



# BEFORE THEY *HATE*

Theoretical basis of the methodology



# Before They Hate

## #B4H8

The project *Before they Hate: Tackling hate speech as manifestations of racism and misogyny through prevention in youth work* has received funding from the Icelandic National Agency of the **Erasmus+** Programme under the Grant Agreement

**2022-1-IS01-KA220-YOU-000089488**



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Center for  
Digital Pædagogik

**CONNECT**  
INTERNATIONAL

**OFSi**  
OFBELDISFORVARNASKÓLINN



Authors of this Methodology: Cristina Martínez, María Cruz, Aleksandra Vidanovic, Vojislav Milosevic, Benedikta Sörensen, Malik Larsen, Victoria Ledgerwood and Neil Young.

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## THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE METHODOLOGY

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# 1. INTRODUCTION



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## *About the project*

The methodology for this project has been created in the context of anti-discrimination and equality practices. “Before They Hate” (B4H8) is an Erasmus+ project in the field of youth cooperation and has the aim of providing youth workers and educators with useful tools for their implementation with young people in order to fight against hate speech.

This project is being carried out due to the increase of hate crimes and behaviours in our society and the apparition of new ways of communication, like online social networks. “Before they Hate” has been coordinated by the Icelandic association Ofbeldisforvarnaskólinn (OFSi) with the partnership of CONNECT International (Belgium), Centre for Digital Paedagogik SL (Denmark), St. Paul’s Youth Forum (United Kingdom), and BACKSLASH (Spain).

The main objective of this project is to combat hate speech, misogyny, racism, and other forms of discrimination and to foster an environment in which all young people can actively participate. The project prioritises inclusion and diversity, together with shared values and the active civic participation of young people.

Before They Hate aims to increase the quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work and to support youth workers in creating high-quality youth work that is inclusive of all, regardless of gender and background. Preventing and educating individuals and communities on hate speech and violence is essential in education and in the fight against discrimination within our communities. This project aims to increase the skills and knowledge of youth workers in this field. In addition, the project is expected to provide support and recognition for youth work as a tool to prevent violence, both online and offline.



To achieve these objectives, this handbook will explore the topics of human rights, hate speech, both online and offline, and democracy and participation through the methodological chapters. In this way, youth workers will be able to acquire a broad overview of the issue of hate speech in order to address it from different perspectives. Participation will also be encouraged as a tool to combat hate speech, empowering youth to promote democracy, developing their leadership skills, taking initiative, and promoting respect and inclusion.





## About the methodology

B4H8 has been designed for youth workers, trainers, and other professionals working with young people who want to develop their knowledge about hate speech and how it is closely related to misogyny and racism/xenophobia in order to address these issues with the youth they work with. So young people are the indirect target, as they will be the ones who participate in the experiences and activities proposed in the manual.

The methodology has been created with two objectives. On one hand, to provide both theoretical and practical knowledge about hate speech, being able to recognise and prevent it, both online and offline. On the other hand, this methodology aims to increase the confidence of youth workers to lead young people in prevention youth work, look at the community from a critical viewpoint, and take part in the societal discussion on these issues.



To reach this secondary goal, the model has been built with youth work in mind, incorporating the educational methods frequently used in these fields, such as experiential learning and peer-to-peer learning facilitated with the use of games, project work, and conversation starters. In conclusion, non-formal education methods and experiential learning will be the tools used throughout the methodology to guarantee a learning experience that puts youth at the centre.

The model aims to provide young people with this knowledge and the necessary tools so they can be aware of and recognise this type of hate speech and be able to combat it. This methodology is designed to be used by youth professionals with an elementary level of hate speech. In this way, it aims to provide them with the basic theoretical framework to understand the topic and know how to deal with it, together with a collection of activities to implement with young people.

B4H8 uses the methodology of non-formal education, in which young people actively participate in the learning process through activities and dynamics, which can be individual or group, offline or online, with which they acquire the necessary skills to combat hate speech. Trainers should accompany the young people in the process, become a role model, and guide them. For this purpose, youth workers should be able to create an environment where young people can feel motivated to learn but also supported, for which the trainer needs to develop skills such as confidence, empathy, and humility.



## How to use this methodology

This methodology is composed of two complementary volumes. On the one hand, the current volume, which contains the theoretical foundations on the subject of hate speech and other cross-cutting themes that allow for a deeper understanding of the subject in order to have the tools to deal with it.

On the other hand, an activities handbook that compiles 27 practical activities from the different chapters to be implemented with young people. The main aim of the handbook is to facilitate the trainer's work and have the activities at hand with the specific objectives, materials, duration and implementation steps.

The recommendation is to first get to know the theoretical foundations in order to then apply the activities more efficiently.

This theoretical part is structured in the following way:

**Introduction:** Providing context on why to address the issue of hate speech in youth work and how to create a [safe space](#) to work with young people.

**Concept chapters:** Introducing concepts that are important in the prevention of hate speech among youth: 1. human rights; 2. hate speech; 3. online hate speech; and 4. democracy and participation.

Each concept chapter has three different sub chapters, which are outlined as follows:

1. *What is...?:* An introduction to the concept will set out the theoretical framework to be discussed in the chapter, with the aim of giving youth workers a broad overview of the topic.
2. *... in youth's lives:* A manifestation chapter dives deeper into explanation of the topic with the aim of creating a deeper understanding and bringing it closer to the daily realities of the youth they work with.
3. *Taking action in... :* A chapter to encourage youth workers to inspire the youth they work with to take action and to provide them with tools to guide young people in tackling the issue at hand.

The reason each module is structured in this way is to make the methodology as experiential and practice-based as possible, so that youth workers can guide young people to reach their own objectives rather than having them provided for them.

At the end of each conceptual chapter there is also a list of some extra resources that are really useful to dive deeper into the topic.



**Conclusion chapter:** stressing the importance of reflection and evaluation in this method of learning. As well as enabling youth workers to guide young people in reflecting on the knowledge they have gained about hate speech and how to combat it.

**Glossary:** compiles words relevant to the subject matter covered throughout the methodology, in order to facilitate the reader's approach to these concepts.

The handbook has been created in such a way that youth workers can be flexible when implementing it with young people and adapt the content according to the group dynamic, the time available, and the circumstances. This means that, although it would be great to apply it in its entirety to get a fuller understanding, it is possible to deliver the individual chapters or activities separately.

As this handbook intends the learning process to be through non-formal education, the youth worker should create the right atmosphere for the work where young people are actively involved. The trainer will act as a guide in the learning process, but it will be the young people who will have to find the outputs by themselves.





# Creating Safe Spaces

To tackle the problem of hate speech, it is important to include the youth who are involved in the project so that they can define it and provide examples from their own lives. In order to do it this way, it is essential to establish a safe space free from criticism, intimidation, shame, or fear so that all participants can speak their minds without fear.

Creating safe spaces where an atmosphere of trust is achieved should always be your first step to be able to deal with controversial issues.

In a safe space is an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully without fear of being attacked, ridiculed, or denied their own experience.

In order to create a safe space, it is important to consider the physical space in which you are going to work. The space should be comfortable and welcoming, allowing participants to feel relaxed, well ventilated, and accessible to all participants. Removing the tables and replacing them with a circle of chairs or couches makes it easier for everyone to see one another and sets the mood for a more social gathering.

It is important not to confuse a safe space with a brave space. A brave space is a concept that refers to an environment where individuals are encouraged to engage in uncomfortable and challenging conversations. It is a space where people are encouraged to think critically, disagree politely, and generally develop their minds

Fostering growth, inclusivity, and *empowerment* are the goals of both safe places and brave spaces. Having said that, they do it from somewhat different perspectives. Encouraging a feeling of safety and security, safe spaces place an emphasis on people's emotional health. Conversely, a brave space promotes intellectual development and the holding of difficult conversations. It encourages people to think critically and consider other points of view.

When it comes to hate speech, this methodology prioritises creating a safe space for people rather than a brave one. This is because these are sensitive topics for young people, and they may not be comfortable enough to confront uncomfortable opinions. Instead, respect is emphasised. Establishing trust requires the facilitator to take on a pivotal role. For this reason, prior to tackling the problem of hate speech, the initial step in this process is to establish a safe working environment.

The best way for a group to foster an environment where members feel comfortable speaking their minds and participating in collective practices on reducing hate speech is to work together to define ground rules. While all opinions must be acknowledged, not all opinions are legitimate, so the group needs to set *boundaries* and conditions.



