

SOpHiSM

SOpHiSM:

***A RESPONSE TO ONLINE HATE SPEECH THROUGH THE ENHANCEMENT OF HIGH-
QUALITY PROFESSIONAL AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM***

Guide booklet for journalists to counter online hate speech

Grant Agreement No: 875422

Acronym:	SOpHiSM
Title:	A response to online hate speech through the enhancement of high-quality professional and citizen journalism
Start Date:	01/03/2020
Duration:	20 months

SOpHiSM Programme Description

Partners



CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
(CECL), Coordinator

Greece



Hellenic League for Human Rights
(HLHR)

Greece



University of Nicosia (UNIC)

Cyprus



National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) Greece



This document was funded by the European Union's Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The content of this document represents the views of the authors only is their sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.



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ABOUT THE SOPHISM PROJECT

The SOPhiSM project attempts to address this issue by drawing on existing international standards and tools, as well as the views of all involved actors (young journalists, students of journalism, citizen journalists and NGOs).

The project aims to:

- support high quality journalism in Greece and Cyprus through the enhancement of the Media literacy skills of students of journalism, junior journalists and citizen journalists (bloggers and social Media influencers);
- consolidate and add to the existing pool of data on hate speech online in Greece and Cyprus;
- improve Media literacy and skills to identify and counter hate speech online, and to create anti-hate speech messages;
- create tools designed to target the particularities of online hate speech in the participating countries.

Furthermore, the project aims to raise awareness of the general public on the challenges of online hate speech. This shall contribute to decreasing hate speech elements in online journalism and in promoting accurate, truthful reporting framed by anti-hate speech.

GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS

Purpose for developing the Guide

Journalism as a vocation or profession plays a very essential role in society. It serves the public interest in practice and not in theory by rereading the decisions of those who govern, by criticizing, by revealing scandals, by giving citizens a voice. At the same time, journalism is a power, it is an authority, it is a means for shaping public opinion, a tool to control trends and behaviours of the society as a whole. Hate speech is a phenomenon of acquired social behaviour, a political act with a specific ideological and racist content.

If a significant part of the journalistic world, which consciously but mainly unconsciously uses racist, xenophobic phraseology, plays a decisive role in the emergence, penetration and cultivation of hate speech in society, then it must be taken for granted that the journalistic world can do its utmost to curb and expel hate speech from the social sphere.

Hate speech is an attack on people who are usually vulnerable and prepares the ground for greater tensions, inequality and often violence. The Council of Europe considers hate speech a threat to democracy and human rights. European Commission, being on the same wavelength against racism and intolerance, points out that the use of hate speech may reflect or promote the unjustified assumption that the user is in some way superior to a person or a group of persons that is targeted by it. The use of hate speech may be intended to incite, or reasonably expected to have the effect of inciting others to commit, acts of violence, intimidation, hostility or discrimination against those who are targeted by it.

In a time when the international community places such great importance on this anti-social phenomenon, in a time when journalistic discourse is flooded with messages containing hate speech, the creation of a guide that will help Media professionals to recognize and avoid the use of hate speech in their messages, is deemed more than necessary. This Guide offers useful and necessary information in the hands of every professional journalist, journalism student, as well as of citizen - journalist who seeks to be trained on hate speech issues. By adopting its content, Media professionals can help to prevent the spread and reproduction of hate speech in society.



WHAT IS HATE SPEECH?

According to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (1997. p2): *“Hate speech or intolerant speech shall be understood as any form of expression which spreads, incites, promotes or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on prejudice, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin”*.

The term can be used to describe particularly abusive, even threatening behaviour, as well as comments that are usually offensive. For its part, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (2015,p.3), adds that: *“Hate speech should be understood as the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status”*. Hate speech may take the form of the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condonation of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, which has been found by courts to have occurred and the praise of persons convicted of such crimes.

Hate speech lies in a complex nexus along with the freedom of expression (of an individual or group) and the concept of rights, as well as concepts of dignity, liberty and equality. This definition is often challenged. In national and international law, hate speech refers to expressions that advocate incitement to harm (particularly, discrimination, hostility, or violence) based upon the target’s being identified with a certain social or demographic group. It may include, but is not limited to, speech that promotes, threatens, or encourages violent acts. For some, however, the concept extends also to expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance, while this can trigger targeted discrimination, hostility and violent attacks.

