FreeEx
RESPONSIBILITY
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Counter-strategies towards hate and disinformation

A practical guide for NGOs, activists and volunteers about democratic limits of freedom of expression, countering hate speech, fake news and intimidation

Imprint

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Introduction

Freedom of expression is under threat, in various ways, across the European Union Member States. While legal frameworks are recognising and protecting freedom of expression, implementation falls short of transposing legal provisions into reality. Journalists and civil society leaders are among the most affected, experiencing various forms of hate speech, censorship, threats or self-censorship. The aim of this brochure is to provide an inventory of tools which can be used by journalists and civil society leaders facing such limitations to their freedom of speech.

The brochure is based on research conducted in 2018-2019, including desk research, interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire. The way the brochure is structured reflects what has been learned throughout the project. The included tools have been harvested through the research process as well as through organising a series of three webinars with experts and associations addressing the current limitations to freedom of expression.

Each tool presented in this brochure has been reviewed by the authors and is presented in a way that connects it to specific experiences with limitations to freedom of expressions lived by civil society leaders and practitioners in EU Member States. At the end, we present several recommendations for the European Union institutions, primarily the European Commission, as well as for the Member States, for ensuring a better protection of the freedom of expression within the borders of the EU.

Overview

Overview of pressures to freedom of expression faced by civil society

Freedom of expression is a fundamental value of the EU enshrined in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union and in the constitutions of the EU Member States.

With increased access to information and communication distribution channels as well as to countless sources of data – some accurate, some not – we can only expect that the benefits come accompanied by misuse and abuse. The civil society practitioners we encountered in this project are no strangers to such challenges. The risks they face are high including being targeted with disinformation, finding themselves at the receiving end of hate speech and facing intimidation, threats or other forms of abuse.

Recent changes in the media ecosystem raised new concerns about the vulnerability of democratic societies to disinformation or "fake news" as more people call it, even that the term is not correct, to describe the phenomenon that we are facing. The world is experiencing rapid changes without being able to adapt at the same pace as the growing use of new technologies. The limited ability of society to cope with the effects of this problem is yet to be seen.

This brochure aims to look at the challenges related to freedom of expression regarding hate speech and disinformation faced by the civil society practitioners and to give same helpful information on how to tackle them in our everyday life and work.

There are **3 main tasks** in order to accomplish this objective.

First, to define key terms and to present the context faced by the civil society practitioners in relation to hate speech and disinformation.

Second, to define how civil society practitioners and activists tend to react in first instance and how they could improve their initial reaction.

Third, to define different strategic approaches for combating hate speech and disinformation.

Chapter I:
Hate speech and intimidation

Civil society practitioners, NGOs, activists, journalists and researchers are among the groups our research has identified as being increasingly vulnerable to hate speech and intimidation in the public sphere. Whether driven by ethnic, racial, religious, gender or political considerations, among others, aggressive and hateful behavior tends to have a strong emotional, professional, social and even economic impact on members of these groups. Their private life often suffers as much as – if not more than – their professional life and well-being. With little public support and awareness available to address such impact, hate speech tends to have long-term effects. The particular cases we encountered refer to affected organisations and individuals from LGBTQI communities, migrant communities, religious minorities, community organisations, investigative journalists to name just a few.

In many cases now, hate speech happens online since most of these individuals and groups are active on social media and in other digital forums. In addition to easily reaching its direct target (individual, group, organisation), such abuse is often meant to intimidate civil society practitioners, deter them from their work and campaigns or discredit them amongst the public opinion and influence their target audience or supporters.

The impact and results of such targeting are however very real and tangible in the offline space, too. Individuals can get unwanted attention and abuse on the streets, some may lose connections and contracts helpful in their work, organisations face financial restrains when trying to allocate more resources to defending themselves and building counter-campaigns, while some simply quit their projects if pressure becomes unbearable.

At the other end of the line are the abusers who take more and more advantage of the multiple opportunities to spread hate and to intimidate. From enraged far-right groups, corrupt politicians, compromised businesspeople or any other individuals and groups that may be pro- or against- something, hate speech emerges from multiple sources and seeks to cause harm, intimidate and abuse. It is, however, still very hard to pinpoint, combat and prosecute, as we've heard and seen during our research and interviews with civil society.

The challenge overall is for hate speech and intimidating behavior to be recognised as such not only by the ones targeted, but by our communities, society at large, and by law enforcement institutions.

Glossary terms related to hate speech

Illegal hate speech

Definition The public incitement to violence or hatred directed to groups or individuals on the basis of certain characteristics, including race, colour, religion, descent and national or ethnic origin.

Reference EU Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law

Link https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2008/913/oj

Hate speech

Definition Hate speech covers many forms of expressions which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons. Hate speech is speech that attacks a person or a group on the basis of protected attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Reference No Hate Speech Movement

Link www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence

Freedom of expression

Definition Freedom of expression is the right of every individual to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Reference Council of Europe

Link www.coe.int/en/web/portal/protecting-freedom-of-expression-and-information

(Internet) Troll

Definition Someone who enters a communication channel to cause trouble. Trolls often use comment threads to discredit valid content or comments and/ or spread disinformation.

Link https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/trolling

Cyberbullying

Definition Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. It can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. It includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

Link www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html

Countering hate speech

Hate speech is understood by EU law as the public incitement to violence or hatred directed to groups or individuals on the basis of certain characteristics (Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law). Hate speech can be intentional or unintentional; you can find it online, or in real life.

How do human rights defenders, civil society organisations and journalists experience hate speech?

The common method of de-legitimising human rights defenders, independent media and civil society activists often is to label them as enemies of the state and consumers of public money. Politicians and extremist groups are manipulating the public when they try to legitimise their hate speech with such terms as ‚freedom of speech' and when they call anti-discrimination speech ‚hate speech'. The relativism of discriminatory opinions in the public sphere and the media has led to the creation of a fluid line between freedom of expression and hate speech.

How can we tackle the challenge of hate speech while maintaining a democratic environment and respecting the freedom of speech?

This freedom is connected to accountability. Art. 10(2) of the European Convention of Human Rights refers to "duties and responsibilities". Norms, such as tolerance and acceptance, mutual understanding, solidarity and intercultural dialogue, should be understood as a desirable part of European culture and heritage. These principles are forming the basis of European Citizenship. They are key for furthering civic engagement and democratic participation of citizens at EU level.

However, they are increasingly getting under pressure – hate speech and intimidation are major challenges in offline and online communication. Especially populist actors and supporters engage in such practices that are not compatible with the norms and values mentioned above. It rather contradicts the principles of open dialogue, mutual understanding and solidarity, as it draws on strong antagonisms and exclusion.

In May 2016 the European Commission agreed with social media companies Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube a "Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online" to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online. The implementation of the Code of Conduct is evaluated through a regular monitoring exercise which is set up in collaboration with a network of organisations located in the different EU countries. Civil society organisations play an important role in this network.

Among others, the code of conduct provides that the IT Companies commit, quoting:

- to have in place clear and effective processes to review notifications regarding illegal hate speech on their services so they can remove or disable access to such content. The IT companies to have in place Rules or Community Guidelines clarifying that they prohibit the promotion of incitement to violence and hateful conduct;
- Upon receipt of a valid removal notification, the IT Companies to review such requests against their rules and community guidelines and where necessary national laws transposing the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, with dedicated teams reviewing requests;
- The IT Companies to review the majority of valid notifications for removal of illegal hate speech in less than 24 hours and remove or disable access to such content, if necessary.

The 2019 evaluation of the Code of Conduct shows that this initiative delivers successful results: the companies are now assessing 89% of flagged content within 24 hours and 72% of the content deemed illegal hate speech is removed.

How do civil society organisations counter hate speech?

Civil society organisations across Europe are developing more and more expertise in countering hate speech.

Organisations combating hate speech are engaged in very different activities:

Like the human rights organisation **Aequitas** is monitoring activities of online hate speech in the framework of the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech in the Cypriot online context. Using a commonly agreed methodology on the EU level, it is testing how the IT companies are implementing the commitments in the Code.

www.aequitas-humanrights.org

Other organisations like **ZARA** in Austria (Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit) have developed a national platform to address the fight against hate speech:

https://counteract.or.at/

NEVER AGAIN Association in Poland is particularly concerned with the problem of education against racial and ethnic prejudices among the young.

www.nigdywiecej.org/en

Phiren Amenca, the network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organisations in Hungary, is creating opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue and engagement, in order to counter hate speech by challenging stereotypes and racism.

https://phirenamenca.eu

Zara, Aequitas, NEVER AGAIN Association, Phiren Amenca, and many others are raising awareness, building capacity and offering training sessions to build skills, attitudes and knowledge on the topic. That can be a training of trainers in the educational sector, empowering them to integrate the combat of extremism and hate speech online in their work; or it can be the organisation of a youth exchange or a cross-border exhibition; or the development of a phone app to report and counter hate crime tactics; and many more activities.

Many civil society activists and initiatives are joining forces today in a new European network. Find out more about it and have a look who is there from your country:

INACH: European network of organisations dedicated to counter hate speech

www.inach.net

Strategies for individuals

Strategies of civil society activists to counter hate speech can be very different. Suggestions reach from ignoring to confronting or engaging to reporting and seeking help. The association of European journalists is sharing some insights and experiences, explaining how they counter hate speech on an individual level.

