

## Advocacy to Prevent Intolerance, Discrimination and Group-focused Enmity of Youth in Bulgaria, Germany and the Visegrad Group

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The project “CEE Prevent Net – Central and Eastern European Network for the Prevention of Intolerance and Group Hatred” aims to foster dialogue with actors across all ends of the political spectrum and between stakeholders in youth work. It also seeks to evoke cross-partisan goals and positive emotions by “safeguarding young people... enhancing the youngsters’ wellbeing and skills... buttressing youth welfare, and supporting tomorrow’s societies – in Central and Eastern Europe”.<sup>1</sup> In a similarly positive and constructive spirit the Mission Statement of the ongoing project claims that CEE Prevent Net also aims to “prevent (young people) from becoming intolerant and anxious,” “help to avert the myriad of risks which young people are facing today – violence, hatred, drugs, criminality, dependencies, self-destructiveness etc.,” and “keep the youth away from becoming extremists”.

This report paints a picture of the activities and possibilities for political advocacy in youth affairs in Bulgaria, Germany and the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) in order to empower youth and society at large better to resist contemporary risks and challenges, particularly as pertains to discrimination, racism, hatred, bullying, intolerance, violence, and group-focused enmities. It furthermore provides an overview of networks of national stakeholders to support capacity building efforts in the countries this report addresses.

With its preparation, this report assists stakeholders, such as first-line practitioners, advocacy actors, experts who advocate for citizens’ interests while endeavoring to meet their basic needs, and media representatives considered potential allies in advocacy matters. There is a specific focus on advocacy actors working in the field of youth affairs and the prevention of intolerance, discrimination, and group-focused enmity. This report helps better to understand the opportunities for advocacy in youth and prevention issues in the current political context and to explore which kind of approaches, arguments and language should be used to build skills and capabilities of better handling the negative phenomena and trends in this domain. Given the fact that many stakeholders engage in advocacy without being aware of doing so, this report also raises awareness for advocacy activities.

## 1.2 Methodology

In preparing this report, the members of the Consortium first explored the potential network of agencies and experts acting in these fields to get an overview of youth policy and related issues. Desktop research was conducted to explore good practices and available tools, experiences and

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<sup>1</sup> See CEE Prevent Net Mission Statement. Available at: [http://www.ceepreventnet.eu/files/Publications/Mission%20statement%20CEE%20Prevent\\_5.pdf](http://www.ceepreventnet.eu/files/Publications/Mission%20statement%20CEE%20Prevent_5.pdf) (Accessed August 9, 2019).

expertise of political advocacy in the partner countries. Literature on domestic and international advocacy activities and actors was also reviewed during this process.

Based on the outcome of this research, a series of meetings and semi-structured interviews with about 150 stakeholders and activists working in both governmental and non-governmental sectors were organized and these stakeholders were invited to share experience and lessons learned in implementing youth policies from the aspects of collaboration, networking and advocacy activities. This included both successful and failed interventions. This entire process lasted nine months.

This report is a practice-oriented summary of the outcome of the aforementioned activities and is not meant to be considered in-depth scientific research. It clarifies terminology; assesses the conditions under which advocacy activities are undertaken, the current state of play regarding advocacy for to prevent intolerance, discrimination, and group-focused enmity of youth; and maps good practices of advocacy in the six countries covered in this report's scope. It pays special attention to the political agenda and approach of government institutions engaged in interaction with other stakeholders, including representatives from civil society.

Finally, the paper makes recommendations for undertaking political advocacy activities, network and coalition building, and for conducting advocacy work both in unfavorable conditions and with regard to advocacy language. The situations in the six countries vary substantially; therefore, the description of challenges are to be considered rather as a summary of the conditions than a synthesis of the status quo. Consequently, the recommendations do not equally apply each country per se.

### **1.3 Terminology**

There are different perceptions and approaches to political advocacy in the six countries covered in this report. Although many stakeholders are directly involved in advocacy work, it is seen and understood as a by-product of other sorts of prevention activities and not as a regularly, strategically conducted endeavor. Some experts admitted they either did not know the word or its definition or they simply did not use the word in their work at all. However, some stakeholders proved that they engaged in manifold kinds of advocacy without knowing its definition. This underlines the fact that, in many cases, advocacy activities are undertaken in an ad-hoc, inconsistent, and fragmented manner, which in turn impedes the exploitation of its full potential.

### **Advocacy**

Advocacy activities were considered by some youth workers to be mentoring and supervision, representation of individual clients, and standing up for the rights of young people whose voices are not sufficiently heard. Advocacy is sometimes confused with lobbying, which pursues the interest of a small group of people as opposed to public interests. The two terms are sometimes used synonymously.

This paper uses lobbying to mean “the main activity used to persuade the target audience to take a particular cause of action”.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in most cases, lobbying is associated with a specific government legislation or policy. In some cases, it is even described as a “speciali[z]ed form of advocacy.”<sup>3</sup>

At a national level, advocacy may also be perceived as the protection of the rights of people who are not able to defend or fight for their rights themselves. This may include individuals, communities or minorities against a societal majority. Advocacy may be also understood as protection of the interests of local communities against policymakers.

This report expands the definition of advocacy to include a “deliberate process of influencing those who make decisions about developing, changing and implementing policies.”<sup>4</sup> However, it stipulates that influencing in this report and in the CEE Prevent Net project means raising awareness about and convincing interlocutors with facts, arguments, logic and empirical evidence that preventing intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity of youth builds societal peace and common welfare in both a community and a country.

Seen from a normative perspective of societal peace and common welfare, “[a]dvocacy is the process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders, and, ultimately, decision makers take ownership of your ideas, evidence, and proposals and subsequently act upon them.”<sup>5</sup> Advocacy activities can be pursued by a wide variety of actors ranging from decision makers and politicians to journalists and non-governmental organizations. This report focuses more specifically on political advocacy in which the advocacy activities mostly unfold and address the realm of public policy.

