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IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE CHAD: COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND HURTFUL SPEECH AGAINST DIVERSITY: ROMA, LGBTIQ, JEWISH AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The [CHAD project](#) ran from April 2022 to March 2024, conducted by RGDTS in partnership with Haver Informal Educational Foundation, Rainbow Mission Foundation (Budapest Pride), and Political Capital. The project was supported by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the DG Justice, European Commission.

The primary aim of this project was to tackle intolerance, racism, xenophobia, homo- and transphobia, and discrimination. This was achieved by enhancing the capacities of civil society organizations and their communities to recognize, identify, monitor, and combat hate speech and hurtful speech online. The project fostered an alliance of Roma, Jewish, LGBTIQ, migrant, and human rights organizations and communities in Hungary, with the intention of sharing experiences, knowledge, and results at the European level.

All consortium members had prior experience with online hate speech issues, but this was the first instance of active collaboration with diverse minority communities to form effective alliances against online hate speech.

Through the project's diverse activities, staff, volunteers, and members of the participating organizations became familiar with the situations, struggles, and specific vocabularies of other groups. They shared experiences of discrimination and online hate speech and compared both organizational and individual strategies to respond to it. The partnering organizations' communities participated in training events on the legal definitions of hate speech, available legal instruments for victims, and the psychology behind experiencing and perpetrating hate speech. They also learned about various methods for monitoring hate speech and the advantages and disadvantages of using artificial intelligence in this process. These activities not only provided expertise but also helped build relationships among different minority groups.

Members of different organizations and minority communities, by spending time together and sharing their experiences, had the opportunity to address their own internalized prejudices such as antigypsyism, antisemitism, homo- trans- and xenophobia.

Consortium staff learned about artificial intelligence—how it works and its applications in various fields—enhancing their ability to navigate a digitalizing world and improve their awareness-raising campaigns. Participation in international working group meetings enabled organizations to forge new

professional connections and expand their international expert and activist networks. Learning about initiatives and policies in different countries laid the groundwork for future projects and international cooperation. During this period, colleagues accessed monitoring results and reflected on the differences and similarities in the hateful texts circulated online about vulnerable groups. This reflection process culminated in training on creating counter-narratives, where members of Roma, Jewish, LGBTQ+, and migrant communities analyzed collected texts containing hate speech and developed counter and alternative narratives in response.

The second part of the project timeline included national and international events such as conferences, training events, workshops, and various actions. These activities allowed individuals, organizations, and experts in the fields of combating hate speech and anti-discrimination to exchange practices in non-formal education, advocacy, and campaigning, and to develop and disseminate counter-narratives. Conferences and workshops with policymakers, local decision-makers, media representatives, future journalists, and civil society actors provided opportunities for networking, coalition-building, and mutual exchanges to strengthen advocacy. These events fostered partnership-based connections rather than adversarial interactions, enabling policymakers and journalists to share their concerns and align their long-term goals with those of the different sectors.

Various stakeholders, including representatives of media outlets, universities, CSOs, and institutions, received information directly from vulnerable groups facing online hate. They engaged in discussions during online and offline events, gaining a better understanding of the harmful effects of hate speech not only on vulnerable communities but on society as a whole.

The general public was widely sensitized through social media platforms of the participating organizations and their allies, as well as a television spot aired on mainstream Hungarian channels. The interested public could also participate in training events through open calls. Additionally, various channels outside the project team's scope reported on the CHAD project, and participating organizations received numerous calls from media outlets and other alliances, as well as civil society organizations seeking to report on the project.

Some challenges arose during the project's implementation, particularly regarding monitoring results. Although sufficient texts were downloaded and categorized by volunteers, the approximately 25% rate of hate speech or hurtful speech found seemed inadequate for advocacy purposes. However, after consulting with organizations that had monitored online hate speech in other countries, it was determined that these results were consistent across the board. During national and international conferences and within the international working group, a pool of experts and committed stakeholders was gathered to formulate recommendations for different sectors to combat online hate speech against our communities, based on the results of the monitoring process.