The facilitator will guide the group to come up with rules and boundaries that everyone can feel safe with. These should be written down throughout the workshop, and participants will have the opportunity to make changes and adaptations as the workshop progresses.

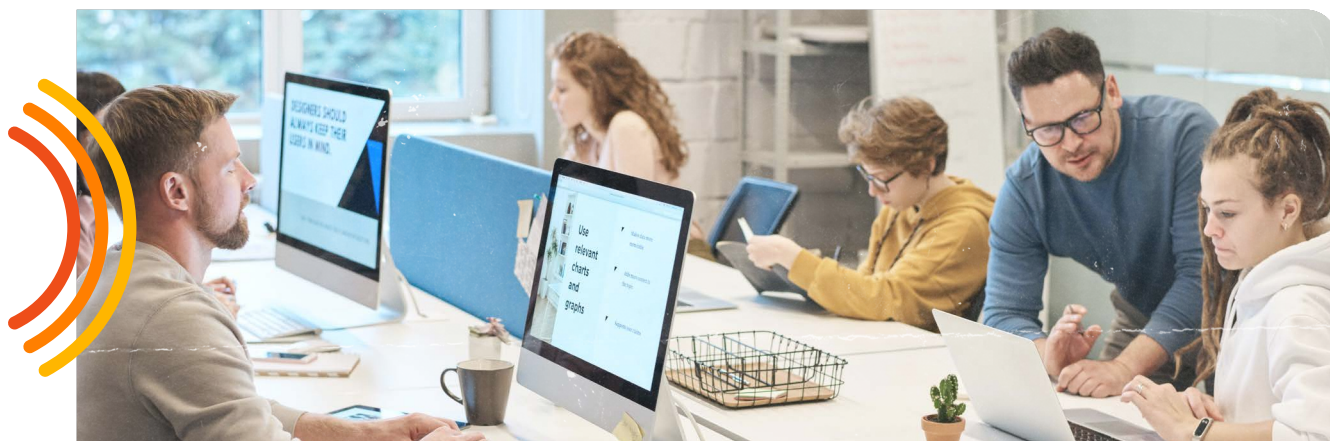
The facilitator can suggest some rules and conditions, such as:

- Respect the turn to speak
- Nothing sexist or homophobic will be tolerated.
- Show consideration for the opinions of all group members.
- Use inclusive language

It may be challenging to establish a safe place, despite best efforts, at times owing to group dynamics, environmental factors, or unforeseen circumstances. When this occurs, it's the facilitator's responsibility to maintain order in the group, pointing out what makes the space safe and avoiding disrespectful or inappropriate comments throughout the session.

It takes time to establish trust, which means that creating a safe space cannot be accomplished in only a few sessions. As you work with the group, it will be an ongoing process. Actually, with only a few sessions, it's next to impossible to create an entirely safe environment. Additionally, as it is a continuous process, there may also be fluctuations, and once the safe space is generated, it can disappear due to some internal conflict.

Consequently, the goal should be to evaluate how safe the safe space is so that youth workers can work towards meeting some of the essential requirements without becoming disheartened if they fall short. This evaluation and your knowledge of your group should guide what activities suit best and what topics can be covered. Furthermore, it is important that every youth worker does their own research on the subject to equip themselves with the knowledge and resources that will enhance their ability to provide a safe environment for adolescents.



## Introducing Hate Speech

Once the basis for a safe space is established, the next step is to make it suitable for discussing hate speech and ways to counter it. This approach suggests having a group activity–debate to define hate speech based on everyone’s input. The goal is to establish a common ground for the group to operate on.

In accordance with Recommendation No. (97) 20 of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers:

«(...) the term ‘hate speech’ shall include all expressions which disseminate, incite, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other types of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination, and hostility against minorities, migrants, and persons with an immigrant background.»

As far as the Council of Europe is concerned, «all forms of expression» encompass not only verbal expression but also visual content such as photos and videos, as well as any other type of online interaction. Cyberbullying is thus a kind of hate speech. Even though there is a formal definition of hate speech, the group you’re working with may not adhere to it entirely. Their perspective will be coloured by their own experiences and realities.

This is why it is important to do this activity every time you work with a new group, as it gives the youth worker a chance to know their own level of topic knowledge and set a good baseline. Furthermore, the definition of hate speech will vary from one group to another due to inherent differences in history, culture, and experience. Consequently, this exercise also makes sure that everyone is on the same page, which is important for moving forward with the training and using the group’s definition as a point of reference in the workshops. Because of this, the role of the facilitator is crucial in this session, as their guiding and reflecting questions will help the youth develop fresh perspectives, ultimately leading to a definition of hate speech that is both comprehensive and specific.

In addition, the topic of privilege should be discussed in relation to hate speech, as these comments are often generated by the most privileged members of society in opposition to the oppressed. Therefore, the aim is to focus on the fact that having privileges does not mean that one person is better or worse than another, but simply that they have more resources to overcome the obstacles that arise in their lives more easily. In this way, the aim is to use these resources as a tool for positive change in the fight against inequality and discrimination.



## Extra resources

### **Creating safe space:**

- [\*Glossary of relevant terms in constructing safe learning spaces in non-formal\*](#)
- [\*The reader will find tips for practitioners to support the creation and maintenance of safe learning spaces in their educational activities\*](#)

### **Introducing hate speech:**

- [\*Bookmarks, a manual for combating hate speech through human rights education\*](#)

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## 2. CONCEPTUAL CHAPTERS



# 2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS

## *What are human rights?*

Did you know that from the moment we're born, we're wired with human rights? These rights, rooted in human dignity and equality, set the stage for living with respect. They're like our shared code, reminding us that no matter who we are, we're all on the same page when it comes to being human. According to the Vienna Declaration, 1993, human rights are: **universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated.**

The idea that people have inherent rights has its roots in many cultures and ancient traditions. It is by no means a «Western idea» or an idea originating from the twentieth century (Marks, 2016). The notion of rights isn't a newfangled thing. It's got roots that stretch back through time and cultures. Ancient Babylon was already putting 'justice rules' on the books around 2000 BC. Plus, ancient Egypt, Persia, and China! They were all about recognising each individual's rights, like the right to life, moving freely, and doing business.

The division of human rights into three generations was initially proposed by Czech jurist Karel Vasak in 1979. Vasak's theories are primarily accepted in European law. Its division follows the three slogans of the French Revolution: **liberty, equality, and fraternity**. Three generations of rights are distinguished in certain articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes first-generation rights as well as those considered second-generation rights. The concept of generations of human rights refers to the categorization of human rights into distinct phases or categories based on historical and developmental perspectives.





### ***First-generation Human Rights (Civil and Political Rights):***

First-generation human rights, sometimes called «blue» rights, encompass civil and political rights that are traditionally associated with individual freedoms and liberties. «First-generation rights are the rights of the individual as a member of society; they are civil and political rights—rights to be free from government interference and rights necessary for political participation.» (Donnelly, 2013). First-generation rights include, among others, the right to life, equality before the law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, property rights, the right to a fair trial, and the right to vote. Some of these rights, such as the right to appropriate treatment by the state body towards the citizen, originate from the Magna Carta of 1215 and the Rights of the English, which are prescribed in the English Bill of Rights from 1689. A more complete list of first-generation human rights is contained in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen from 1789 and the United States Bill of Rights from 1791. These rights on a global level were prescribed and received status in international law in 1948. In Europe, they were incorporated into the European Convention on Human Rights in 1953.

### ***Second Generation Human Rights (Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights):***

Second-generation human rights focus on economic, social, and cultural rights that aim to ensure social justice, equality, and well-being for individuals and communities. «Second-generation rights are the rights of the individual as a member of society; they are economic, social, and cultural rights—rights to be free from the inequalities of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education and health care.» (Donnelly, 2013) These rights are sometimes called «red» rights and belong to the category of positive rights. These are like the architects of a fair society. They make sure everyone gets a fair shot at things like jobs, education, and healthcare. It's all about building up the community.

### ***Third Generation Human Rights (Solidarity Rights):***

Third-generation human rights are collective rights that emphasise solidarity, self-determination, and the rights of marginalised groups and communities. «Third-generation rights recognise that individuals exist in a social context and that their rights are embedded in social relationships; they are rights of peoples and groups, including the right to development, the right to peace, and the rights of indigenous peoples.» (Donnelly, 2013) However, the term third-generation human rights is still used mostly unofficially, just like its often-used synonym «green» rights.

