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...uniting, not dividing, always working as one...¹

How do things stand with hate speech in Poland today? First and foremost, the world is full of it – both offline and online. . This hate offends us, humiliates us and hurts us. It is an affront to human dignity. It's a violation of human rights. Does its omnipresence actually bother the men and women living in Poland? For some, it is definitely an issue. Especially for those people who have experienced it first-hand. Unfortunately, the majority just doesn't seem to care. They believe that this does not concern them at all. But does one have to become a victim of hate in order to understand how destructive it is to both individuals and to society? We think that this is not the case...

The mission of the Humanity in Action Poland Foundation is to educate young people about human rights, to develop their competences to act against human rights violations as well as to develop networks which connect young people, allowing them to inspire, support and cooperate with one another. Taking these goals into account, we wanted to draw the attention of young people to the issue of hate speech and to encourage them to join together and take a stand against this particular challenge. With this in mind, the Humanity in Action Poland Foundation has initiated and implemented two projects: "Antivirus Program: No to Hate Speech On The Internet!" and "Start-up! Activities and Ideas Labs Against Hate Speech", taking advantage of the support offered within the Citizens for Democracy programme, financed out of EEA grants. Within the framework of those initiatives, a series of different actions have been devised; in this article, we focus on three projects which combine the key aspects of human rights education: combining theory with practice, historical education with human rights education and knowledge transmission with skill development and networking, encouraging young people to get involved in actions against human rights violations and designing unconventional and innovative measures against prejudice and discrimination.

Our efforts focus on education; for this reason, we have created the Academy of Human Rights and Civic Activism – a project which has commenced back in 2006. From 2014

¹ Taken from the chorus of an anti-hate song created by the participants of the Inter@ction Zone Congress.

onwards, the name that we apply to the programmes in question is “Ideas Incubator. Transformation, Democracy and Human Rights”, with the titular “incubator” allowing us to deepen our understanding of hate speech as a phenomenon as well as to design measures that we can use against it. When devising this new formula, we made the assumption that, because of the abundance of messages that contain hate speech, each one of us may – and should – react against this violation of human rights in his or her own way. Hate speech should never be allowed to remain unchallenged, since when it does, people around us will get the impression that we acquiesce in the emergence of what may, in the future, actually become a norm. Because of this, our Incubator teaches young activists and leaders how to create and conduct campaigns against hate speech in social media, which are aimed primarily at their peers. These programmes are conducted annually in international groups, allowing experiences gathered in participants’ home countries such as Poland, Ukraine, Germany and the United States to be compared. The campaigns themselves are designed for both Polish and English-speaking audiences (previous Ideas Incubator campaigns: [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#)). Insofar as the results of our actions are concerned, during the last three years we have prepared and implemented a total of 24 social campaign concepts directed against hate speech and discrimination in social media, which have reached approximately 450 thousand people. These campaigns involved the creation of online videos and memes as well as real-life events such as urban actions or happenings.

Having gathered a wealth of experience in the course of the previous editions of our Ideas Incubator, we would now like to expand the group of people who would be willing to learn about hate speech and the challenges which this type of human rights violation presents and who would be ready to work with us on the strategies for a joint response to this problem. The Inter@ction Zone Congress which took place on 7-9.11.2014 – the first nationwide meeting of about 200 activists – proved to be an excellent opportunity. The aim of the Congress has been to allow young people to expand their knowledge and skills in the field of counteracting hate speech and to encourage them to make new contacts with other people at their age as well as with experienced activists and experts who remain involved with the issues in question.

Thanks to the “Inter@ction Zone” Congress it was possible to release the online anti-hate “vaccines”:

- 1 recorded song featuring KAEN, a renowned Polish hip-hop artist;
- 1 scenario for reacting to hate speech in the form of a happening;
- 4 scenarios for educational events;
- 4 scenarios for reacting to hate speech using drama techniques;

- 6 ideas for social campaigns;
- 20 ideas for anti-hate graphics to be printed on bags.

In addition, we have also successfully campaigned for the removal of 5 Facebook sites which promoted hate speech and notified 1700 incidents which involved hate speech to website administrators and moderators.

