

## Working Group on Communication Strategies and Practices

# Summary

1 March 2016

Altius Boutique Hotel, 1 Acheon Street, Nicosia 1101, Cyprus

### WELCOME

We were warmly welcomed by Aristos Tsiartas, Head of the Anti-Discrimination Body of the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman), who explained that thanks to the work that they have done within the Working Group (WG), they have a strategic plan on communication for three years now. They have gained a lot from the exchanges they have with other members. The Anti-Discrimination Body works on a daily basis with hate speech, hate crime, xenophobia, and many other areas. Because of the financial crisis, new areas of discrimination have also developed.

They are currently working on communication campaigns as regards the migration crisis as well as homophobia. They aim to use social media to reach vulnerable groups, along with partnerships with other stakeholders. Gender equality is a big part of their work, especially within migration (intersectionality).

Following this introduction, the Working Group's moderator Katerine Gaustad Pettersen (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway) invited all participants to briefly introduce themselves and their work. A number of equality bodies (such as France, Lithuania, Finland) have had changes in their governance or staff structures, so they are developing or have recently developed new communication strategies which include increased use of social media, crisis communication etc. Other colleagues shared that they are inspired by the innovative ideas shared in the working group and are always happy to go back to the office with new suggestions for improved communication. The presentations given in the Working Group meetings allow for introspection on their own work as well, which is always a valuable exercise.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES: COLOGNE ATTACKS

Ann Kathrin Sost of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA) in Germany then presented the work of FADA as a result of the New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne. More than 1000 women have filed charges since then, three for rape, some for robbery and others for some sexual harassment and/or assault. Just after the attacks, the information circulating about the events were unclear, and the Police cited the perpetrators as coming from Arabic or North African regions, some with a refugee background. Since then, 75 people have been investigated (so far only for robbery), and most of them are of Moroccan or Algerian descent.

After the attacks, many demonstrations took place against sexual violence against women, but some were hijacked by extreme groups who spread messages of hate against refugees and migrants, which developed into physical attacks in some cases. While there was huge media discussion on sexual harassment and violence, there was also talk about Germany being too soft on North African migrants.

FADA's first reactions was to give a statement on sexual violence and harassment, insisting that it is never acceptable. They made no mention of the perpetrators. Then on Facebook, they began to highlight the issue of racism and gender, such as through the [#ausnahmslos\\_campaign](#) (see translation into Czech,



Dutch, Hungarian, Slovak and Spanish [here](#)). After a few days, they started to highlight workplace harassment and made efforts to explain the laws in place that protect against this practice.

In the meantime, it emerged that the summer before, the Dortmund police had explained that there was a new way of pickpocketing – antanzen, and FADA had asked police not to talk about the origin of the perpetrators. This was then picked up as FADA trying to ‘censure’ the police. This created massive backlash on Facebook, and while the work of FADA was usually more quiet, now they were receiving death threats and other obnoxious messages.

Since the events in Cologne, refugees are no longer allowed to use swimming pools, clubs etc. in some places, Christina Lüders, head of FADA has emitted statements explaining that this was not ok (and the Equal Treatment Act forbids that), but people (club owners etc.) think they have the right to disallow entry and don’t consider it discrimination. In one way, this is positive as it means that FADA can now talk about what discrimination really is. On the other hand, hate against refugees (including attacks on refugee homes) is growing, existing laws like the equality act are being questioned, and more media attention is being focused on areas that are not all that positive.

**Questions to colleagues:** Could FADA have done anything better? How should an equality body act when the situation is not clear? How is it possible not to weaken one issue while highlighting the other? How should we address discrimination by an otherwise discriminated group (refugees, migrants)?