### ***Fourth Generation Human Rights (emerging rights):***

The concept of the **fourth generation** of human rights is a relatively new and evolving concept that expands the understanding of human rights to include environmental rights and sustainable development. «The fourth generation of human rights encompasses the idea that the environment is a fundamental component of human well-being and dignity. It recognises the interdependence between environmental protection, sustainable development, and the realisation of human



rights. This perspective highlights the need to address environmental challenges such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution as human rights issues requiring collective action.» (Alston, 2019)

It's important to note that the concept of generations of human rights is subject to ongoing academic and philosophical debates, and there may be variations in how different scholars and experts categorise and define these generations. Some analysts believe that the fourth generation consists of human rights in relation to new technologies, while others prefer to talk about digital rights such as: The right to a digital existence, the right to digital reputation, the right to a digital identity, the right to digital anonymity, right to privacy (GDPR), etc.

Some point to an important difference between the first three generations of human rights, which refer to human beings as members of society, and the fourth generation of rights, which refers to humans as a species.



## Human rights in youth's lives

Ever heard of freedom of expression? It's like the ultimate right to speak your mind and share your thoughts. But hold up, it's not like a free-for-all. There are some limits, like laws against hate speech. These rules are here to make sure nobody gets hurt or treated unfairly. Think about it like this: when we put the brakes on hate speech, we're actually making sure that our society stays peaceful and everyone gets a fair shot. It's like building a safe space for everyone to thrive, especially those who might face more challenges. So laws against hate speech are great, but it would be even better if no one ever felt the need to communicate hate like that. That's where you come in.



*«Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, and equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.»*

- **Eleanor Roosevelt**, American political leader and activist

Human rights aren't just a concept; they are something very visible in all our lives. The youth you work with need their rights to be respected, and they need to respect other people's human rights. That's one of the reasons that human rights and hate speech are so closely related. The way you and the youth you work with talk can create an atmosphere that is conducive to respect for all human beings and their rights, or not. Hate speech is a way of normalising violence and separating people into 'us' and 'them'. Thinking that the people in the other group are somehow different and more difficult to empathise with and experience as fully human. Can you imagine that you have the power to influence the young people you meet, the leaders of tomorrow, to respect, empathise, and see the human in everyone.



## Taking action in human rights

Now, let's talk about a game-changer: education for human rights! It's all about spreading knowledge, values, and skills that help us respect and fight for human rights. There are three cool ways to learn about it:

- **Learning ABOUT human rights:** You get to know what human rights are all about and why they matter. It's like discovering the rules of being a good human.
- **Learning THROUGH human rights:** You put those rights into action in your own life. It's like becoming a superhero for fairness and respect.
- **Learning FOR human rights:** This is where we all team up. We learn together, stand up for each other, and create a world where everyone's rights are honoured.

In the Activity Handbook complementary to this methodology, you will find a number of activities, both short and long, on the topic of human rights. However, the key ingredient will always be how you lead the activities. Education for human rights is like the secret sauce for creating a world where respect, equality, and dignity are the main ingredients. Imagine having the tools to spot and stand up against unfairness and discrimination? Well, that's what this education does! Education for human rights plays a fundamental role in fostering a culture of respect, equality, and dignity. It equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and address human rights violations and discrimination (Gibson, 2017).

Picture this: when we sprinkle human rights into youth work lessons, it's like giving everyone a pair of empathy glasses. Suddenly, everyone is more aware, more understanding, and way more into celebrating differences. And guess what? This education isn't just about books and facts. Nope, it's about diving deep, asking questions, and having conversations. Basically, getting you and the youth you work with all fired up to change the world. It enables students and young people to critically analyse social issues from a human rights perspective and empowers them to become active global citizens (Andreotti et al., 2019).

And the best part? It's not just a one-way street. You, the youth worker, will learn so much! When everyone's part of the discussion, it's like a brain-power explosion that leads to some pretty amazing solutions. Adopting participatory and inclusive pedagogies in [human rights education](#) fosters engagement, critical thinking, and dialogue among learners (Freire, 2000). So, if you're up for it, there are a whole bunch of creative ways to dive into this world of human rights, whether you choose pre-made activities or develop your own. There are numerous innovative activities and approaches that can engage young people and effectively teach them about human rights.



Here are some examples:

### ***Simulations and Role-Playing:***

Organise simulations and role-playing activities that allow young people to step into the shoes of different individuals experiencing human rights challenges and violations (e.g., migrants, activists, marginalised communities). This helps them develop empathy and a deeper understanding of human rights issues and hate speech.

### ***Artistic Expressions:***

Encourage young people to express their understanding of human rights through various art forms, such as painting, sculpture, music, poetry, or theatre. This allows them to explore human rights themes creatively and engage with them on a personal level.

### ***Community Engagement Projects:***

Encourage young people to identify human rights issues in their local community and design projects to address them. This could include organising awareness campaigns, fundraisers, or volunteering activities. By taking action, they learn about the power of collective efforts and advocacy.

### ***Digital Media and Technology:***

Utilise digital media and technology platforms to engage young people in human rights education and combating hate-speech online. This can involve creating interactive online modules, developing and using educational apps, or organising virtual campaigns and discussions and reporting.

### ***Global Connections and Exchanges:***

Facilitate connections between young people from different cultural backgrounds through youth exchanges, virtual exchanges, or international youth conferences and festivals. Such interactions promote intercultural understanding and provide opportunities for dialogue on human rights. Young people can learn more about human rights through an international cook-off event than in a classical school class!

### ***Storytelling and Personal Narratives:***

Encourage young people to share their personal stories or narratives related to human rights. This can be done through written essays, oral presentations, or multimedia platforms. Sharing stories fosters empathy, encourages critical thinking, and helps young people find their own voice in advocating for human rights and creating counter-narratives.

### ***Gamification and Game-Based Learning:***

Develop educational games or gamified activities that focus on human rights





concepts and challenges. This interactive approach can make learning engaging and enjoyable while also promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

It is important to remember that the choice of activities should consider the age group, cultural context, and the specific human rights issues being addressed. These activities should aim to empower young people to become active agents of change in their communities.

Another great tool that the Council of Europe published are *Bookmarks: Combating Hate Speech Online Through Human Rights Education*, packed with ideas and activities that help you stand up to hate speech using the power of human rights education, and *Compass*, a guidebook for spreading the word about human rights, especially to young people. You can find them in the extra resources section.

Living Library is one of the most innovative and impactful methods for working with human rights education and has been done all over Europe for the past 20 years in different contexts and settings. The Living Library is a tool that seeks to challenge prejudice and discrimination. It works just like a normal library: visitors can browse the catalogue for the available titles, choose the book they want to read, and borrow it for a limited period of time. After reading, they return the book to the library and, if they want, borrow another. Living Library is like a passport to smashing stereotypes. The only difference is that in the Living Library, books are people, and reading consists of a conversation. It's like reading, but with real-life pages.



Following are some of the basic guidelines and practical tips for organising human rights educational activities. It is of the utmost importance to keep participants engaged, interested, and “hooked” by the learning process. When you’re setting up human rights activities, here’s the scoop: keep things engaging and exciting. Think about it as creating a story that’s all about you and your world. It’s like getting to be the director of your own learning adventure!





## How can we facilitate activities for human rights education?

- Help participants see the topic on a broader level.
- Present human rights as a «work in progress.».
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations (or use them if that's the language your group is more familiar with; LOL). Don't get too technical!
- Emphasise a commitment to improving people's lives.
- Do not assume the group's prior knowledge of human rights.
- Constantly stress the importance of the enjoyment of rights, not just the violation of rights.
- During the activity, enable the participants to connect their personal experiences with the basic principles of human rights protection.
- Focus on at least one human rights document.
- Offer options for taking action.
- Distribute materials to participants to keep with them, or send them useful links.



## Extra resources

- [\*The story of human rights – a short educational video\*](#)
- [\*Living Library in Serbia\*](#)
- [\*Living Library\*](#)
- [\*European Living Library for Young Citizens – Let’s Talk About Politics\*](#)
- [\*Best human rights videos\*](#)
- [\*Changing the pattern of dominance behavior\*](#)
- [\*Compass – manual for human rights education with young people\*](#)
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## 2.2 HATE SPEECH

### *What is hate speech?*

Have you ever thought about the impact of hate speech on individuals, communities, and whole nations? It is damaging and has a significant impact. Working with young people allows you to delve into the meaning of hate speech, where it comes from, and how it affects people and communities. There has been a lot of focus on the complicated and controversial topic of hate speech recently. This encompasses «all types of expression that incite, promote, spread, or justify violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status». A person's or group's racial or ethnic background, religious beliefs, language spoken, gender, and expression of that gender are all examples of such traits.

