

Hate Speech in public space

Report from press monitoring in 2014

- summary

***Hate Speech Alert – przeciwko mowie nienawiści
w przestrzeni publicznej***

projekt realizowany przez Stowarzyszenie
Interkulturalni PL oraz Fundację Dialog Pheniben,
w ramach programu Obywatele dla Demokracji,
finansowanego ze środków Funduszy EOG.





Between October 2014 and July 2015, INTERKULTURALNI PL Association, in partnership with the Dialog-Pheniben Foundation carried out work on the diagnosis of hate speech, which is present in media discourse and resulting from the opinions of journalists themselves, or as part of reporting on actions and statements made by Polish politicians. The analysis was intended to select target groups of the project "Hate Speech Alert - against hate speech in public space", which was financed from the EEA Funds, as part of the grant competition "Citizens for Democracy".

As a result of measures taken during ten months of activities we published a report "Hate speech in public space. Press monitoring report in 2014". In the first stage of our work on diagnosis we had made evaluation and meta-analysis of existing data and studies on this phenomenon, highlighting threads found in these studies that are connected to activities of the press, other media or political activity. On the basis of existing studies we developed a coherent definition of hate speech, which was used then to conduct a qualitative analysis of press material obtained.

It combines elements of the definition recommended by the Council of Europe in its official documents with intuitive assumptions described in the book of S. Kowalski and M. Tulli "Instead of trial. Report on hate speech" (Warsaw 2001) only, so far, a qualitative study of the press in this regard. An act of hate speech was therefore understood as statement, that spread, promote and justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance that undermine democratic security, cultural cohesion or pluralism. We had also added some more strict requirements to our definition. The statement might though be considered as an example of hate speech, if it meets three cumulative conditions:

1) be pronounced with a negative intention, or with the intent to assault (humiliation, depreciate, cause damage, or to show superiority, etc.),





2) be addressed to a certain group or an individual, that is reduced to the characteristics of the specific population it belongs to,

3) Use the features, being part of someone's identity, (or assign a person to such a feature) as an epithet / label which is used as the basis for discrimination.

The publication also contains an extensive discussion and critical analysis of the laws that are supposed to protect individuals against the use of hate speech. It indicates a significant gap between the theoretical foundations of norms, enabling the prevention of this phenomenon and the reality of their application, which invariably since decades is criticized both by NGOs, bodies of international institutions, the Council of Europe and the European Union agencies, responsible for implementing the rules of equality and anti-discrimination. Despite having many evidence of a significant spread and intensification of the phenomenon of hate speech, especially on the Internet, but also in traditional media, hateful statements of politicians, number of criminal proceedings conducted on hate crimes, including cases of hateful language use remains small. Most of these proceedings end up with discontinuance of procedure or refusal to initiate an investigation or inquiry. Authors expressed concern about this sad fact, especially, that a relatively small number of convictions reported by the Ministry of Justice, suggests that people found accountable for the use of hate speech or committing hate crimes are mainly juveniles – people raised already under democratic rule of law, in which anti-discrimination education should be the basis of the socialization process.

The meta-analysis, included in the first part of the publication – a study conducted by a research team consisting of Adam Bulandra, PhD, Mateusz Zimnoch, PhD and Jakub Kościółek, Ed., covers public opinion polls and other Polish and international projects addressing the issue of hate speech. Studies, that were analyzed and evaluated are very diverse in nature and provide different criteria for defining the phenomenon. Most of them





have however common ground, that enables comparison between them. This mutual element is either related to general positioning of this phenomenon in the context of discrimination discourse, social policy issue, and part of social pathology, or was devoted to specific threads in hate speech discourse, affecting certain communities or social groups, such as sexual, religious, racial, ethnic, or highlighted by social status, like immigrant minorities for example. Our cross-sectional study at the first part of diagnosis of public hate speech phenomena showed a sustainable trend, showing that the highest level of hate speech primarily affects sexual minorities and Jews, and increasingly, Muslims, Roma, and uncertain number of individuals, who contributed positively to develop the idea of gender studies or the supporters of such idea. There is also visible decrease in levels of hate speech against black people, as racism slightly changes its character, pointing at people of Asian (Pakistani, Afghani) or Arabic origin, often bound inextricably with the issue of Islamophobia.

For our research team, the outcome of the meta-analysis became the basis to carry out the study on press releases relating to nine test groups, selected on the basis of existing data on social groups (not necessarily the minority), living within the majority society and most exposed to discrimination.

Quantitative research that was conducted on raw material delivered by Press-Service media monitoring group, containing of 26 501 articles had been finished in April, 2015. As a result, three groups were selected, towards which there had been found the highest rate of co-occurrence of expressions characteristic to hateful language within the close range of words, defining social groups covered by the survey. These were sexual minorities, Muslims and Jews. The analysis was performed using statistical software tools, based on computerized analysis of the words and their compounds within tested texts. The method applied is commonly used in similar media studies, however it does not allow to draw





certain conclusions referring to the subject tested. Automatic analysis of texts does not allow to grasp the context of speech, or does not distinguish at what point a form of expression, being part of the press release, may match the adopted definition of hate speech for the purpose this study.

