulation of hate speech in electronic media in Slovenia

Wednesday,  
15 October 2020

11.00 – 13.00

Host:  
**Peace Institute,**  
**Ljubljana, Slovenia**

Moderator:  
**Lana Zdravković,**  
**Peace Institute, Ljubljana**



This project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.



CENTRE FOR MEDIA STUDIES



Mikrosol Institute  
Research and analysis in public policy  
The Peace Institute  
Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies



Welcome slide Session 3

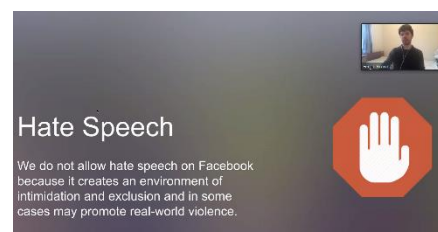


Session 3 was moderated by **Lana Zdravković** from **Peace Institute, Ljubljana**, who welcomed the participants, gave some technical information and announced speakers of the upcoming session on media self-regulation in combating hate speech online.

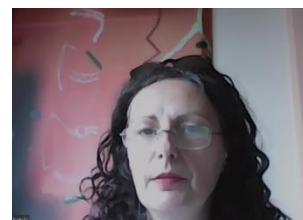
**Louisa Klingvall**, **European Commission**, spoke about important activities regarding social media self-regulation, Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. With it, IT companies committed to reviewing reported content in 24 hours and remove it according to their policies and local laws. EC is regularly monitoring their responsiveness in cooperation with local civil society organisations. Some important progress has developed through years, proving the success of collaboration.



From the other perspective, **Fergal Browne**, **Policy Stakeholder Engagement Manager at Facebook**, explained how Facebook enforces their policy on hate speech. Important part of the process is algorithms based technology that detects potential hate speech and sends it to a trained native language speaking reviewer who makes final assessment regarding removal. At the end of 2020, 95 % of illegal content was found that way. They also offer Trusted Partner Channel, where civil society organisations, as experts, report violating content and reviewers assess it with higher priority.



**Asja Rokša-Zubčević**, **co-editor of the Council of Europe report** on media regulatory authorities and hate speech, shared some information about regulation of media regarding hate speech. She highlighted the importance of objective assessing of hate speech cases in relation to freedom of expression and some challenges in media landscape. Besides regulation, transparency and cooperation, as well as values such as integrity, professionalism and ethics should be promoted.



Another good practice of media self-regulation was presented by **Ilinka Todorovski**, **Ombudswoman of national RTV Slovenia**. She receives complaints from RTV Slovenia audience, investigates them and gives an opinion to program council to communicate a solution. This way, everyone benefits; audience has a feeling that they are being heard and can trust media, media receives more accountability, and journalism in general is seen as more trustworthy. She presented some cases she dealt with and expressed challenges of her work. Being a mediator, she is under pressure from all directions, including receiving hateful public messages herself.



From the same institution **Kaja Jakopič** presented her tasks as an **editor of RTV Slovenia web site**. She described instruments and activities towards limiting hate speech on their portal, including encouraging users for quality discussion, interacting with them, requiring registration, offering options to report content and moderating. For sensitive topics and repeated violators pre-moderation is turned on so comments have to be approved before posted, or commenting is disabled. Following trends, various measures are being implemented to counter hate speech.

Shorter speeches have been carried out by three discussants, starting with **Urša Valentič**, **coordinator of Spletno oko hotline at Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia**. She talked about hotline's collaboration with media outlets, signing the Code of Hate Speech Regulation in Online Media with which they committed to regulate hate speech on their portals in various ways. Spletno oko also organised training for moderators, published moderating guidelines and held regular meetings with media representatives. Later unfortunately most of them resigned from the collaboration.

**Editor of b92.net, Miloš Vlahović** from **Serbia**, shared how they, as one of the oldest Serbian online media, are trying to prevent any form of derogatory content on their web page with pre-moderation of comments under all articles. This way around 40 % of daily comments do not get published, since especially certain topic incite many hateful messages. He stressed the challenge of trying to keep decent conversation among common people when political sphere is full of derogatory speech.

**Tomaž Gorjanc**, **Head of the Electronic Media Department at Agency for Communication Networks (AKOS), Slovenia**, commented on current regulation of hate speech in electronic media in Slovenia. He warned about the fact that social media is not regulated by the law at the moment, even though most of the hate speech online is detected there. Important work is done by the Police and the Criminal Prosecution, but some challenges follow unclear definition of hate speech in legislation.

At the end, discussion was open for participants to comment and ask questions to speakers. As Fergal Browne summarized, media self-regulation activities are necessary to keep extreme negative content away from their portals so people don't feel harassed, but it has to be balanced with their right to stress their opinion, even if it is controversial.