### **Intolerance and group-focused enmity**

“Group-focused enmity describes the syndrome of interlinked negative attitudes, prejudices and intolerance towards groups identified as other, different or abnormal, and assign[s] inferior social status. These may take the form of anti-immigrant attitudes, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim attitudes, sexism [or] homophobia[,] as well as prejudices against other identified groups.”<sup>6</sup> Different elements of group-focused enmity are interlinked, held together by a common core that can be identified as an ideology of inequality,<sup>7</sup> i.e. as a world view which devalues out-groups of “others” while aggrandizing the in-group of the “us” and “self.” These world views are generally embedded in a framework of black-and-white and good-or-bad thinking that does not recognize

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<sup>2</sup> CARE International (2014) *The CARE International Advocacy Handbook*, p.32. Available at: <https://www.care-international.org/files/files/Care%20International%20Advocacy%20Handbook.pdf> (Accessed August 9, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> CARITAS Advocacy Handbook, (p. 13)

<sup>4</sup> CARE International (2014), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Young & Quinn (2012). *Making Research Evidence Matter: A Guide to Policy Advocacy in Transition Countries*, p. 26. Available at: [https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/policy\\_advocacy\\_guidebook\\_-\\_making\\_research\\_evidence\\_matter\\_-\\_young\\_and\\_quinn\\_2012\\_0.pdf](https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/policy_advocacy_guidebook_-_making_research_evidence_matter_-_young_and_quinn_2012_0.pdf) (Accessed August 9, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Zick, Küpper & Hövermann (2011): Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*

ambivalence and relativity and may be found across all different kinds of both politically and religiously contextualized violent extremism.

### **Youth and youth work**

The U.N. defines all persons between 15 and 24 years as youth. More substantially though, youth is understood as the “period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence.”<sup>8</sup> In general, the changes and differences between current societies make it difficult clearly to define the age of youth. It often happens that at the age of 12, some young people deal with issues which are relevant for others at the age of 20 or even later. It is therefore necessary always to pay attention to the local context and nuances when using the term youth.

By youth work, this paper means any way of working with young people that has been thought up.<sup>9</sup> In fact, its definition has always been a matter of debate. In the context of this paper, youth work is a distinctive way of approaching and responding to young people and prompting them to reach for more than they might otherwise have considered or even thought possible to themselves.<sup>10</sup> Youth work “enables children and young people to learn the social skills they need to act as active and autonomous citizens in what is becoming an increasingly intricate society.”<sup>11</sup> Some types of youth work focus on specific target groups, so they are sometimes defined as specific kinds of youth work or youth social work. This aligns with the belief that the social needs of such target groups are greater than those addressed by mainstream youth work services.<sup>12</sup>

In line with the perceptions and definitions above, the findings presented in this report, and the activities in the framework of the entire CEE Prevent Net project, the authors have explored and analyzed tools and approaches for effective political advocacy. Based on this work, the paper aims to prove that well-devised, coherent and efficient advocacy can contribute successfully to preventing intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity – and thus to more peaceful and thriving societies.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Definition of Youth. Available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf> (Accessed August 9, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> This comprises different types of activities, such as playground associations, political youth associations, youth centres and clubs, youth amateur art associations, youth workshops, youth music workshops, children’s farms, youth cinemas, student associations, youth work for disabled children and youth people, initiatives for vulnerable/disadvantaged young people, initiatives for working youth, or self-organising groups for young people from ethnic minorities, inter alia (see Coussée, Filip. 2008. A century of youth work policy. Gent: Academia Press, p. 5.).

<sup>10</sup> Batsleer, Janet R., Davies, Bernard (2010): What is Youth Work? Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd.

<sup>11</sup> Coussée (2008): p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

## **2 Context**

Political and cultural influences greatly impact the scope of political advocacy and youth work. This chapter highlights some conditions featuring in all or some of this report's six countries which should be taken into consideration when conducting political advocacy activities. Investigating these conditions will hopefully prove useful for advocacy actors living and working under similar conditions in other countries when planning and implementing their own advocacy measures.

### **2.1 Challenges**

Polarization along political, ethnic, religious, and ideological lines is increasing as is the tendency towards intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity. Governing political parties make continuous and systematic efforts to cement their positions. To that end, they introduce changes that undermine the rule of law and democratic freedoms and which are perceived and opposed by the general public to varying degrees. While new measures are tolerated and accepted peacefully in some countries, they provoke massive demonstrations and protests in other countries.

Populist and extreme right-wing narratives, discrimination, stigmatization, and demonization are gaining traction. Extremist voices have successfully (mis)used printed, online and social media to propagate their inhumane ideologies. Hate speech and derogatory statements against both refugees and immigrants and feminism and gender diversity are spreading rapidly and either resonating with or even reinforcing long-standing resentments towards e.g. LGBTIQ+, Roma or Jews.

Political leadership itself can fuel social tensions and hatred, for instance, by legitimizing forms of public shaming, degradation, or instigating aggression as acts of free speech or expression of personal opinion. Governments and state institutions are not willing or not adequately prepared to prevent and intervene with such anti-social phenomena.

There is also a growing collusion between publishers, oligarchs, public figures, and political party leaders, which typically results in a monopolization of media channels, attacks on independent media, and a decline of media freedom, media pluralism, and transparency.

The recent globalization of nationalism has had a more evident effect on general societal moods and rising levels of intolerance and hatred. This becomes particularly evident when viewing the levels of trust between citizens during the flows of refugees and immigrants in the past years. As frustration and apathy rise, belief in meaningful changes fades away. All of this climaxes in a decrease in psychological conditions apt for engaging in political advocacy.

Young people are increasingly exposed to far-right and Neo-fascist ideas and incitement of religious, ethnic and racial hatred, and their vulnerability is growing. The increase of discriminatory narratives has led to a rise in school violence and online bullying. Experts are skeptical about future developments and the possibilities of preventing and intervening with hate speech and

discrimination, especially among those young people or political parties who already tend to embrace a violent extremist stance. A particularly worrying recent phenomenon is that far right paramilitary groups are more actively recruiting adolescents and young people. At the same time, the civic space for human rights activists and anti-discrimination educators has drastically shrunk. The rights and values they promote and uphold are under attack by the aforementioned developments in society. There are systematic efforts to discredit the significance of human rights and of human rights activists. Moreover, there is a lack of well-trained experts in the public sector who would be able to recognize the challenges and develop and apply the tools to respond to the challenges.

## **2.2 Possibilities for Dialogue**

Current political conditions do not favor dialogue or political advocacy, let alone advocacy for the prevention of intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity of youth. In countries with autocratic features, it is extremely difficult to find entry points to enter into a dialogue with governmental agencies. In these countries, there is no dialogue between the government and the opposition. Government agencies are typically willing to cooperate with NGOs which support the government, and as such, these groups are provided access to financial resources. There is little interest in developing collaboration or engaging in dialogue with other political stakeholders and organizations.

Officially, there is no dialogue between the youth organizations of the government and opposition either. Despite the difficulties, some practitioners see chances for informal dialogue between representatives of various youth organizations. However, the people willing to start a dialogue of this sort risk being branded a traitor by both sides.