The Congress also made it possible to create new networks of regional cyber-activists (e.g. „Hate – I can feel it too”) as well as to initiate various off-line educational programmes. The project was implemented in cooperation with the “Polis” Association of Young Journalists and the Coalition Against Hate Speech. For more information please go to: <http://uprzedzuprzedzenia.org/kongres-strefa-interkcji/>

The formation of the Congress led to the HIA Foundation being awarded the prestigious Intercultural Prize by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in recognition of the best and most innovative practices and projects which support the broadly understood intercultural dialogue both in the given country and on an international scale. The project was selected from among a few hundred initiatives in 31 countries. The Humanity in Action Poland Foundation was the only Polish organisation which was awarded one of the five prizes within the “Current Events” category.

In addition to education-oriented initiatives, we also focus on well-planned, grass-roots activities conducted in response to local needs. During our “Start-up! Activities and Ideas Labs Against Hate Speech” project, we have devised a formula of social start-ups in each of the 16 provinces of the Republic of Poland in which young people were able to work on ideas for actions intended to react to hate and counteract it in an innovative fashion. The local “Ideas Start-ups” were not a new organisation, but a place for the implementation of actions and a space for the development of various initiatives in the field of human rights and multiculturalism, allowing us to face the social challenges related to the (non-) compliance with the applicable standards in this regard, in particular insofar as hate speech is concerned. The tailor-made ideas for action were triggered by a diagnosis of local problems and pertained specifically to the crucial issues affecting the given community. This approach made it possible to introduce the wider public to the subject of counteracting hate speech, including both on the domestic, regional and local level. In addition, to focusing on action (the “action” module), the project also incorporated two additional modules: “education” and “inspiration”. Within the framework of the “EDUCATION” module, the project participants were able to expand their knowledge on counteracting discrimination and hate speech in the course of both online and off-line training courses, which allowed them to make a more precise diagnosis of local issues and to create the concepts for local start-ups. The

“ACTION” module involved the implementation of the 17 most interesting ideas selected by way of a competition. Within the framework of the “INSPIRATION” module, we have attempted to get as many young people as possible involved in the actions against hate speech on a local level, using innovations and state-of-the-art technologies such as micro-campaigns, applications, crowdsourcing etc. Another source of our inspiration was the platform for the exchange of experiences and the meetings held in the course of two regional conferences in Białystok and Poznań. The implementation of this project allowed us to establish a nationwide network of local leaders, supporting each other in making it “trendy” to fight against hate speech. Insofar as the effects of our start-ups are concerned, one needs to mention, first and foremost, that this initiative allowed us to implement the following projects:

- the Hate_ALERT plugin for Google Chrome which makes it easier to report instances of online hate speech in an efficient manner;
- the STAND UP FOR YOURSELF online platform containing the stories of people who were able to get to grips with their diverse backgrounds by openly talking to other people about them and have thus turned them into an advantage;
- the OUR VOICE project, designed to speak on behalf of young women exposed to discriminatory practices. The meetings with the “Mega Babki” (“Mega Girls”) group and our critical thinking workshops allowed the participating women to contribute to the creation of a compendium of knowledge for the victims of violence;
- the model for cooperation between antagonistic sports clubs (within the framework of the “SPORT START, HATE STOP” programme) designed to change the way in which teams, spectators and sport itself are perceived as well as to teach us how to oppose hate speech, promote language devoid of hate and create a positive image of sportsmen and fans alike. Specifically, the activities in question were intended to overcome our indifference to hostility, offensive graffiti and unsportsmanlike conduct. Once the project was complete, four of our start-ups have remained active, continuing their struggle against hate speech.

The project was implemented in partnership with the “Polis” Association of Young Journalists and in cooperation with the Coalition Against Hate Speech. The project was implemented within the framework of the Citizens for Democracy programme, financed from EEA grants. For more information please go to: www.uprzeczupzedzenia.org/re-akcje-na-hejt/start-up-laboratoria-akcji-i-idei-przeciwmowie-nienawisci/.

The HIA Poland educational materials

There are people who believe that pretty much everything had already been said and done, in particular where education is concerned, which means that, in many cases, the tried and tested – albeit rather clichéd – solutions simply cannot be avoided. And yet one is left to wonder whether we can still somehow step off the beaten path. We, at the Humanity in Action Poland Foundation, still believe that there is, in fact, an immense field for innovation and creative experimentation with educational tools. This approach makes it possible for obtaining knowledge and new abilities to become an inspiring and useful experience for everyone.

