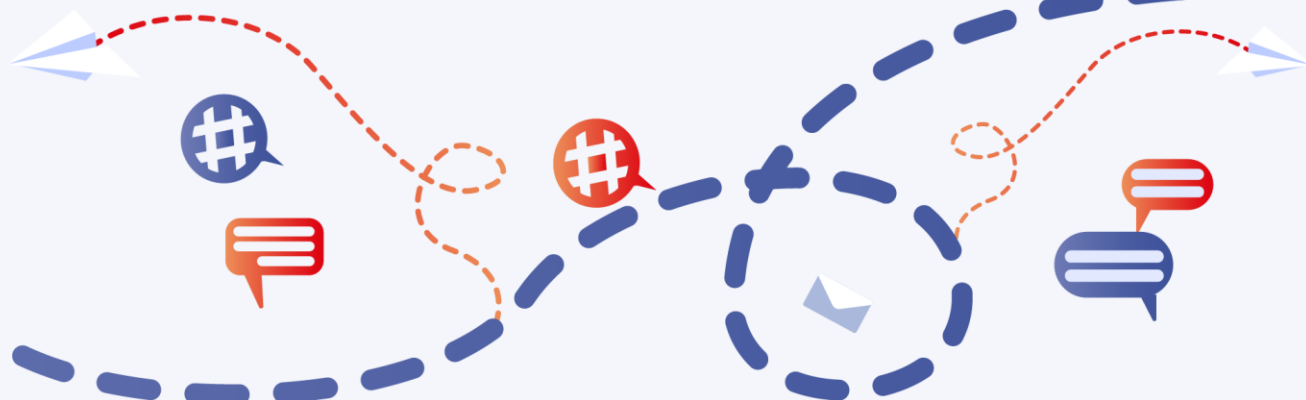




The European COMMIT Declaration

Deliverable 4.5



Project Information

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THE PROJECT AND THE OBJECTIVES

During the past years, Europe has been facing alarming tendencies toward increasing extremist, radical & terrorist propaganda. Extremists use widely online means to spread hate, encourage violence, radicalise and recruit followers, prepare and incite attacks and then claim credit for them.

The online activities are highly concentrated on social media.

According to Europol, over 150 social media platforms are used by terrorists for propaganda. Such content has proven to accelerate the radicalisation processes.

However, it is not only terrorists who promote violence & push audience towards radicalisation. Many European extreme right- left/-wing groups are mobilising their followers, communicating about Daesh brutality as justification for their own extreme response. The migration crisis only fuelled this trend.

Besides, media (willingly or not) support the extremist' and radicals' efforts by negative hostile media coverage, incorrect, selective or misleading reporting opening the door to populism, right-/left-wing extremism, intolerance & violence. Education around the issue for future media specialists is a self-evident need, however is seldom part of the standard curricula.

Extremists, radicals & terrorists are populating the spaces where young people consume & share information, socialise & are socialised which makes them a highly vulnerable group to terrorist/radical/extremist propaganda & recruitment attempts. Young people are therefore one of the main groups that would benefit from learning skills improving their capacity to detect propaganda, fake information & extremist content, and being trained about how to develop & disseminate positive messages among their peers that can be a real alternative to extremist content online. To help them resist indoctrination & radicalisation, their critical thinking & media literacy must be improved & the internalisation of democratic values supported. COMMIT does so via offline activities such as workshops and online communication on platforms usually used by the young.

Although online communication activities are not deradicalisation tools in themselves, they can be used as preventive tools, offering different perspectives on societal challenges and, directly/indirectly, challenging extremist ideas via counter & alternative narratives. Counter narratives aim to “deconstruct, discredit & demystify extremist propaganda while alternative narratives undercut it by focusing on what we are ‘for’ rather than ‘against’, or by putting forward a positive story about social values, such as tolerance, freedom & democracy”. The development of such narratives as well as strategic communications are considered as a priority⁷ in order to prevent terrorist propaganda from having success⁸.

Considering all of the latter, COMMIT aims to prevent & dissuade vulnerable young people (13 – 25) in 4 partner countries from extremism, radicalism & terrorism providing them with skills

relevant to co- create counter narratives challenging extremist online propaganda and alternative narratives promoting democratic values, tolerance & cooperation, and to identify & resist extremist online content.