HATE SPEECH AS INCOMPATIBLE WITH ETHICS

Journalistic ethics and Codes of Conduct prioritise the need to respect diversity. Tolerance, respect, as well as defending diversity, whatever form it takes, is considered a criterion for evaluating the quality of journalistic discourse and at the same time an expression of journalistic civilization. Hate speech is considered to be incompatible with journalism and ethics. The International Federation of Journalists, criticizing hate speech, urges journalists not to encourage the spread of populism, believing that this conduct harms the quality of information.

Article 4 of the Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility of Journalists - Members of the Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers- emphasizes that it is unacceptable to “present persons in a way that may encourage humiliation, social isolation, or discrimination against them by the public on the basis of, in particular, gender, race, language, religion, ideology, age, illness or disability, sexual orientation or occupation. It is not allowed to express derogatory, racist, xenophobic or sexist messages and descriptions as well as intolerant positions and in general ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable or weak population groups should not be affected.”

The Code of Conduct Cypriot Ethics Committee urges journalists to avoid “any action which contains elements of prejudice on the basis of race, colour, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property, descent, age, gender and personal status, including physical or mental illness or invalidity.” Furthermore, the Code considers as not permissible “scorn, ridicule and abuse of individuals or groups. This provision covers individuals and groups or subgroups of people with different racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics, as well as characteristics relating to personal status, including personal data and characteristics. The above qualities are related to the right to diversity, which must be recognized in practice and respected by all.”

At first sight, the restrictions imposed on the spread of hate speech are in conflict with the right to free expression as defined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the same article notes that the right to expression can sometimes be restricted in order to serve the public interest, human rights and so on. Such a case, obviously, is the protection of the public from the use of hate speech by the Media

professionals. It is emphasized that with successive resolutions the European Court of Human Rights has accepted that restrictions on freedom of expression may be necessary when individuals spread, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance (including religious intolerance), provided that any 'formalities', 'restrictions' or 'penalties' imposed are proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.

TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF HATE SPEECH in JOURNALISM

An example of Media bias is the reference to ethnic and racial origin when these qualities are not an essential element of the news story. This practice is mainly observed in news reports about crimes or offenses or for any other reason negatively reflecting on individuals or groups, in which the ethnic and racial origin or simply the fact that the perpetrator or victim is not indigenous is highlighted as a primary element of the news story. On the contrary, if a person is identified as native, is not considered in similar cases an element of the news and is almost never mentioned. This practice contributes to the creation of feelings of xenophobia, hostility, hatred and intolerance towards foreigners. In a similar way, other rights of immigrants are often violated, which are respected when it comes to inhabitants, as native citizens.

Examples include the violation of the presumption of innocence, the publication of photographs at the time of their arrest or transfer to court, the right to privacy and the disclosure of their personal data. Xenophobic statements are often published and broadcast because in many cases they come from celebrities, as has often happened in live talk shows or statements on television and radio stations, or assertions made by the public, usually without contradiction or other point of view. Journalists often associate immigrants and refugees with terrorist organizations, consider them as a threat to the nation's purity, and in various verbal or other forms cultivate feelings of insecurity among the indigenous people of countries receiving migration flows. Serious mistakes are also made regarding the definitions used by the Media and their employees. For example, foreigners being en masse referred to as *illegal immigrants*, and the unsubstantiated and often unfounded claims constitute a practice of the worst kind.

Despite the progress that has been made, people from minorities (e.g. Roma) as well as people of different sexual orientations are treated in a degrading way by a part of the press. Also, many Media employees feel uncomfortable when dealing with topics involving people with disabilities, as well as with people with certain specificities in general. This awkwardness with which Media professionals approach topics and deal with people with specificities in general constitutes evidence of the difficulty to fully accept diversity, which still exists. The difficulty of accepting diversity, the awkwardness, sometimes the guilt a citizen may feel about the way society treats minorities of all kinds, leads journalists to employ adjectives, statements and general verbal forms that draw the attention of the message's recipient to the element of diversity, which should also be avoided.