Interactions between governmental and non-governmental sectors are often impeded by a lack of understanding. These interactions are further complicated by the fact that governmental and non-governmental sectors work in diametrically different modes. For instance, young people feel that the communication between different actors involved in supportive action (i.e. social workers, teachers, and parents) is weak, and so addressing concrete problems is often difficult. This is further compounded by the fact that interactions with clients are typically based on judgements and punishments instead of solutions tailored to the clients' individual circumstances. In a similar vein, youth who have been recruited into hate groups or right-wing extremism are not perceived as young people in need of an intervention, but rather as targets for repression and punishment.

## **2.3 Advocacy for Youth**

In the political sphere, youth work is often marginalized, particularly when engaging in activities and strategies for preventing intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity. Key conceptual strategic documents on youth and youth work are occasionally missing or outdated. There are sometimes duplications in the frameworks and conceptual documents in which



objectives are not always clear and specific. All this often results in the feeling that it is easier for the NGO sector to act alone without interacting or even communicating with the government.

Local governments, however, appear more responsive to and interested in cooperation with other stakeholders, including NGOs, than governmental agencies at national level. There are possibilities for advocacy at a grassroots level through international organizations and watchdogs. Media outlets and social media could also prove useful for advocacy in settings where the freedom of the press is supported. Managing backlash and repercussions caused by governing actors becomes an integral part of daily activities of the civil sector. This is more time-consuming than advocacy work itself.

Actors in the field of education play a major role in building up capabilities of resilience but they are often insufficiently active. Education systems have not been adequately reformed and consequently do not provide students with necessary life skills, such as media literacy, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence; neither are educators equipped with the tools needed to educate young people on issues of anti-discrimination and equal treatment.

A minority of the countries covered in this report have favorable conditions for political advocacy, including a stable infrastructure of inter-agency cooperation between various state and NGO actors. In these countries, there is a more developed climate of trust and political receptiveness to cooperate at least in some sectors, regions, and states within the national setting.

### **3 Key factors of the successful advocacy strategies**

This chapter lists some prerequisites to consider in order to be successful when conducting political advocacy activities.

#### **Human aspects**

- *Individual personal contacts.* Informal channels and proper personal communication seem to be the most efficient and useful – in some cases they were even decisive – for the success of advocacy work. In some way, however, this factor reflects the frustration and distrust towards bureaucracy and administration. When there is a good, willing personal contact, even complicated bureaucracy issues within rigid state institutions can be solved more easily. At the same time, many advocacy initiatives have experienced a different margin of success or failure when confronted by a change in staff in a specific key position at a state institution.

- *Building trust systematically.* Advocacy's success is often the result of systematic efforts to build trust with a counterpart. Systematically working together with a specific focal point in the counterpart organization is of paramount importance. It is useful to pursue a bottom-up approach and discuss the possibilities of cooperation with low- or mid-level officials who are more pragmatic and less biased politically than high-level officials. An important part of trust building includes regular communication on the progress of the projects, e.g. continuous updates on the activities in parallel with the official reporting.
- *Participation in state-run structures.* In many cases, interdepartmental working groups that allow NGO sector representation are the best and most efficient way to undertake advocacy activities and shape strategy, policies, agenda-setting, and priorities.
- *Capacity building.* Despite the fact that advocacy is an organic part of any NGO activity, the lack of advocacy capacities and the understaffing of the NGO sector, especially in the youth work sector, are long-term challenges which will have to be addressed.

## **Initiatives**

- *Priority to local and community level initiatives.* Experience has shown that it is usually much easier and much more effective to engage in dialogue and cooperate with local governments than officials at national level. Moreover, it is easier to identify and present initiatives in a much more tangible and transparent way at community level than across the country.
- *Meeting real needs.* The idea of change serving as a basis for any initiative is not sufficient, nor is using high-level political slogans. Unless the initiative targets the real needs of a community, it is unlikely to succeed.
- *Joint initiatives are effective.* State institutions used to criticize the fragmentation of the civic sector. Although there are some areas where NGOs work together with each other more closely and therefore also more effectively, thereby enabling their voices to be heard better, this solidarity is not apparent in initiatives relating to addressing intolerance, discrimination, and group-focused enmity. The reasons for this are manifold and range from organization competition to the interdisciplinarity of the topic (i.e. organizations with very different focus approach the topic from very different perspectives). It is therefore imperative that civil society networks join efforts and collaborate on activities. This simultaneously ensures that the networks are stable and function well, which in turn enables productive communication channels with both state institutions and decision makers and – more importantly – with local communities the networks represent.
- *Like-minded alliances.* Partnerships with like-minded organizations and coalitions increase legitimacy, strengthen institutional voice and create synergies for promoting common interests. In a like-minded coalition, the priorities set and topics represented should be

- carefully agreed with each member as well as how things are communicated, both internally and externally.
- *Addressing advocacy initiatives properly.* Having a comprehensive overview on the current legislation and assessing the scopes, limits and responsibilities of the institutions at which the advocacy is directed is vital. In many cases, state institutions reject an initiative because they are not authorized to make a decision on the given matter.
  - *Short and clear initiatives.* The ideas and ambitions of advocacy should be summed up in short, clear documents to present the expected change concisely. These proposals should clearly depict which specific steps the partners will take. That makes it easier for the government officials to make positive decisions on the submitted proposal.

## **4 Recommendations**

This chapter contains advice for practitioners to undertake advocacy activities in an efficient manner. Political advocacy activities can be particularly effective if they are implemented within the context of networks or coalitions which amplify the efforts at individual level. The chapter also contains sub-chapter about advocacy in specific – unfavorable – conditions.

