Welcoming remarks

Victor Negrescu, MEP, S&D, joins via a pre-recorded message, reiterating his commitment to tackle challenges, such as cyberbullying, through education. More visibility is needed on cyberbullying considering that one in three individuals reported experiencing instances of cyberbullying. As a form of violence, it remains hidden and current pressures made by the civil society and legislators on companies have led to more pledges and codes of conduct being developed. However, MEP Negrescu highlights that this is insufficient. Education institutions must discuss the effects of it and how it can be prevented, while learners are protected. MEP Negrescu reminds participants of the European Parliament report on Shaping Digital Education Policy, for which he was the rapporteur, as it has foreseen actions to tackle cyberbullying. The European Commission is leading its campaign: Better Internet for Kids. These actions led to recommendations to EU Member States, however, this needs to be translated into action. Now, more than ever, partnerships are required among companies, parents, platforms and those affected by cyberbullying to support legislators in building up regulations at local, national and European level. As more people are online, cyberbullying can only proliferate further and the youth is not safe online. Without harming the freedom of participation online, more work needs to be done on regulations and self-regulation. For this reason, there is a better need for psychological counseling for those affected by it while support phone lines need to be mainstreamed. MEP Negrescu is advancing a project in the European Parliament on a network of psychologists in education institutions and he further advises on the implementation of media literacy campaigns, reporting illegal behaviour online and teaching modules for educators and parents. The civil society can contribute by analysing the situation, identifying the means needed and work together with the EU on a European-wide monitoring mechanism for cyberbullying. Now is the time for action and the European Parliament and MEP Victor Negrescu are committed to play their part in eradicating cyberbullying and equipping people with the needed tools to cope with it.

Presentation of the #YouthAgainstCyberbullying project – Carsten Andersen, FIC, Project Coordinator

Carsten Andersen greets and thanks the participants as well as MEP Victor Negrescu, stressing the importance of having engaged politicians for a real follow up on the project results. Representing the project coordinator, Carsten praises all the partners of the consortium for the work done over the years to achieve today's results. He underlines that at the time of the application, in 2019, cyberbullying was just emerging as a concept in the public debate, and for this reason the project was based on the direct engagement of the youth, as this is the group of people who experienced it first. This is why during the Conference the floor will be given directly to them, he explains, and notably to the frontrunners of this project. They have been involved in national activities to test and contribute to the educational tools of this project, such as the dedicated app and the online platform. Multiplier events are still taking place this summer to further the dissemination of the project and, although the project is technically ending this year, its results indicate that continuing its dissemination is essential, as they proved to be very relevant and pertinent for the target group.

Fabien Degoulet CÉMEA

Introduced by Carsten, Fabien presents the two main outputs of the project: the online platform and the mobile application. He then explains the objectives of these tools, which consist of clarifying the definition of cyberbullying and in providing useful resources such as good practices, educational tools, links and contacts to know how and where to seek help for young people experiencing cyberbullying. All these resources are available in the language of the countries involved in the consortium (Croatia, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Serbia) and refer to local contacts and materials, facilitating their concrete use and not only their consultation.

Alice Chisin, CÉMEA presents the content of the mobile application. The application is designed for young people to bring them together in a community and learn how to actively combat cyberbullying as well as how to behave responsibly towards online aggression, without being passive bystanders. It is populated by images, definitions and games based on storytelling, through which the app raises awareness. Overall, the main message of the app, through its gamified consultation, is that every behavioral decision made online leaves a mark and does come with consequences.

Session 1 – Experts policy Roundtable

Panel discussion on cyberbullying as a challenge and policy solutions

Marcos Ros Sempere, MEP, S&D, opens the debate by sharing his enthusiasm for this event, as on the same morning he hosted a group visiting the EP for a project that promotes the importance of empowering the youth for enhancing safe and healthy online environments. He then expresses the concerns regarding the fact that bullying always existed and today it is perpetrated in new forms which add on the pre-existing ones and, importantly, add on structural discriminations: there is indeed data showing that the main victims of bullying are young people with lower socio-economic backgrounds and the LGBT+ community. Moreover, research shows that children who have been bullied at some point in their life are significantly more likely to fail at school, furthering the disadvantage of these groups.

Cyberbullying is growing exponentially and, therefore, it requires firm action also by policymakers. The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan, the Gender equality strategy, the EU LGBTIQ Strategy for Equality are excellent initiatives, but the EU still lacks a strategy on cyberbullying and this is an issue that the MEP commits to engage on along with his colleague Victor Negrescu, in order to raise it in the CULT Committee of the European Parliament. This prompts another reflection, which relates to the limited competences of the EU in the field of education. Nevertheless, even within the current limited powers of the EU in the field of education, more attention should be given to media literacy, also in the frame of the Digital Education Action Plan. Cyberbullying must be stopped. To do so, we need a European strategy to analyse the issue by relying on data collection and to finally act upon these through policy initiatives.