Keep in mind that these traits can be actual or attributable to an individual. As an example, regardless of a person's true religious views, it counts as hate speech if they are verbally abused because their brown complexion is thought to be Muslim. The usage of disparaging slurs like «fag,» which does not necessarily refer to someone's sexual orientation, is another example prevalent in youth culture. Sometimes, it is used to describe a boy or man who has feminine traits; in other cases, it is just used to describe anything negative. The term used here to describe this form of talk is «casual bias-based hate speech,» which will be defined in further detail a little later.

Hate speech is firmly ingrained in human nature and has a lengthy history. Racist and homophobic rhetoric and practises have been around for a long time, and they tend to target already-vulnerable populations. Hate speech has been used by many different cultures to marginalise and oppress others, causing more division and discrimination. Its goals include the dehumanisation of people or groups, the instigation of violence, and the promotion of prejudice based on inborn traits.



Take into account that the phrase «hate speech» does not have a universally accepted definition. Its meaning has varied according to the people who have attempted to define it and the specific circumstances in which they did so. The detrimental impacts of hate speech on the health and development of young people should be the primary concern of youth workers working to eliminate this type of rhetoric. Young people are unable to realise their potential and enjoy life to the fullest because of hate speech. Encouraging constructive dialogue and lessening the impact of



hate speech should, therefore, be among a youth worker's primary objectives.

Being the target of hate speech has the same devastating effects as being a victim of any other kind of violence. People experience dread, nervousness, and social exclusion as a result of its frightening, insulting, humiliating, and demeaning effects. It compromises their physical and mental well-being. Bullying and harassment are serious problems, and most youth professionals have witnessed firsthand the damage they can do to the young people they help. When these factors are combined with bias-based harassment, which might be based on sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, or any other characteristic, the impacts are considerably more pronounced, according to the research.

Many people become afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation when they hear hate speech. Especially for women and ethnic minorities who experience hate speech based on their gender or ethnicity, this repressing effect limits participation in political discussions and debates, undermining [democracy](#). People may be afraid to participate in public political conversations on social [media](#), especially young women, because of the prevalence of hate speech online.



Everyone, not just the people directly targeted, feels the repercussions of hate speech. It could lead to the normalisation of intolerance and the promotion of divisions, which would weaken social cohesiveness and put democratic societies at risk. A person's understanding and emotions can be shaped by hate speech, which in turn can spread feelings of fear, distrust, or hatred towards specific groups. As intolerance gains acceptance, it has the power to influence public opinion and behaviour. This can be seen as particularly true among the younger generation, as they are still developing their sense of identity and learning to communicate. For instance, some participants in research on how young people perceive shouts of violence against women during football games found the violent language acceptable because it was frequent in that setting.

To sum up, hate speech is destructive since it impacts not just the people it directly targets but also their communities and democratic societies as a whole. Its detrimental impacts reduce happiness, impede engagement, and erode community solidarity.





## Hate speech in youth's lives

Rape culture and its manifestations in contemporary society are typically illustrated using the pyramid model, which was initially devised by an organization called the 11th Principle. Hate speech, in all its manifestations and manifestations of frequency, can be better understood by applying this notion.



- 1. Casual bias-based hate speech:** Includes, but is not limited to, statements intended to denigrate a group of people sharing a demographic trait (i.e., jokes, curses, statements built on misinformation, or other).
- 2. *Gaslighting*:** Using possession of power to negate or deny suffering or victimhood of marginalised or powerless groups/individuals.
- 3. *Trolling, doxxing, and harassing*:** Deliberately derailing via provocation, threats, or denigration, debaters or debates.
- 4. Statements promoting violence:** Statements legitimising or even necessitating violence against marginalised groups or individuals belonging to or sharing characteristics with those groups.
- 5. Ideologically motivated assault:** Violence perpetrated specifically to derail specific movements, demographics, etc. from participating in society/democracy.

It is important to clarify that this model does not evaluate the severity of statements within each bracket. Instead, it aims to depict the complex reality of hate speech and hate crime in our society. The lowest bracket, «casual bias-based hate





speech,» might include statements intended to denigrate a person or group of people based on demographic traits. This can include jokes, curses, statements based on misinformation, and more. It is likely the most prevalent form of hate speech, occupying the widest and lowest sections of the pyramid. The fact that misogyny and patriarchal power and abuse are so widespread might have the effect that they are considered the least serious and, for many, might invoke the least emotional response. However, its commonality could also be a reason to consider it more severe, as it potentially has the most profound impact on society.

Each bracket within the pyramid can be similarly analysed in terms of how widespread it is, the severity of its impact on individuals, and its potential effects on society as a whole. You can see that hate speech can take many forms among young people, and that they can also play varied roles when it comes to hate speech. They could be the ones subject to it, the ones hearing it, or even the ones doing it themselves. In order to effectively combat hate speech through youth work, it is essential to take into account the diverse perspectives and unique needs of young people. As you've now learned, hate speech impacts everyone involved, and everybody can have an impact on the conversation.

There has not been enough research into the reasons why young people engage in hate speech. That means that when you engage in prevention with youth on the subject, it is essential to draw on your knowledge and experience as a youth worker. Nonetheless, there is some research that can give a better understanding of the potential motivations for hate speech among youth. Three frequent causes were found in a study that asked young people themselves what motivated them to use hate speech: revenge, social motivations, and ideological motivations. Other less frequently mentioned reasons include power, status, and exhilaration. Revenge was the strongest self-reported motivation. This includes feelings of anger towards those targeted with hate speech and, interestingly, being hurt or annoyed by others than those directly targeted. This suggests that youth who engage in hate speech may find proxies for their frustrations in their chosen targets, which has also been observed in perpetrators of hate crimes.



Social motivations, such as belonging to a certain group or maintaining their position within it, were almost as common. The research supports the experience of many youth workers that young people's perceptions of social norms can motivate them to participate in all sorts of behaviours. There is a connection between hearing hate speech and engaging in it, as well as being the target of it. This suggests that hate speech among adolescents can happen as impulsive acts rather than planned or strategic attempts to effect political or societal change.



Preventive measures should take this into account.

Ideological motivations also emerged as a common theme. One study suggested that youth were more likely to claim perpetrating hate speech due to their «opinions» rather than their «beliefs.» This might imply that youth see themselves as having opinions rather than beliefs, or they may have a limited or different understanding of the term «beliefs» and therefore do not use it. If it is the first one, that offers hope that they can be more easily influenced to change their minds, for example, through teaching critical thinking skills.

As a first step in preventing hate speech, youth workers should try to understand why young people engage in it. So, think about how you can make the youth work environment so that young people don't feel the need to resort to hate speech for personal gain or social status and that they learn about the many forms that hate speech can take.



## Taking action in hate speech

Given the complex nature of hate speech, it is crucial to use a range of measures to combat it among young people. It will require the combined efforts of many parties, such as governments, NGOs, schools, and news organisations. What you need to focus on is how important young people are in this, so it's also important that you are there for them. Youth activism has proven to be a powerful force for social change throughout history. In the context of countering hate speech, young activists play a crucial role in promoting tolerance, inclusivity, and respect within their immediate environments. It can be pretty cool to see youth and young activists work towards preventing and shutting down hate speech.

It is clear that hate speech is a complex phenomenon. That means you have to get creative! Use lots of different ways to support your youth in their actions against hate speech. First of all, they need to understand what it is and what it does. There is also the fact that you are in the perfect position to foster the empathy and well-being of youth who might become perpetrators, the confidence of those who have the potential to stop it, and the health and emotional support of youth who get targeted. To be successful, your prevention work will need to take all of this into account.



The work you do will need to be somewhat personalised. Before you start reading this next section, it would be good to take some time and reflect on your group and the needs of the individuals within it. What demographics are you working with? How is the group dynamic? What are the strengths of the individuals that make up the group? What support might they need? Keeping the answers to these questions in mind when you read through suggestions of what might be done to prevent hate speech will help you choose what is right for your group or the individuals you work with.

As a youth worker, leading reflective conversations and sharing insights and knowledge on the subject are important aspects of your work. However, it is crucial to recognise that young people themselves can be the best source for understanding the challenges they face and the injustices that need to be addressed. Remember, you will probably be learning just as much as them.





