



THE COMMISSIONER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS
THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HUNGARY

NOTE

“Good Practices for Tolerance”

“With Communication for Equal Dignity - Inclusive Speech contra Hate Speech”

Workshop

Date: 29 April 2013

Venue: Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Budapest, Hungary

Thematic workshop was held on the important subject theme of hate speech. Several scholars and representatives of the civil society were presented on the one-day event which was held in the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights.

In his welcome speech, **Prof. Máté Szabó**, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, was delighted to greet the audience and emphasized the importance of the theme that should be examined and dealt closely by every participants of the society. He urged the change of mentality and attitude towards the question, as the prevention should be in the centre of attention and not the sanction and penalization of the convicts. A tolerant society should be developed with members having an appropriate political behaviour. Therefore, education receives a special attention and importance on this field. Within the framework of the project and investigations, the colleagues of the Office have contacted several relevant authorities for receiving information on their actions and plans regarding the prevention of hate speech and the promotion of tolerance. The results were depressing: the state authorities have been failed to comply enough. The goal should be a creation of a democratic society with participants with adequate political culture, for which the state organs should support every initiatives of the civil society.

The leader of the project, **Ms Katalin Szajbély**, placed the issue in a conceptual environment. She reminded the participants of the workshop to the unsuccessful attempts of the former ombudsman being responsible for minority issues: when Dr. Jenő Kaltenbach drafted the legal provision on the issue of hate speech, or when Dr. Ernő Kállai proposed an

amendment to the act on equal treatment to regulate the question. The current Commissioner, Prof. Máté Szabó, launched a project touching the issue: the project of the “Losers of the crisis - In the captivity of paragraph” had a segment which examined the strengthening prejudices and discrimination in the context of financial and economic crisis. From social-psychological aspects, the colleagues of the ombudsman investigated relevant cases; furthermore they had contacted the civil society and examined the specialised literature to propose a comprehensive report on the issue during this summer.

Following the introductions, lecture was given on the European Union funding opportunities and their implementation in Hungary which target the support of vulnerable groups and tolerance (by **Ms. Bernadett Gergely** from the NFÜ-Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ügynökség- National Development Agency). Later, **Ms. Márta Pánczél** from the Equal Opportunity Authority emphasized the importance of developing social tolerance and acceptance.

Among the speakers, **Mr. Lajos Aáry-Tamás**, the Commissioner for Educational Rights, should be highlighted; who introduced a successful education programme in cooperation with the Canadian Embassy accredited to Hungary. The programme aimed the education of human rights to school children with diverse backgrounds.

Péter Radó, public policy expert and education specialist talked about **tolerance in education and its obstacles**. In his view, the most important obstacles are the low awareness of ethnic problems among teachers and school managers, the low absorption capacity of the systemic environment of schools and the low absorption capacity of the schools, themselves. Speaking about education and tolerance, deficiencies can be explained by problems related to the quality of the teaching-learning process: by pedagogical methodology used by the teachers, by the way how in-classroom interactions and conflict situations are managed (usually it's only between teacher-student, student-student communication is prohibited many times in the classroom), the preparedness and the expectations of teachers. It is very common that teachers do not give time to their students to answer a question or pose an opinion which may seriously deteriorate their motivation.

He added that high quality training programs on anti-discrimination were launched for teachers. Concerning ethnic segregation, it is still a common phenomenon in the Hungarian education system.

Mr. Radó concluded that good practices are welcome, however their successful implementation requires a change in mentality and paradigm.

Mr. **Zoltán Fleck, professor of the Faculty of Law of ELTE University of Budapest** gave a short summary on his recent study concerning how law students are influenced by prejudice in Hungary. Law students were given several questions, Mr. Fleck highlighted 3 of them:

- 1) Which social groups should be protected by law: minority groups or majority? About 70% found that the primarily role of law is to protect the majority society. (25% answered that Roma people should not be protected by law.)
- 2) Which groups of society pose threat to society? 44% of the students answered that Roma represents a serious threat to society.
- 3) Whether Roma students should be segregated into separate classrooms from other students? 22% of the students gave a positive answer to this question.

In order avoid and prevent this kind of attitude, good practices should be implemented at first place in the educational system and pedagogical mentality. Evidently, changes of cultural attitude and paradigms are also necessary to fight stereotypes and prejudice.

According to Mr. Fleck, in countries of unstable culture ideologies, norms and institutions have an outstanding role in consolidating the moral and ethical rules of society.

