



**Statement by the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) on the topic of “Causes, scale and impact of hate speech targeting minorities on social media” at the United Nations thirteenth Forum on Minority Issues**

Since the beginning of the rise of social media, hate speech has been an accompanying factor of the concept of anonymity. For young people belonging to minorities, that have been growing up in a highly digitised climate, hate speech is not a new phenomenon but rather something that they have been encountering at every step of their daily life and it has shaped their minority identity, and had a damaging effect on their wellbeing. We have to remember that lack of opportunities to grow in a safe environment that nurtures young minority identity is not only harmful on oneself but it has unrepairable effects on the development and existence of minority communities in general, and with this on society at large. Current pandemic should therefore not be seen as a cause of hate speech but rather as a catalyser of it. While most of the tech giants and state actors are focusing on addressing the symptoms and remaining reactive, young people have been taking a proactive stance and believe that the focus of resources should be on understanding the issues pertaining to hate speech, on identifying the mechanisms behind it and on addressing the causes and drivers of hate speech such as fear of those seen as “others” stemming from a lack of knowledge of minorities.

Hate speech as a manifestation of discrimination and intolerance remains a major concern for YEN as it often leads to other minority and human rights violations and its impacts always advance to offline spaces. We cannot allow the normalisation of hate speech as a standard that young people should get used to when using social media and instead of recognizing it as an act of hatred, view it simply as impolite and uncivil.

Hate speech directly targets the freedom of expression of minority youth as constant exposure to hateful messages leads to shame in regards to minority identity, and hiding and withdrawal from expression of belief or any kind of elements that would show their pluralism or distinct identity. In addition to this, it needs to be underlined that even without the damaging effects of hate speech on one’s minority identity, minority youth has troubles expressing themselves on social media, as most of them do not facilitate the use of minority languages or lack visual means such as emojis and stickers connected to specific minorities that are carriers of culture and symbols of identity for most of young people.

For the future existence of minority communities, it is important to nurture and cultivate minority youth identity, and provide spaces and opportunities that empower young people from minorities so that they feel confident to address any kind of acts of hatred against them. National and international actors should recognize the value and importance of the work minority youth organisations are doing in regards to minority youth empowerment and encouragement to take



charge of their lives. Nevertheless, minority youth organisations should not be left to fend for themselves. Institutions and governments need to address the lack of opportunities and space in formal educational systems regarding minority topics, addressing hate speech and responsible behaviour in online and offline spaces, and development of critical thinking skills.

Similar to the climate crisis or talks on artificial intelligence, debates on the impact of hate speech are coming several years too late. Nevertheless, we first and foremostly:

**Call** to adopt international definition of hate speech and develop monitoring mechanisms, by involving in the process a wide range of actors on different levels, but especially those that are the most affected by it - minority youth.

**Stress** the importance of awareness raising measures on tackling mis- and disinformation about minorities and dangers posed by hate speech.

**Acknowledge** social media as an important tool of an expression of minority identity and **address** the absence of opportunities to use the lesser-spoken languages in technological tools.

**Urge** the governments to apply rights-based approach to education and include topics in areas of minority rights and responsible behaviour on social media in school curriculums.

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