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In cooperation with the Gender Equality Unit

Combating Sexist Hate Speech

A seminar bringing together youth and human rights activists, researchers and policy-makers to deepen the understanding of sexist hate speech and identify appropriate responses

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 10-12 February 2016

Information
Call for participants

Background information about the seminar

While the impact of new information technologies on all aspects of modern societies and human life has been very positive, new vulnerabilities of our societies have emerged through the growth of the Internet and social media. The Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Movement campaign was set up to mobilise young people in awareness-raising and acting on the issues related to hate speech and human rights online. From 2013 to 2015 member states set up National Campaigns and took part in the European campaign to gain a better understanding of the issues young people are concerned with and ways forward to counter this challenge to human rights and democracy.

In May 2015, in the framework of the Action Plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, the Committee of Ministers decided to continue the No Hate Speech Movement campaign until 2017. This campaign remains driven by the need to counter online hate speech in all its forms, including those that most affect young people, such as cyberbullying and cyberhate, racism and other forms of discrimination. The campaign is based upon human rights education, youth participation and media literacy.

One of the thematic focus of the campaign in 2016-2017 will be sexist hate speech. In the survey about young people and online hate speech carried out in 2015, women are one of the top three target groups of hate speech encountered by the respondents. The need to prevent and respond to sexist hate speech has been reaffirmed by the campaigners in the No Hate Speech Movement, based on the observation that sexist hate speech is often seen as "acceptable", harmless and often less serious than other forms of hate speech, while in fact it is one of the most widespread and systemic forms of hate.

Women and girls receive threats and insults of a sexual character on daily basis via emails, websites or social media, including threats of publishing personal photos and information. Sexist hate speech against women has been referred to as "sexualised hate speech", "sexist hate speech", "cyber gender harassment", or "cyber-sexism". The aims are to humiliate and objectify women, to destroy their reputation and to make them vulnerable and fearful. Sexist hate speech has devastating effects, especially on young women, and affects society's quest to achieve gender equality. Sexist forms of hate speech are also direct manifestations of violence against women and girls, which remains the most pronounced expression of the uneven balance of power between women and men, one of the root causes of discrimination against women. The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 has the overall goal of achieving the advancement and empowering of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in the Council of Europe member states. One of its five objectives is "combating gender stereotypes and sexism", including "combating sexism as a form of hate speech and integrating this dimension into Council of Europe action aiming at combating hate speech and discrimination while actively promoting respect for both women and men".

The Gender Equality Unit and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe – responsible for the implementation of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign – are resolved to work together in order to raise awareness of the extension and damages of sexist hate speech on women and girls and on democracy. This will start with a seminar and a Europe-wide Action Day against sexist hate speech planned for **8 March 2016**.

This seminar is organised in order to:

- develop a better understanding of the causes, extent, forms, different targets and consequences of sexist hate speech online and offline, especially on young people.
- identify measures to prevent, counter, report and remedy sexist hate speech, notably through the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, the Gender Equality Strategy of the Council of Europe and other relevant instruments.
- prepare the main approaches and actions for mobilising the No Hate Speech Movement campaigners to act together against sexist hate speech on 8 March 2016.
- promote the implementation of Council of Europe's standards and identify gaps to fully address sexist hate speech in the Council of Europe member states.

The seminar will bring together 30-40 participants from among the governmental and non-governmental partners of the Youth Department and experts identified by the Gender Equality Unit, and the Gender Equality Commission.

The expected outcomes of the seminar are:

- a plan for the organisation of the European Action Day on 8 March 2016
- a list of proposals for the Council of Europe's future work to combat sexist hate speech
- a compilation of good practices from the member states and civil society on combating sexist hate speech.

The programme of the seminar will include the following main sessions:

10 February

- o Introduction to the institutional context of the seminar, including the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, the Gender Equality Strategy of the Council of Europe and other relevant Council of Europe standards.
- o Understanding sexist hate speech (keynote speaker) and discussion based on participants' understanding and experiences

11 February

- o Presentation and discussion around good practice examples of campaigns, projects, case law, legislation etc. that aim to combat sexist hate speech
- o Analysis and brainstorming on gaps and possible measures to address them, in order to more effectively combat sexist hate speech

12 February

- o Analysis and brainstorming on gaps and possible measures that could be taken to more effectively combat sexist hate speech (continued)
- o Preparation of the Action Day on 8 March 2016 (common messages and advocacy points)
- o Follow up steps, evaluation and closing.

Profiles of participants

The conference will bring together 30-40 participants, with the following profiles:

- representatives of youth organisations with experience in combating sexism and/or sexist hate speech or motivated and committed to start working on combating sexist hate speech
- representatives of national committees and online activists committed to combating sexist hate speech in the framework of the No Hate Speech Movement campaign
- representatives of NGOs working against sexist hate speech, for example women's rights NGOs, human rights defenders, etc.
- policy makers working on developing policies and legislation to combat sexist hate speech
- experts, researchers and academics specialised on the topic of sexist hate speech
- journalists active in combating sexist hate speech
- representatives of the Gender Equality Commission, the European Steering Committee on Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe
- representatives of other Council of Europe's bodies relevant for combating sexist hate speech.

All participants should:

- Be committed to working against sexist hate speech and interested in supporting the No Hate Speech Movement campaign
- Be motivated and committed to contribute to the seminar and its outcomes
- Have experience on the themes of the seminar
- Be able to work in English or French.

The preparatory team of the seminar will select participants on the basis of the following criteria:

- Compliance with the profile of participants mentioned above
- Geographical balance
- Diversity and complementarity of profiles
- Level of understanding and experience in the field of combating sexist hate speech.

Call for participants, application procedure and deadlines

The Youth Department is now opening the call for participants for this seminar. All interested candidate must apply online, completing the application form through this link: <http://youthapplications.coe.int/Application-forms>

The application must be submitted **by 6 January 2016, at midnight Central European Time.**

Practical and financial conditions

Timetable

The seminar will start at 9.15 on 10 February and end on 12 February at 13.00. The afternoon of 12 February will include networking and planning time for the 8 March 2016 European Action Day, notably activists and national representatives of the No Hate Speech

Movement campaign. Participants interested in the European Action Day should plan leaving after 18.00 on 12 February or on 13 February.

Venue and accommodation

The conference will take place at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. Accommodation and meals will be provided by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre.

Travel and subsistence expenses

Travel expenses to and from Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe.

Working languages

The working languages will be English and French.

Visas

Visa costs will be reimbursed by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe secretariat will issue an invitation letter that should facilitate the delivery of visas to attend the conference.

Further information

For further information about the seminar, please contact youth.nohatespeech@coe.int .