The mainstream activities of our organisation involve the creation and implementation of educational programmes for young activists and leaders, focusing on human rights issues in the Polish context and making it possible to enhance one's knowledge and expand one's skills in the field of actions intended to benefit society as a whole. Working mostly with small groups of young people, we work together on educational "tools" or "products" which make it possible to reach a broader audience, so that social change may take place on a wider scale by being multiplied through the activities of the programme's alumni. Furthermore, young people are also able to perform an accurate analysis of the expectations and needs of others at their age and to design materials which feature an attractive form and a language which all young people are familiar with. In particular, we would like to recommend the following educational resources and materials:

1. The „Preempt Prejudice” website

The underlying idea that guided our actions from the very beginning was to create a portal which would allow us to share the knowledge and inspirations on how to act against hate speech in an accessible manner. In line with this concept, the portal contains the basic, useful information for everyone who is interested in human rights issues and related challenges – including, in particular, the issues related to hate speech – as well as educational materials of various sorts such as online courses, location-based games, publications or video links. Secondly, the website also offers many good practices relating to the prevention, counteracting and combating the phenomenon of hate speech. These include, first and foremost, social campaigns designed by the participants of our educational programmes as well as the products created in the course of such programmes, i.e. graphics, pictures, memes and videos as well as scenarios for educational events. Thirdly,

the portal also constitutes a space for interaction, inspiration and cooperation for activists and people who wish to get involved in the actions designed to eliminate hate speech. Finally, another feature which remains important from the standpoint of potential users of the site is that it can also be used by persons with visual impairments. For more information please go to: www.uprzedzuprzedzenia.org

2. Online courses

We remain firmly convinced that anyone can make a stand and act in defence of human rights. Motivation is what matters most. In practice, however, it is always useful to obtain the necessary knowledge and to avoid making the same mistakes over and over again. Despite the numerous opportunities for expanding and enhancing one's knowledge in the course of various educational programmes – such as the ones that we continue to organise – not all the people who might be interested are in fact capable of attending such programmes. For the above reason, we have devised an alternative in the form of online courses. The prime advantage of this form of educational activities is the full control over the entire process: the ability to focus on the issues which the given person finds interesting or useful at the given time. In line with our mission, we have designed four different courses so that anyone who is interested in taking action in their own community may acquire the necessary knowledge.

- The “STOP HATE”, e-learning course is designed for all those who are interested in taking action against hate speech and in promoting human rights culture. The course focuses on transferring knowledge on hate speech, yet it also encourages its participants to reflect on the related issues. The course, consisting of 8 thematic modules in total, does not require any prior knowledge in the field of hate speech theory and prevention. An additional bonus is the opportunity to receive a special certificate when the given participant completes at least 5 out of 8 available modules.
- The “LOCAL COMMUNITY?? GRASS-ROOT? ACTION”, e-learning course is designed for people who would like to become active in their own, local community. The key step before taking any action is to perform a careful analysis of community needs; this, in turn, cannot be achieved without obtaining the necessary information and without creating the appropriate guidelines for action on the basis of such data. In addition, the course also encompasses certain inspirations and good practices which may prove useful when planning your next step, i.e. the actual activities performed within the framework of the project.
- The “COMMUNICATION IN PROJECTS”, e-learning course is intended to teach its participants how to act in a more informed manner when designing various forms of media

communications and information on the activities performed, making it possible to attain the project objectives more efficiently.

- The “PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: STEP BY STEP”, e-learning course is intended to systematise further steps which must be taken in the course of project implementation; on one hand, this is intended to help the less experienced individuals get up to speed, yet on the other hand even the more advanced project coordinators may enhance their abilities in the field of designing budgets and schedules or performing various assessments. These are the skills which anyone will find useful.