Another challenge was reaching out to journalists and public bodies. Despite inviting numerous journalists and media representatives to training events on minority representation and combating hate speech, our efforts through professional and personal networks, open calls, emails, and phone calls proved somewhat unsatisfactory, as mainstream journalists were either uninterested or lacked the time to take part in our events. Therefore, we adjusted our approach by focusing on future journalists, partnering with the Media and Communications Department of ELTE University in Budapest and conducted a full-day training for university students who are prospective journalists

and communications experts. Many active journalists in the Hungarian independent media come from this department, so training them on avoiding and countering hate speech indirectly influenced future media practices. Regarding public bodies, due to the political situation in Hungary, our invitations to high-level officials were unsuccessful. However, municipalities not lead by the governing party, and European-level institutions were very responsive and supportive, as were numerous local decision-makers, communications liaisons, and equal opportunities officers.



IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF WORK PACKAGES

Monitoring of online hate speech and hurtful speech in Hungary

The AI company, with the assistance of 16 volunteers—each a young person belonging to one or more vulnerable communities—categorized 11,354 texts over six months. These texts were scraped from 34 pre-selected online sources using key expressions to filter hateful content. Hate speech targeting Roma, Jewish, LGBTQ+, Muslim, and migrant communities was identified in 722 texts, while hurtful content was found in 2,103 texts. This represents approximately 25% of the texts containing harmful messages.

One of the primary impacts of this process was on the participating organizations and the volunteers involved in the monitoring. During the preparation phase, all participants attended training events covering theoretical content related to hate speech, including legal definitions, remedies, causes, effects, and possible responses. These trainings enhanced their ability to recognize, raise awareness about, and counter hate speech. Throughout the monitoring period, volunteers and coalition members held regular consultations to discuss the texts, identify underlying narratives, and address misconceptions. This process fostered a broader sense of empathy and alliance among the affected communities by exposing them to the insults and offenses experienced by other groups and reinforcing the understanding that they all "walk in the same shoes."

Sharing the results among the networks of the participating organizations and the members of the international working group created a sense of community and laid the groundwork for further discussions and potential future collaborations. This outcome represents a long-term, international, and cross-sectoral impact. The results, particularly the trends and underlying narratives of hateful content, were also utilized in other parts of the project to develop counter-narratives.



Training of coalition members, journalists, civil society organisations and decision-makers on combatting online hate speech

The project's capacity-building goals were achieved through a series of training events for diverse audiences. The first significant step was to cross-sensitize members of vulnerable communities to the experiences of other such groups. This was followed by a series of training sessions for Hungarian civil society organizations, future media and communications professionals, and decision-makers. Finally, European-level activists, CSOs, and institutions received ideas, shared practices, and practiced methods to prevent and combat online hate speech and degrading comments. The methods used in these training events were published as a toolkit.

The cross-sensitizing weekend had a substantial impact. Organizational representatives and volunteers who themselves experience discrimination, along with human rights advocates, learned about the experiences of other minoritized communities. They listened to presentations about the history and cultures of Roma, the different levels of identities of Jews, the struggles of LGBTQ+ people, and the legal categories of and restrictions on Muslim migrants and refugees. Participants started thinking critically about stereotypes and prejudices against different communities, familiarized themselves with the work of human rights organizations, and exchanged encounters and observations of hate, including hate speech.

In the long term, it is believed that these communities will be able to work together more efficiently, use this extended network for their work, and support each other in advocacy efforts. Individuals can also disseminate the knowledge they gained at the training and raise awareness. Already within the project period, numerous common actions were planned and realized in support of causes affecting one or more communities.

The first domestic training event targeted individuals involved in institutional, local, regional, or national decision- and lawmaking related to online hate speech. The recruitment process was challenging due to many institutions' reluctance to "be trained" and interact with minorities targeted by political propaganda. However, municipality-level decision-makers (mayors, communications liaisons, and equal opportunities officers) and institutional representatives, such as those from the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, who attended the training, left with tools, project ideas, and connections to be utilized. A need for regular consultations and experience-sharing events or an active network emerged from this meeting, which has already been taken up by the municipality of Budapest's 8th district.