### **4.1 Network- and coalition building**

This paper understands a network to be groups of interconnected individuals and organizations that exchange information and develop professional and social contacts. Building networks is the first step towards aligning intentions to pursue common interests, values, and goals. Coalitions represent a specific, more goal-oriented form of networks that can be defined as a “group of individuals, civil society organizations, communities, religious institutions, businesses, journalists and/or government agencies that agree to work together towards a common goal. That work may be extremely narrow in scope and time-limited, or it may be quite broad and ongoing.”<sup>13</sup> Setting up and maintaining coalitions of like-minded people and organizations is a basic precondition for successful political advocacy. However, it is not an easy task, which is why the CEE Prevent Net consortium has identified the following recommendations:

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13 Coalition Building for Tolerance and Non-Discrimination A Practical Guide (OSCE/ODIHR)

## Structure

- *Realistic planning.* It is important not to make overly idealistic assumptions and to cross-check the conditions that affect the implementation of activities in order to increase the chances for success.
- *Awareness of the risks of competition.* Due to an increasing industrialization of prevention in measures combating intolerance, discrimination, and group-focused enmity, actors in the scene tend to see each other as competitors and not as allies, which in turn leads to a lack of cooperation and candor. At the same time, the public sector typically prefers dealing with a small number of contractors. In extreme cases, this can result in one NGO contractor which is then treated preferentially and effectively becomes a government organization and a façade for public-private cooperation. These “state” NGOs risk becoming dependent or even obedient towards politically motivated requests of government funders.
- *A well-designed, structured and gradual approach* is a necessity for political advocacy. Quick progress and implementation cannot be expected.
- *Combining top-down, bottom-up and inter-agency approaches for network and coalition building.* The combination of different types of action appears most suitable for achieving cross-regional and structural impact. Such conglomerations would enable NGOs and field practitioners to gain attention in and get involved in implementation of national and state programs as well as utilize the synergies these programs provide.
- *Establishing a comprehensive national advocacy network.* A well-established inter-agency advocacy network on the national level should focus its activities at preventing group hatred and intolerance, including phenomena of polarization, hate speech, hate crimes and building relevant skillsets including skills in exit mentoring. The network should include representatives from both the NGO, public, and private sectors, independent and genuine family associations, academia, the media, and independent experts. The advocacy network should maintain contact and collaborate with similar regional, national, European and global networks working on the same or related topics. The network should have a clear structure, a governing body, clear membership, and an ethical code. It should also meet regularly.

Some specific advocacy-related activities such an advocacy network could include are: the network creates and disseminates templates for advocacy materials (briefs, case studies, and letters), annual calendars for advocacy opportunities, visuals and templates for social media campaigns, for use by interested actors, and a manual on how to organize and implement successful advocacy initiatives. The Network builds and maintains strategic partnerships, organizes events, workshops, round tables, etc., publishes relevant papers and policy briefs, and monitors the overall implementation of the advocacy activities.

- *Building structures beyond national borders.* Events in a regional framework, setting regional objectives, and displaying regional flavor, e.g. in the Visegrad countries, not only complement national efforts, but might also have a better chance at success than national measures in the same vein, since they are able to act without addressing national shortcomings and challenges directly, thereby saving face of the responsible political actors. Regional events can result in regional cooperation and the establishment of cross-country advocacy networks that could also serve as a stepping stone for successful political advocacy at a national level.
- *Compiling a comprehensive advocacy strategy and action plan.* The strategy should identify the needs and challenges and define the agenda, the short- and long-term objectives, the actors to be approached, and the appropriate channels and tools for advocacy measures. Advocacy planning should be based on high-quality research on the nature and the scope of the identified problem – lack of such research could lead to ineffective advocacy.

### **Communication and Trust**

- *Clarity and transparency* are indispensable when outlining the principles and organization follows.
- *Finding adequate information exchange channels* and agreeing on the ways partners can exchange information with each other bolsters institutional confidence and prevents mistrust. Partners should present their work in practice and invite each other to see what they do. It cannot always be assumed that all stakeholders know each other and their work, competences, and programs. Mutual exchange helps to correct and amend inaccurate or partial information and builds trust between partners.
- *Establishing professional personal and institutional contacts.* Communication is much easier when people know each other personally. Even on an informal basis, personal contact with people working in state institutions is often viewed as one of the most important pre-conditions for successful advocacy. At the same time, the individual personal contact should not be the only line of communication upon which the advocacy activities rely, since this forces the advocacy activities into a dependence on personal contacts and can lead to a substantial setback in case the contact leaves their position. Therefore, in addition to the personal contact, the institutional partnership should be built gradually as well. In the fields of youth work and prevention, understaffing of state agencies impedes the establishment of contacts, and so one of the first steps towards advocacy should be convincing state authorities that the political significance and lack of partners necessitates the appointment of focal points responsible for these matters.

- *Sharing concerns with partners* and identifying solutions when a problem is detected in a partnership is helpful, since some organizations may not view their partners' concerns as such.
- *Bridging communication gaps.* Fostering information exchange between stakeholders and, where prudent, policymakers and practitioners, is particularly helpful to prevent knowledge gaps from negatively impacting advocacy work. It is, therefore, recommendable to provide a forum for policymakers, lawmakers, and practitioners to voice their concerns and share good practices. During these events, the NGO sector can gain insight into the possibilities and limitations of the state sector and adapt its initiatives to the status quo rather than criticizing the shortcomings of bureaucracy. When communicating, NGOs should apply the proper language and form of presentation, e.g. short handouts instead of lengthy analyses. In return, the state sector should be more open to the opportunities the NGO sector can bring into the cooperation, especially given its flexibility and comparable lack of bureaucracy.
- *Paying attention to small details* can prevent small issues from damaging attempts to establish cooperation, e.g. civil servants being tied to their office hours and therefore unable to attend external events.
- *Creating space for activities* can lead to more intense networking, communication and deeper contacts and collaboration.
- *Enhancing internal cohesion through teambuilding events.* Chances for successful political advocacy are higher in cohesive and well-organized coalitions. As a first step towards establishing coalitions, like-minded experts and structures should be convened. Afterwards, pro-governmental bodies can be invited to join the conversation.
- *Exchange internships* help organizations get to know each other and generate new ideas for collaboration.

## **Empowerment**

- *NGOs should be close to well-acquainted with their key target groups*, such as difficult to reach young people, youth work practitioners, and adults leaning towards anti-democratic attitudes.
- *Mapping young people's basic needs, ambitions, and intentions.* One promising point of departure for any interaction between governmental agencies and other stakeholders could be to prepare surveys, studies, or a compendium of best practices, the conclusions of which underline the needs joint endeavors have as well as providing recommendations for their implementation. This can, in turn, also serve as basis for capacity- and network building. The activities for exploring these needs should also apply the language and the