Creating an environment where young people can educate each other is essential. Giving those who are the targets of hate speech and those who are eager to fight for a more just society a voice empowers them to act as social change agents. Young people can organise workshops, seminars, and campaigns to inform their peers about the consequences of hate speech, its impact on individuals and communities, and the importance of fostering inclusive dialogue.

It is important for youth workers to provide opportunities for each young person to find their own way of contributing to countering hate speech. Some might want to organise events or campaigns, while others may focus on developing skills to respond to hate speech in their closest environment. The most important thing is to include as many as possible and that each young person finds a way that suits them to be an agent for social change. By sharing their knowledge and opinions, youth and young activists lay the foundation for empathy, critical thinking, and active participation in countering hate speech.

If you have not read the chapter about safe spaces, now is the time to do that! Safe spaces and brave spaces are super important if you want to talk about hate speech. Youth might just be engaging in hate speech for social reasons, to fit in, or to keep their status within a group. One of the ways to prevent this is to make the space safer by using counter-speech. That means that not only is hate speech not given the space to thrive, but it is actively countered. Hateful statements are answered in a decisive manner without resorting to bad language or name-calling. Talk about the situations and views of groups that are likely to be subject to hate speech before it happens.

As you will remember, another reason youth are named as reasons for hate speech is revenge. If you provide possible perpetrators with safe spaces and the opportunity to discuss what is on their mind, you will potentially also lessen their motive to seek revenge.

Creating an environment like this through youth work can also be a role model for youth to facilitate safe spaces within their own environments, like at school, at home, with their peer groups, or on online platforms.

Youth activism also has the potential to influence change at local, national, and international levels. Advocating for better hate speech laws and policies is one way that young activists can help shape lawmakers' priorities. They can bring attention to the issue by taking part in public debate, writing letters to elected officials, posting on social media, or organising protests. Youth activists' collective voice has the power to shape the narrative surrounding hate speech and influence systemic change.

Young people are capable of changing the world, and youth workers are in the privileged position of being there to empower them to do it. Together with the youth you work with, look at the stories of young people's voices who have changed the world in big and small ways and find the way they want to have an impact.





## Extra resources

- [Rape Culture Pyramid](#)

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## 2.3 ONLINE HATE SPEECH

### *What is online hate speech?*

What is, exactly, online hate speech, and how is it different from other hate speech? The Council of Europe defines online hate speech pretty much the same as offline hate speech; it can, at its core, be understood as «all types of expression that incite, promote, spread, or justify violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status.». The fact that intolerance happens through online media and tools instead of traditional media or in real life is what makes it uniquely online. When you think about how important being online is to younger generations, it makes sense that hate speech online could have just as bad of an effect as hate speech offline.



When referring to ‘personal characteristics’ in the definition above, what is meant are legally protected characteristics such as race, nationality/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Targeting these demographic traits in a malicious manner online would be considered online hate speech. Because of this, not all forms of offensive behaviour online are considered hate speech. Online abuse or bullying may include hate speech, but it’s not a must because the speech may be directed at things other than protected traits.

Even though there are clear similarities between offline and online hate speech, the transition from one arena to the other makes a big difference. Form is one way it can be different; offline hate speech is most often committed through vocal speech, while online hate speech is frequently in written form or visual creations such as pictures, memes, GIFs, etc. This shape shift, so to speak, expands the opportunities and risks of quickly sharing and storing stuff. For example, it is very easy to plug-and-play a hateful meme in different contexts. When used in different situations, a meme can change its meaning, making it more or less hateful depending on the person who sees it, the situation, and the intention behind it.

The online world also brings up new problems when it comes to how to properly apply basic democratic ideals. There might be talks about the limits of free speech or the difference between what is private and what is public. In Denmark, for example, it is illegal to discriminate against people because of their race, nationality or culture,



gender, sexual orientation, or disability in public. But it is not illegal to make racist comments in private (even if it's a pretty terrible thing to do). The legal difference between public and private, on the other hand, is much harder to understand online. Which area do secret chat groups that are closed belong to? Some could get dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of people to join. How would you feel if something shared online, like a message or a joke, was later moved to a public space? When someone with a private page shares something with 300 friends, is it public or private?

Intention is another important topic to talk about when talking about online hate speech. Is communication that is meant to be hateful, discriminatory, harassing, or threatening enough to be called hate speech, or does it only need to be received that way? How much of the hatefulness of certain words will always come with saying the word? What do settings do? For instance, is it hate speech when it is considered friendly bantering in a group of friends to call each other gay, hoe, or bitch?

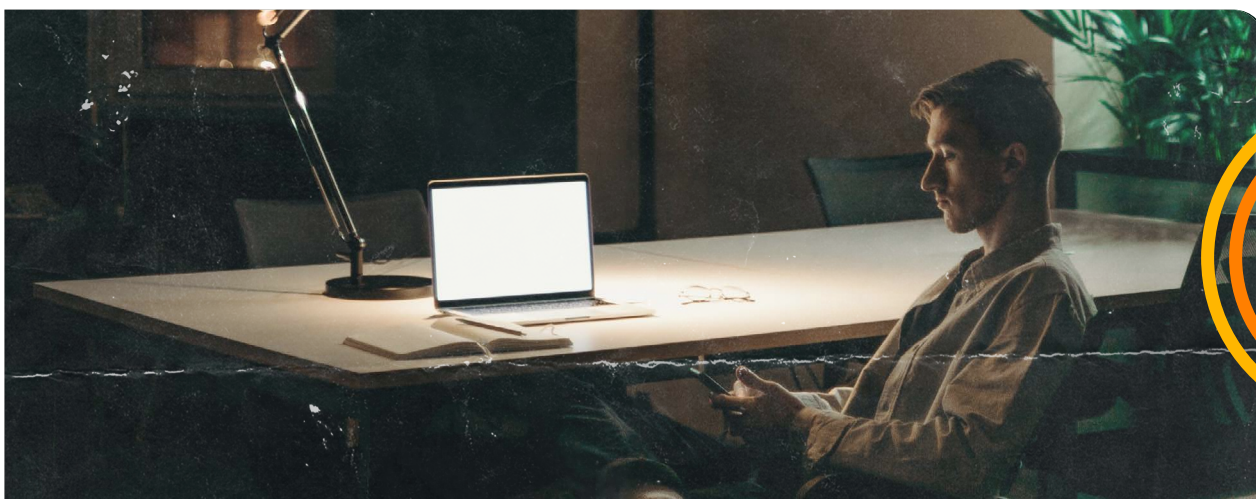
People are likely to have different thoughts and opinions about these kinds of questions, but they are real problems that a lot of people aren't aware of or haven't thought about.



## Online hate speech in youth's lives

Online hate speech can show up in many forms in the lives of young people: In online public debate, closed forums, private chats, gaming, etc. In most instances, they will be bystanders, while in others, they may become victims and/or perpetrators. This part of the chapter will talk about two types of online hate speech that have to do with youth culture. First, there's the fact that online hate speech can be very vague and ambiguous. Second, the possibility of slowly crossing lines or moving boundaries by taking part in or being exposed to toxic online culture.

Online hate speech and its impact on youth culture are complicated for many reasons, but one of the most important is the inherent ambiguity of the communication. We need an exploratory and nuanced approach if we want to understand what is going on because young people often justify what could be seen as rude, unpleasant expressions, or even hate speech as jokes. This in no way implies that offensive language should be rationalised or condoned! It just means that we would gain an awful lot if we could go beyond the surface-level meaning of certain terms.



The meaning of a sentence or a meme can change radically, even switching from one pole to another, according to the specific context, intent, facial expression, tone, relationship between sender and recipient, etc. All of these aspects have a greater potential to 'misfire' online, as recipients are often left with less information from the sender than in face-to-face communication, and both time and context may change between sending and receiving. The private-public nexus mentioned earlier adds to this as communication between two parties, who might understand the subtle meanings of the expressions, can at the same time be observed by others who might not understand the same expressions similarly.

The ambiguity can at the same time be used as a deliberate strategy to communicate hateful messages, all totally under the radar, with the backdoor option of pretending not to know if someone calls you out on it. All this ambiguity makes us





think about what kinds of things should be called hate speech online. Is it hate speech if someone hears something that wasn't meant to be hateful but is taken that way, maybe by someone who wasn't involved in the conversation when it happened? Of course, this relies on the specific case, observer, and so on.