The second event involved Hungarian civil society representatives from organizations representing or working with minority groups or for human rights in general. This encounter was useful for extending professional networks, learning about the nature of hate speech other organizations and their communities experience, and developing counter-narratives for the types of hate speech they most often face. Two project leaders from the consortium gave a radio interview on a Hungarian station with a wide audience.

The third training event was open to active journalists and students training to become journalists and communications professionals. They analyzed media pieces about different minority groups in Hungary and received practical tips for avoiding unfair representation from minority representatives, active journalists, editors, and media lawyers. The Media and Communications Department of ELTE

University has already approached consortium members with the idea of turning this training into an accredited university course. In the near future, journalism students may receive specific training on the representation of vulnerable groups, with a pool of organizations available for consultation when planning publications.

The three-day international training was the final event, attended by 30 representatives from CSOs, churches, and educational institutions, including both minority and mainstream groups. Besides gaining knowledge and practical tools, the main takeaway, according to their assessments, was the network and sense of solidarity gained through sharing experiences. Participants have already started planning joint research, awareness-raising, and educational projects.

The toolkit compiling the methodologies used throughout the training was widely shared among professional networks and can be adapted to different countries' local or international contexts.



National and International Advocacy

An international working group met 10 times over two years, engaging more than 60 experts, activists, and decision-makers from 17 countries. This initiative included a national conference on hate speech, and minority representation with 80 participants, and an international conference mobilizing 70 professionals and interested people to discuss various aspects of online hate speech. The culmination of these events was the publication of recommendations for Hungarian and international stakeholders.

Ensuring the sustainability of the international working group was challenging. Regular attendance required presenting relevant topics and securing the availability of suitable presenters. Although the composition of the group varied, a core set of members and returning participants based on specific topics characterized the meetings. The series of meetings began with an introductory session to assess the needs and expectations of invitees, who later recommended other participants and experts. The working group covered diverse and timely topics, including practices for monitoring online hate speech, the scale of hate speech in different countries, regulatory measures, media representation, AI's connection to hate speech, the presence of hate speech in election campaigns

in the CEE region, best educational practices, and policy recommendations. These meetings increased participants' knowledge, built a network for cooperation and unified initiatives against hate speech and discrimination, and provided insights for formulating recommendations from diverse perspectives including transnational institutions, AI specialists, educators, civil society actors, activists, and youth representatives.

The Hungarian conference on online hate speech addressed all crucial aspects of the issue in Hungary, including regulation, recognition, and monitoring of hate speech, its impact on vulnerable communities and society, and its relationship with AI. Closed sessions allowed experts, academics, activists, institutional representatives, lawyers, police personnel, judges, and journalists to discuss actionable recommendations for policymakers and each other across different sectors. They brainstormed on advocacy strategies and initiated collaborative projects. The First University Radio of Pest recorded the public panels, making them available online. The event fostered connections and cooperation among sectors that typically do not interact, opening possibilities for future collaborative actions. The input from participants was a key component in formulating domestic-level recommendations.

The international conference provided a platform for representatives of vulnerable groups, international institutions, transnational NGOs, academic and practicing lawyers, journalists, and European-level decision-makers to discuss the legal and philosophical challenges of defining hate speech. They explored the roles of media and social media platforms, and the impact of AI on combating online hate in Europe. This conference facilitated real dialogue among experts, activists, politicians, and theorists, presenting participants and online viewers with the complexity of addressing online hate and solutions from legal, journalistic, academic, and other stakeholder perspectives. The discussions generated during the conference will inform future projects, campaigns, and advocacy actions, and enhance cross-sectoral connections. The three-day conference significantly contributed to the consortium's policy recommendations.

The project resulted in two sets of recommendations targeting different stakeholders. Initially focused on political and business levels, discussions within the working group and conferences highlighted that effective change requires joint efforts across sectors. In Hungary, proposals were made to strengthen the rule of law, addressing police, prosecution, courts, public authorities, and ministries. Recommendations also targeted public education, universities, media, and civil society. On the European level, the project provided recommendations to EU institutions and lawmakers, member state governments, international media outlets, and INGOs. Participating organizations continue to disseminate these recommendations and plan to use them in their advocacy activities. Other civil society organizations have endorsed and utilized these publications, sharing them within their networks. These recommendations offer valuable information and well-informed demands for national and international advocacy campaigns.