- terminology used by the governing actors to legitimize the proposals, reduce political backlash, and mobilize stakeholders (rather than deterring potential partners).
- *Mobilizing social and youth workers, teachers and school psychologists* and familiarizing them with the work of NGOs is an easy way to create more synergies.
  - *Providing support to stakeholders and practitioners with good access to the more difficult to reach groups* of (young) citizens is imperative, since they possess extensive personal and methodological experience, not only in raising awareness and civic education but also in pedagogical and relational work (socio-pedagogy, socio-therapeutic approaches, i.a.). These kinds of activities also require a clear distinction between lobbying and doing advocacy for the cause of building societal resilience and preventing intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity.
  - *Organizing simulation exercises for youth with different views and approaches* builds trust and bridges, eases tensions, and facilitates sustainable dialogue; however, this is only possible if the participants perceive these settings as safe spaces.
  - *Creating and implementing online media campaigns* can shape attitudes and opinions of teenagers and young adults. The campaign should contain authentic and credible voices that can challenge extremist propaganda and provide alternative perspectives. Additionally, media education in schools, whether as a stand-alone subject or a cross-curricular goal, could empower young people to identify fake news, prevent and combat bullying, and voice their individual interests and alternative perspectives.
  - *Introducing the concepts of inclusion and tolerance in the education system as early as possible* (ideally in kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade), helps to raise awareness with stakeholders that effective prevention has to start from a very early age. There should also be an emphasis on the necessity of having parents be involved in every part of the process. Initiating debates on sensitive topics that involve children and youth such as discrimination, online bullying, or hate speech, could increase awareness of these issues and foster critical thinking. Moreover, the role of peers in inspiring and engaging with youth is widely regarded as being productive.

Promoting acceptance and changing perspectives can also be done through peer-to-peer activities. One recommendable tool is the storytelling approach, in which young people who have experienced environments of intolerance and group hatred and subsequently distanced themselves from said environments share their experiences and thoughts with their peers. This very effectively raises awareness about the dangers these environments entail.

- *Developing trainings and online platforms for teachers.* Focusing efforts to prevent intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity on capacity building for educators and teachers is particularly useful, as they are able both to transmit and reaffirm the values of non-discrimination and to disseminate these ideas among students during

everyday situations. School staff need to be trained to deal with problems of intolerance and group hatred, to detect warning factors, and to respond to challenges.

Ideally, government authorities will support programs that teach good practices abroad. These programs can be an alternative if national governments and institutions do not support similar measures in the country. These topics should also be raised at staff meetings at the beginning of each semester. Additionally, creating a space where teachers can discuss particular cases and solutions and exchanging ideas and good practices can be very helpful for educators. A range of NGOs should be involved in the trainings to ensure diversity.

- *Organizing advocacy trainings for the NGO sector* helps NGOs pool their resources, since – with the exception of a few larger organizations – most NGOs have neither sufficient advocacy capacities, nor the funds to conduct such trainings on their own. The advocacy trainings can take place on an ad hoc basis depending on the actual circumstances and which needs are most urgent. NGO awareness about the benefits of advocacy and the disadvantages of the lack of knowledge and a systematic approach should, therefore, be addressed and increased.
- *Addressing psychological challenges.* When designing a strategy for advocacy, there is always a risk of burn-out and fatalism due to the nature of the work conducted in difficult, divisive, and conflict-ridden social atmospheres. Moreover, social constraints prevent activists from working with difficult-to-reach young people and engaging in advocacy communication with equally difficult to communicate to with actors in the local community at the same time. This difficulty is compounded when practitioners have to work in a social climate fraught with widespread populist discourses of xenophobia, resentment, anti-EU, and anti-human rights sentiments. Establishing a trusting, transparent relationship between NGOs and government representatives is particularly difficult, and so it is recommended that resources be made available for psychological support and self-help groups for the parties involved. It is similarly helpful to include mediation, counselling, and psychotherapy skills into the teams which engage in advocacy work.

## **4.2 Advocacy under unfavorable conditions**

This chapter contains some recommendations for civil society and the social movements engaged in political advocacy for the prevention of intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity of youth under unfavorable conditions, like weakening pluralism, shrinking civic space, or the erosion of human rights standards, media independence, and the rule of law. These recommendations are aimed at actors who experience major difficulty when trying to enter into an advocacy dialogue with government institutions.



- *Instead of neglecting advocacy, strategic, circumstantial and creative objectives can be used to advance an advocacy agenda, even under difficult circumstances.* Many NGOs, social movements, and other members of the civil society tend to give up on advocacy when the challenges seem insurmountable. While interaction with governmental agencies may not be feasible, this does not preclude advocacy work from being conducted. Although there is no one size fits all solution for such situations, looking for new allies or forming new coalitions at a local or international level may be one way to move forward. Revisiting advocacy objectives may also prove helpful, e.g. pursuing capacity building (like trainings for teachers or lessons at school) instead of policy reform or developing research activities aimed at mapping the status quo and facilitating proposals for action from other perspectives. Sharing information with and learning from peers in the sector and having a flexible approach and strategies that can be adapted to a dynamic landscape are ways to succeed in a political environment that is predisposed to thwart advocacy work.
- *Prioritizing and supporting the civil sector, social movements' resilience, and emerging mobilizations.* Civil society and social movements are key drivers for change, yet they remain under concerted attack. For these movements to be successful, they require cross-sector and cross-movement solidarity, exchange, and support. Some of the strategies to explore may include: sharing experiences between long-lasting and newly formed groups; celebrating even the smallest achievements; hosting workshops to prevent burn out and caring for activists' well-being; providing support, including emotional support for young leaders, school principals, and teachers; working in networks or coalitions for a stronger voice and higher visibility; engaging in cross-movement and cross-sector exchange and support; and showing solidarity when other groups are smeared or attacked.
- *Investing in relationships with local governments, opposition politicians, international human rights institutions, academics, progressive donors, the media, and, crucially, peers across movements and sectors.* When conditions are not favorable or even hostile, it is especially important for advocacy actors to step out of their comfort zones and engage with a wide range of actors. These may include:
  - politicians of the opposition who still have the power to set issues on the parliamentary agenda;
  - local governments including municipalities, provided they have a certain degree of autonomy to pursue policies and fund programs at local levels;
  - international institutions, such as the EU or the UN, which are able to hold national governments accountable for the implementation of international standards and values related to universal human rights, including anti-discrimination;