Recommendations of journalists to counteract hate speech

- Ignoring
  Delete hate e-mails, block Twitter-users, and don't reply to offensive or aggressive communication.
- Reporting
  When threatened with violence, expose trolls and aggressors. There are Apps, telephone help lines and special websites in every EU country where you can do that meanwhile, do not fear, just report abusers.
- Confronting, shaming or engaging
  It might be worth trying to engage with trolls in a public conversation to make them aware how unacceptable their behaviour is – although this strategy needs thorough planning.
- Seeking support
  Try a #lovemail against #hatemail, support others to get to know supportive communities – you are not alone.
- Staying anonymous
  More and more activists of civil society keep their name quiet to distance them from personal hate mails online, voicing opinions or announcing activities without individual names, staying in the shadow of their organisation.
- Staying online nevertheless
  Ignoring or complaining about harassments – don't let yourself to be pushed out. Change is in the air!

To read more about the individual experiences, go to **https://europeanjournalists.org**

Chapter II: Disinformation

Context and risks

The topic of fake news and disinformation is becoming a major challenge not only for politicians and businesses, but mostly for citizens and members of the civil society. The digital transformation of the media and the rapidly changing media environment are also transforming the way our democracies work. The democracy that all the civil society practitioners and organisations aim to build is one in which the organised public monitor the actions of the elected leaders, not the other way around. This requires, among other things, transparent, verifiable, full and reliable access to information.

Conspiracies and media propaganda have long been used to threaten democracy, but today's online media tools implicate companies in new ways. Social media platforms provide a powerful voice to anyone who can attract followers. This new power structure enables a small number of people armed with technical, social, and political know-how to distribute large volumes of disinformation or "fake news".

For civil society practitioners, disinformation in social media is important and dangerous, because of the abundand sources, and second, because of the creation of echo chambers. Assessing the reliability of information in social media is becoming increasingly challenging due to the spread of well-conceived fake information. The trend of 'likes' and followers leads to the creation of echo cameras and filter bubbles that intensify polarisation. Since there is no contradictory information to counteract the lies, misleading information or the general consensus of isolated social groups, the end result is lack of a shared reality that can be divisive and dangerous to society.

Among other risks, such situations can allow discriminatory and inflammatory ideas to enter public discourse and be treated as a fact. Once implemented, these ideas can be used to create scapegoats, normalise prejudices, strengthen their thinking, and even, in extreme cases, catalyse and justify violence which is what a lot of people in different NGOs are facing.

In this way, fake news and disinformation are a growing threat to the norms and values of European Citizenship, such as the freedom of expression as part of human rights, tolerance and acceptance, mutual understanding, solidarity and intercultural dialogue.

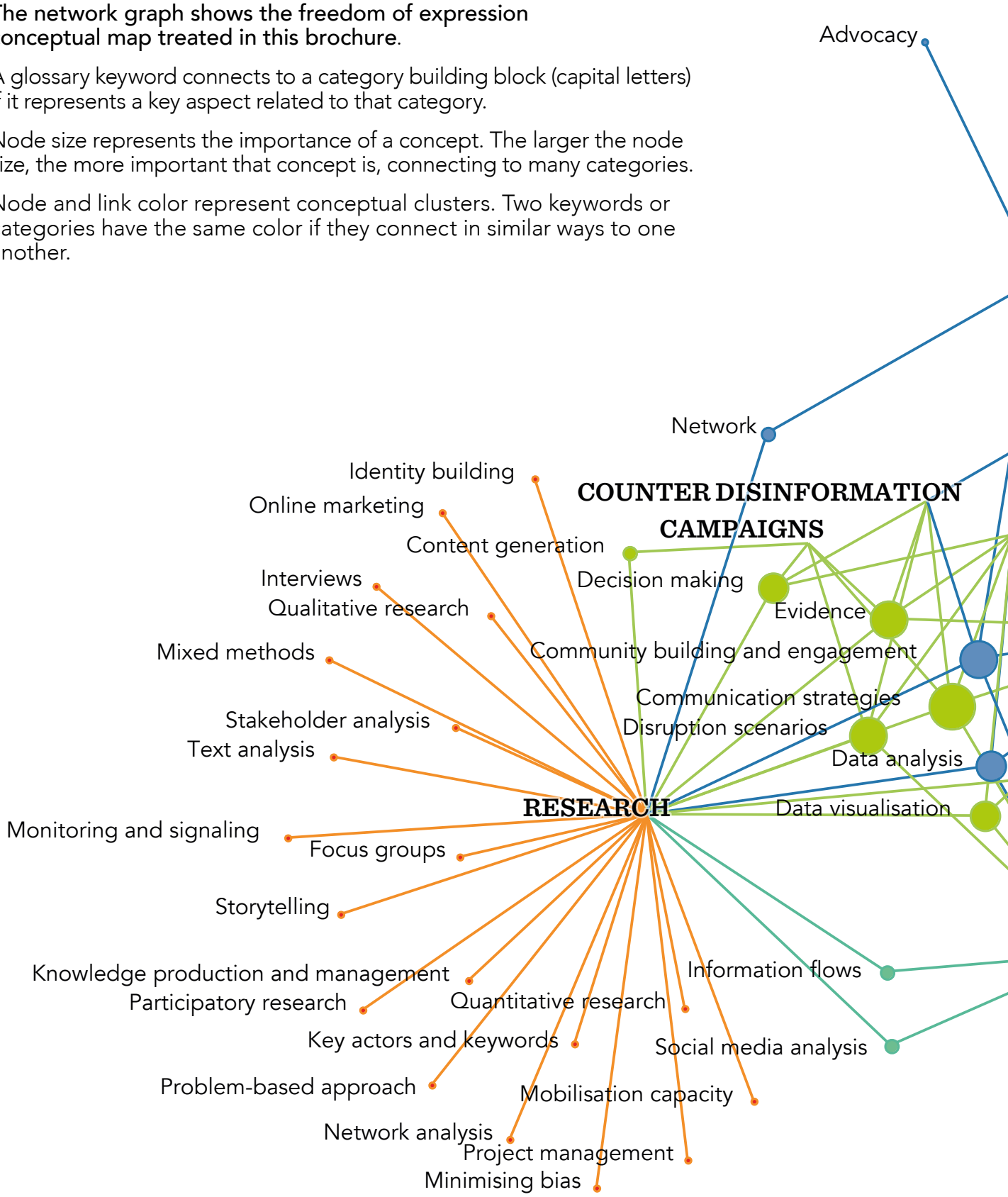
Freedom of expression
Counter-strategies conceptual map

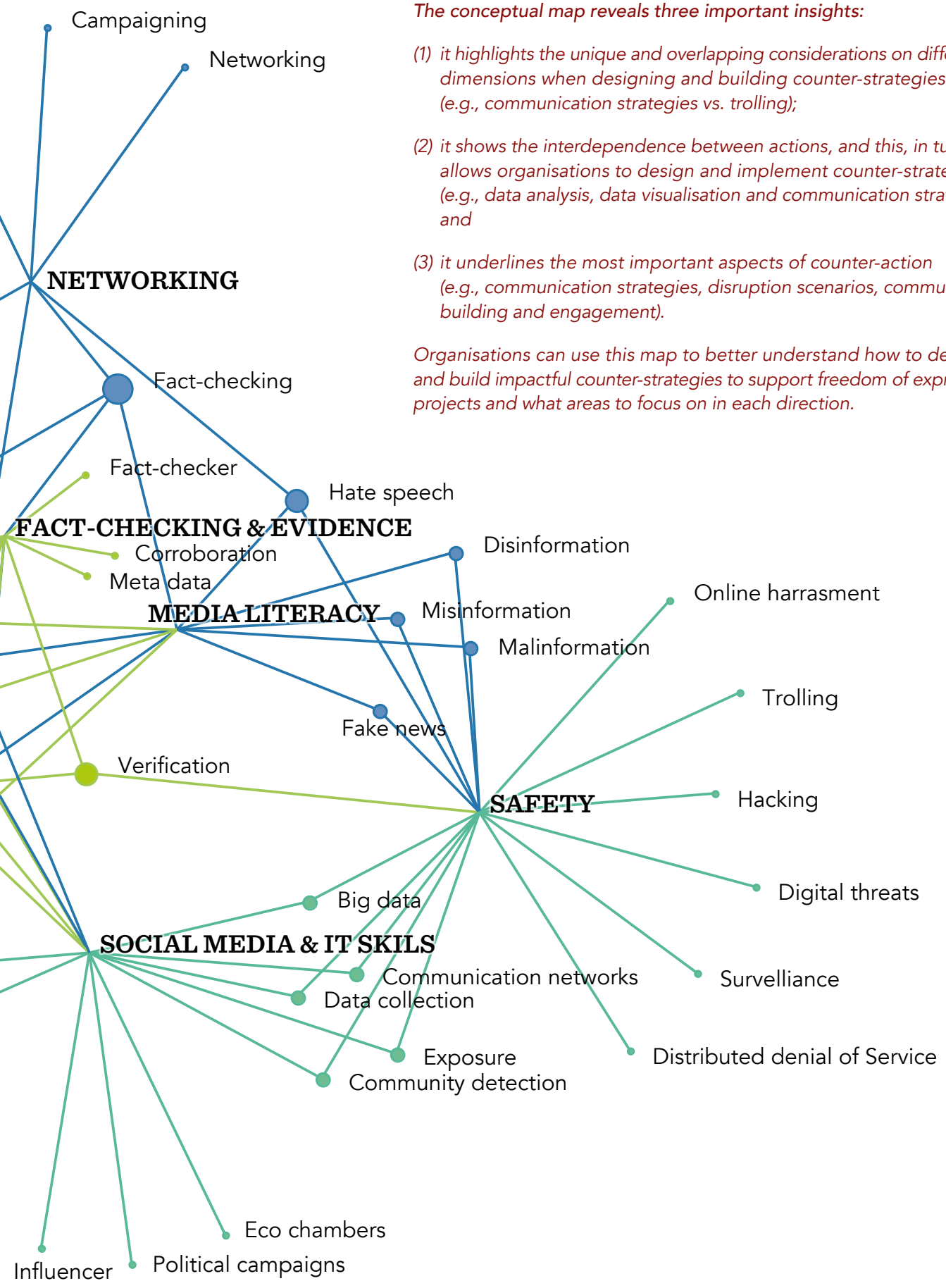
The network graph shows the freedom of expression conceptual map treated in this brochure.