#### Discussion:

- **Mob behavior** of young men is not a new thing. FADA probably adjusted their tools to the input from the media and others, such as putting this case into perspective. Ann Kathrin explained that putting the perpetrators background into perspective doesn’t work – it is not accepted in this case.
- In many countries, **people don’t know their own laws**, so the question was raised as to how newcomers can learn them if locals don’t know them. Need to inform all members of society about laws, which is what FADA tried to do.
- In **Finland, there was a big discussion about this topic as it was rumoured that similar events were to happen there**, with a suggestion that 1000 male refugees were planning to assault Finnish women. This resulted in the police condemning the refugees without knowing what happened, Finnish men saying they had to protect Finnish women and right wing extremists planning attacks on refugees. However the women in Finland started saying that they had been harassed in the past by Finns, which calmed everything down quite a lot. Since last summer, it is a crime in Finland to harass people in public places, so that might have caused this outcry by the women. The Ombudsman gave an interview stating that harassment was not a new phenomenon, however it is important not to carry out ethnic profiling. In reaction, people are now saying that it might be an old phenomenon, but now it’s being planned and so Finnish girls are threatened. In the end, it is still not very clear what happened and if anything was planned at all.
- There are limited numbers of refugees and migrants in Hungary as the Hungarian government has closed the borders, and built fences. Hate speech is increasing, including from high ranking politicians – people believe this, despite not having ever seen a refugee. The Commissioner uses values-based communication to combat this, but people react instinctively in the face of this perceived fear. We need **high-level statements such as the recent [joint statement on migration](#)**

from the Visegrad Four. Furthermore, the Hungarian media is in the hands of the government, so difficult to combat hate speech there.

- In order to combat this kind of communication, one needs to **create empathy**! Field images with counter speech (eg. focus on women/children, not men) could work. First need to reach people! It might be worth considering creating brand conversations, such as the French Defender of Rights will try to do.
- When we communicate with people, we are generally addressing those people who are predisposed to otherness. Migrants (whose numbers are increasing), are generally not in contact with society, so more problems may arise. Our institutions should **pressure the state administrations to have more integration facilities** with language courses, courses explaining what is expected of them in this new country etc. If you leave people alone without the pressure to integrate, they will just follow their culture, rather than trying to understand yours. However, it was pointed out Germany has plenty of integration courses etc. but also has lots of bureaucracy, which means that people may spend a long time waiting for something to happen for them.
- The Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment didn't mention anything about what happened in Germany, but should have seized the chance to explain how the law works in Austria. They would have handled the situation in the same way as Germany!
- In France, there wasn't really any talk about Cologne. The **refugee topic** became important in September because of the situation of the refugees in Calais, but then that disappeared because of the **November attacks**. It was good that FADA spoke about harassment first, and they can't help the external events that happened afterwards, such as the police leaking information to the press. Despite the Defender of Rights insistence that it's not a good idea for it to continue, 80% of the French population agree with the state of emergency.
- One suggestion was that FADA could have spoken with media associations to make sure the journalists understand the different discrimination aspects of this story.
- A question was raised as to whether or not anyone had ever created an **influence strategy**? This means that they identify leaders of opinion and get them to engage with them the equality body and ideally champion their ideas. Sponsored messages on social media could make sure that they see your calls to them. It would then be important to sequence your messages and get your messages shared or have those leaders speak out for you. In any case, institutional messages need to be ready to face any event (crisis communication). Bloggers could be good opinion leaders, as well as members of the Parliament
- In Greece, they have identified the **friendly journalists** from the main journals who can be contacted on issues of interest to them. They are included when press statements are issued, for example. They will usually include the Ombudsman's stance when writing articles.
- In Finland, the biggest **opinion leader** is a lawyer and he takes the issues on every day in a very personal way.
- Our Italian expert recently met the heads of **Facebook and Twitter** main heads and had conversations with them over 2-3 days. They are open to developing policy recommendations, and have accepted to become partners in an upcoming proposal for a project on counter speech if funded. (This should then help all countries, but you could contact your national Facebook link for a meeting and ask them to implement your policy suggestions. It was agreed that Google and Twitter are generally more responsive to complaints than Facebook. If you see that Google searches for

your name (or other positive messages) bring up hateful groups who spread hate amongst the first results in the listings, talk to Google to get them to change the ranking of organisations not linked to your own (esp. if they are right wing spreading hate). In France, following in an incident in 2013 where there was a few hours of very insulting homophobic messages trending on Twitter, it is now easy to get hateful trending topics hidden. In general, more people reporting any given post means there's a quicker reaction, but one report on Facebook or Youtube should be enough to get it taken off (if that is the appropriate response).

