



Conclusions of the Conference "Together against hate speech and hate crime"

The conclusions on the conference against hate speech and hate crime, held in Madrid on the 27th of November 2014 and organised by the Spanish Social Action NGOs platform in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, and the Norwegian Embassy in Spain, with the support of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009/2014, has shown the need to review the partnerships between governments, civil society and international agencies in the fight against hate speech and hate crime. Preventing, raising awareness and prosecuting those crimes must be a joint priority. The Internet and social networks have changed our lives. It is easier nowadays to spread hate speech and we must not let this phenomenon disseminate under the alibi of freedom of speech, as sentences ruled by the European Court of Human Rights state that it is a violation of the fundamental rights of our democracy.

Internet has become the tool to amplify the hate speech phenomenon. To fight it, we must promote on the Internet the same rules and values that are the pillars of our society: diversity, tolerance and the respect of human rights.

Hate speech is a violation of human rights, an attempt against people's dignity. Democratic societies need to take actions to sanction and prevent all types of language that disseminate, promote or justify hate or intolerance.

The role of international agencies in order to develop new partnerships to guarantee fundamental rights is key.

New internet-based partnerships between agencies are also necessary to combat hate speech and hate crimes.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Council of Europe (CoE) have agreed on the need to stress that this is a cross-border growing phenomenon against which we must unite efforts and work through public awareness campaigns, but also developing strategies to measure the phenomenon and protect victims.

The CoE added that the role of education in preventing and raising awareness about hate speech and its consequences; this includes of course human rights education, media education and non- formal learning activities. Education is key to prevent further discrimination and deterioration of the democratic values.

Following this line of thought, several works were presented:

- The No Hate Speech Campaign of the Council of Europe, developed in Spain by the Youth Institute (INJUVE). It warns us of the need to educate and raise awareness as we are facing the first generation of digital natives, nearly 99% of youngsters have profiles on social media. It has been shown that cyber criminals are ahead of the social and legal response that could be given. Thus, efficient policies and action protocols are needed by Internet providers too, as the study warns on the great danger of legitimising impunity and on the need to show exemplary behaviours as a priority.

<http://www.nohate.es/>

- Development of strategies against hate crimes by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) through working groups that meet regularly in international conferences and build the binding acquis for states regarding the criminalisation of those crimes and the protection of victims. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/hate-crime>
- Support to governments and NGOs to develop data collection systems that help strengthen the protection systems provided by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at www.hatecrime.osce.org

Those attending the conference acknowledged the work carried out by those agencies and the adaptation of their working models to make them closer to social media and access to information on the internet. Those are human rights that must be demanded, championed and protected for future generations.

The justice system in Spain wishes for the collaboration of NGOs to obtain specific results, such as the improvement of the criminalisation of those behaviours considered as hate crime and the development of action protocols, as they need to be put into context, something NGOs are able to do. All of this will lead to the protection of victims, allowing for those crimes to be reported and improving the justice system's efficacy.

The conference made it possible to get to know the partnership formulas developed in Spain. In fact, Spain started recording hate crimes officially in 2013, to a total to date of 1172.

NGOs and the justice authorities agree on the fact that those 1172 cases are not all the crimes committed, as only 9% of the total offences are reported according to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, due to a lack of knowledge on the rights, lack of confidence on the justice system or due to fear. This low number of crimes reported is, according to NGOs, due to "social consent and normalisation of aggressions".

The Spanish justice system has advanced with the creation in 2009 of a Prosecutor's Office specialised on hate crimes that has nowadays over 50 prosecutors spread across the provinces within the same unit as the prosecutor's office against internet crime, so it is possible to give context to both actions. In turn, those prosecutor's offices collaborate with the country's security forces in the drafting of training and crime identification protocols and a regular analysis that translates into annual reports on the main causes of hate crimes and the types of hate crime committed in Spain, thus promoting new prosecution mechanisms. It is also considered crucial updating the context in which hate crimes occur and referring to international legal instruments so that the justice system advances in the efficient guarantee of human rights.

In turn, the police unit is improving its actions in this matter thanks to the training and creation of action protocols with the collaboration of NGOs and of government bodies such as the Spanish Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. The latter has trained until now over 22,000 police officers based on the belief that it is necessary to specialise and prepare in order to fight hate crime.

[The challenge for NGOs: The fight against hate speech and hate crimes has to be fought globally in order to be more efficient, coordinating the actions of several NGOs and groups into more demanding and proactive actions that have large global impact.](#)

Thanks to this conference, it was possible to put into context the work of NGOs as part of a common European strategy to champion human rights in which civil society plays an important role.

Only by coordinating actions between organisations and bringing closer the reasons behind hate crimes and its victims (racism, xenophobia, LGTB movement, religious beliefs, disability, aporophobia, etc.) will it be possible to build a more global strategy against hate crime, more efficient and more capable of transforming society.

The conference showed the specific work of the financial projects promoted by the EEAGRANT financial mechanism, developed by the Spanish Social Action NGOs platform, amongst them:

- The analysis and intervention of hate speech on the internet addressed against immigrants and Roma people (Observatory of Human Rights of Catalonia);
- The project networks against hate towards the LGTB movement by FELGTB and;
- The project of the HATENTO observatory on homeless people by Fundación RAIS.

The experience shown by NGOs in Spain demonstrate that the priority must be the protection of victims, combined with more demanding and proactive actions in order to be more efficient when prosecuting crimes, as victims are in many cases invisible. Hate speech on the internet and sanctioning it require putting it into context, something provided by the knowledge and street proximity of NGOs.

Efficient collaboration between NGOs, the authorities and international agencies will be key to fight hate crime and hate speech on the internet.