The applied research method was based on the analysis of co-occurrence and characteristics of the relationships between words that name social groups and hostile words that form hate speech language, including the determination of the frequency of such co-existence in the body of texts, included in the analyzed data, and compared to the body of reference texts (typical press releases). As part of the quantitative study we had analyzed 26 501 newspaper articles that were published between January 1st and December 31st, 2014 about the 9 minorities (test groups) in seven daily newspapers and thirteen weekly magazines. We have skipped other media, in particular electronic ones, because of the difficulty in monitoring them and the enormous costs of such monitoring. We took into account that traditional press has some features, that make it a versatile, diversified and pluralistic mean of public opinion carrier.

The result of the quantitative study was consistent with previous meta-analysis of other studies carried out on hate speech in Poland, which allowed for the extension of the results to the broader social discourse on this phenomenon. Due to the fact that the quantitative study had prevailing scientific nature, referred to statistical relationships mainly and often used abstractive, sophisticated language, we decided to add a qualitative analysis of the selected texts, firstly to make publication more intelligible, secondly to draw examples that would show the true nature of hateful language used by media providers.

Qualitative analysis was carried out by Dr. Adam Bulandra according to the originally adopted definition of hate speech. Since the analysis of all available press articles in the body of texts was not possible, the study was limited on several levels. First, we decided to





analyze only articles, concerning minorities, that had been selected in the quantitative study as most exposed to hate speech, i.e. Muslims, Jews and sexual minorities. This reduced the scope of the study to a total number of 9882 articles. It was further narrowed through search methods, used primarily in the quantitative study and left approx. 50% of texts. By randomized selection to further detailed qualitative analysis we indicated 350 articles concerning the Muslim minority, 450 articles concerning the Jewish minority and 500 articles on sexual minorities. The difference in numbers of articles chosen to analyze were justified by differences in the size of the original bodies, referring to these particular groups. The report of the final query selected a total of 146 positions, which according to the author fulfilled the criteria of adopted hate speech definition and were therefore included in the final part of the report - a complementary diagnosis of hate speech in public space, as reflected in the press in 2014.

It should be noted that the query performed showed that hate speech in media is governed by certain features that might help in designing prevention methods or even its elimination. Deeper look into the titles, frequently appearing in our study, proves that some magazines and newspapers are overrepresented in the study. This means that it is focusing on description of particular social group significantly more often than other press titles. For example, while analyzing the articles about the Jewish minority, it turned out that about 80% of the analyzed material was shared half in half by "Gazeta Wyborcza" and "Najwyższy Czas", however in the first title we found no expression, which carried hate speech against Jews, except of certain texts of reporting manner, but such anti-Semitic statements were very common to "Najwyższy Czas". Another observation was the frequent repetition of the names of journalists who are the authors of hateful texts. In this sense, a significant number of hate speech observed was the result of an activity of small group of authors. This showed that the phenomenon of hate speech is spreading not because of the universality of its prevalence in the press, but due to the relatively small circle of people with certain views,





hired by media. This is in our opinion an important clue to undertake certain preventive measures. Another observation was the accumulation of hate or discrimination we encountered. The one text often slandered more than one social group. A very important observation was made according to such relations, linking the issue of the emancipation of sexual minorities, perceived in a negative manner, with gender discourse, also criticized. Both were seen as threat to Western civilization endurance. Critics of gender “ideology” are thus essentially based on homophobic bias. It was noted from time to time, that the responsibility for such "collapse of civilization" were blamed on Jews, which showed cascading paradoxes of thinking of those, who disseminate hate speech in the media.

Our qualitative research was presented in a manner similar to that shown in the book of S. Kowalski and M. Tulli, and therefore included quotes from selected articles followed by subjective commentary, indicating the reasons why the text was considered by us as hate speech. The factual material for each group was preceded by an introduction, outlining the overall narrative found by us in selection of press material in relation to a particular social group, covered by the study.

In relation to a small number of articles, classified as hate speech, we did not selected “quotes” but summarized them, due to difficulties with selection of specific portions, which could illustrate its hateful content. These difficulties were caused by the intensity of hate occurring in such texts, which in principle would require the entire text to be quoted as an example.

To sum up, we provided readers with material that is undoubtedly marked by subjectivity of evaluators, but large enough and "raw", so that everyone can personally make its own opinion about it. Nevertheless, diagnosis is consistent with previously and currently conducted studies on this phenomenon. Considering the fact that media largely affects social attitudes, but also define the scope and subject of public discourse, it can be assumed



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that these similarities are not accidental, and results of our research relates directly to the social reality, thus providing its objective image.

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