COMMIT adopts a trans-medial approach combining online campaigning (3 campaign will be developed addressing: fake news, hate speech, populist propaganda; extremism, radicalism & terrorism; active bystandership) & face to face activities (workshops, contest, events). COMMIT will also improve the capacity of university students, media professionals, Civil Society Organisations, Internet companies, stakeholders to meet the new challenges linked to extremist propaganda online & radicalisation, training them in alternative & counter narratives and their use in prevention of radicalisation through a capacity building programme.

PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

- Campaign research (content analysis and target audience mapping) and communication strategy for the campaigns' development;
- Capacity Building for:
 - 1) internal staff of the project;
 - 2) university students, civil society organisations and local stakeholders (10 training sessions for a total of 30h);
 - 3) young people (approx. 26h of workshops & contest);
- Development and co-creation of 3 communication campaigns addressing:
 1. fake news, hate speech, populist propaganda;
 2. extremism, radicalism & terrorism;
 3. active bystandership
- Development of COMMIT Declaration;
- Creation of a local network.
- Setting up and implementation of intervention support via dedicated online channels to support people affected by hate speech or close to extremist groups.

THE EUROPEAN COMMIT DECLARATION

This document has been developed under the WP4 - Capacity Building for university students, civil society organisations and local stakeholders, which aims:

- To equip university students and professionals in the field of media and communication, representatives of CSOs and other relevant local stakeholders (TG2) with competencies and tools needed to prevent and combat extremism and radical propaganda online and promote democratic values.
- To create local networks of stakeholders and support multi-stakeholder cooperation and enhance their skills to design and implement sustainable joint initiatives against radicalisation and online extremist propaganda while promoting democratic values.

During spring and summer 2021, in Italy, Austria, Netherlands and Greece, a capacity building programme addressed to university students, civil society organisations and local stakeholders and focused on methods and strategies to prevent and combat extremist and radical online content using alternative & counter narratives (see D4.1).

As last activity of the capacity building programme, each group at country level have worked on the development of a “COMMIT DECLARATION” including memorandum of understanding and bottom-up recommendations on how to combat extremist content online, prevent radicalisation and promote the European democratic values. The Declaration collect the main lesson learned from participants to the capacity building as a call for personal reflection and awareness regarding the project’s topics and for a common commitment for a better use of the social media, and to take action against hate extremism and radicalism online promoting democratic values and active participation online and offline.

In the National COMMIT Declaration (see D4.4) each group has collected the main lessons learned from the Capacity Building and has put them in a form of simple principles for a COMMITment against hate, to be spread and agreed by other youngsters and stakeholders.

All the declarations developed at country-level have been furthermore combined and merged in a unique European COMMIT Declaration, putting together the common elements from each country, in a coherent and common European Manifesto against hate and extremism, representing the European added value of the activity implemented. All recommendations have been organised as a step by step guide addressed to young people, but also CSOs, media professionals, stakeholders and policy makers, and the general public as social media users, willing to “commit” like as to follow this code of conduct for a better use of the internet and social media. The European COMMIT Declaration has been included in the project website, in the page [BE PART](#)

[OF #COMMIT](#) as a public Manifesto open for online signatures. We aim to disseminate the Declaration at local, national and European level, towards stakeholders including media, journalists, internet companies, civil society organisations, institutional authorities, universities to create a local and European network of practitioners willing to share ideas and best practices for joint initiatives in a long-term perspective.

In fact, people who will sign the Declaration online, will receive an e-mail inviting them to register to an intranet platform within the COMMIT website, in the form of a forum

<https://commitproject.eu/forum/>, with National and European rooms, for get in contact with other users and stakeholders at different level, thus assuring the sustainability of the project in a long-term perspective.

This document contains the European COMMIT Declaration in the word format, adapted from the online version, which is available at <https://commitproject.eu/declaration/>.

We are the COMMIT Team!

We are working in Austria, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium towards one goal: build a campaign that shows what everybody can do against hate in daily life.

We want to COMMIT against hate, to raise awareness about the easy tricks used to incite people against one another, promoting fundamental actions to resist and counteract hate in our society.

Would you like to join us in this effort?

Would you like to COMMIT yourself against hate?