A glossary keyword connects to a category building block (capital letters) if it represents a key aspect related to that category.

Node size represents the importance of a concept. The larger the node size, the more important that concept is, connecting to many categories.

Node and link color represent conceptual clusters. Two keywords or categories have the same color if they connect in similar ways to one another.





The conceptual map reveals three important insights:

(1) it highlights the unique and overlapping considerations on different dimensions when designing and building counter-strategies (e.g., communication strategies vs. trolling);

(2) it shows the interdependence between actions, and this, in turn, allows organisations to design and implement counter-strategies (e.g., data analysis, data visualisation and communication strategies); and

(3) it underlines the most important aspects of counter-action (e.g., communication strategies, disruption scenarios, community building and engagement).

Organisations can use this map to better understand how to design and build impactful counter-strategies to support freedom of expression projects and what areas to focus on in each direction.

How civil society practitioners tend to react in first instance to disinformation and pressure on their freedom of speech

Today the fast process of change in the media ecosystem is affecting all professions. Before, the journalists had the big task to disseminate and spread quality information. Today, this responsibility lies on every one of us. It is easy to write and share a opinion pieces and information on social media, but who then is responsible for the quality of this information? In consequence, all us of should have basic knowledge on how to use, create, and spread information, especially in online environment in order to protect ourselves from disinformation, mal-information and misinformation. This is important not only for journalists, but for all citizens, activists, and civil society practitioners.

Faced with disinformation, civil society practitioners tend to react emotionally, at times retracting from activity, isolating themselves or, most often, reverting to self-censorship. Such reactions illustrate that they are not well connected to peers or informed about their rights, options, and existing national and EU legislation. Structurally, this shows that legislation protecting freedom of expression is not properly implemented and that social and political practices go against basic principles and rights related to freedom of expression.

Key terms and regulation in the EU

According to Claire Wardle[1] it's important to distinguish messages that are true from those that are false and to know from whom and with what purpose the message is created.

She distinguishes 3 types of messages:

- **Dis-information** - Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country.
- **Mis-information** - Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.
- **Mal-information** - Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country.

According to the European Commission "disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm"[2].

In 2018 the EU has outlined an Action Plan clarifying that "public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as EU citizens' health, environment or security. Disinformation does not include inadvertent errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary. The Action Plan only target disinformation content that is legal under Union or national law."

The EU Action Plan step up efforts to counter disinformation by improving detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation; joint responses to threats; collaboration with online platforms and industry; raising awareness and improve societal resilience.

In 2018 the EU created a Code of Practice on disinformation which is self-regulatory set of standards. Now Facebook, Google, Twitter and Microsoft submit reports on the actions undertaken by them to counter disinformation.

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1 C Wardle, H Derakhshan, Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe report, DGI (2017)

2 Quotations: Communication of the European Commission on tackling on-line disinformation, COM(2018) 236

Glossary terms related to disinformation

Fake news

Definition False stories that appear to be news; spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke.

Link https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fake-news

Disinformation

Definition Dis-information is when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm.

Reference C Wardle, H Derakhshan, Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe report, DGI (2017)

Link https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-researc/168076277c

Misinformation

Definition Mis-information is when false information is shared, but no harm is meant.

Reference C Wardle, H Derakhshan, Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe report, DGI (2017)

Link https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-researc/168076277c

Malinformation

Definition Mal-information is when genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere.

Reference C Wardle, H Derakhshan, Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe report, DGI (2017)

Link https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-researc/168076277c

Post-truth

Definition Definition: Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/post-truth

Counter-narrative

Definition A message that offers a positive alternative.

Link www.counternarratives.org

Chapter III: How to build strategies to counter hate speech and disinformation

Addressing fake news, disinformation, and hate speech requires awareness, flexibility, and commitment. The type of experiences civil society leaders, activists, and practitioners face in a context of fake news, disinformation, and hate speech is diverse. In consequence, it is important for those exposed to such challenges to design their counter-strategies wisely and robustly.

The public should be encouraged to view the exposure of fake news and hate speech as a matter of common public interest. In this regard it is important to be strategic in addressing the freedom of expression challenges one faces as a civil society practitioner. To stand a chance at being successful, civil society organisations should develop a deep understanding of the problematic of disinformation and hate speech and increase their level of engagement with countering these phenomena.

Media and digital education training

Media and digital education training is important not only for the youth, but for the adults too. Critical thinking, taught methods of dissecting stories, knowledge how to check facts and to be encouraged to expose lies are critical for the democratic society.

What in general civil organisations could do?

- Rise awareness of the issues regarding "disinformation" and spread quality information.
- Strengthen media literacy and critical thinking.
- Work for media literacy campaigns and media education training.
- Invest in educating and empowering people for better assessing and using online information.
- Improve monitoring and debunking of fake news, or monitor popular social media publications.
- Fact-checking.
- Encourage the development of new forms of cooperation between civil society organisations to implement new approaches to counter disinformation.

And what should we do first when we faced a disinformation or in that matter any information? The first necessary step to make it possible to react on disinformation is to know what exactly it is. So, keep yourself informed.

What to do as civil society practitioner, activist or as citizen?

1. Inform yourself before you take any other actions.
2. Check you information not only with google but with reliable sources – information from institutions, academia or at least from 2 other independent sources.
3. Find the primary source on the information you are reacting to.
4. Check who is the initial source of the information – if you cannot find the author probably the information is not reliable.
5. Search for the context of this information.
6. Try to distinguish the different interest that this information may oppose or defend.
7. Make your analysis according to the specificities of each individual case.

Featuring best practices and tools to counter disinformation

There are many organisations on a national and on an international level that are working to counter disinformation. We could separate them in two main groups: fact-checking and media literacy.

Fact-checking

- **Debunk.eu** is an Estonian initiative that unites the media, the society, and the state to fight against disinformation. They have tools and powerful allies, but the most importantly, they have the knowledge and willingness to stop spreading lies and to defend the freedom of speech.

- **What The Fake** is a French civil initiative that fights against hate speech, extremism and online manipulation.

- **StopFake** is a journalists' organisation whose primary goal is to verify information, raise media literacy in Ukraine, and establish a clear red line between journalism and propaganda.

- **EU vs Disinfo** is run by the European External Action Service East Stratcom Task Force. The team was set up in 2015 to challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns.

- **Bellingcat** is an investigative journalism website that specialises in fact-checking and open-source intelligence. It publishes findings of both professional and citizen journalist investigations into war crimes, human rights abuses, and the criminal underworld.

- **CORRECT!V** is a non-profit newsroom in Germany which investigates injustice and abuses of power.

- **Faktograf.hr** evaluates the accuracy and validity of statements in the Croatian public space.

- **FaktaBaari** is a Finnish non-partisan journalistic service which uses social media to collect and distribute factual information to the audience, especially during campaign elections.

- **CrossCheck** is a collaborative journalism project composed by newsrooms in France which reports false and misleading claims present online.

- **Teyit.org** is a Turkish social impact, non-profit social enterprise investigating suspicious news.

- **The Ferret** was launched in Scotland in 2017 and it's a non-partisan fact-checking service. They are mainly focused on statements from politicians and prominent public figures but also viral claims, hoaxes and memes.

- **Pagella Politica** is an Italian project that monitors statements made by political figures in Italy in order to verify their authenticity through numbers and facts.

- **Snopes** is a US fact-checking and investigative website created in 1994. People can submit online items which they suspect to be false or incorrect.

Media literacy

- **Drog** is a multidisciplinary team of academics, journalists, and media-experts that conduct research, give talks, offer workshops and educational programmes, and create innovative tools that help you build resistance to disinformation. The Drog headquarters are based in The Hague. They increase the resistance to disinformation by letting people experience how disinformation works. Drog's clients range from army generals to a classroom of primary school children.