Counter-Narrative Campaign

The counter-narrative campaign was developed through a training workshop designed for coalition members and their volunteers. This workshop focused on distinguishing between counter-narratives and alternative narratives and outlined the specific steps for crafting effective alternative narratives. The core message was derived from the analysis of online hate speech, which revealed prevalent hateful and hurtful discourses targeting Roma, Jewish, LGBTQ+, Muslim, and migrant communities. The primary theme of these harmful comments was that these groups do not belong to the nation or Europe, presenting a perceived threat to societal cohesion. In response, the campaign's central, subtle message emphasized inclusivity, asserting that everyone belongs.

The campaign was exemplified by an animated video featuring narration by a renowned Hungarian actress and incorporating a poem by a national classic poet. This video was disseminated online, aired on commercial television channels, and showcased in arts competitions. It also supported a petition urging the President of Hungary to act as a representative for all citizens and to cease endorsing discriminatory laws. The campaign included various components such as online information about hate speech, public opinion polls, local initiatives, press releases, short supportive videos featuring minoritized individuals and their allies, and workshops addressing online hate speech, bullying, and discrimination at festivals.

The training on crafting alternative narratives equipped consortium members and their constituencies with the skills to analyze encountered discourses and develop effective responses, both in personal and organizational contexts.

The animation video achieved substantial reach, garnering over 115,000 views on social media and airing 15 times on commercial TV channels. Additionally, 20 photos and short videos supporting diversity and combating online hate speech were circulated across social media platforms.

The campaign included both online and offline actions. A petition addressed to the President of Hungary, advocating for inclusive representation of all Hungarians, including vulnerable groups, collected over 6,000 signatures. The petition text was shared with civil society organizations, 15 of which endorsed it as official signatories. An awareness-raising speech by the director of Budapest Pride, supported by partnering organizations, was delivered at the 2023 Pride March, attended by approximately 35,000 people, and was covered by five mainstream media outlets. The project was also promoted at the annual Sziget Festival and the "So Keres, Europa?!" youth gathering, reaching an international audience. The animated video, representing the campaign's main message, was screened at the "LGBTQ Animations" event and received an award at the 2023 RGB Creative Design Competition.

The high visibility of the campaign fostered connections and collaborations, with individuals and organizations both within and outside Hungary reaching out to the consortium members for further information and potential partnerships. This visibility also reinforced the sense of solidarity among vulnerable groups, demonstrating the supportive presence of intergroup alliances despite the challenges posed by online hate.

As part of the campaign, comprehensive knowledge about the history, characteristics, and challenges faced by vulnerable groups was disseminated through non-formal education. Five

workshops were held at the Pride Month Festival in summer 2023, covering topics such as the spread of online hate speech, its impact on vulnerable communities, Roma cultures and stereotypes, Jewish identities and antisemitism, and the creation of counter-narratives. Additionally, five workshops were conducted for international audiences at the “So Keres, Europa?! 2023” youth event, addressing stereotypes about Roma communities, legal best practices against anti-Roma hate, antisemitic prejudice, and hate speech against LGBTQI+ communities. These events provided attendees unfamiliar with these issues with valuable insights, fostering mutual understanding and strengthening solidarity among diverse groups and mainstream society.

Over the two-year duration of the project, robust working relationships were forged among consortium members, facilitating potential future collaborations with a range of Hungarian and international entities. These include law enforcement agencies, decision-makers, civil society organizations (CSOs), universities, and academic institutions. Each participating organization has outlined plans to extend the impact of the CHAD project by leveraging its results for further initiatives.



This report is part of the CHAD: Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech Against Diversity: Roma, LGBTQI+, Jewish and Migrant Communities project, coordinated by RGDTS and funded by the by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the DG Justice, European Commission.

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