If you agree with our vision, follow these easy steps in your daily life and spread the word: sign-out the COMMIT Declaration!

5 easy steps for awareness and action against hate

<p>1. FEAR & INSECURITY MAKE US SUSCEPTIBLE TO HATE SPEECH.</p> <p>We will recognise our fears & vulnerabilities and understand how people or groups may seek to exploit them.</p>	<p>2. THE DESIRE TO INGROUP IS NATURAL TO COUNTER INSECURITY BUT IN-GROUPING CAN EASILY PUSH PEOPLE IN DESTRUCTIVE DIRECTIONS.</p> <p>We will critically assess our motivations and the promises of potential groups before and after joining.</p>	<p>3. HATE SPEECH CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT SOCIETAL DISCOURSE AND LEAD TO DISCRIMINATION AND, IN SOME CASES, EVEN VIOLENCE.</p> <p>We will recognise hate speech, understand the impact it has, and counteract it.</p>
<p>4. ACTIVE BYSTANDERSHIP IS THE BEST DEFENCE AGAINST HATE SPEECH.</p> <p>We will stand up early - seek allies - and remember that even the smallest actions count. Whether it's liking positive comments online or intervening (safely) when we encounter hate speech or problematic situations, we will endeavour to make a difference.</p>	<p>5. ATTACK PROBLEMS, NOT PEOPLE.</p> <p>Attacking individuals or groups of scapegoats will not solve our problems. We will search for root problems, instead of just attacking symptoms. We will attempt to resolve the problem itself, and not scapegoat others instead.</p>	

DO YOU AGREE WITH US?

DO YOU SHARE OUR VISION?

DO YOU COMMIT WITH US?

[CLICK HERE AND SIGN OUR DECLARATION!](#)

Do you need a hand for keeping this COMMITment? Follow these simple rules, and do it everyday!

1. Hate hurts, sometimes kills

Intolerance and violence can only be fought with respect and education. **Hate cannot be fought with more hate!**

2. Too often, judgements don't go beyond appearances

Respect comes from knowing and understanding others. **Put yourself in other people's shoes!**

3. Differences can be a source of fear

Differences shouldn't be greeted with suspicion, but as an opportunity for enrichment. **Treasure the differences!**

4. Extremism is never good

Absolute positions don't promote democratic debate. The world isn't black and white. **Love the colour!**

5. Discrimination doesn't value diversity

A fragmented society is a fragile society. Social cohesion is a fundamental value. **Promote inclusion!**

6. Labels cancel people's uniqueness

Religious belief, political position, nationality or sexual orientation should not be used to discriminate a person. **We are all human beings with equal rights!**

7. Social media can be a toxic place

Sharing trolls and viral memes aimed at harming someone, something or a minority makes the web a toxic place. **Make the web a better place!**

8. Spreading fake news creates panic and confusion in society

Before sharing news, check its sources. **Share news responsibly!**

9. Hate speech on the web is uncontrollable

Hate speech can be a violation of human rights, so each of us must limit its spread as much as possible. Words have weight. **Use words consciously!**

10. Hate speech generates hate actions

The step from words to an act of physical violence is shorter than you think. **Defuse hate at its origin!**

Still Keep scrolling...
not enough?

#10 Messages by young people to young people

1. It is not your fault, if someone humiliates you.
2. Support those who are belittled by others and need help.
3. Get to know your limits!
4. Try to solve conflicts without violence!
5. Do not put others down in order to make yourself look better.
6. Respect your classmates, even if they are different from you.
7. Both actions and inactions can impact others.
8. Disrespectful statements hurt.
9. Fun *with* others is better than fun *at the expense* of others.
10. If you experience humiliation, find someone you can trust and talk about it. Seeking support is not snitching!

#5 Pieces of advice young people wish they had known earlier . . .

1. Don't comment, if you do not know enough about the situation.
2. Don't judge people, if you do not know them.
3. Report! Report any suspicious comment, even if you are not sure. . .
4. Don't post when you are angry or in a bad mood.
5. Use facts & evidence.

Calls to supportive action – With a little help . . .