- **Lie Detectors** is an award-winning project aiming to turn European school children aged between 10-15 into powerful lie detectors and critical thinkers in a world increasingly populated by propaganda and distorted facts online, empowering them to understand news media, make informed choices, and resist peer pressure as they assemble their worldview.

- **EU DisinfoLab** is focused on researching and tackling sophisticated disinformation campaigns targeting the EU, its member states, core institutions and core values. The main independent European platform on disinformation assembles a community of experts to encourage collaboration, organising seminars, forums and other events. They identify trends and threats alerting civil society and researchers, and regularly propose policy recommendations.

- **Fake News Buster** is aneducational social platform that helps improve users› news literacy skills. The app provides step-by-step training with scaffolding approach as well as opportunities for students to investigate and share suspicious news articles with others on the platform. As students progress in the app, their ranking as the fake news buster will be improved.

- **Neustart** is a crime prevention and rehabilitation NGO based in Austria. It coordinates a pilot programme called "Dialogue instead of hate" ("Dialog statt Hass") which has been running since 2017. Instead of taking cases to court, prosecutors can now refer offenders to this programme, which aims to cultivate media literacy and respectful behaviour online. The programme consists of a six-month course of 15 modules, covering topics such as disinformation, human rights, the workings of Facebook›s news feed algorithm and dissecting tabloid headlines.

Governmental

- **French Centre for Media and Information Education (CLEMI)** was established in 1983 as part of the French Ministry of Education. It is the centre for liaison between teaching and information media and through training activities, it promotes different uses of new media and encourages the development of critical understanding of the media world.

- **Swedish Media Council** is a government agency which aims to protect children and youth from harmful effects of the media by empowering them to become conscious media users.

- **Flemish Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy (Mediawjis)** was created under the initiative of the Flemish Minister of Media. Their main goal is to provide citizens with the necessary tools to use media in a critical and conscious way. They organise consultation, networks and cooperation together with trainings and campaigns.

- **Mediawijzer.net** is a Dutch media literacy network whose goal is to provide the Dutch population with a framework and guidance to become media literate. The centre links activities of more than 1000 organisations and promotes cooperation between them, created by an initiative of the government.

Tools to counter disinformation

WeVerify

It works on addressing the advanced content verification challenges through a participatory verification approach, open source algorithms, low-overhead human-in-the-loop machine learning, and intuitive visualisations. Social media and web content is analysed for the detection of disinformation and is then contextualised within the broader social web and media ecosystem. Any misleading and fabricated content is subsequently exposed as such through both micro-targeted debunking and a blockchain-based public database of known fakes.

WeVerify - Wider and Enhanced Verification For You

https://weverify.eu/

GDI

The Global Disinformation Index (GDI) is an independent and neutral assessment of a domain's risk of spreading disinformation. Every domain in a country is assessed and assigned a transparency rating.

https://disinformationindex.org/

Who Targets Me

It monitors the use of political adverts on social media. Their software helps researchers and journalists understand the use of targeted social media advertising by political campaigns. They analyse the anonymous advertising data you help to collect to explain the strategies that campaigns use to win votes.

https://whotargets.me/en/

Facebook Tracking Exposed

It is a browser that helps to increase the transparency of personalisation algorithms, so that people can have a more effective control of their online Facebook experience as well as more awareness of the information to which they are exposed.

https://facebook.tracking.exposed/

AlgoTransparency

It is a project aiming to find out which information the YouTube algorithm shows to people. The program simulates the behaviour of a user who starts on one video and then follows the chain of recommended videos.

https://algotransparency.org/

Glossary terms related to research

Big Data

Definition An evolving term that describes a large volume of structured, semi-structured and unstructured data that has the potential to be mined for information and used in machine learning projects and other advanced analytics applications.
Big data is often characterised by the 3Vs: the extreme volume of data, the wide variety of data types and the velocity at which the data must be processed.

Link https://searchdatamanagement.techtarget.com/definition/big-data

Echo chambers

Definition Describes a situation where certain ideas, beliefs or data points are reinforced through repetition of a closed system that does not allow for the free movement of alternative or competing ideas or concepts. In an echo chamber, there is the implication that certain ideas or outcomes win out because of an inherent unfairness in how input is gathered.

Link https://www.techopedia.com/definition/23423/echo-chamber

Focus group

Definition A group of people who have been brought together to discuss a particular subject in order to solve a problem or suggest ideas.

Link https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/focus-group

Influencer

Definition A person or group that has the ability to influence the behaviour or opinions of others: The influencer is the individual whose effect on the purchase decision is in some way significant or authoritative."

Reference The Cambridge Business English Dictionary

Monitoring

Definition Monitoring means "to watch and check a situation carefully for a period of time in order to discover something about it.

Reference The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus

Sentiment analysis

Definition The process of computationally identifying and categorising opinions expressed in a piece of text, especially in order to determine whether the writer's attitude towards a particular topic, product, etc. is positive, negative, or neutral.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/sentiment_analysis

Storytelling

Definition A very old technique (…) and it remains as one of the most effective ways to reach someone and move them with your message. Stories can be used to shape vision, to pass on knowledge and wisdom, and to shape identity and organisational culture. Storytelling is regarded as one of the most effective and influential techniques, and has been documented extensively in numerous fields (…)

Link https://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/storytelling.php

Research

Introduction & analysis

Research is one of the building blocks of designing effective strategies and counter-strategies to pressures on freedom of expression. Research empowers an organisation, its leaders, volunteers, and community, to make informed decisions with respect to any aspect related to their work, to protect, encourage and pro-actively engage in freedom of expression. Whether of conceptual nature, argumentative, empirical or data-driven, research provides evidence to support decision-making.

Whether basic or comprehensive research, the answer will always be the purpose for it and the aims targeted by the organisation. For example, basic research would be enough to familiarise the organisation with the existing legislation on a topic related to pressures on freedom of expression. More comprehensive research would equip the organisation with thorough information on how the laws were applied in different contexts, whether within the same country, or in different countries with similar legal systems. Or, basic research can inform the organisation about primary threats to its own community. Comprehensive research can inform the organisation on the details of specific cases, the dynamics of the problems over time, or the reach and depth of the threats to different groups within the community.

Research can help make informed decisions and minimise bias

Qualitative research can help organisations get in-depth knowledge about the nature of problems faced by their community through, for example, interviews, focus groups or participatory research. Analysing these will help the organisation conceptualise the problem in coherent, systematic terms that reflect the complexity of their experience. Quantitative research can help organisations complement their qualitative knowledge of pressures on freedom of expression, by providing a bird's-eye view on the problems, understanding the frequency of cases reported, the media coverage around certain topics, the social media response to certain issues, or the evolution of sentiment around certain figures, keywords, or places. The power of analysing large amounts of information is that the results provide strong evidence to support an argument or idea, or to show the amount of distortion of perceptions.

The best approaches to complex problem solving are always mixed methods. Combining qualitative and quantitative research in order to map out the problem, its nature, extent, evolution and dynamics, as well as possible solutions, key players, main arguments and rhetoric, and responses.

One of the least explored potential of quantitative research is to test possible disruption scenarios to specific problems. For example, how to redirect the information flow from hate speech to bridging communities? One can map out the conversation space online, see who the key actors are, what they are talking about, what are the flows of information and communication and then test different what-if scenarios, devising strategies with the team for developing relevant content that will reach targeted audiences, find the influencers on specific topics, those who can provide reach and engagement, and the topics that are best able to create the desired reactions (i.e., discussion, debate, agreement, etc.).

Featuring best practices for research

Name	Target audience	Suggested uses	Short description
Public Engagement Roadmap	Civil society organisations	Effective public engagement	The Toolkit's assessment gets you started with a series of strategic activities designed to facilitate a more transparent, inclusive, and creative public engagement process.
Ask for Evidence	US citizens (can be adapted to any other location)	Holding powerful figures to account	public campaign that helps people request for themselves the evidence behind news stories, marketing claims and policies
Researchers Working with Society	US Civil society organisations (can be adapted to any other location)	Link researchers with civil society organisations and their communities; develop research together	Describes a wide range of rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community and aim to improve, understand or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges
The Moving Communities methodology	Civil society organisations	Transform ideas into a viable and effective project	Idea development using various techniques and principles from creative thinking, rapid proto-typing and agile development
A Visual Guide for Communities Working with Academics on Participatory Research Projects	Civil society organisations	Participatory research	Basic explanations of the back-ground to, and motivations for, participatory research, as well as overviews of the processes of research, the implications that communities should consider when deciding whether or not to participate in projects and the key steps participants can take to minimize risks and maximize benefits.
March for Science Top Tips: how to tell the story of your research to the public	Research oriented civil society organisations	Explain their work to the public and outline how scientific research affects lay people	Top Tips on how to tell the story of your research to the public