- academics who are experts in their fields and also able to keep abreast of new independent research;
  - progressive donors, including corporate and private foundations, as well as wealthy individuals who are able to fund advocacy work without being tied to the same restrictions as government funding;
  - independent media in the position to share and publicize narratives that may differ from the government's; and
  - peers across movements and sectors, e.g., teachers, students, parents, trade unions, or NGOs standing together for cross-sector solidarity, shared platforms and collective agendas. Broad coalitions or networks, including informal ones, can produce strategies for addressing specific problems and enhancing the will to act collectively.
- *Acting where the government fails to act.* Offering anti-discrimination classes or workshops at schools, hosting training for and supporting teachers, developing educational materials and independent research are ways to fill the gaps inactive governments leave unfilled. There is high demand and expectations of such activities, regardless of how a government acts.
  - *Avoiding political jargon and simplifying communication.* Communication with lay people should be done on down-to-earth terms. It is essential to speak in a way that people understand. For example, anti-discrimination education may be an unclear or vague term, whereas specific terms like children's safety, suicide prevention, or ending violence and bullying at schools are more easily understood and shared by a majority of people. This kind of lexis serves a dual purpose, since these concepts are also specific goals of anti-discrimination education
  - *Managing backlash* because it is almost sure to happen. There are many experts at managing backlash in civil society and social movements, both domestically and abroad. Asking peers for training or advice is better than hoping to get lucky and avoid backlash altogether. Having a strong own narrative is better than responding to smear campaigns. Having responses for anticipated *frequently asked questions* (FAQs) is another easy step to take for organizations, partners and allies, since there is a higher likelihood that backlash will not be restricted to a sole target. Receiving backlash is an indicator of strength; lack of backlash is sign of fear.
  - *Founding new forms of project-based collaboration* between civil societies of "smaller groups of Member States" based on shared interest and joint solutions to common challenges, e.g. with regard to intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity<sup>14</sup> is

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. the report of the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R), on: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20180613\\_final-report-radicalisation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20180613_final-report-radicalisation.pdf).

another way to progress under unfavorable conditions. Thinking outside of the box and seeing challenges and solutions in a more synergistic way helps to establish contact and dialogue with unlikely interlocutors or initiate unlikely forms of collaboration.

### **4.3 Defining useful advocacy language**

Strategic communication may start in many places in a low-profile manner, e.g. as roundtables, seminars, workshops, or events organized by local inter-agency groups. Such roundtable work may be dedicated to wider issues or trainings related to prevent work, but it should also include a module on how to speak about what we do, i.e. how to do advocacy, networking and strategic communication. The audience should be approached in a twofold manner. On the one hand, mid-level political and government representatives may understand a message one way, but on the other hand, that same message will need to be adopted to a wider audiences, in particular with those not typically exposed to the work an organization does or who may come from a different socio-economic or political background and therefore be unfamiliar – at best – or hostile – at worst – to the organization or the work it does.

Strategic communication usually begins by identifying and reaching out to local and national government or administration representatives who have already indicated they may be promising interlocutors or be interested and apt to understand and contribute to local prevention challenges in a broad sense of the word. This is a quasi-diplomatic communication and networking activity, a sort of informal governmental advocacy that is particularly recommendable in countries or regions experiencing widespread anti-European or anti-human rights sentiments. If successful, informal governmental advocacy is able to create a foundation upon which local actors can build to gain recognition and a deeper understanding of the necessity and methodology of advocacy work. The following observations and recommendations are for finding the most suitable linguistic style and techniques to be used when communicating about effective advocacy and building up trusting relationships:

- *Knowing one's partners.* It is difficult to build a joint mental framework in political affairs with unknown or unfamiliar organizations or individuals. Institutional and interpersonal levels of knowing each other are important. Collecting small pieces of information about a potential partner's views, opinions, interests, attitudes, and the issues they are dealing with is helpful. During activities like workshops, tasks that focus on work with opinions and attitudes help partners get to know each other better.
- *Communicating clearly with a partner and understanding each other's language.* It can happen that partners talk about the same things but use different terms or language. This can lead to partners feeling like they are not compatible with each other, which in turn can impede further collaboration. It is advisable, therefore, regularly to ask a partner for an explanation of what has been said or to explore the exact meaning and the background of

words together. That is one way to prevent misunderstandings, negative emotions, and conflict.

- *Using a mutually agreed vocabulary* – a vocabulary of cooperation – can facilitate joint meetings and activities. While a one-sided adoption of one partner’s language may have some short-term benefits, by adopting a vocabulary of cooperation, both sides commit to collaborating and can work together for the long term. This vocabulary also facilitates multilateral meetings and moderators can point out and overcome possible language barriers at the outset of such meetings.
- *Proposing initiatives which also match a partner’s interests* is mutually beneficial. Talking about topics with which both parties are familiar allows for easier communication and for a better assessment of a proposal.
- *Avoiding negative messages.* Fighting does not sound positive or appealing. On the contrary, constructive phrases like “what we are working for” or “building up skills such as critical thinking, digital and media literacy, emotional intelligence, teamwork, conflict resolution, etc.” which prevent and intervene with anti-social phenomena in practice can more easily convince partners to join a collaborative initiative.
- *Avoiding phrases and expressions that can have negative connotation* or sound like cross-talk, extreme qualification or accusation. Such language may trigger the opposite effect.
- *Depoliticizing language* will make it sound as non-activist and non-moralistic as possible. This prevents interlocutors, regardless of which political background they come from, from feeling alienated.
- *Avoid using bureaucratic language* and the agreed language of international institutions at home. Apply expressions which sound more human and quotidian and are easy to understand. The language should also take account of the given political culture, historical circumstances and even demographical particularities.
- *Using language and catchwords relating to daily needs* can be more appealing than scientific terminology. There is no chance for any interaction when there is no overlap between the language used and the government goals.
- *Respectful communication.* Disrespectful communication complicates and impedes the progress of partnership and cooperation. It is worth remembering that organizations and individuals often come from different backgrounds, environments, communication levels, knowledge, and skills, and that every person deserves to be communicated with respectfully.
- *Avoiding partisan terminology* and presenting a broad-scale prevention agenda allows initiatives to be conveyed in a cross-partisan way. This is especially helpful when interlocutors do not share a political background. Cross- or non-partisan language is more likely to receive long-term support and transcend systemic issues within the political sphere.