**TO DO:** Get an English copy of the German Facebook policy if possible and send it around to participants so that they can use them to improve Facebook's policy in their countries

→ [Together against Hate Speech. Ways to tackle online hateful content proposed by the Task Force against illegal online hate speech](#)

- In Croatia, with up to 10,000 refugees arriving daily, the **media has done a great job of raising awareness on the horrors refugees were facing in their countries and problems along the refugee route**. The Ombudswoman and her teams went on site to monitor human right conditions and treatment of refugees. They communicated their remarks intensively on Twitter, where they also showed refugees making a positive impact, such as cleaning train stations that were dirty. The biggest problem during the first week was a lack of information for those who were arriving in Croatia. After the Ombudswoman publicly calling for information to be produced for them, the Minister of Interior got on a bus full of refugees and said "Salamalaikum, my name is Ranko", and explained to the refugees where the driver was taking them and how long the drive was, thus showing how people can be welcoming and information can be shared. The Ombuds office had organised an event in the weeks leading up to arrivals, together with the parliament, NGOs, Red Cross, UNHRC, universities etc. and this might have helped the question. In Croatia this was seen not only as a security, but also as a humanitarian issue, but then of course Croatia is a transit country for almost everyone.
- In Serbia, a famous journalist wrote an article with a lot of prejudice against a certain religions. This was followed by sharp reaction on social media. The **Commissioner spoke out against this very quickly and other media followed**. Statements from the Commissioner & the Ombudsman are very important for the media in Serbia.
- In Croatia, they organized the work in such a way that no other issues in the country were set aside, and also made sure the public was aware of it and not presuming they neglected other problems during the refugee crisis, so while they did a lot of work on that, they made sure that they were **loud about other things** (age etc).
- On the 19th of February, the Ombudsman of the countries on the Balkan migrant/refugee route (i.e. Turkey to Austria), met in Thessaloniki-Greece, discussing a **common action plan regarding the migrant /refugee crisis**. They agreed on certain components of this action plan, amongst which a **specific component on Hate speech**. More info on that can be found on the following [link](#).
- In the Czech Republic, there is an irrationally high fear considering there are no migrants in the country. To combat this, a Facebook initiative to fights myths online has been started entitled **Hate Free Culture**. People don't know who to trust in the public space anymore however (due mainly to Russian propaganda, neo-Nazis messages proliferating etc), so they don't even trust this website. As regards answering hateful comments on Facebook, it could be useful to reply with questions: eg.

do you know how many migrants there are? They then have to find out the answers themselves and while you guide them, this deconstructing of myths can work.

- It is possible to **plot influential people on a graph** so that you can identify those with no power (X axis) or a lot of power (Y axis), and then identify how much they disagree/agree. If they agree with you and have a lot of influence (such as influential journalists for example), you should try to work with them. For powerful people who are against you (such as some members of parliament for example), you need to be prepared to react quickly to their comments. For those with little or no power who use hate speech online, a strategy also needs to be developed to deal with them. Finally, people with no voice and not against your work are generally on your side and so not much work needs to be done.
- For those equality bodies who feel that identifying all of these targets audiences is very important, it is possible to pay for maps provided by consultancies who identify the movers and shakers for you. They are called identifying **territories of expression**.

### **BRAINSTORMING SESSION: SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING FOR EQUALITY BODIES**

A call for trainers for the planned social media training was released in February, but no proposals were received, due primarily to a lack of time (to develop the bid and to get the module ready for 3-4 May 2016). Based on this information, it was suggested that we break into groups to see what are our next moves: to push for the May meeting in order to make the most of the final conference of the PRISM project on hate speech; to postpone it until the autumn in order to relaunch the bid and extend the length of time for application; or something else?

#### **Feedback:**

*Group 1:* we should postpone the meeting until autumn. This will give us time to gather examples and other useful info to include and make it more relevant. There is a massive Social Media meeting in Germany on 3-4 May and many experts will be there, so better to wait. A professional trainer will maximize our learning. 15 person limit – how will it be decided? Is agenda too wide? Is it just dipping into info and not learning how to do it properly? Most important points: how to engage audience, make them active, make them feel something...if you do that right, you'll get more followers. Use practical examples from equality bodies and other similar NGOs/civil society. Hate speech is not really our problem: we have more experience with people who are angry/frustrated/afraid – they want to talk to us but how do we engage with them to get good dialogues?