Main features	Author(s)	Links
Toolkit, Guide, Game, Case studies	The Engagement Lab @ Emerson College in partnership with Living Cities	https://engage.livingcities.org/
Ask for evidence (claim, where, when, who); Understand evidence (what is reliable evidence by subject)	Sense about Science	https://askforevidence.org/index
Resources Cases studies Methods Catalogue Training Planning for Impact National Contacts (US)"	Campus Engage	http://www.campusengage.ie/our-work/researchers-working-with-society/resources/
Communities, strategies, values	Platoniq and Idea Camp	http://public.platoniq.net/IDEACAMP17/Moving-communities-Canvas.pdf
This guide is for communities interested in participatory research and engagement with academics as part of participatory projects	Community professionals from Ashington- Northumberland, Brisbane - Australia, and Cork City, and academics from University of Lancaster, University College Cork and de Montfort University	http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/good-culture/participatory/a-guide-for-communities-working-with-academics-on-participatory-research-projects/
The big picture, progress, implications, visual, language	EuroScientist and SciencePOD	http://21ax0w3am0j23cz0qd1q1n3u-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FiveTipsMarchForScienceFINAL.pdf

Tools for research

Improving research capacity of CSOs

Name	Target audience	Suggested uses	Short description
			Network Analysis
NodeXL	For users with little or no programming experience to allow them to collect, analyze, and visualise a variety of networks	Monitor and analyze networks on social media	NodeXL Basic is a free and open-source network analysis and visualisation software package for Microsoft Excel
Gephi	For users with little or no programming experience to allow them to collect, analyze, and visualise a variety of networks	Analyze and visualise large, temporal, and geographic networks	Gephi is an open-source network analysis and visualisation software
			Project Management
Teamweek Zoho Reports Asana Teamwork Wrike Paymo ClickUp		Managing multiple projects at once, delegating tasks, collaborating across teams	
Researcher App	Individual researchers and organisations	Knowledge discovery	With over 13,000 journals across 10 research areas, just choose which journals you want to follow and we'll create you a personalised feed

Main features	Author(s)	Links
Tools		
Access to social media network data importers, advanced network metrics, and automation	Social Media Research Foundation	www.smrfoundation.org/nodexl/
Real-time visualisation, complex layouts, basic metrics, analyse network over time, create cartography, dynamic filtering, shortest paths analysis, random networks generator, community detection	Mathieu Bastian, Eduardo Ramos Ibañez, Mathieu Jacomy, Cezary Bartosiak, Sébastien Heymann, Julian Bilcke, Patrick McSweeney, André Panisson, Jérémy Subtil, Helder Suzuki, Martin Skurla, Antonio Patriarca	https://gephi.org/
Tools		
		https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/free-project-management-software
	Researcher	www.researcher-app.com/

Civil society organisations can use specific research tools to:

- Build their identity and storytelling capacity.
- Build the main discursive arguments to support their mission and vision.
- Communicate effectively with their community and gain sustainable public support.
- Market their organisations effectively online.
- Stay up to date with scientific research on topics of their interest.
- Monitor and signal key players and issues in their field of interest (including various threats to the organisation or its community.
- Analyse internal organisation and potential external partnerships.
- Analyse formal and informal communication flows within the organisation.
- Analyse conversation spaces.
- Analyse online and offline community networks.
- Analyse networks of relevant stakeholders, decision makers and relevant actors.
- Create effective visual content.
- Create effective plans and manage complex projects, tasks and timelines (project management tools).
- Improve their mobilisation capacity – benefit from momentum, engage many and diverse people, sustain social movements, coagulate requests into coherent demands.
- Support public policymaking in a systematic and sustainable way.
- Build strategic alliances with relevant actors.

All tools suggested here are free or open access. Most of them can be used as are. Some of them can be replicated and improved for each organisation's needs. Some solutions do not exist specifically on the market but can be built relatively easily with specific expertise.

Fact-checking and building evidence

1. Introduction & analysis

Verifiable facts and evidence are key to any public-facing statement, online or offline, and even more so in the current age of information and disinformation overflow. Being able to distinguish opinions or biased statements from fact-based affirmations makes all the difference and civil society practitioners are having an increasingly hard time doing so for all of us the avid audiences and information consumers.

Fact-checking refers to a complex practice of verifying the accuracy of information, whether in the form of verbal or written statements, datasets, news articles, images or other content shared by news outlets, politicians, researchers, NGOs, social media users and so on. It consists of research methods aimed at identifying the original source of an information, the original content and context of that information in order to be able to confidently say whether a statement/image/news is accurately depicting that original information, or not. Fact-checking is done by consulting all the available sources, allowing the 'fact-checker' to corroborate that information, and be able to prove its accuracy.

Context, tone and wording can have tremendous impact on information and data. No matter how accurate a number is, the way it is used can make a huge difference for the audiences, especially if left up to anyone's personal interpretation. From here on, a tiny manipulation can make room to disinformation, misinformation or hateful and abusive speech. For instance, if a politician claims that access to local jobs has decreased by 20% because of large numbers of incoming migrants in town, the statement needs to be verified based on accurate numbers such as available official population employment and available jobs statistics, situation of migrants and job access, among many other data sources. Such a statement can easily inflame public opinion online and offline and may, for instance, affect the migrant communities as well as the work and safety of civil society groups representing migrants.

Fact-checking therefore leads to finding and revealing evidence. Evidence is proof of something that happened, or did not happen. It is proof that data or human sources exist to confirm or deny information that is being spread or claimed. Verifying information and finding evidence is a process that all of us can and should do to a smaller or larger extent. Journalists need to fact-check their articles; NGOs need to fact-check their reports; activists need to make sure that their campaigns are based on fact-checked information; politicians need to make sure that whatever they say in campaigns is grounded in facts; social media users need to understand, verify and control the content they share online. We all know this doesn't always happen but now more than ever it's time for more citizens and civil society actors to ensure that the information they consume or choose to believe has identifiable sources, can be proven from multiple trusted sources, and is not merely intending to cause bias, confusion or offence.

2. Featuring best practices – organisations that do a good job on fact-checking

Fact-checking as a practice beyond newsrooms and major NGOs has gained considerable presence and influence around the world lately, with new civil society initiatives shaping up, as well as new resources and learning materials available to citizens and organisations.

Probably the most notable initiative globally is the establishment of the **International Fact-checking Network**, involving fact-checking organisations (from newsrooms to NGOs and other local initiatives) from all over the world. In addition to its activities of publishing research and findings relevant to the field, providing educational materials for the public and for NGOs and running an annual global conference, IFCN has recently established 2nd of April as the International Fact-Checking Day – its website is in itself a useful resource of public education materials adapted to schools and civil society campaigns worldwide. Other initiatives at the forefront of bringing fact-checking closer to NGOs, audiences and information consumers as well as working to combat disinformation in the online environment include:

- **First Draft** fighting mis- and disinformation by identifying new methods to research and uncover evidence, expose propaganda and its actors;
- **FullFact** not only fact-checking public statements in the UK but also developing automated fact-checking.

Glossary terms related to fact-checking and building evidence

Corroboration

Definition Verification and confirmation of the same piece of information from multiple sources. A common practice in journalism, fact-checking and law enforcement.

Evidence

Definition Proof of something that happened or did not happen. The process of fact-checking is meant to prove what pieces of information can be considered as evidence.

Link https://kit.exposingtheinvisible.org/investigation-concepts.html

Fact-checking (verification)

Definition The process of verifying information accuracy and discovering its original source, contents, author, meaning and context in which it was created.

Fact-checker

Definition Person/group/organization conducting fact-checking.

Metadata

Definition Information that describes properties of a file such as an image, a document, a sound recording, a map – the date the image was taken, the location and device it was taken on.

Original source (of information)

Definition The creator of a piece of data or information; can be an individual, a group, a public institution, an NGO etc.

Tools for fact-checking and building evidence

Verification Handbook A resource for journalists, aid providers, citizen journalists, activists and anyone interested to verify information online; with step-by-step guidelines how to deal with user-generated content during emergencies. http://verificationhandbook.com/

Exposing the Invisible – The Kit A collaborative, self-learning resource that makes investigative techniques used by experienced investigators more accessible for own investigations without losing sight of ethical or safety considerations. https://kit.exposingtheinvisible.org/

First Draft - Verification curriculum Online courses to teach how to verify eyewitness media, fabricated websites, visual memes, and manipulated videos. Take a five-unit course as a journalist, or a one-hour version for the general public.
https://firstdraftnews.org/en/education/learn/

The Full Fact Toolkit Simple practical tools anyone can use to identify misinformation.
https://fullfact.org/toolkit

A Field Guide to Fake News and Other Information Disorders It explores digital methods to study false viral news, political memes, trolling practices and their social life online.
https://fakenews.publicdatalab.org

Six fake news techniques and simple tools to vet them Exposes information fraud scenarios we encounter on common basis, and explores techniques and tools to debunk misinformation attempts. https://gijn.org/six-fake-news-techniques-and-simple-tools-to-vet-them

Jeffrey's Image Metadata Viewer Online image metadata viewer to verify an image location, time stamp, device it was taken on etc. Verify if an image was taken when and where it's being claimed. Image metadata can be easily removed or modified so always double-check this information in multiple places! http://exif.regex.info/exif.cgi

ExifTool A downloadable tool read, verify, write and change metadata from images.
www.sno.phy.queensu.ca/~phil/exiftool/

TinEye Allows search by image and enables you to find where that image appears online. Useful to verify the source, spread and potential manipulation of images. www.tineye.com

Reveal Image Verification Assistant Verify images online, image manipulation detection algorithms plus metadata analysis, GPS Geolocation, EXIF Thumbnail extraction and integration with Google reverse image search. http://reveal-mklab.iti.gr/reveal/index.html

Google Image Search Search a picture to find related images from the web; verifying if and where that image has been used previously and if it has been taken out of context.
https://images.google.com

Amnesty International You Tube Data Viewer Tool to help human rights researchers and others with the process of video verification. https://citizenevidence.amnestyusa.org

Social Media & IT Skills

Introduction & analysis

Social media and IT skills are crucial parts of the life cycle of an organisation. Given that important communication processes are happening in the online world, civil society organisations that want to remain relevant need social media presence and understanding, as well as basic skills and abilities around collecting, analysing, visualising and interpreting digital data in order to thrive.