Q&A

During the Q&A session participants ask MEP Marcos Ros Sempere about ensuring policy coherence through funding schemes. In particular, a reference is made to the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs), which show that reforms on digital education are about digitalising infrastructures and about the development of hard skills rather than promoting transversal skills such as the ones needed

to combat cyberbullying. Therefore, participants ask the MEP how can the EP help in this regard. Marcos Ros replies that the EP asked to link at least 10% of the resources attached to each NRRPs to education. The aim of the control that the EU institutions seek over the implementation of the NRRPs is to avoid double funding or the undue overlapping of projects. In the CULT Committee, MEP Marcos Ros ensures that they are vigilant that these funds feed in the overall improvement of education systems. Nevertheless, he stresses that more strategic pooling of resources from the Erasmus+ and CERV programmes could further contribute to the NRRPs to address the issue that was raised.

The panel discussion continues with the intervention of **Laura Kaun,** Policy and Campaigns Officer at the European Women's Lobby, who presents their campaign, #HerNetHerRights, which was aimed at tackling online violence against women and girls. The campaign is based on the following main concepts: the need to implement the Istanbul Convention, the fact that digital communications offer huge possibilities for feminist, youth-led, intersectional activism and community-building as well as for disruptive power and transformative change (e.g. #MeToo and the Black Lives Matter movements); finally, the idea that these tool allow many to transcend the traditional barriers of political participation. Nevertheless, the campaign also stems from the acknowledgment that different groups have still different access to these tools.

Research shows that online violence is part of the continuum of violence, and that women are 27 times more likely to be harassed online than men. Therefore, it is essential to understand the root causes of online violence against women. In order to address this, the campaign #HerNetHerRights has been developed over two phases: in the first one, the European Women's Lobby analysed the continuum of violence and its causes and subsequently created a toolkit including recommendations and demands. During the second phase, which is still ongoing, the campaign developed a specialised training to empower women, and notably those running for public office.

Participants ask during the Q&A session for more information on the EWL's role and its membership. Laura therefore explains the structure of the EWL, which is a European umbrella NGO. She is then asked to tell participants more about the Istanbul convention, and she explained that it is a Convention aimed at combating domestic violence and violence against women which was initiated by the Council of Europe. More information on the Convention can be found here. Finally, participants show interest in learning if the European Women's Lobby had the opportunity to seek cross-fertilization with other projects in order to achieve an intersectional outreach of their tools, and she replies that so far, this was done only in terms of engagement of the LGBT+ community, but not with other audiences, which could indeed be an interesting continuation of this campaign.

The panel discussion is then concluded by the intervention of **Ana Marce**, Youth Frontrunner of the project #YouthAgainstCyberBullying. Ana shares her background, coming from Croatia, and she expresses her content with the project, which she describes as a great learning opportunity on how to behave, who to get in touch with and how to do so in each and different local context as well as on how to report cyberbullying. She says that a very important outcome for her was the understanding of how to identify bullying in the first place, which she would not have been able to do otherwise, in terms of clear definitions. This also is a main takeaway for policymakers, project partners hope.

The panel session is concluded by Andrei Frank, SOLIDAR Foundation, who presents the following session while underlining that the panel helped unearthing the importance of awareness raising related to cyberbullying as well as the innovative nature of the actions undertaken by Civil Society Organisations in this regard, thanks to the implementation of targeted non-formal and informal learning methodologies for different audiences.

The Conference continues with the second session, dedicated to EU funded projects synergies.

Carsten Andersen, FIC, introduces the second session of the Conference.

The first intervention is by **Carla Scaramella**, representing ARCI and presenting the project REACT. She explains that the project built upon the previous experience of the PRISM project, and that is the reason why she particularly welcomed the invitation by SOLIDAR to this event: rather than seeking continuous innovation per se, EU funding should encourage the continuation of good practices and their further development, like this session of the Conference aims to do. ARCI is a member of SOLIDAR, and it counts more than 1 million members who share a common mission: community and citizenship building: advocacy for rights, popular education, and soliciting active participation in democratic societies. As a project, REACT builds upon all these principles. In particular, it has done so by focusing on the response to hate speech online, involving 5 countries and 12 partners, that developed workshops reaching out to 2.500 participants. The project analysed hate speech online and identified effective examples of counter-narratives, building also upon project partners' mutual learning and exchange of best practices among key stakehoders for fostering tolerance-driven relationships. Further, the project encouraged reaction and action taking, through capacity-building and training activities on media literacy targeting educators and youth workers, followed by workshops addressing young people directly and finally by delivering an educational toolking on media literacy and launching a related advocacy campaign. The impact of the project was identified as:

- enhanced ability to think critically on topics such as racism, stereotypes and biases
- Empathy towards the victims of disinformation
- Understanding of the importance of collecting reliable sources of information before sharing content online
- Enhanced ability to identify offensive forms of communication
- Acquired techniques to respond to hate speech online
- Raised awareneess on the impact carried with our own actions online.