HOW TO IDENTIFY INCIDENTS OF HATE SPEECH ON MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

In many ways, the Internet has had a positive influence on society. For example, it helps us to communicate easily and to share knowledge on all kinds of important topics efficiently: from the treatment of a disease to disaster relief. But the Internet has also broadened the potential for harm. Being able to communicate with a mass audience has meant that the way we engage with politics, public affairs and each other has also changed. Hateful messages and incitements to violence are distributed and amplified on social media in ways that were not previously possible.

- Through social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat), 3.19 billion users converse and interact with each other by generating and sharing content.
- The business model of most social media companies is built on drawing attention, and given that offensive speech often attracts attention, it can become more audible on social media than it might on traditional mass media.
- The regulation of harmful speech in online spaces requires drawing a line between legitimate freedom of speech and hate speech.
- One of the dangers of regulating hate speech online is that it will become a pretext for repressive regimes to further limit the rights of their citizens.
- The age of digital media has allowed online speech and content to be shared anonymously and often without a second thought for the consequences. While the act of publishing online is instantaneous, mechanisms designed to regulate speech are often cumbersome and slow.
- The speed and sheer amount of content, as well as the lack of editorial oversight make social media platforms a particular challenge for regulators.

Where possible try to gather evidence. This will help with any investigation if you decide to report to the police or one of the other possible support organisations listed below. The best way to gather evidence for online Hate is by taking screenshots of the posts or messages and/or saving the webpage link if relevant (for example on a webpage or YouTube). Once you have secured the evidence you have a few options.

- Use the 'Report' functions available to users of the platform where you've seen Hate Speech. They may remove the post, suspend the account or close the account down if it is in breach of the platforms 'community standards'.
- Each social media platform may have different ways to report hateful content. This should be signposted through the policies, forms, complaints, or 'Report a problem' sections.
- Discuss your options. If you are not sure whether the online incident has broken the law, and you want to talk about it with someone else first, different organisations can offer information, advice and support to people affected by Hate Crime in your country. Most of them, they will take reports anonymously if you don't want to share your name or personal information.
- Try to talk with an experienced journalist on digital media.
- Report to the police. If you think the post is criminal a lot of platforms guide you how to report the incident to the police for criminal investigation.

Links on how to report hate speech on different social media platforms

Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/help/www/212722115425932?helpref=popular_topics

Tik Tok: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/search?searchTerm=report%20hate%20speech>

Twitter: <https://help.twitter.com/en/forms/safety-and-sensitive-content/abuse>

Kik: <https://www.kik.com/safety-center/>

Instagram: https://help.instagram.com/contact/584460464982589?helpref=faq_content

Tumblr: <https://www.tumblr.com/abuse>

Pinterest: <https://help.pinterest.com/en/article/report-something-on-pinterest#Web>

Whatsapp: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/general/security-and-privacy/staying-safe-on-whatsapp>

Youtube: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802027?hl=en>

SnapChat: <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/report-abuse-in-app>

Ask.FM: <https://safety.ask.fm/safety-tools/>

Education on online media ethics

Countering tribalised hate speech begins by a realization that while freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, the emergence of social media has created multiple platforms for the production, packaging and dissemination of hate speech.

Education on online media ethics should focus on the rights and freedoms of journalists and their role in creating and promoting peaceful societies.

Users' experiences online are mediated by algorithms designed to maximize their engagement, which often inadvertently promote extreme content. The same technology that allows social media to galvanize democracy activists can be used by hate groups seeking to organize and recruit.

Additional tools to help journalists report hate speech

C.O.N.T.A.C.T (Creating an Online Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics) is a European Union supported project that focuses on hate speech and hate crime of a racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic nature. The project includes partners from Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain and UK. <http://reportinghate.eu/en/report-hate/>

Tackle Hate - digital guide

The present digital guide represents one of the main outcomes of the joint work of the project consortium represented by Netherlands (CAAT projects), Estonia (Nooruse Maja), Spain (Projuven) and Bulgaria (Alterntivi international), within the project of "Tackle Hate". As said before this project goal is to provide youth workers with updated knowledge, tools and good practices in order to deal and prevent hate speech. <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/tackle-hate-digital-guide.2617/>

MANDOLA

MANDOLA project wants to make a bold step towards improving our understanding of the prevalence and spread of on-line hate speech and towards empowering ordinary citizens to monitor and report hate speech. <http://mandola-project.eu/>