Pressures on freedom of expression are manifestly distinct in the online compared to offline contexts. From the temporality of expression, to the ease and depth of reach, and from anonymity to group and influencer effects, these concepts have various implications for the organisations having to deal with them.

When organisations try to harness conversations that protect freedom of expression without infringing on people's privacy, integrity or identity, they encounter both opportunities for engagement, as well as significant limitations. Knowing how to manage communication, engagement, or identity crises online becomes then not only desirable, but also necessary.

The following sections list tools that help organisations use social media and IT skills to contain, redirect, and harness toxic discourse online, as well as to inform, engage and build communities, fruitful discussions, and reliable source of knowledge.

Whether with the help of a specialised team in charge of the online presence of the organisation, or relying on a single person to recurrently post, monitor and research social media and digital data repositories, organisations have the capacity to systematically and sustainably counter pressures to freedom of expression using already existing tools and examples of good practices, or by adapting strategies, tools and techniques tailored to their own needs to develop counter-narratives, promote non-discrimination, tolerance and respect, and through awareness-raising activities.

Civil society organisations are not alone in this matter. Governments, corporations and international organisations, as well as citizen initiatives work continuously to help build more ethical, positive and constructive environments in the online world.

How can civil society use IT skills to counter pressures on freedom of expression?

- Communicate directly and instantly to large audiences.
- Collect, analyse, and understand patterns in big data.
- Open direct communication and feedback channels with constituents, community, groups and skeptics.
- Respond quickly to reactions online and de-escalate attacks.
- Build diverse communities around issues of interest.
- Manage flows of information reaching their communities.
- Manage communication, identity or issue crises online.
- Inform communities using reliable data, evidence and knowledge.
- Analyse and understand their own digital data and other relevant digital data.
- Make informed decisions about action strategies, community building, engagement, organisation's identity, mission and vision.
- Design powerful and targeted storytelling and counter-narrative strategies.
- Design and implement complex coordinated campaigns across various platforms.
- Build knowledge management capacity for complex digital processes.

Glossary terms related to Social Media and IT Skills

Digital (data)

Definition Involving or relating to the use of computer technology.normal operations.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/digital

Privacy

Definition A state in which one is not observed or disturbed by other people.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/privacy

Toxic (discourse online)

Definition Poisonous, malignant – the "Year in a Word 2018".

Link www.ft.com/content/cbb4958e-f706-11e8-af46-2022a0b02a6c

To debunk

Definition To expose the falseness or hollowness of (an idea or belief).

Link www.debunk.eu

Propaganda

Definition Dissemination of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.

Link www.debunk.eu

Black propaganda

Definition Refers to messages of an unknown source, often based on lies fabrications.

Link www.debunk.eu

Hate propaganda

Definition Hate propaganda is advocating or promoting genocide against any identifiable group.

Link http://queensu.ca/humanrights/initiatives/end-hate-project/what-hate/what-hate-propaganda

Featuring best practices everyone should know

Name	Target audience	Suggested uses	Short description
			Counter-strategies
Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online	Users, civil society organisations, national authorities	Notifying illegal hate speech	Document to promote and facilitate freedom of expression throughout the online world
No Hate Speech Youth Campaign Examples	Organisations involved with young people	Street actions, festivals, games, videos and posters	Creative ways young people counter hate speech
SELMA Hacking Hate	Teachers and other professionals working with children and young people	Flexible and hands-on activities; one-off sessions to trigger immediate engagement and effect	SELMA (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness) is a two-year project co-funded by the European Commission1 which aims to tackle the problem of online hate speech by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance, and respect.
ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide	General users	Bring problems to the attention of big companies	Because of the enormous volume of content, companies typically rely on users like you to bring problems to their attention.
The Counter-narrative Handbook	Anyone looking to proactively respond to extremist propaganda with counter-narrative campaigns	Amplify their counter-narrative messages through training, networking and campaign support	A beginner's guide for those with little or no previous experience of counter-narrative campaigning
The Counter-narrative Toolkit	Anyone looking to proactively respond to extremist propaganda with counter-narrative campaigns	Plan a campaign, create content, promote a campaign	Resources to create & manage campaigns to counter extremist narratives
Facebook Community Standards	General users	Removing content that encourages real-world harm; keeping the platform safe and respectful	Community Standards that outline what is and is not allowed on Facebook
Bookmarks Flipbook – A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education	Schools, youth centers, youth organisations	Reduce the acceptance of hate speech online	The activities have been designed to address the underlying causes of hate speech.
Twitter – Report abusive behavior	General users	Provide an environment where people can feel free to express themselves	If abusive behavior happens, we want to make it easy for people to report it to us

Main features	Author(s)	Links
Initiatives		
Processes to review and remove illegal hate speech; educate and raise awareness with their users; improving the speed and effectiveness of communication between authorities; strengthen partnerships with CSOs; provide high quality notices; provide regular training to their staff	European Commission, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube	https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/countering-illegal-hate-s%20peech-online-2019-feb-04_en
Illustrate practices in different contexts, combining different methods and for addressing different types of hate speech	Different European organisations	www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/campaign-examples1
Over 100 easy-to-access and customisable resources; wealth of flexible and hands-on activities to trigger immediate engagement and effect; clear guidance on how to build more comprehensive and sustained pathways of change.	European Schoolnet; For Adolescent Health; South West Grid for Learning; The Diana Award; Media Authority for Rhineland-Palatinate; Centre for Digital Youth Care	https://hackinghate.eu/
Click on the company or product name below to quickly access its policies and a link to make your complaint heard	ADL Fighting Hate for Good	www.adl.org/adl-cyber-safety-action-guide
Main stages of creating, launching and evaluating an effective counter-narrative campaign	Henry Tuck, Tanya Silverman (Institute for Strategic Dialogue)	www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf
Plan a campaign, create content, promote a campaign	Institute for Strategic Dialogue	www.counternarratives.org/html/home
Violence and criminal behavior; Safety; Objectionable content; Integrity and authenticity; Respecting intellectual property; Content-related requests	Facebook	www.facebook.com/communitystandards/
Human Rights, Freedom of expression, Racism and discrimination, Cyberbullying, Private life and safety, Internet literacy, Campaigning strategies, democracy and participation	Council of Europe Youth Department	www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-flipbook
Security and hacked accounts; Privacy; Spam and fake accounts; Sensitive content; Abuse	Twitter	https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/report-abusive-behavior

Tools to improve social media and IT skill capacity of CSOs

Name	Target audience	Suggested uses	Short description
Social Media			
TweetDeck Twitter Analytics Twitter Search Google Alerts Google Trends Social-Searcher TweetReach Followerwonk SumAll Mentionmapp Lithium (formerly Klout) Hootsuite Boardreader BuzzSumo Google Alerts Native Analytics Tools HubSpot Zuum Social Likealyzer Crowdfire App Mention Mapp Shared Count Who.Unfollowed.Me Ninjalitics	Organisations	- monitor presence, activity, engagement, content, trends - sentiment analysis - find influencers and popular hashtags and keywords - community detection	Free social media monitoring tools
Data Visualisation			
Datawrapper	Organisations	Enrich your stories with charts, maps and tables	Online data-visualisation tool for making interactive charts
Tableau Public	General users, organisations	Analyze, visualize, map digital data	Tableau democratises visualisation in an elegantly simple and intuitive tool
Google Fusion Tables	General users, organisations	Analyze, visualize, map digital data	Google Fusion tables is an incredible tool for data analysis, large data-set visualisation, and mapping
Infogram	General users, organisations	Infographics, reports, slides, dashboards, maps, social media visuals	Infogram is an intuitive visualisation tool that empowers people and teams to create beautiful content
Data Extraction			
Octoparse	General users, organisations	Automatic data extraction from any web page	Web scraping without coding
ParseHub	General users, organisations	Automatic data extraction from any web page	Web scraping without coding
Scraper	Intermediate to advanced users who are comfortable with XPath	Data mining for online research, export into spreadsheet	Scraper is a Chrome extension with limited data extraction features but it's helpful for making online research, and exporting data to Google Spreadsheets

All tools suggested here are free or open access. Most of them can be used as they are. Some of them can be replicated and improved for each organisation's needs. Some solutions do not exist specifically on the market but can be built relatively easily with specific expertise.

