



The Civil Initiative of Szeklerland

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Item 4. Minority Youth and the media in the digital age

Pro Regio Sicularum Association, Romania

Written Submission

The Pro Regio Sicularum Association was founded with the purpose of addressing the problems faced by the Hungarian community in Romania, to draw attention to the violation of their linguistic and cultural rights, and the various forms of ethnic discrimination that they face.

Hate-speech has been particularly pervasive in Romania this year, both on social media and on mainstream television, where journalists, social media influencers, opinion-makers and some Romanian politicians expressing extremist views propagated nationalistic messages directed against the Hungarian community. It is not uncommon for instance that talk-shows and news programmes purposely misrepresent information about the Hungarian minority, which can have very damaging effects. For example, in June a set of legislative proposals meant to increase the linguistic rights of minorities in Romania were eventually not adopted in Parliament, due in great part to a nationalistic media campaign conducted by several news channels. Sadly, when media platforms are used in such a corrosive way, as a means to promoting hate-speech, they can have a very wide-reaching effect, turn public opinion against a minority community and do great damage to peaceful interethnic relations.

Our organisation submitted complaints to the National Council for Anti-Discrimination and the National Audiovisual Council of Romania against those who publicly voiced anti-Hungarian messages and contributed to propagating false, misleading and xenophobic content in the media about the Hungarian minority.

But how can we make sure in the long run that digital media and media in general is a force for good and not used as a platform for hate speech? First of all, in the digital age minority youth can play a huge part in promoting positive messages about their respective communities. Many Hungarian youth organisations, as well as some human rights organisations led by minority youth



have done great work recently in promoting the language, the culture, but also minority rights on digital media.

Secondly, states have to be more decisive in combatting hate speech. While regulatory institutions, such as the National Council for Anti-Discrimination, and the reactive work that they do is helpful and important, it is not enough. States have to be more proactive. Just like minority communities themselves, governments can also and MUST promote positive images about minorities, in order to deal with the root causes of racism and hate-speech, which is the lack of knowledge about the history and the culture of minorities. Therefore, we believe that it is not enough for minorities to be granted the right to learn about their own history and culture, but the majority should also be taught about the history and the culture of the minorities living in their countries. This can be achieved through educational programmes, while also using digital media as an indispensable platform in today's world for promoting empathy and tolerance.

Thank you!