HIT Project

The HIT project is a European project that provides young people with knowledge and tools to address hate speech towards migrants and minorities. With these tools, they can identify, and then report, these abusive speeches. <http://hitproject.eu/>

HateMeter

Project Hatemeter aims at systematising, augmenting and sharing knowledge on Anti-Muslim hatred online, and at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of NGO/CSOs in preventing and tackling Islamophobia at EU level, by developing and testing an ICT tool (i.e., Hatemeter platform) that automatically monitors and analyses Internet and social media data on the phenomenon, and produces computer-assisted responses and hints to support counter-narratives and awareness raising campaigns. <http://hatemeter.eu/>

Guides on how to regulate misinformation in different social media platforms

Facebook: <https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#facebookSection>

Instagram:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#instagramSection>

Youtube:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#youtubeSection>

Twitter:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#twitterSection>

Pinterest:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#pinterestSection>

Reddit

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#redditSection>

Snapchat

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#snapchatSection>

Whatsapp

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#whatsappSection>

Tik Tok:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/#tiktokSection>

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON HOW TO CREATE MEDIA MESSAGES WITHOUT USING HATE SPEECH

- When preparing the Media message, the element of cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, social, sexual diversity should be taken into account in order to promote mutual understanding between the different groups of the population.
- Reference to the ethnic and/or racial origin of persons should be avoided unless it is an integral part of the information. For example, if it is deemed that the descent does not matter in a news story, it should not be mentioned whether the person involved is a native or a foreigner. Especially in cases of crimes or offenses, no reference should be made to the element of national origin, of the religion of the suspect or suspects, if this is not a necessary component and element of the news story.
- The economic crisis and the high unemployment rates create fertile ground for the development and spread of xenophobia, racism and hostility towards immigrants. This requires Media professionals to be particularly careful when handling news about immigrants, especially asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking or other groups. Media professionals need to inform the public in a correct and comprehensive way, citing, for example, the EU's financial contribution to the lives of refugees. Journalists often do not mention the positive effects of immigration at all, such as meeting labour needs, rejuvenating the population, enriching the culture of countries that receive immigrants, and so on.
- Journalists must respect the presumption of innocence and not publish information that refers to the private life or personal status of those involved or of their family members. Everyone has personal data, whether they are indigenous, immigrants, or people belonging to social or population minorities.
- When writing the Media message, simplistic, absolute, derogatory expressions and characterizations, mainly against people who belong to vulnerable groups, people who do not have the ability to defend themselves, should be avoided.

- Journalists do not reveal the identities of asylum seekers, refugees, victims of human trafficking, or even immigrants who choose to speak out and be portrayed, as they or their relatives could face retaliation by their country's authorities or by non-governmental and even criminal organizations. For the same reason, photographs showing asylum seekers and victims of exploitation should not be displayed. If the circumstances require publication/showing, this should be done in a way that does not make the persons identifiable.
- In Media messages concerning immigrants, it is preferable to avoid the use of standard archive photos, e.g. veiled women, with headscarves, men in prayer position. Not all immigrants are Muslims or practising Muslims, and stereotypes can create negative associations.
- When the message concerns cases of women who are victims of human trafficking, under no circumstances should the impression that these women voluntarily prostitute themselves be formed. On the contrary, it must be emphasized that these women are being exploited inhumanely.
- Radio and television presenters must be prepared to intervene effectively, distinguishing themselves, if any of the guests, whoever they may be, make statements containing elements of hostility or prejudice against foreigners or persons who belong to social, population minorities or other minorities. Such statements should be condemned, especially when they come from public figures, from those in authority or from persons who, by virtue of their position, exert influence in public opinion.
- Media messages should not aim to impress and create feelings of fear, panic or anxiety about the effects of immigration, unless there is serious and well-founded evidence for the allegations made.
- In general, journalism should not create news frames that use hate speech, directly or indirectly, as a means of dramatizing and consequently attracting the attention of the public.
- When circumstances require the publication of statements with adverse content for persons belonging to minorities, the right of reply must be satisfied at all costs. The journalist makes sure to allow the other voice to be heard, the other perspective of approaching things.