*Group 2:* It would be better to wait until after the summer in order to develop a useful module. In that case, we should relaunch the bid and look for a main trainer and consider inviting some experts (such as from Facebook or Twitter). It would be better to hold it over two days as there is so much information to cover and this shouldn't actually change the budget of the event (finishing up about 15:00 on day two for flights etc). The basic information outlined in the Terms of Reference was good, but include a discussion on costs of social media campaigns (useful arguments to convince colleagues of low costs and benefits), evaluation, interactive communication as opposed to hate speech (as mentioned above – engaging with people who don't have all the facts and busting those myths), as well as teachings on visuals (eg. list of free tools such as infographics). The equality bodies main objectives with social media are to make users aware of their

organization, explain what discrimination is and increase engagement with users. Some examples of successful campaigns were discussed as well, such as 'Find your Skin Colour' in Portugal.

*Group 3:* They insist that it's important to have the training as soon as possible. Firstly, they would like to have the opportunity to be at the PRISM conference on 3 May (having access to international experts), and also because they need this training as soon as possible. Secondly, social media engagement is happening now and there are more and more problems to deal with, so the sooner they have the answers to tackle these issues, the better. Furthermore, there could be follow-up on the outcomes of the training at the next WG meeting in the autumn.

Finland & the Czech Republic have experts on crisis communication & digital media (Finland - female) & building campaigns (CZ - male) and they could cover the proposed agenda between the two of them. Furthermore, practical short examples of the daily work of equality bodies could also be included (and then feedback given to each person on how they could do it better). They are also interested in learning about new tools to monitor conversations, such as those used by French consultancies, and another used by Paivi. They want to look at digital media as a new way to do other jobs (but what fields does it apply to?). They want to know how to deal with hate speech on a daily basis and where to put your personal emotions in that case, basically understanding the job and expectations of a community manager.

*Group 4:* No discussion of time frame. They expect: how to use these tools and what are their limits? Costs of tools for proper use in campaigning (money and time)? How to control flow of outgoing messages (independent admins or top controls or mix of both)? How to make messages interesting, appealing, raise discussions? Most current discussions are not interactive. Need examples of successful and unsuccessful campaigns. How to reach target audiences not using social media (eg. Roma)? How to make campaigns to be used and understood by different audiences (young and old, educated and uneducated)? Want better grasp of idea of multiplier effect – create viral messages? Does the EC support such campaigns and are they things that could be funded?

*Final decision:* We will aim to hold the meeting on 3-4 May in Brussels, linking to the PRISM conference, if both of the experts from Finland and the Czech Republic can come and host the training. If not, it will be postponed until the autumn and launched as a new bid. Members are worried about how the 15 participants will be chosen and this needs to be very clear for everyone. Finally, there is more interest to delve into topics in depth rather than briefly touching on many subjects.

**TO DO:** Get confirmation from Paivi and Monica if their contacts can come to Brussels on 3-4 May and offer the training

**NOTE (9/3/2016):** *The contacts mentioned above wouldn't both be available on 3-4 May, therefore the bid will be put out again and the training session will be postponed until the autumn.*

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The draft Equinet communication strategy for 2016-2018 was presented by Sarah Cooke O'Dowd, and the main questions raised were regarding:

- Objectives



- Ideal vs. Realistic: All staff members in equality bodies should know about Equinet? Not very realistic for Equinet to reach all staff members. This is an institutional issue and more dependent on each organisations internal communication structures.
- Institutional support: how about developing projects that are linked to institution building within our members organisations, such as for example, getting an expert to come to one equality body and analyse their communication or other sections. That would be real capacity building, and might cost just as much as getting an expert to come to a meeting. Drawback: only for one organization, so benefits not for all members
- Target audience & key messages?
  - Any messages that we do put out should have meaning for our audiences. No need to separate audiences in plan further than already done, but at implementation level, would need to identify main external stakeholders and use different language for each.
  - At the moment we consider individuals & media as our audience indirectly, but should include them as a risk
- Communication Tools
  - Thematic newsletters were considered a good idea
- Evaluation
  - Do we count how much information is exchanged between equality bodies, for example, do we measure or follow up on their questions? It would be very interesting to monitor the number of messages being exchanged between equality bodies and inform them all of the feedback that each receive.

In the ensuing conversation, it was generally agreed that equality bodies communication strategies are not comparable with those of equality bodies, although development and evaluation could be comparable.

We must clearly highlight the benefits Equinet brings to equality bodies and others throughout the strategy! They are a leverage for us and them, and it is really important to highlight the EU level impact amongst equality bodies, as that is one of the main reasons for them to be part of the network.