#### Session 4: Education and public awareness, arts and culture, and citizens actions

15<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 14:00 – 16:00

Host: [Novi Sad School of Journalism](#), Serbia

Mutual learning online regional conference on good practices and lessons learned regarding countering hate speech online

14 – 15 October 2020

BHAVE  
ODGAVOR

##### Session 4:

Education and public awareness, arts and culture, and citizens actions

##### Panelists:

**Milica Pešić**, Media Diversity Institute

on the use of innovative cross-country approach to monitor and expose cases of hate narratives and develop counter campaigns with the project [Get the Trolls Out](#) contributing to awareness raising and EU level of civil society action

**Ana Dokler**, Agency for Electronic Media in Croatia on the purpose and achievements of the Media Literacy web

portal founded by the agency in cooperation with UNICEF

**Boris Vezjak**, blogger, [Blog 'In Media Res'](#) on the blog concept, way of working and lessons learned from reporting on hate speech cases in the blog

##### Discussants:

**Serbia: Milica Janjatović Jovanović**, Novi Sad School of Journalism, on contribution of media literacy actions in Serbia to countering hate speech online

**Germany/Serbia: Klaus Dahmann**, Deutsche Welle, Country Manager for Serbia and Western Balkans, on the work with young influencers in Serbia on the campaign against hate speech on YouTube channels in Serbia

**Serbia: Dušan Srbijak**, YouTuber, one of the founders of the BalkanTubeFest, on the campaign against hate speech on YouTube channels in Serbia

Wednesday,  
15 October 2020

14.00 – 16.00

Host:  
Novi Sad School of  
Journalism,  
Novi Sad, Serbia

Moderator:  
**Marina Grnja Klaić**,  
Novi Sad School of Journalism



This project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.



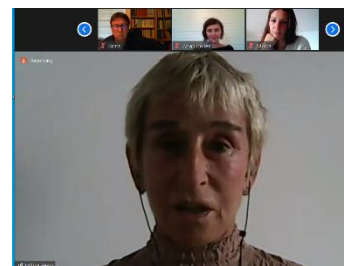
Welcome slide Session 4





Moderator of the last session (Session 4) was **Marina Grnja Klaić** from **Novi Sad School of Journalism, Serbia**. She introduced the project, session panellists and discussants, and gave technical instructions to participants.

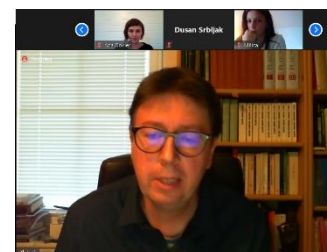
From **Media Diversity Institute**, **Milica Pešić** introduced international collaboration within the project **Get the Trolls Out** towards countering hate speech with counter narratives and awareness rising. She gave several examples of successful tools, including campaigns, complaints to the media, educational videos as answers to hateful messages, media monitoring, guidelines for responding to hate, reports on hateful movements, and video material for different age groups. Based on their experiences, innovative methods are being developed and used to adapt to the audience, such as memes, cartoons and carousels.



**Ana Dokler** from **Agency for Electronic Media in Croatia**, is editor in chief of website **Media Literacy**, designed in cooperation with UNICEF to promote media literacy and teach audience to critically consume media content. It publishes research material, recommendations for parents, good practices, articles and educational material for different age groups, currently in a form of video lessons. They also organise Media Literacy Days with different activities and institutions promoting media literacy, visited by thousands of participants, including children. One of the topics they cover is also hate speech, with recommendations where to report it and how to recognize misinformation reproducing it.



**Slovenian blogger Boris Vezjak**, running blog **In Media Res**, described his 15 years long experiences on researching and commenting media, political and social events in Slovenia. Among others, he publishes analyses of media and political language, including hatred and its legitimisation, critics of public figures promoting hate speech and politicians manipulating it. He recognises Slovenian legal practice as serious problem, since too strict interpretation of the Criminal Code is disabling the prosecution of hate speech even in some of the most extreme cases. Afterwards, he presented Anti-hate speech council, established within a project from Peace institute in 2015 as independent body publicly reacting to hate speech. It was successful at first, but then stopped its activities in 2017.



Among discussants, **Milica Janjatović Jovanović** from **Novi Sad School of Journalism** first pointed out the importance of media literacy promoting activities in schools and elsewhere, also for countering hate speech online, so that especially young people know how to react and where to find help. At Novi Sad School of Journalism they are organising seminars for teachers, workshops on how to recognize stereotypes, manipulation and fake news, and publishing educational videos to approach young population. One of the good practice was the campaign created with Youtubers, which received great feedback. As **Klaus Dahmann**, **Country Manager for Serbia and Western Balkans at Deutsche Welle**, added, they found that there is a lot of hate, cyberbullying and other violence promotion happening on YouTube, and it is receiving millions of views. So they connected with some of the young Serbian influencers to create YouTube campaign against hate. **Drušan Srblijak**, **Youtuber and one of the founders of the BalkanTubeFest**, who also participated in this campaign, showed created videos titled **Klikbejt** and **Drama** and explained that youth should be spoken to in their own language. They addressed some important but controversial topics with this campaign and started a heated discussion among young people. They recognised this as an important step to deliver a message that not everything is accepted online. For a conclusion, short discussion started about lack of critical consumption of media content among audience, proving the importance of dialog and discussion. Especially for younger generations, showing a good example and condemning hateful content is a good start towards promotion of critical thinking.





This project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.



This document was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the project partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.