The fact that many of us are online most days makes it hard to completely avoid being exposed to hate speech online. This is because people may gradually push the limits of what is acceptable. There is obviously more hate speech on some sites and groups than on others, but anyone who looks for news, plays games, or talks to other people online may be exposed to it. In general, hate speech might hurt people the same way other kinds of violence do: it can make people anxious, make them avoid social situations, and make it harder for some groups to vote, like women and people of colour, to name a few. It could also have less obvious effects, like changing values and pushing limits over time. People may become so used to rude language that they don't see it as strange anymore.



You don't have to be a genius to realise that a gradual effect like that could be very profound. People actually internalise radical political views in this way. Of course, that doesn't always happen, but it's pretty common that people pick up and use language that is also common in radical political circles without really believing what it means. Nevertheless, in this way, youth and anyone else can really become 'hardened' and come to participate in a collective toxic online culture. In relation to adults raising the alarm on hate speech, to certain youth, it can be hard to comprehend why a misogynic

joke is 'worse' than harsh memes of babies with cancer and videos of people dying in traffic. Whether actual political views or language portraying the transgressive are at play might follow patterns in relation to age groups. Youth from the age of around 10 may primarily be looking for the thrill of the transgressive, while it is relatively more plausible that, in some cases, late teens could actually be expressing personal views.



## *Taking action in online hate speech*

Now for the exciting part! You and the youth you work with can really have an influence in online spaces, maybe even more than in other spaces.

People who work with young people should also be concerned about stopping and dealing with hate speech because it can affect their health and their ability to participate in politics. Still, there isn't a lot of writing about how to stop and/or deal with everyday hate speech online, especially when it comes to youth work.

Teenagers may think that hate speech is just a normal part of the internet and that people, not the tech industry or governments, need to do the most to change this if it's to be changed at all. The Center for Digital Youth Care held three classes where a random poll of 834 Danish primary school students ages 13 to 16 was given. Ninety percent of those surveyed said that they themselves were responsible for fighting hate speech. While 53% pointed the finger at the tech industry, 30% pointed the finger at parents, 28% at politicians, and 25% at schools.

Some young people may not realise that things could be different, so as a youth worker, you have an important role in helping them realise that their rights should be respected online the same as everywhere else. That's why it's important to teach young people how to spot hate speech when they see it online and give them tools and knowledge to shut it down. Knowing how algorithms work is a way to stop people from passively contributing to hate speech online. For example, not clicking on or watching content that you know will be offensive and upsetting keeps the content from getting more attention. Another way to take a stand is to leave forums that share offensive material.

But in real life, things aren't always that easy. If you love playing video games, you won't stop just because some other gamers use hateful language. Reporting hate speech or material can help with some problems, but it's not as effective as, for example, addressing hate speech in face-to-face communication.

In order to talk about all this effectively with the youth you work with, don't try to pretend that complicated issues are simple. For approaches and advice to help, they need to be realistic and not put too much pressure on each young person to solve a problem that is essentially a group issue.

For example, in general violence prevention, research from the US has shown that instead of trying to change people's minds, it's more likely to focus on improving their social and emotional skills. Youth who have better emotional control and problem-solving skills are better prepared to deal with stressful scenarios. Regarding online hate speech, other researchers have made similar points. Being able to work on and improve the skills listed above can help people stop participating in hate speech.



## Extra resources

- [If you want to know more about how to educate on online hate speech, the previous EU project SELMA - Hacking Hate is a good place to start](#)

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## 2.4. DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION

### *What are democracy and participation?*

Democracy—that's like parliamentary elections and stuff, right? Yes, it is, but it's also so much more. A democracy is a form of political system or a system of decision-making within a country, school, youth centre, or anywhere else in which all members have an equal share of power. Democracy can also be considered an ideal, a value, an ideology, and an approach to sharing decision-making processes among a variety of social actors and participants. Democratic values and democracy as a political system are rooted in the mythology of Ancient Greece and Ancient Greek philosophy (think of people like Aristotle), where city-states were first recorded and voting democratically has first been recorded (at least in Western civilization).

Democratic values are key and underpinning principles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1989), with the UN focusing its efforts broadly across promoting and upholding the human rights, development, peace, and security of its member and non-member countries. In 2000, the UN Committee for Human Rights recommended a series of legislative, institutional, and practical measures to help establish democracy as a major, prominent focus for sustainable development across the globe. These measures were adapted further by the UN Commission on Human Rights that in 2002, the following points were *listed* as essential for human flourishing, democratic participation and equality in democratic societies. (UN, 2023)

- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of expression and opinion
- Access to power and its exercise in accordance with the rule of law
- The holding of periodic free and fair elections by universal suffrage and by secret ballot as the expression of the will of the people
- A pluralistic system of political parties and organisations
- The separation of powers
- The independence of the judiciary
- Transparency and accountability in public administration
- Free, independent and pluralistic media





The promotion of human rights and children's rights, including the importance of free speech, equality, and respect for diversity, are key elements in promoting a democratic society.

Furthermore, in order to have a democracy, you need to have participation.

Democracy and participation are two key concepts and underpinning principles of most societies and are founded on the beliefs and values of equality, fairness, power sharing, and active contributions to the communities and societies we are part of. Youth participation in democratic processes can range from engaging in formal to informal participation in different social networks, politics, education, and beyond.



Hart (1992:5) refers to democratic participation as:

- 'The process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives'
- 'The means by which democracy is built'
- 'A standard against which democracies should be measured'
- 'Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.'

In the view of the academic theorists discussed in this chapter and through our own practise as youth educators and activists, young people are viewed as **agents of change**, and furthermore, young people are viewed **as active citizens within communities who make positive contributions within society.**

The United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) states: 'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' That means that children and youth under 18 '**have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account**' and that grown ups have a responsibility to help them do that.



When people participate in their societies, it's called civic engagement. That and social activism have the potential to reframe our societies and communities for equality, anti-discrimination, the promotion of inclusive values and approaches, and raising awareness on issues that affect diverse community members. Civic engagement, or civic participation, is any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern. Civic engagement includes communities working together or individuals working alone in both political and non-political actions to protect public values or make a change in a community. This is part of the reason why you should be thinking of democracy when you address hate speech in your work with youth.



As mentioned before, being subject to hate speech has the effect of silencing people. This means participating less in social and political debate and having less readiness and ability to engage in civic engagement, activism, or politics. This alone will have a detrimental effect on democracy. Add to the fact that some people and groups are much more subject to hate speech than others. This will create an uneven basis for participating in democracy.

This will especially affect those who belong to more than one marginalised group. Intersectionality is a complicated term, but it's very important to explore with youth for them to understand both their own situation and others. Intersectionality is a way of understanding how the world around us and society around us can work, specifically for some groups of people and against other groups. To understand life as intersectional is to understand that our social location, identity, characteristics, and opportunities are bound up within one another and can impact our opportunities in life, how we are treated, and how we are able to exercise democratic decision-making in our lives.



## Democracy in youth's lives

Explanations for what democracy and intersectionality are may all seem very theoretical, but both manifest very clearly in young people's lives. The social identities, locations, and characteristics related to a person, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nation of origin, ability, age, etc., are all tangled with who you are as a person, and they are all tangled with each other. Intersectionality is the many ways in which a person's identity can intersect, overlap, and actually compound experiences of disadvantage and discrimination for individuals and groups in society.



So the youth you are working with might seem very similar to you; they might have similar interests, talk about the same things, and listen to the same music. But their different backgrounds and experiences make them all different people, and often people will treat them differently based on the differences they see and not the similarities they share.

An example of intersectionality comes from the Centre for Intersectional Justice (CISJ), where they state that “when a Muslim woman wearing the hijab is being discriminated against, it would be impossible to dissociate her female from her Muslim identity and to isolate the dimension(s) causing her discrimination”. Another helpful resource that discusses the contemporary example of intersectionality in Europe is available from the Centre of Intersectional Justice and discusses how taking an intersectional approach (like practising and enacting inclusive democracy) can empower young people to make positive change in society.

The CISJ factsheet states: “An intersectional approach creates an opportunity to evaluate which systemic inequities have resulted in opportunities for some and not others. It recognises that every individual experiences privileges and disadvantages due to their inherently complex identities, yet offers a perspective to explore what role everyone can take to cultivate an environment that could benefit from a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”. When youth are treated differently, it affects their ability to participate in their societies, hindering some and enabling others.