- Journalists working on websites should be particularly careful because the internet provides more opportunities for racist rhetoric. Information websites are responsible for what is posted on their site and therefore should immediately remove racist comments from anyone.
- When possible, the journalist should seek the advice of experts or organizations that are well aware of the issues of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, sexual orientation, religious minorities, people with disabilities, etc. in order to provide clear and comprehensive information to the public.
- Journalists should be aware that HIV/AIDS transmission is not exclusively related to LGBTQ people. It can happen to couples of the same or different sex, generally to anyone who does not take protection measures.

CORRECT USE OF LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

The following section contains indicative references to the correct use of words and terminology:

- An asylum seeker is a person who is outside his/her home country and who has applied to be recognized as a refugee or to receive some other kind of international protection. The asylum seeker, regardless of whether he/she entered the country without documents or in any other irregular manner, has the right to remain in the country responsible for examining his/her application until the final decision is made.
- A refugee is a person who has been granted this status under the 1951 Geneva Convention, which has been endorsed by 148 countries. According to Article 1 of the Treaty, a refugee is a person who *“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality or the country of his habitual residence and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”* Refugee status can be granted to people who meet the above conditions.
- Beneficiary of Subsidiary Protection is a status granted to asylum seekers who do not face the risk of personal persecution in their home country under the Geneva Convention, but cannot return home because they risk serious harm - torture, death

penalty, inhuman or degrading treatment, a serious threat to their lives - due to conflict or widespread violence.

- Victim of human trafficking is the person who is exploited, whether it is for forced labour, sexual exploitation or the removal of organs, by other persons who exercise complete control over him/her. Human trafficking victims have either never consented to be transferred to another country or if they initially consented, that consent has been rendered meaningless by the coercive, deceptive or abusive actions or threats of the traffickers.
- The terms 'undocumented immigrant' which is recommended by the Council of Europe, the European Union and international human rights organisations refer to persons entering or residing in a country without legal documents or even after their expulsion order was issued.
- Migrant is a person who voluntarily chooses to look for work and better living conditions in another country. Unlike the refugees, migrants' life and freedom are not in danger and they can return to their country if they want to.
- When reference is made to LGBTQ people, words such as 'immoral', 'sinful', 'lustful', 'filthy', 'damn' are not to be used. Usually, the use of these terms has a religious background and is used mainly by clergy who do not accept diversity in relation to sexual orientation.
- The use of nouns such as 'deviant', 'disturbed', 'dysfunctional', 'perverted', 'sick', 'abnormal', 'destructive' aims to present LGBTQ people as subhumans, mentally ill or as a danger to society. It is underlined that the perception that being a LGBTQ person is a mental disorder has been disproved by scientific research.
- It is emphasized that the use of words with offensive content, words with a sexist background aimed at ridiculing, humiliating and abusing people of different sexual orientation is hate speech. When reference is made to LGBTQ people, one should use the terminology promoted by the European Commission against racism and intolerance and not abusive definitions such as 'fag', 'faggot', 'queer', 'dike', 'fairy', 'sissy', 'pansy', 'one of them', 'shemale', 'tranny', 'drag queen' etc.
- LGBTQ people flirt, do not 'deceive', 'trap', 'dupe', 'pretend', 'playact', 'fake it for publicity', 'disguise'.

- Homosexual/Gay is the man who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men. A lesbian is a woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.
- Bisexual is the person who feels sexual and/or emotional attraction to more than one gender.
- Transgender/Trans people are individuals with a gender identity that differs from the sex that they were assigned at birth.
- Asexual is the person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. Intersex people are individuals born with sex characteristics (such as chromosomes, genitals and/or hormonal structure) that do not belong strictly to male or female categories or that belong to both at the same time. Pansexual/Omnisexual people are individuals who have romantic, sexual or affectional desire for of all genders and sexes.
- Homophobia is fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance and/or hatred directed towards homosexuality.
- Sexism is any act, gesture, visual presentation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based on the idea that a person or a group of persons is superior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline.
- Black coloured people are called 'black' or, if they are American citizens, 'African American'. The characterisation 'coloured' is, besides racist, wrong since all people have colour.

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Date:	13/10/21
Edition:	Final
Type:	Public document
Place:	Nicosia