For more information about our courses, please go to: <http://uprzedzuprzedzenia.org/czym-mowa-nienawisci/e-kursy/>

3. Social campaigns

Since social media allow everyone to create their own content if they wish so, anyone may also take a stand against hate speech in one way or another. Designing and implementing social media campaigns on a DIY basis has become one of the most important abilities nowadays; our goal is to make it easier for prospective social activists to acquire this ability. On the other hand, however, it is likewise important to react whenever any expressions which amount to hate speech appear in the public domain. The 24 implemented social campaigns against hate speech and discrimination in social media, as well as the memes and videos created in the course of such campaigns, may serve as an inspiration and provide a ready-made response to any instances of hate speech online.

For more information go to <http://uprzedzuprzedzenia.org/re-akcje-na-hejt/re-akcje-inspiracje/>

4. Location-based games City Games?

In the changing political and societal environment of today, many Polish educational and cultural institutions (such as, for example, schools) have verified their approach to the issues of multiculturalism and human rights. Many of these institutions – which have hitherto been very much interested in cooperation in this regard – have now suddenly begun to point out various difficulties. All these changes had to be taken into account when making plans for further actions. As a result, from 2016 onwards, including, in particular, within the framework of the project entitled “EXCHANGE for social CHANGE”, funded by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODHIR), we have focused on actions which we were able to take regardless of the position of various institutions in this regard. The Internet, social media and mailing lists have become even more useful than they were before. In order to discover the multicultural past and present of selected towns and cities, we have developed six location-based games for

Katowice, Cracow, Poznań, Warsaw, Wrocław and Zielona Góra. All of these games have been prepared in consultation with local historians specialising in the field and subsequently put to the test by inviting students from different schools to participate. The aim of the games in question is to encourage the participants to develop a real interest in the themes explored through the use of various means such as an immersive storyline or interesting exercises, creating an atmosphere conducive to expanding one's knowledge on the origins of Polish towns and cities (including both the monuments of tangible and intangible culture) as well as on the contribution of national and ethnic minorities to their development and on the way these towns and cities look like today. An additional factor which may encourage young people to participate is the presence of competitive elements and the use of social media such as Facebook or Snapchat. The games are available both in paper form (available on request) as well as in electronic form at <http://uprzedzuprzedzenia.org/filmy-gry-i-ksiazka/>

5. "On Jews" – an interactive book on Jewish culture

In response to recurring instances of antisemitism – including, in particular, among young people whose knowledge of the issue remains limited at best – we have come up with an idea for an interactive book on Jewish culture entitled "On Jews ". The aim of this book is not just to deal with the lack of knowledge, but also to present the Jewish history, customs and culture in a novel and intriguing way. It is the first publication of this kind in Poland, using the familiar format of books such as "Wreck this Journal" for educational purposes. The use of this format makes it possible for readers to contribute to the contents of the book to a significant extent by performing the allocated tasks described within. The idea behind the book is that readers may work with the publication on their own, reflecting upon the contents thereof, but may also use it in the course of workshops, enhancing its educational effect. The book is available both in paper form (available on request while stocks last) as well as in electronic form at

http://uprzedzuprzedzenia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OZydachiZydowkach_ebook.pdf

6. Films

In response to the preferences of the young generation who are much more willing to reach for video content than for books or articles, we have created two types of short films within the framework of the "EXCHANGE for social CHANGE" project, telling the stories of contemporary Jews and Jewesses.

- By drawing on the “Living Library” concept, allowing members of various minorities to tell their stories in response to questions posed by people who want to know more about “Strangers”, we have devised an enhanced electronic “living library” formula; using our „Stand Up for Yourself” portal, we have presented the digitised stories of four Jewish men and women – people exposed to discrimination and exclusion. These films allow the viewers to learn what it is like to be a Jew or Jewess on an everyday basis. Film screenings may be accompanied by anti-discrimination workshops for young people, making it possible to enhance the educational effects even further.
- Biographical films created in cooperation with the Jewish members of the #MegaBabki (Mega Girls) group were intended to emphasise the role of Jewish women in their respective communities and to present their stories to young girls so that they might serve as an inspiration to choose their own ways in life. The life stories of the selected characters of the films are distinctive in many ways; one of them is a businesswoman, one is an artist and one works as a social activist. The films have been presented in the course of a screening organised in Zielona Góra, which was accompanied by a debate and anti-discrimination workshop.

The films are available in online at <http://upzedzupzedzenia.org/filmy-gry-i-ksiazka/>