The goal of youth participation is that young people come together to exercise their freedom to take collective action on matters that are important to them; namely, young people act as agents of change when challenging issues of discrimination, inequity, human rights injustices, and hate crimes. Democracy and participation are two key concepts and underpinning principles of both historic and contemporary

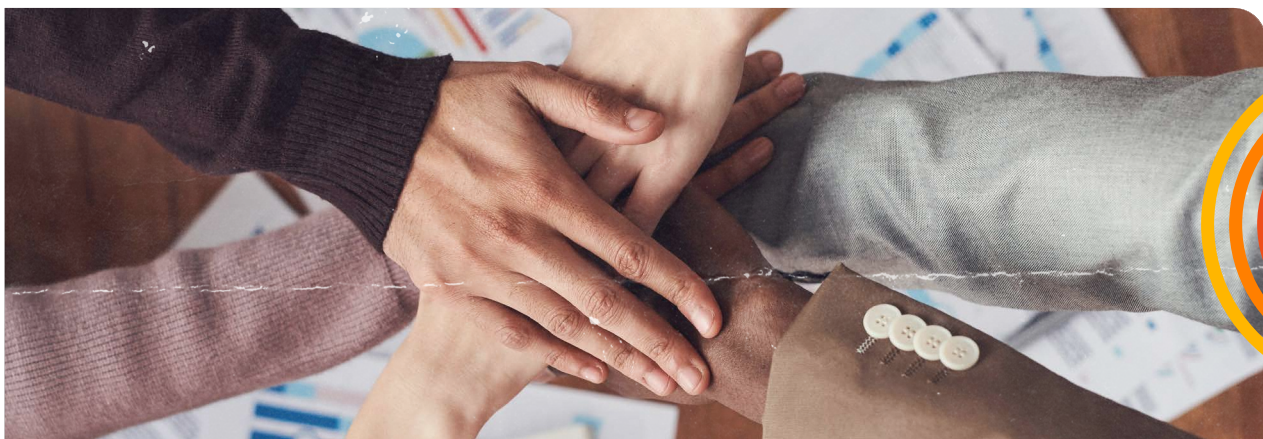




societies and are founded on the beliefs and values of equality, fairness, power sharing, and active contributions to the communities and societies we are part of. Youth participation in democratic processes can range from engaging in formal to informal participation in different social networks, politics, education, and beyond. Children and young people are agents of their own lives, with their own thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas, and dreams. Upholding these ideas and taking action on them is held by adults who support and look after children and young people in a variety of contexts; this also means youth workers.

Youth participation and youth empowerment are inextricable from one another, meaning there cannot be youth empowerment without participation, and there cannot be true participation with young people holding a balance of power (with adults and other young people in society). Fitzimons and colleagues (2011), in their book 'Empowerment and Participation in Youth Work', discuss how "In today's society, many young people feel marginalised and unable to find their own voice. It is vital, therefore, that youth workers and educators are able to work with them to tackle this in a meaningful way.". Young people can be supported through active citizenship, engagement and participation activities to democratically and meaningfully exert power over their own lives.

Young people's citizenship experiences can be affected by overt and covert forms of power (these can be visible or invisible and can vary depending on the country or context). Young people are mostly subject to 'adult' discourses, ideas, rules, and regulations, while at the same time being expected to carry out certain adult responsibilities and entitlements over which they have little power.



Empowerment can be described as exercising power through forms of personal efficacy and decision-making and can involve processes at different levels. Some of these levels can be individual and collective (with other people) and can happen in different local, national, and international contexts. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has described youth empowerment as "promoting fully inclusive governance, increasing youth participation in decision-making, ramping up youth employment, engaging youth in peacebuilding and gender equality programmes, and ensuring youth are a part of the Sustainable Development Goals integration, implementation, and monitoring".





Digital citizenship and online participation are a contemporary and interactive way for young people and adults to participate and engage in a democratic way over social justice issues and environmental and political concerns.

Farrow (2018) has discussed some examples of this, which can be related to:

- e-voting or online participatory budgeting can be mechanisms for public participation that young people can engage in.
- Online platforms often facilitate social movements and social justice causes for different members of different communities.
- *Digital* technology provides greater individual personalisation of services and is a mechanism by which young people can connect and build confidence, agency, and alliances locally and internationally.

Farrow (2018) cites the work of Newsom (2013), which discusses contemporary and online ways of citizenship bolstered by:

“New technology offers a genuinely new way of reaching people, supporting their participation, and providing real-time responses, resolutions, and rewards.”

The role of social media platforms and online spaces can offer ways for young people to engage in civic dialogue and debate, including participating in social activism movements and connecting with other young people across the globe. An example of digital citizenship comes from the international organisation ‘One Young World’. This organisation holds a Youth Leadership Summit every year, bringing young people together in person and digitally through an annual conference and online activities.

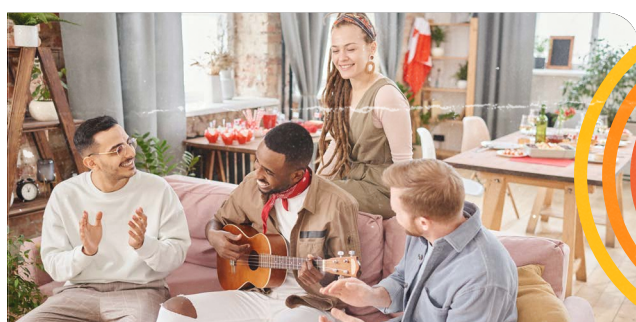


## Taking action in democracy and participation

It's often said that young people are the future! Well, as youth workers, you have a pivotal role in ensuring that young people are aware of their rights to be able to equally and meaningfully participate in and contribute to society. Youth have been pivotal in making changes to societies, from Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai to the NAACP Youth Council. Youth civic engagement and social activism are essential to reframe our societies and communities for equality, anti-discrimination, the promotion of inclusive values and approaches, and raising awareness on issues that affect diverse community members. Civic engagement, or civic participation, is any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern. To do this, they need encouragement, support, and education.

Some tools and methods for engaging young people in democratic participation within their local communities in areas that they are interested in and that affect them are using creative methodologies to engage in critical discussions about the world around them. Some examples include:

- Music
- Dance
- Drama
- Poetry and songwriting
- Participatory photo voice (using a camera and photos to have dialogue on certain issues or themes).



These youth work and community-based methodologies have all been shown to be effective mediums for encouraging young people to reflect on their experiences and engage in critical discussions with others (including adults) about their lives, ideas, and perceptions. This can help young people develop their own agency and strive for positive change, both individually and collectively.

Some important points for youth workers to remember when facilitating or engaging in democratic participatory activities with young people are:

- **Participation is a process**, not a one-off event; it is a sustained process of engaging young people in decision-making
- **Participation happens at multiple levels:** individual, local, regional, national and global
- **Participation is about power—sharing** the distribution of power from and between those that typically control the process with those they seek to engage.



Civic engagement can be expanded upon to include models and approaches to social activism. Social activism is a particular form of civic engagement that is usually aligned with a socio-political or socio-economic cause that affects individuals and groups within society. Social activism is a more overt form of civic engagement, whereby social activists seek to impact and, at times, disrupt societal norms in order to foster more equitable approaches. Social activism is inherently linked to social movements and causes and can be described as the practice of working towards the reform of institutions, behaviours, relations, and expectations in society. To achieve their particular goals, social activists aim to affect political policy, build new institutions or organisations, or encourage individuals to change their behaviours directly.



Examples of social activism can be wide-ranging and can encompass a variety of approaches, from engaging with political and social movements (like the Yes movement in Northern Ireland around changing the laws on abortion) to public displays of artwork (like the social commentary of Banksy and other graffiti artists). Social activism can also involve engaging in protest movements (both in person and online), attending rallies and protests, signing petitions, lobbying members of parliament, engaging with issues on social media, creating social activist music and songs, or working for social movements like charities. Social activism is linked to the concepts of agency and social justice, with these two concepts and experiences being brought together for the benefit of people in society to create a more fair and just world.

Social activism is about taking action and participating in issues that affect individuals and can be looked at historically through the lens of the Suffragist and feminist movements (like MeToo), civil rights campaigns, and the recent Black Lives Matter protests globally. Social activism and youth/young people have been described in a BBC article as: “Activism has long been synonymous with youth culture. From the **May 1968 protests in France** and **demonstrations against the Vietnam War** and **the Civil Rights Movement** in the US to **the global Occupy movement** and **the Arab Spring** of the late noughties, young people have a record of pushing forward social change. Gen Z is the latest chapter in the decades-long encyclopaedia of young activists; however, this cohort appears to communicate, mobilise, and rally support in a way that sets them apart from the generations before them.