Main features	Author(s)	Links
Monitoring Tools		
Real time monitoring, analysis, search, reach, exposure; visualisation; sentiment analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.)	Various providers	https://www.dreamgrow.com/69-free-social-media-monitoring-tools/ http://oursocialtimes.com/10-best-free-social-media-monitoring-tools/
Tools		
Nineteen chart types; three interactive map types; 1000 administrative regions	Datawrapper	www.datawrapper.de
Interactive dashboards; Access and combine disparate data without writing code; trend analyses, regressions, and correlations; mapping for more than 50 countries worldwide; data collaboration; Big data, live or in-memory; design, customize, and publish optimized dashboards for desktop, tablet, and phone	Tableau	www.tableau.com/
Big data; dynamic analysis and visualisation; mapping	Google	https://support.google.com/fusiontables/answer/2571232
Viewer demographics, average on-screen rate, and how many people shared your content, track of how many people hovered over your tooltips, or clicked on your tabs and legends, create individual tracking links	Infogram	https://infogram.com/
Tools		
Point and click interface, any website	Octoparse	https://www.octoparse.com/
Point and click interface, any website	ParseHub	www.parsehub.com/
Works right in your browser and auto-generates smaller XPaths for defining URLs to crawl		https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/-scraper/mbigbapnjcgaffohmbkdlecaccepngjd

Networking

Facing pressures related to one's freedom of speech comes often with high psychological distress. It is therefore of utmost importance to strengthen one's access to networking and peer-support groups, which can make a significant difference when under pressure.

More broadly, networking implies an actively inclusive and collaborative behavior among organisations, groups of people or individuals with an aim to achieve a certain goal, in this sense – prevent and suppress hate speech or provide support networks and joint counteractions.

From an organisational perspective, networks are also of great importance due to the exchange of good practices, knowledge and experience among members, as well as dissemination of their outcomes and results to other organisations and networks.

Networks of civil society organisations and/or individual activists could enable citizens to amplify their voices and influence the public space, change public opinion or/and impact public policies, actively engage into the democratic procedures, and lead toward social changes, including tackling pressures on freedom of speech. Due to the social and political context characterised by increasing challenges to freedom of expression, as well as shared aims and objectives among organisations and individuals, NGOs with similar or same values and goals organise into networks.

Networking through activities

In order to prevent, counteract, or suppress disinformation, hate speech, and fake news, networking must be based on one or more common activities:

- Hate speech monitoring (in the online and / or offline world),
- Reporting hate speech cases (in the online and / or offline world),
- Support for hate speech victims (in the online and / or offline world),
- Educational activities (in the online and / or offline world),
- Research,
- Database creation,
- Advocacy and public campaigns.

Networks usually do not deal with just one activity alone, so there is overlapping action. The results are usually the sum of the united and shared work through several lines of action, advocacy and campaigning.

Monitoring and reporting of hate speech are often the backbone of many networks and consortiums. They often develop their own IT tools to monitor and report hate speech (and hate crimes) on the Internet. Building a network of diverse organisations, individual activists and institutions gives us a broader and more effective approach to assist victims (professional assistance including psychological counselling, social counselling, legal help, restorative programs). One of the outcomes of focus groups, who were conducted during this project, was that media reporting should be focused on the perpetrators, not on the victims. In this way, secondary victimisation would be avoided, as well as public pressure on the victim. Information and awareness raising campaigns to spread information about support services and increase awareness about available assistance, support and legal resources is most commonly related to this activity.

Creating an educational platform and a coalition that could provide and carry out a public awareness campaign, especially when it comes to media literacy, often is a common theme or base on which the network of NGOs relies. Advocating the introduction of media literacy in the curricula is a common motive for mobilising civil society. Numerous networks are being organised to educate professionals from the system who are working or could work with the victims - police, justice, medical and education workers. Also, networks often educate media workers and editors to avoid media spreading hate speech or reporting fake news. For this type of activity different kinds of software, online programs and e-learning sites are most characteristic.

Journalists and media editors could be both - perpetrators and victims. They could spread the hate speech and fake news on the one hand, but on the other hand they could be victims of hate speech and fake news. In order to raise the quality of media reporting, but also respect the ethical principles of the profession, journalists and editors could network to create guidelines and professional reporting standards on a specific topic. Such a network could carry out educational activities with the aim of transferring knowledge within the consortium, but also creating guidelines for other media workers on the topics of how to report on minorities and vulnerable groups in society. One way of organising is also forming or joining organisations such as trade unions or strengthening so-called soft bodies. During our research, one of the results was that media workers think that it is of the great importance to empower the soft bodies around EU, so they could play an active role in promoting good practice in journalism.

What civil society organisation could do in general?

Several common actions are likely among organisations that face pressures related to their freedom of expression.

Some such actions are:

- Organise and act strategically together,
- Share good practices, knowledge, and experience,
- Support each other in times of crisis,
- Learn from each other,
- Create together,
- Connect resources,
- Advocate for the common goal,
- Be brave and come out with an innovative and progressive solutions,
- Build solidarity.

Networks recommendation

No Hate Speech Movement is a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department. The main goal of the campaign is to mobilise young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. They use social media for activists to connect and share their concerns and experiences online.

www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign

Scan project (sCAN) aims at gathering expertise, tools, methodology and knowledge on cyber hate and developing practices for identifying, analysing, reporting and counteracting online hate speech. It strives to strengthen the initiatives developed by the civil society and to develop cross-European capacity by providing e-learning courses for cyber-activists, moderators and tutors through the Facing Facts Online platform: www.facingfactsonline.eu

http://scan-project.eu

KlickSafe is European Commission's awareness-raising campaign which aims to promote media literacy in the use of the Internet and new media. Fields of action: focusing on preventive measures against illegal, undesirable, or detrimental content (hotline for reporting illegal content and counselling centre for children, parents and teachers is available), emphasising the importance of a safe media environment and networking with partners and stakeholders in order to raise public awareness about hate speech in media space.

www.klicksafe.de

International Fact Checker Network is a unit of the Poynter Institute which brings together fact-checkers from all over the world. It promotes best practices and exchanges in the media field. Among other tasks, it monitors trends and policy-making, promotes standards through the fact-checkers' code of principles, provides trainings and funds fellowships.

www.poynter.org/ifcn

ECRI is a pan-European commission of the Council of Europe, a unique human rights monitoring body specialised in questions relating to the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance in Europe. It works with civil society and equality bodies, in 2019 focusing on three main themes: effective equality and access to rights, hate speech and hate-motivated violence, and integration and inclusion.

www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance

European Network Against Racism ENAR is an anti-racism network that combines advocacy for racial equality and facilitating cooperation among civil society anti-racism actors in Europe. By monitoring and collecting data about equality they are providing powerful tools against discrimination which can be used in many civil society organisations whose aim is to end racism.

www.enar-eu.org

Safety of data and communications

1. Introduction & analysis

Most civil society actors expose themselves to risks by the very nature of the work they do, and the public presence and visibility that their activities require. Journalists, activists, human rights defenders, researchers, community organisers and citizen investigators are among those paying a high price for their commitment to promote freedom of expression and diversity or expose wrongdoing in their societies. Digital and physical threats and attacks to such actors are common, even more so in contexts where there is little to no respect for democratic principles or where far-right attitudes and movements have been gaining influence.

While increased access to online tools and channels for information and dissemination have improved the strength and outreach of civil society actors, it has made them exponentially more vulnerable, too. From online harassment and trolling to surveillance, hacking of devices, communications and data or distributed denial-of-service (DdoS) attacks on servers, the volume and diversity of digital threats can be overwhelming to some. Any of these, and other, situations can have considerable impact on freedom of expression as they tend to intimidate, block, exhaust resources, harm reputation or even take down an initiative. Oftentimes, the challenge stands in first figuring out what was affected and to what extent – whether it's about devices, data, platforms, trust, public image – and only then finding ways to address it, assessing the risks of it happening again and identifying mechanisms to avoid and mitigate such risks. It's worth keeping in mind that one is only as strong as the weakest link in their team or network – a perfectly valid assessment for digital and physical safety where the most common answer a safety expert would provide starts with "it depends...".

In fact, risk and weakness assessment and anticipated solutions to mitigate problems are the essential steps that any civil society actor (organisation, informal group or individual) should prioritise. This assessment is more effective if done in partnership with safety and security experts or with more experienced people and groups or simply by investing time in researching and understanding one's environment, the factors and actors that influence it and any potential 'adversaries' – be they institutions, individuals, laws, beliefs, etc. For instance, an anti-corruption group campaigning for transparency of local budgets in what they assess as being a highly corrupt society will need to face politicians and their supporters, businesses, public institutions, think tanks and many others – both online and offline. On the other hand, they will need to make sure that themselves, the research they do, the data they collect and the human sources they communicate with stay safe at all times. This involves considerable effort to safeguard not only devices, communication and information but also physical presence, movements and events. From setting up strong passwords to devices and using encrypted call and messaging apps to cautiously selecting locations for meetings with stakeholders, such a group will benefit a lot from anticipation and risk assessment.

The psychological side of safety and its associated risks must not be overlooked at any time. Thinking of safety from a holistic approach (inner, outer, digital, physical, wellbeing etc.) is crucial for civil society actors in order to avoid loss of confidence and motivation in fulfilling their mission.