## UPDATES

### European Journalism Award 2016

Speaking of a European impact, participants were informed that Equinet and its members has been informally asked by the Commission to participate in its European Journalism Award 2016. While it is not yet confirmed, this would entail the following:

One journalist would be nominated from each of the EU28 countries – ideally by the national equality body. The Commission would provide guidelines for what type of journalism they are looking for (topics, focus, as well as format), but they are primarily looking for portraits of persons with minority religious backgrounds who are successfully integrated with mainstream society and making a positive contribution. The Commission will also specify the timeframe within which the article/online piece had to be published, in order to reduce the scope of potential articles to be examined. The national equality body would nominate one selected written material (ie. journalist)

from their national context for the award. Each equality body could exercise discretion in how they choose to organize the nomination process: whether they allow their own internal communication team to handle it or whether they prefer a more open process in consultation with civil society. It is left up to the equality body's resources and possibilities to determine what would be most appropriate in their given context. There would be a contractor to assist those equality bodies in need of support (due to lack of resources, etc.). However, there would be no additional budget for equality bodies' work in the nomination process.

All selected nominees would be invited to the award ceremony, where an expert jury – including an Equinet representative – would announce the three winners. Keynote opening by the Commissioner Jourovà would be expected to support this initiative. Would equality bodies be involved in the initiative to select national nominees, the Commission suggested to foresee a further keynote by Equinet Chair alongside the Commission. Equinet and individual National Equality Bodies could be named and have strong visibility alongside the European Commission as significant support or co-organiser of the Journalism Award.

If this goes ahead, Equinet contact people, including members of the WG on Communication will be informed of what exactly is expected of them and for when.

### **European Action Week against Racism, 12-21 March 2016**

Every year, [UNITED for intercultural action \(European Network against nationalism, racism, fascism, in support of migrants and refugees\)](#) run the [European Action Week against Racism](#). This year, **the campaign will start on 12<sup>th</sup> March and finish on 21<sup>st</sup> March**. You can find more information [here](#).

**Equinet wishes to highlight your work on the fight against racism during the Action Week.** If you have examples of activities (publications, campaigns or other, which are more or less recent) that you would like highlighted on our social media channels during that week, please send an email to Sarah Cooke O'Dowd ([sarah.cookeodowd@equineteurope.org](mailto:sarah.cookeodowd@equineteurope.org)) with a brief overview in English as well as the relevant links to the activity. **Deadline: 9 March 2016**

### **2016: SECOND MEETING**

It could be worth talking more about the idea of influence strategies, and if someone has an example, they could outline that. Both in the next meeting and in 2017, hot topics should be our main focus. For example, in the next meeting, there could be a report (possibly by Dimitris) about the development of the Balkan Migrant Gateway action plan, in particular how they are developing their work on hate speech.



Monday, 29 February 2016 – Social Event	
20:30	<b>Dinner at Zanettos Tavern</b> Meet in hotel lobby at 20:00 to walk there together
Tuesday, 1 March 2016: Working Group Meeting	
9:00 – 9:30	<b>Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Aristos Tsiartas, Head of the Anti-Discrimination Body, Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, Cyprus</i></li> <li>- <i>Katrine Gaustad Pettersen, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway</i></li> </ul>
09:30 – 11:00	<b>Communication Challenges: Cologne Attacks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Ann Kathrin Sost, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, Germany</i></li> </ul> Followed by group discussions on how to tackle growing hate and balance different discrimination grounds at the same time, in this case gender and ethnic background/religion, without weakening one of them.
11:00 -11:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:30-13:00	<b>Brainstorming session: Social Media Training for Equality Bodies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outline of agenda</li> <li>- Ideas for speakers</li> <li>- Focus of hate speech content</li> <li>- Identify examples to be included in Training Manual/presented in meeting</li> </ul>
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Lunch break</b>
14.00 – 15:30	<b>Communication Strategies: Equinet</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sarah Cooke O’Dowd, Equinet</i></li> </ul> Plenary discussion including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback on the Equinet communication strategy</li> <li>- Other examples of communication strategies?</li> <li>- How to successfully put strategies into practice (eg. Concrete strategies per publication, per event, per campaign? )</li> <li>- Evaluation</li> </ul>
15:30 – 16:00	Summary of meeting and close
Approx. 16:30	City visit (Optional)

## List of Participants

Surname	Name	Organisation	Country	Email
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