In her presentation about the **image of Roma in the Media Vera Messing, research associate of the Institute of Sociology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences** explained that according to a study prepared by herself and Gábor Bernáth, based on research samples from online and print news providers and from the programming of commercial and state-funded television, one-third of all coverage on gypsies has to do with crime. In ten cases out of four, when Roma are shown on television, it is in connection with a criminal offence. Insinuating and indirect messages are common, along with the acceptance of pre-fabricated news items. Materials that promote prejudice and stereotypes about Roma have become a widespread practice.

Another characteristic aspect of the portrayal of Roma is that content on everyday discrimination has completely vanished, however sociological studies and other research have shown that discrimination is part of the everyday reality of a significant part of the Roma community. The media only rarely cover cases that have a negative impact on them, like cases of Roma facing discrimination in education, healthcare, and the labour market; or about poverty – mayor problem of Roma.

Culture, which used to be the only positive aspect of the publicity offered to Gypsies, is a very whitewashed area. There is still a lot coverage of cultural matters, but today half of these have to do with celebrities. There are very few reports that show living Roma culture, and within this model, we also don't learn more about celebrities than we did historically about Gypsies. That is, they do not build their careers by emphasizing their Roma heritage.

Another phenomenon is that in the past 15 years or so, along with the appearance of the extreme right political party “Jobbik”, putting down Gypsies has become increasingly socially acceptable both in politics and in public forums. A media image emerges from a certain community in which there are speakers, and these speakers have various degrees of access to power and thus to publicity as well. Accordingly, the government, officials have a greater role and have more access and more authority with regards to statements. If they talk like this, then this statement will almost automatically find its way into the media. This is a direct correlation.

Speaking about good practices Ms. Messing mentioned **cross categorization**, when a Roma person appears in the media not because of his race but in connection with the topic of the program/article concerned. Another example is when **minority groups and majority appear together** striving for the same goal.

Mr. Marcell Lőrincz, representing the **Subjective Values Foundation**, gave a short summary of the Foundations activities, paying special attention to various projects carried out by the Foundation, including the Urban Culture against Racism in Europe (U-CARE) project, the launching of the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign and the Lunar New Year Festival.

Mr. Bence Tordai of the **Haver Informal Jewish Educational Public Benefit Foundation** spoke about the educational programmes aimed at facilitating Jewish–non-Jewish dialogue among secondary school and university students, stressing that, by conveying attitude instead of knowledge, they intend to promote critical thinking and improve debating culture.

The representative of the **UCCU Roma Informal Educational Foundation**, **Ms. Flóra László** drew a parallel between Haver and UCCU, stressing that the latter was established utilizing the practices and experience of the former. She also spoke about the Foundation’s educational programme which, just as that of Haver, is aimed at the youngest generations.

Mr. Zsolt Virág, speaking on behalf of the **Being Gay and Being Aware Programme** (Szimpozion Melegség és Megismerés Program), focused on prejudice against LGBT people, stressing the importance of education and openness.

Mr. Gábor Kulcsár of the **Waldorf Pedagogical Institute** gave an overview of the Institute’s pedagogical programme with a special emphasis on the education of Roma children.

Ms. Ilona Móricz, representative of the **Independent Media Centre** spoke about the Centre’s role in training media specialists and about the responsibility of journalists in handling such issues as the situation of minorities and various disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Márton Illés, representative of the Junk Dreams Theatre shortly presented his company's activities. The theatre is a civil initiative, performing cultural actions in the public space to raise awareness to Hungarians who make a living on junk collected from house clearances, with special emphasis on making use of sites other than the traditional places of art, as well as on social integration.

The activists of Junk Dreams work for turning these events into civilized community festivals instead of the planned termination of the institution of house clearances across Budapest's districts. During these "performances" artist-trainers involve the children of local residents and junk collectors in creating art products from rubbish and junk on the street and realizing street actions.

Ms. **Katalin Horváth** made a short presentation on the project of **Káva Cultural Group** (the first Theatre in Education company in Budapest), entitled "**The missing class mate**". **The aim of the project was to break down stereotypes and prejudice among classmates** through theatrical performances.

Ms. **Judit Takács, deputy director of the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences** concluded that the presentations underlined two common goals: preventing discrimination and raising cultural awareness.

Mr. Ferenc Orosz, procurator and chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Association gave a short presentation on the foundation's activities and goals. He agreed with the previous presenters that social and cultural instruments and education have an important role in promoting tolerance but legal instruments are essential to prevent racism and discrimination. Mr. Orosz shortly presented one of the foundation's recent projects. The annual competition "It was a long time ago – Where was it?" dealt with the topics of the Hungarian Holocaust, the activities of the rescuers, and the coexistence of Jewish-Hungarian culture. It aimed to make the students familiar with the Holocaust and rescuer memorial places.

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