Tools for safety of data and communications

TOR browser A tool for safe private Internet browsing.
www.torproject.org/download

DuckDuckGo A privacy-enhancing search engine that doesn't track users' searches.
https://disinformationindex.org/

Searx Privacy-respecting search engine, open source.
https://searx.me

Https everywhere Firefox, Chrome, and Opera extension that encrypts your communications with many major websites, making your browsing more secure.
www.eff.org/https-everywhere

PrivacyBadger Browser add-on that blocks invisible trackers you interact with on the web.
www.eff.org/privacybadger

Panopticlick Online platform that shows you how traceable your browser is and where are your vulnerabilities, so you can take better safety measures.
https://panopticlick.eff.org

Have I Been Pwned A website and database thatshows you if your email and other password-protected services have been hacked and where the vulnerabilities are.
https://haveibeenpwned.com

GnuPG Software that allows you to encrypt and sign your data and communications.
www.gnupg.org

KeepasXC Software enabling secure password storage.
https://keepassxc.org

Signal Encrypted communication app for phone and desktop.
https://signal.org

Wire Encrypted communication app for mobile and desktop.
https://wire.com/en

Data Detox Kit Online resource and guide that helps you clean your online traces and be more aware about your digital life practices.
https://datadetoxkit.org/en/detox

Holistic Security A manual about physical and digital security and wellbeing for civil society actors working under pressure.
https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org

VeraCrypt Free open source disk encryption software for Windows, Mac OSX and Linux. Author: IDRIX.
www.veracrypt.fr/en/Downloads.html

XYZ Practical tools, advice and shared expertise how to navigate digital security and privacy from a gender perspective. It includes resources related to tackling online harassment and hate speech.
https://xyz.informationactivism.org/en

Digital Safety Kit for Journalists Safety advice and tips for journalists.
https://cpj.org/2019/07/digital-safety-kit-journalists.php

Digital safety: Protecting against online harassment Safety tips and guidelines on how to protect yourself and how to react to online harassment.
https://cpj.org/2018/11/digital-safety-protecting-against-online-harassmen.php

Security Risk Management: a basic guide for smaller NGOs Simple, easy-to-use security resource to help smaller NGOs demystify security risk management.
www.eisf.eu/

Security in a Box For civil society organizations, activists, journalists, general public, multiple language guides and recommendations on tools and best practices to keep you safe online. Author: Tactical Tech.
https://securityinabox.org/en/

Security Checklist An open source checklist of resources designed to improve your online privacy and security. Authors: Brian Lovin, Marshall Bock.
https://securitycheckli.st

Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk A collection of tactics and best practices for human rights defenders and NGOs, resulted from hundreds of human rights defenders from over 50 countries who have attended Front Line Defenders workshops on security and protection..
www.frontlinedefenders.org

2. Featuring best practices

Numerous organisations and resources are available to address the digital and physical risks faced by civil society actors in various environments, from journalists and activists operating in conflict areas or oppressive regimes to human rights defenders and advocacy groups struggling to counteract the shrinking civic spaces both online and offline.

Organisations such as the **Committee to Protect Journalists - CPJ**, **Front Line Defenders**, **IFEX – formerly called International Freedom of Expression Exchange** or the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation - UNESCO** are some of the many notable organisations providing valuable knowledge resources, guides, tutorials, training and direct support to journalists, human rights defenders, activists and other members of civil society facing challenges that affect their freedom of expression and safety at all levels.

In terms of digital challenges and mitigations, the **Electronic Frontier Foundation** is a leading presence in the area of awareness raising and resource development to address the digital safety and privacy challenges faced by civil society and freedom of expression overall. In addition, **Tactical Tech** is an NGO that has been investigating the interaction between technology and society for over 15 years, training activists and creating information resources to increase awareness of safety risks and enhance the safety of civil society actors worldwide.

These are by no means the only organisations and resources available but they provide a strong starting point for any civil society actor willing to invest in their safety awareness and skills. The list is much longer, with more useful organisations and resources being listed by networks like **ACOS Alliance – A Culture of Safety** and the **Global Investigative Journalism Network – GIJN**.

Glossary terms related to safety of data and communication

Denial-of-service attack

Definition A malicious attempt to overwhelm a web property with traffic in order to disrupt its normal operations

Link www.cloudflare.com/learning/ddos/glossary/denial-of-service

Hacker

Definition A person who uses computers to gain unauthorised access to data.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/hacker

Encryption

Definition The process of converting information or data into a code, especially to prevent unauthorised access.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/encryption

Malware

Definition Short for "malicious software," malware refers to software programs designed to damage or do other unwanted actions on a computer system. Common examples of malware include viruses, worms, trojan horses, and spyware.

Link https://pc.net/glossary/definition/malware

Offline (communication)

Definition Offline refers to a device not connected to a network and additionally refers to the "real world" outside of the internet.

Link www.techopedia.com/definition/657/offline

Phishing

Definition The fraudulent practice of sending emails purporting to be from reputable companies in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/phishing

To counteract

Definition Act against (something) in order to reduce its force or neutralise it.

Link www.lexico.com/en/definition/counteract

Conclusion: Recommendations for European policymakers

Based on the research conducted in the framework of the FreeEx Project, freedom of expression is under threat in the entire European Union. At the same time, hate speech is becoming an instrument for putting additional pressures on those standing up for constitutional freedoms and human rights.

We find that much can be done at individual and organisational levels, however, without a strong commitment and intervention of the European Union institutions, there is little chance for preserving or expanding the freedom of expression for civil society practitioners and journalists.

The Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech provides a very good starting framework for a way forward and we believe that its suggestions should be further followed up and acted upon. In particular, we endorse the commitment of "The IT Companies to educate and raise awareness with their users about the types of content not permitted under their rules and community guidelines."

This toolkit is meant to be a supportive of those how are facing limitations to their freedom of expression. At the same time, having gathered insights about both experiences and reactions of civil society practitioners and journalists to limitations to their freedom of expression we put forward the following recommendations for EU Member States and European institutions.

We do believe that a better synergy between stakeholders (i.e., civil society, European institutions, academic institutions, and companies) must be built to increase awareness rising efforts against hate speech and disinformation.

As hate speech could lead to hate crime, recommendations for EU member states and EU institutions are:

- Improve the recording system of hate speech and hate crime.
- Systematically train law enforcement and legal professionals.
- Educate the general public about hate speech and its consequences.
- Protect journalists and encourage the media to report fairly and impartially.
- Support and develop educational initiatives that promote tolerance and inclusion.
- Condemn every hate speech act as disrespecting a European value and, as such, to qualify it as an unacceptable practice in our society.

Further recommendations:

- Monitor implementation of legal frameworks protecting the freedom of expression, as well as other freedoms put forward by the EU treaties.
- Develop resources that can support Member States in de facto ensuring freedom of expression.
- Recognise the limited funding available for watchdog and human rights organisations, including organisations working on freedom of expression, and develop appropriate funding mechanisms.
- Enable rankings of media outlets in accordance with their editorial practices.
- Find ways to address self-censorship, enable funding for journalists and civil society leaders as well as funding that ensures spaces where diverse opinions can be expressed without being marginalised.
- Fund in-depth research on cultural frames and practices that inherently maintain and promote behaviors and attitudes that limit freedom of expression.
- Scale up substantively media literacy (including visual media literacy) efforts and education on values and skills related to freedom of expression for all age groups.

About us

The FreeEx-project partnership brought together organisations and institutions:

The World of NGOs (project coordinator)

The Austrian NGO was founded in 1997, engaging in information and networking of civil society, actively supporting the development of European integration issues focusing on challenges society is facing today. On the national level the association serves as an adviser in the field of civic education of democratic citizenship, citizens' participation in policy shaping, promoting gender equality and volunteering.

www.ngo.at

The Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna

The Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna conducts research in all core areas of political science, develops innovative and problem-oriented research areas and offers many opportunities for specialised study. The staff examine the forms and functional transformation of governance, democracy and solidarity in various policy areas, geographic regions and political spaces.

https://politikwissenschaft.univie.ac.at/en

The Făgăraș Research Institute

The Făgăraș Research Institute strives to develop a knowledge and research infrastructure in its home region and to connect the area to national and global knowledge networks. The Institute is located in the region of Țara Făgărașului/Romania, bringing together researchers, scholars and practitioners from over ten countries. Relying on interdisciplinary research, FRI addresses topics such as migration and diaspora, community development and philanthropy, education, regional history, international relations and development, civil society and human rights, integrity, health, and technology.

www.icf-fri.org

Association Sustainability of progressive and open communication "SPOC"

SPOC was founded in 2011 in Sofia with the purpose of assisting the development of social and civil abilities: to consolidate European values in stimulating youth initiatives and sustainable development of the society; to co-operate with institutions and central and local authorities; to develop and test innovative methodologies and approaches, directed towards improvement of the training process and functioning of the civil society; to fight stigmas in the society; to foster media pluralism and freedom of expression.

http://spoc-s.com/en

B.a.B.e. Be active. Be emancipated

B.a.B.e. is a strategic lobbying and advocacy NGO in Zagreb, founded in 1994, working for the affirmation of women's human rights, gender equality and human rights in general. In a national context, B.a.B.e. brings gender issues and women's human rights in political discourse. Nowadays, B.a.B.e. is focused on prevention and suppression of all forms of gender-based violence, as well as advocacy and monitoring of legislative procedures and public policies, also operating a Safe House for victims of domestic violence.

http://babe.hr

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