**Youth Link Scotland** has developed **seven national outcomes** for youth workers, youth organisations and **young people** to work towards in the **process of promoting empowerment, participation, democracy and leadership**. These outcomes are as follows:

- **Outcome 1:** Young people build their health and wellbeing
- **Outcome 2:** Young people develop and manage relationships effectively
- **Outcome 3:** Young people create and apply their learning and describe their skills and achievements
- **Outcome 4:** Young people participate safely and effectively in groups and teams
- **Outcome 5:** Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- **Outcome 6:** Young people grow as active citizens, expressing their voice and enabling change
- **Outcome 7:** Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

## Extra resources

- [Manual for Human Rights Education with young people](#)
- [What does democracy mean to young people?](#)





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# 3. CONCLUSION



## Conclusion

This methodology has been our roadmap through the intricate landscape of hate speech, where we started by setting the stage for open discussions on this challenging topic. As we navigated through the conceptual chapters covering human rights, hate speech, its online manifestations, and its impact on democracy and participation, we unearthed valuable insights crucial for the application of this approach.

The exploration of human rights served as a reminder that beneath the jargon lies the fundamental principle of treating everyone with dignity and equality. Understanding the interconnectedness of hate speech with human rights provides a solid foundation for an effective response.

The deep dive into the world of hate speech, both offline and online, shed light on the evolving challenges presented by digital platforms. In this digital era, adapting strategies to combat the spread of hate speech online is essential. This methodology encourages a collaborative and proactive approach, utilizing both technological innovations and community-driven initiatives to address the issue in virtual spaces.

Furthermore, the examination of hate speech's implications for democracy and participation emphasized the delicate balance required to preserve democratic values while protecting marginalized communities. The erosion of these values in the face of hate speech calls for a robust response that upholds the integrity of democratic institutions and safeguards the rights of all citizens.

When you put into practice the knowledge gained from this methodology, the focus is on you, the youth worker, the agent of change in this equation. Take these ideas and apply them in your work with young people, adapting it to the needs of your group. Create spaces where open dialogue thrives, guide critical thinking and empower young people to stand up against hate speech. Together, let's forge a future where respect and understanding trump hate, and where all voices are valued.

## Evaluation

The evaluation of the learning process should be a continuous task for the trainers, from the beginning to the end of the session, as it allows them to adapt the contents and activities to the group, both to their pace of work and to the way of approaching them, in order to obtain the greatest impact on the participants.

A fundamental role in the evaluation process is to measure the final impact that the training has had on the participants. For this purpose, a series of evaluation activities are carried out, as proposed below and can be found in the complementary activity handbook.



Once the implementation of the modules has been completed, either fully or partially, it is advisable to evaluate the knowledge acquired during the workshop. This part of the process should have the same importance as the rest of the content, as evaluating the knowledge acquired is what allows participants to be aware of the learning process carried out, to monitor their evolution, and to realise the inputs acquired as well as their areas for improvement.

When a person evaluates what they have learned, they have to put in place memory mechanisms that allow them to consolidate the knowledge. This happens because initially, learning is stored in short-term memory, but once this knowledge is reviewed, accessed, and neural relationships are established between the new knowledge, it becomes part of long-term memory, thus making learning truly meaningful.

In order to carry out the evaluation of a workshop where the activities from the handbook are implemented, a session of 1 hour and 10 minutes is proposed in which, through two activities and a group reflection, participants can visualise the learning path they have followed and their level of confidence to address the issue of hate speech and confront it after the workshop.

For this purpose, a first individual activity is proposed in which each young person has to select from a template the character that best represents their position or feeling towards hate speech after the workshop, e.g., “I’m feeling confident when combating hate speech» or “I am aware of hate speech but feel afraid of combating it.”. The second activity consists of a group activity where, by using the groups’ memories, participants assist each other in remembering details of their learning path and recalling important elements of that experience.

After that, participants are asked to have a group discussion to reflect on what they have learned, how they feel, and how they can use this knowledge for their future. The full activity can be found in the complementary activities handbook, together with the other activities designed to address hate speech throughout the chapters of this volume.

## Extra resources

- [\*The power of reflection in youth work\*](#)
- [\*Handbook “Valued by You, Valued by Others”\*](#)





## Glossary

- **Active listening:** communication skill that involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks but also seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind them. It requires being an active participant in the communication process.
- **Advocacy:** Efforts to influence policymakers and promote policy changes through activities such as public consultations, letter-writing campaigns, and protests.
- **Boundaries (psychological):** The standard by which we want people to treat us.
- **Counter-speech:** Responding to hate speech with decisive and constructive statements that challenge and counteract hateful narratives without resorting to bad language or name-calling.
- **Democracy:** Democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them (direct democracy) or by their elected agents under a free electoral system (representative democracy).
- **Digital literacy:** Skills needed to critically evaluate online content, identify false information, and engage in respectful online communication.
- **Discrimination:** It occurs when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment
- **Diversity:** The condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organisation.
- **Doxxing:** Revealing or publishing private or personal information about an individual without their consent, often with the intention of harassment or harm.
- **Empathy:** The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, which can help counter hate speech and promote understanding.
- **Empowered/Empowerment:** The process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights
- **European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR):** (European Convention, European Convention on Human Rights), a regional human rights treaty adopted in 1950 by the Council of Europe.
- **European Court of Human Rights:** situated in Strasbourg, it is a supra-national court, established by the European Convention on Human Rights, which provides legal recourse of last resort for individuals who feel that their human rights have been violated by a contracting party to the Convention.



- **First-generation rights:** the rights which were generally accepted as human rights in the 17th–18th Centuries. They include all civil and political human rights such as the right to vote, right to life and liberty, and freedoms of expression, religion, and assembly.
- **Gaslighting:** Using power to negate or deny the suffering or victimhood of marginalized or powerless groups/individuals.
- **Gender:** A social construct that informs roles, attitudes, values and relationships between women and men. While sex is determined by biology – the biological differences between men and women – gender is determined by society; almost always functioning to subordinate women to men.
- **Harassing:** Engaging in persistent, unwanted behavior to intimidate, annoy, or harm someone emotionally or psychologically.
- **Hate Speech:** All types of expression that incite, promote, spread, or justify violence, hatred, or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status.
- **Human Rights Education:** Knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- **Inalienable:** refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken from them under any circumstances.
- **Inclusion:** Respecting and valuing diverse identities and experiences, and enabling full participation of everyone.
- **Indivisible:** refers to the importance of seeing all human rights as part of an undividable and inseparable whole. A person cannot be denied a particular human right on the grounds that it is “less important” than another or “non-essential”.
- **Leader:** A transformational leader possesses the qualities of building a good vision and stays committed towards success.
- **Marginalized voices:** The perspectives and experiences of individuals or groups who have been historically excluded or disadvantaged, and whose voices need to be amplified and heard to challenge discriminatory narratives.
- **Media literacy:** The ability to critically analyze and evaluate media messages, including those that perpetuate hate speech, in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the media landscape.



- **Non-formal education (NFE):** refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, that happen outside the formal educational curriculum, including in youth organizations. NFE is complementary to formal and informal learning.
- **Online hate speech:** Spreading hate through the use of online media and technologies as opposed to traditional media or in the physical world.
- **Participation:** Participation goes beyond the political processes – though that is often the prime focus – and can include decision-making in healthcare, the workplace, education, and within social and economic life.
- **Personal characteristics:** Legally protected characteristics such as race, nationality/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability.
- **Safe Space:** an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of being attacked, ridiculed or denied their own experience.
- **Second-generation rights:** the rights which entered popular discourse around the beginning of the 20th century mainly encompassing economic, social and cultural rights, such as an adequate standard of living, health care, housing and education.
- **Third-generation rights:** rights, not easily classified as either civil-political or social-economic, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. They include the right to a healthy environment, the right to peace, the right to development, and the right to natural resources.
- **Trolling:** Deliberately provoking, threatening, or denigrating others online to derail debates or discussions.
- **Universality:** The principle that all human rights are held by all persons in all states and societies in the world.
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):** (Universal Declaration); adopted by the general assembly on December 10, 1948. The primary UN document establishing human rights standards and norms. All member states have agreed to uphold the UDHR.
- **Values:** A value is a belief about a desirable goal that motivates action and serves as a guiding principle in life across many situations. Values have a normative prescriptive quality about what should be done or thought.
- **Youth activism:** The engagement of young people in activities and efforts aimed at promoting social change, inclusivity, and respect, including advocacy, protests, and raising awareness.

