STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE

Are the online platforms safe for Roma? – Addressing online hate speech against Romani communities

27th September 2021
13:00 – 14:30

Online at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81154885760?pwd=b2FFOWdjUW5mR09aNjc5Z1VaV2REdz09
Meeting ID: 811 5488 5760
Passcode: RomaniWeek

Live at:
https://www.facebook.com/events/2649677995327712

Background

Online Hate speech has been steadily on the rise during the past decade, especially during the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. Making it appearance known at the highest level of the public administration of some Member States, where transformation into policy is just one step away. The liberal stance that was built towards hate speech on basic assumptions that the state and the major society would uphold their democratic standards and values under all circumstances, and distance themselves from hate speakers, has proven to be wrong as many different societal and minority groups continue to be targets of hate speech.

According to the Fundamental Rights Agency, 1 in 3 Roma are victims of harassment and 20% of non-Roma would not like to have a Roma colleague. As identified in the EC Communication 'Midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies' (2017), antigypsyism goes beyond the legal notion of discrimination. In essence, antigypsyism is the root cause of exclusion of Roma people. It has many different dimensions and manifestations, including hate-speech in public, media, and political narratives, expressed stereotypes, hate-crime, discrimination in school, employment, health and housing and structural antigypsyism.

The mid-term review showed very little progress and highlighted the importance of focusing on antigypsyism in the next Framework. It confirmed that fighting antigypsyism by targeting majority society is a pre-condition for the success of any Roma inclusion intervention. Also, the EP adopted a report on the 'Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism' in 2017, highlighting persistent antigypsyism across Europe, despite the efforts undertaken under the EU Roma Framework and the EU legislative framework against discrimination, hate speech and hate crime.

Hate speech as a manifestation of antigypsyism needs particular attention because of its multiplier effect: it influences public opinion, fuels tension, and paves the way for discrimination and hate

crimes. Online media plays a particular role in spreading and inciting hate speech. It strengthens stereotypes, uses offensive language, denies, or trivializes antigypsyism. Through social media hate speech reaches millions of people and allows perpetrators to anonymously incite hatred and violence.

Therefore, we need to address and counter antigypsyist hate speech online. This includes more specifically:

- ✓ Need to better recognise antigypsyist hate speech: As 'the most accepted form of racism', subtle antigypsyist hate speech often remains undetected and is therefore not reported and deleted.
- ✓ Need to better report antigypsyist hate speech: There is little awareness of existing institutional structures and tools to protect citizens from hate speech.
- ✓ Need to better monitor hate speech in order to better understand the problem and support the development of policies to counter hate speech.
- ✓ Need to develop better policies that recognise antigypsyism as bias motivation and tackle institutional antigypsyism.

According to recent academic literature, counter-speech is crucial in the fight against racism and other forms of intolerance. Counter-speech should be backed up also by action: official policy on social inclusion, such as education, awareness-raising, and social programs to level economic and other inequalities. Besides, counteraction is also recommended: strengthening the institutional system to combat hate speech.

The event aims to foster a debate which would lead to identifying positive solutions, policy proposals, as well as advocacy points relevant for further addressing the new challenges arisen during the current pandemic that present new obstacles for a better inclusion of Roma in society.

Participants of the roundtable will discuss, share their observations, opinions and reflections guided be the following questions, such as:

- Is there something about antigypsyism that requires us to characterize it as distinct or different form of online hate speech?
- How can we advance in addressing online hate speech against Roma?
- Why is antigypsyism hate speech increasing in times of Covid-19?
- What are the consequences of hate speech on the Roma communities? Is it manifesting outside the online spaces?
- What is the relation between the living conditions and the access of Roma to online spaces?
- What is more effective when tackling online hate speech: counter speech or alternative narratives?

- How can data collection and reporting of hate speech be helpful and useful in fighting the phenomena of online antigypsyism?
- What are the ways forward and how we can make a difference?

Agenda

13:00 - 13:10 Welcoming remarks

Moderator: Mustafa Jakupov, Project and Policy coordinator at ERGO Network

MEP Pierrette Herzberger Fofana, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

13:10 – 14:20 Roundtable discussion

Moderator: Mustafa Jakupov, Project and Policy coordinator at ERGO Network

Mr. Dan Pavel Doghi, Team leader, Non-discrimination and Roma Coordination Unit, DG JUST

Mr. Marco Pancini, YouTube Director for Public Policy in EMEA

Ms. Selene de la Fuente, Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)

Mr. Wester Meijdam, EU Code of Conduct to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online (TBC)

Ms. Selma Muhic Dizdarevic, International Network against Cyber Hate

Mr. Jonathan Lee, European Roma Rights Centre

14:20 – 14:30 Closing remarks

Moderator: Mustafa Jakupov, Project and Policy coordinator at ERGO Network

The event is hosted by MEP Pierrette Herzberger Fofana and co-organized by European Roma Grassroots Organizations network (ERGO), Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), and International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH) as part of their efforts of to tackle and address antigypsyist online hate speech.

ERGO Network – European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network · Fundación Secretariado Gitano · errc european roma rights centre · INACH bringing the online in line with human rights