Further, Carla stresses the importance of paying as much attention to users of the online space as to educators in formal but also non-formal and informal learning environments, in order to make sure that education on media literacy and digital interactions can become an embedded part of educational activities. Media literacy was not a focus of the project but eventually the project resulted also in better media literacy skills for the 700+ direct participants.

After her intervention, two videos from the project are screened, shot by project participants directly and as part of the project activities. This is a positive experience that ARCI wants to continue implementing, as placing the target group at the core of the dissemination practices and having them

co-creating the deliverables is a real empowering tool for stronger outcomes and real impact on participants.

Zuzana Schreiberova, from MKC, follows Carla's intervention to introduce her organisation, the [Multicultural Centre of Prague](), and to report on the cyber-attacks to which she has been directly subjected during her professional experience. She then presents three projects that MKC has contributed to: [BRICKS - Building Respect on the Internet by Combating Hate Speech;]() [Smart for Democracy and Diversity]() – Compendium "Experiencing Hate Speech – Responses, Coping Strategies & Interventions"; and [Defusing Hate](): A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech. The main takeaways from these projects that Zuzana wishes to share with the other panellists and participants are:

- The importance of choosing wisely when to use facts to counter-argue emotion-driven arguments
- The involvement of supporters
- The relevance of differentiating audiences for different messages
- The often underestimated power of communities

The floor pass then to **Laura Chamas**, representing [La Ligue de l'Enseignement](), and presenting the project [E-media – Media literacy and digital citizenship for all](). Laura starts her intervention by presenting La Ligue's organisational structure and aims. Founded in 1866, la Ligue de l'enseignement is one of France's largest organisations in non-formal education. It gathers 20,000 associations in 102 local and 13 regional federations with the common aims of training responsible citizens, fighting against all inequalities and building a fairer and more independent society. It aims to guarantee access to education for everyone and further promotes a secular society, solidarity among citizens and active citizenship. As citizenship and popular education are the main axes of their action, stressing the increasing relevance of media literacy for the strategic objectives of the organisation.

The main findings of the Emedia project were that the use of digital technologies by the world's population is increasing exponentially, especially among the "digital natives" generation, but also that this comes with increased circulation of conspiracy theories and fake news. Further, the use of technologies and digital tools increased in the context of the Covid-19 crisis leading to the conclusion that it is essential to educate young citizens in the use of technology, internet and social media so that they can use them responsibly. To address these findings, the project relied on three pedagogical tools (handbooks) encompassing the topics of Online Expression, Media Literacy, and Educational Robotics.

This second session of the conference is concluded by the intervention of a second Youth Frontrunner of the project #YouthAgainstCyberBullying, **Fiona Fredericksen**, from Denmark.

Fiona underlines the importance of this project for her and the fellow participants in order to combat echo chambers and understand that if something is for free it is because it is likely taking profitable advantage of one's personal data and/or it is creating an addiction. Therefore, she shares her enthusiasm for the interesting content that she was able to learn thanks to the courses organised by the project at the national level.

During the Q&A session, the audience asks if the parents were involved in the workshops of the project, and Fiona replies that while they were not a direct target group, both parents and teachers were invited to take active part in the workshops, though leaving the young participants in the spotlight of the co-creation process.

Where do we go next?

Carla Scaramella shares the wish of ARCI to keep building upon the good practices implemented thanks to REACT, both in terms of content and methodologies. Laura Chamas explains that the intellectual outputs of the project Emedia are all still online and available, and Zuzana adds that also the toolkits developed in the frame of the project BRICK are still available for public use. Now MKC is using them for working on the analysis of political speech during political campaigns. Finally, Fiona explains that the website and the mobile app of #YouthAgainstCyberBullying are out there for further use and in fact that it is now that the project can have a further impact. In a way, the project just started!

Carsten Andersen delivers the concluding remarks, by stressing the importance of peer evaluation and feedback, of recognizing what and how we learned, as well as the great diversity of audiences and target groups and thus targeted approaches that different project and consortia can achieve. Inspired by the conversations during the second panel, Carsten highlights the difficulties in ensuring continuance for EU projects in the context of a constant demand for innovation regarding these projects as opposed to understanding the strong points of each project and how they can be upscaled in the different EU countries and for different target groups. The idea of peer evaluation and feedback among coordinators of EU projects should be ingrained far more strongly into EU projects while at the same time there need to be more avenues to ensure that outcomes of past projects can be taken on board in new projects and mainstreamed rather than forgotten at the expense of the demands for constant innovation. On this note, he invites all participants to continue collaborating and exchanges, taking the opportunity with their own projects to raise awareness on the work done by their peers in other contexts.