- *Using narrative mode of communication* is preferable to an argumentative mode. Narrative communication means the exchange of first-hand personal experiences which have been individually lived through by the speakers themselves and are thus beyond debate. An effective strategy for narrative communication may be first informally to agree on a minimal common denominator and a most general purpose of speaking with each other (e.g. the situation of youth or the community at hand). From there, communication can be conducted mostly on the narrative level, e.g. an exchange of first-hand experiences about youth and community while leaving any conclusions and assessments aside in the first instance. Sharing experiences as a form of storytelling builds relationship and can thus bridge gaps along mentality and other differences. Narrative interaction in an advocacy setting should be started by the advocacy worker themselves. They can share personal experiences and then gradually invite the interlocutors to story-telling.<sup>15</sup>
- *Developing a level of advocacy gradually.* With each interlocutor, addressing the level of advocacy challenge being faced must be done both carefully and gradually in order to get a feeling for the potential and limits of the conversation being had. When addressing stakeholders who are on opposite ends of the political spectrum – but also with others – it is especially prudent to start out with general terms and overarching objectives and then build a cross-partisan conversation based on common sense. From there, the conversation may become more specific and concrete in terms of propositions and suggestions.
- *Communication may not focus solely on one instance of intolerance, discrimination, or group-focused enmity.* Using terms that implicate larger ethnic or religious groups like Islamism or Salafism should be avoided. Such terminology risks stigmatizing these groups in their entirety rather than only few extremists who try to justify their ideologies and actions with a certain interpretation of a religion.
- *Some catchwords identified for political advocacy* to prevent intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity of youth include:
  - a need for enhancement of social stability;
  - a need for strengthening the feelings of responsibility for the future;
  - a need to build on common sense;
  - a need to be free from extremism;
  - a need for countering, preventing, and intervening with bullying at schools;
  - a need to work against exclusion;
  - a need to work for social peace; and
  - a need for protection of families.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. the approach of „Narrative Group Work in Schools“, “RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices 2019” (forthcoming), [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-best-practices\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices_en).

## Annex: Examples of Good Practices

The following chapter introduces good practices of advocacy for preventing intolerance, discrimination and group-focused enmity of youth in each participating country. These examples should be understood as concrete expressions of the recommendations in the previous sections. Moreover, the recommendations are a direct result of these experiences.

This annex presents two types of good practice. Firstly, this paper's authors have found established infrastructures and platforms of advocacy in some countries' that can be inspirational and exemplary for others. Secondly, some forms of good practice provide deeper insight into specific projects and campaigns, thereby uncovering dynamics and processes that lead to successful advocacy. Moreover, an overarching good practice strategy is formulated in the Draft Mission Statement of the CEE Prevent Net project.

### Bulgaria

The research shows that in Bulgaria, there is a sound understanding about what advocacy is. Sufficient expertise in the area is also available, but the existing know-how, energy and opportunities need to be channeled better through sound strategizing and planning, improved cooperation and deeper collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

The **National Youth Forum**<sup>16</sup> is the largest youth platform in Bulgaria, bringing together 50 youth organizations from across the country. Some key elements of their work are: (1) the *Working Group - Youth Inclusion and Empowerment*, which works to create and promote a sustainable environment for quality youth inclusion and empowerment; (2) the *Structured Dialogue/EU Youth Dialogue* with young people and youth organizations engaging with policymakers, decision makers, experts in the field, researchers, and other relevant civil society actors; and (3) the December 2018 *National conference* where young people from all over the country shared their collaborative vision for Bulgaria until 2025. The conference is part of the Structured Dialogue process in Bulgaria and aims to provide *recommendations for the next National Youth Strategy*. The National Youth Forum is exemplary for good practices in the field of social youth work and social consultations, engaging in active dialogue and state mechanisms that involve the NGO sector.

The **National Assembly of Students' Councils**<sup>17</sup> is the only legal organization in Bulgaria to represent students; it currently represents around 250,000 students. The organizations main priorities include the formation and advancement of national student and youth policies. The organization's activities can be seen as a source of good practices relating to the organization of

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16 Website: <https://nmf.bg/>

17 Website: <https://www.npss.bg/>

workshops and summer and winter schools, as well as formulating and providing opinions, statements, and recommendations on other relevant topics.

**The National Network for Children**<sup>18</sup> is an alliance of 150 civil society organizations and supporters working with and for children and families across Bulgaria. Some key elements of their work are: (1) the *Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign*, which aims to develop child protection systems; (2) the National Network for Children's annual report on schools called *Report Card*, which evaluates whether the government and administration have fulfilled their commitments to children; (3) *Child Rights Hubs for Children in Conflict and Contact with the Law*, which is aimed at establishing four centers for children's rights and piloting services for children in conflict or in contact with the law. The network good practices are evident in the work it does which comprises for instance campaigning and public pressure, establishing a network of informational centers, providing guidelines for working with children and families, and evaluating and launching pilot projects.

The informal Bulgarian coalition **Childhood without Violence**<sup>19</sup> is comprised of 19 civic organizations and academics. It is a broad public platform that brings organizations from civil society together with businesses, the media, and the academic community to create an atmosphere of zero tolerance for child abuse. The formation of the coalition indicates that there is an interest in creating opportunities for a grassroots approach to networking across different scales and with different actors and application.

**The Child Protection Hub**<sup>20</sup> was initiated by a group of individuals and organizations from nine countries from Southeast Europe and the wider European region (Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Hungary, Kosovo, Albania, and Romania). It is a professional network striving towards a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all children. Its existence is a good example of how organizations can engage with a broad group of (international) actors and build trust with collaborating partners.

**Contact Group created by the National Coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism:** The Contact Group serves as an intermediary for the respectively responsible ministries (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports) and agencies and NGOs. The group's goal is to increase policies' effectiveness and the number of actions aimed at preventing and counteracting anti-Semitism, hate speech, discrimination, and intolerance. It was created jointly by NGOs and state institutions and is a best practice that could easily be transferred to other countries, since it shows how a government apparatus can collaborate with the NGO sector and build trust with its partners.

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18 Website: <http://nmd.bg/en/>

19 Website: <http://endviolence.bg/>

20 Website: <https://childhub.org/en>

## **Czech Republic**

This good practice describes the process of initiating a collaborative working relationship between two types of stakeholders in youth and social work at a local level. As non-governmental actors, **low-threshold youth clubs** comprise one stakeholder group; the other stakeholder group is the **Social and Legal Protection of Children Authority (OSPOD)**, the state authority responsible for fulfilling the state's obligation to social and legal child protection. The collaboration happens in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic (approx. 350,000 inhabitants). The network building happens in the context of city neighborhoods or districts in which social exclusion is present.

Low-threshold facilities for children and youth are registered services of social protection and they adhere to social services law. They serve children, adolescents, and young adults aged 6–26. The low-threshold youth clubs in Brno focus on ensuring safety for children, adolescents, and young adults who are struggling with their lives and whose needs are not being met in their natural environments (nuclear family, extended family, peers, and neighborhood). The clubs accompany them during childhood and adolescence. They empower them with the knowledge and skills necessary to making decisions. These services are provided in the form of street work, work in clubs, and online. All of the facilities in Brno conduct preventive programs, consulting, information service, and crisis intervention, and mentor clients throughout the process. There are 11 low-threshold youth clubs in Brno, and they are facilitated by eight organizations. Seven of these organizations are NGOs; the eighth actor is the city of Brno itself, which runs of two clubs.