- **Taking notice & evaluating the situation.** If you notice that someone is unwell, you should take the situation seriously and not look away.
- **Be supportive when you notice someone is unwell.** Show those affected that they are not alone. Show that you do not agree with humiliation.
- **Take responsibility & help:** "I can do something. I support the person to the best of my ability." Even if you are afraid that they will (also) turn against you.
- **Get help if you are worried about being attacked yourself!**
- **Act & know how to help:** "This is what I can do to improve the situation."
- **If you don't know what to do, you feel you can't help or you don't want to intervene:** Get help.
- **Encourage.** The person may not want to talk to you, but you can encourage them to talk to someone they trust.
- **Report injustice. Stand up & advocate for others.**
- **Do not overestimate yourself.** Get help in time. You must and often cannot achieve everything on your own. Do not put yourself in danger!
- **Pay attention and – if appropriate – act when you encounter injustice!** This will also make you feel better.
- **Awareness of the role of victims, perpetrators & bystanders deserves special attention.**

Don't forget to be careful with words!!!

- Put out the **flame** (= insulting someone virtually alone or in a group)
- Avoid **dissing** (= making fun of someone in an excessive way)
- Don't **trigger** (= an emotional reaction caused by words and images that are traumatic for a person)
- Stop the **troll** (= the deliberate action of making controversial comments online to provoke knee-jerk reactions from other users)
- Don't fall for **scam** (= the situation where, in online communities, extremists can find fertile ground to carry out their violent propaganda)
- Beware of **banning** (= exclusion from a virtual community)

<p>ARE YOU A SOCIAL MEDIA USER? CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOU!</p>	<p>ARE YOU A MEDIA COMPANY, MEDIA PROFESSIONAL, POLICY MAKER, STAKEHOLDER? READ THIS!</p>
<p>THE COMMIT TEAM invites you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not reproduce content of extremism, fake news, hate speech, incitement to violence on your online personal profile/website and/or social media. • Assume an active role in preventing and combating the phenomenon through the (re)production of alternative and counter-narratives. • Report comments/posts/articles containing extremist content, hate speech, incitement to violence and/or fake news to the respective competent body. • Check and verify your sources and each piece of news before reproducing it. • Not reproduce/republish any news before investigating the reliability of the news item and its source. • Not reproduce/post news and comments carried away by your emotions, so that the relevant news and/or comment do/does not 	<p><i>The COMMIT TEAM</i></p> <p><i>CALLS ON social media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. invest in the Continuing Professional Development of employees aiming at capacity building for malicious content detection, as well as in the establishment of relevant systems for the rejection and/or deletion of relevant posts.</i> <i>2. renew, simplify and communicate the reporting procedures of the relevant malicious comments/posts in a comprehensible manner.</i> <i>3. create and implement software to monitor hate speech.</i> <p><i>ENCOURAGES local, regional and national civil society actors to design and implement awareness-raising campaigns to inform the public about the dangers of the Internet.</i></p> <p><i>WELCOMES AND ENCOURAGES cooperation between relevant public bodies, civil society organisations, Information Technology and Communication (ICT) companies to prevent and combat the proliferation of extremist content, hate speech, fake news and</i></p>

<p>constitute unjust slander or defamation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the “opposite point of view” before drawing conclusions or posting any material. Motivate your friendly, professional and social network to be informed about the sources used before any material is reproduced. Produce positive contents with a view to raise awareness towards your peers online. 	<p><i>incitement to violence via the Internet and social media;</i></p> <p><i>cooperation and involvement of the Mass Media in the dissemination of awareness-raising activities;</i></p> <p><i>the participation of renowned and popular personalities in information campaigns in order to achieve greater public impact.</i></p> <p><i>URGES the integration of educational programmes in schools to empower individuals to contribute to the prevention and fight against hate speech, sexist speech, incitement to violence and fake news.</i></p> <p><i>ENCOURAGES research institutes and organisations to conduct continuous research on the push factors and root causes that drive individuals to hate speech and other aforementioned phenomena.</i></p>
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The COMMIT EUROPEAN Declaration has been created thanks to the work of the participants of the COMMIT Capacity Building in Italy, Austria, Greece and Netherlands.



COMMIT

COMMunication campaign against exTremism and radicalisation

 CENTRO SVILUPPO
CREATIVO
DANILO DOLCI

 kmopp
KINDLING A BETTER WORLD

 die Berater
ZUKUNFT LERNEN

 LA BENEVOLENCIA

 textgain

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DI PALERMO



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