Social and Legal Protection of Children Authority (OSPOD) employees are civil servants at a national, regional, and local level. At the local level, the city of Brno oversees the OSPOD's offices directly. In Brno, most municipality districts have their own OSPOD office – in a few cases, two districts share one OSPOD office. There are 21 OSPOD offices in total in Brno. The OSPOD is responsible for identifying at-risk children, setting up preventive measures in families, providing foster family services, and supporting individuals through court proceedings.

There are two types of OSPOD social workers. The first are those who ensure that children's needs are being met and that their rights are being upheld. They intervene when parents do not meet their child's needs as defined by the law, when children are abused or neglected, and when a child is in need of a legal guardian (i.e. due to the loss of a parent). The second are those who work with children or adolescents to control their behavior. They work with children and adolescents on the verge of committing crimes or with a criminal record. Their focus is on criminal activities as well as accompanying minors during criminal proceedings.

Even though low-threshold youth clubs and OSPOD offices have the same goals in terms of youth work and preventing risky behavior and they very often share clients, the situation in Brno is not ideal in terms of mutual cooperation when it comes to setting up a functional network for their clients. As a reaction to this unsatisfactory collaboration, the following measures were undertaken to improve the situation. These measures resulted in the establishment of a supportive network for clients and improved the effectiveness of prevention work for both actors in youth work.



1) A working group of low-threshold youth clubs of Brno was founded. During the group's regular meetings, the clients' needs were discussed and experiences shared. The working group agreed on topics considered to be priority ones with regards to OSPOD offices. The working group agreed on a memorandum of self-understanding and what should be communicated towards OSPOD offices.

2) Low-threshold youth clubs conducted workshops to initiate a closer cooperation with OSPOD social workers. The importance of cooperation in youth work was discussed during these workshops, as well as when cooperation between the clubs and the OSPOD would be beneficial for the clients and which methods should be used. Both types of actors identified hurdles in this work and made suggestions as to how to overcome them. These workshops enabled youth club and OSPOD employees to get to know each other better, not only in terms of the services they offer professionally, but also personally. This proved to be very important for future collaboration

3) The webpage [www.situjeme.cz](http://www.situjeme.cz) was launched. The webpage is a compilation of information about low-threshold youth clubs in Brno and includes: a list of youth clubs, a description of their programs and services, information about the clubs' availability and capacities, recommendations for initiating a partnership with low-threshold youth clubs for at-risk youth, how to run a partnership, and how to end one when the club's services are no longer needed. The webpage content is primarily for social workers from OSPOD offices. The activity is organic and is constantly being improved. The content is thus flexible and able to change as a reaction to the involved actors' needs.

4) As a result of collaboration between social workers from low-threshold youth clubs and OSPOD offices, guidelines for how to initiate a partnership with low-threshold youth club and an OSPOD office for individual clients and cases.

5) Low-threshold youth clubs hosted open houses. The target group of these open houses were social workers from OSPOD offices. At the open houses, low-threshold youth clubs raised awareness for their work and presented their guiding principles and their in detail and in an accessible way.

6) Exchange internships are being negotiated between low-threshold youth clubs and OSPOD offices in order to create a space for a deeper mutual understanding of each other's work.

## Germany

What it takes to do this kind of advocacy and inter-agency network building within the current German prevention landscape can best be exemplified by a case study about one particularly effective instance of multi-level inter-agency cooperation between high-level policymakers, government funders, and field-connected NGO practitioners.

Cultures Interactive's conceptual thinking behind this advocacy initiative within the current, quite elaborate, sometimes fragmented, and overheated prevention landscape in Germany arrived at the conclusion that a combined top-down and bottom-up procedure is the most effective. In Germany, this approach should strive to garner the attention and gain cooperation of the larger federal and state programs and the field practitioners engaged in them. This could possibly imply organizing a high-level kick-off advocacy meeting on with key policymakers which would then stably accompany further advocacy processes across the state and potentially federally, too.

As a well-established NGO in the field, Cultures Interactive (CI) was able to put this concept into practice within the parameters of its program "**Narrative Gesprächsgruppen an Schulen**" (**Narrative Group Work in Schools**).<sup>21</sup> In this regard, CI organized a high-level kick-off advocacy and networking meeting in a cross-regional state-wide perspective. A small group (comparable to a task force) of high-ranking key figures from federal and state policymaking, including the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and high-ranking public officers from the state ministry of education, were gathered and convened to discuss solutions together.

Prior to this high-level and state-wide kick-off meeting, the two governmental parties did not know each other well, since there is a strong historically-based separation of the federal and state levels within German federalism. Over the last few years, CI as an NGO had made itself known to these two governmental levels to differing degrees and has conducted manifold advocacy efforts to varying degrees. Given their familiarity with networking and network-building, the two government groups were immediately able to begin working on an initiative for cross-regional and inter-agency cooperation. The focus was on advocacy and prevention issues, primarily in the East German states, but also partly beyond.

As an NGO, CI was able to trigger and facilitate this process for several reasons. This is primarily due to the fact that the German infrastructure for inter-agency NGO-state cooperation is quite advanced. There is a fundamental trust in the system and a latent eagerness to cooperate in at least some sectors, regions, and states at a national level. The reception to implementing an inter-agency NGO-state cooperation is not present in many other EU countries, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe. Due to this fact, the state of affairs in Germany cannot easily be compared to that of other countries and the CEE Prevent Net partners, both in terms of advocacy and related areas of activity.

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<sup>21</sup> This program has been included in the RAN Collection of Practices, see [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/narrative-group-work-schools\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/narrative-group-work-schools_en).

## **Hungary**

This chapter presents the main **Youth Advocacy Institutions** and examples of activities conducted in Hungary.

### **Umbrella Organizations**

National Youth Council

Hungarian Youth Conference

UNK – Center for New Generation

### **Political Actors**

Youth Organizations of Political Parties

### **Professional organizations and lobbies**

FIVOSZ – the National Association of Young Entrepreneurs

HÖÖK – the National Union of Students in Hungary

ISZOSZ – the National Association of Youth Service Providers

AGRYA – Hungarian Young Farmer’s Association

DOSZ – National Association of Doctoral Student

### **Local Actors**

Youth self-governments and roundtables

GYIÖT – Local Children’s and Youth Municipal Councils

### **Campaigns Advocating for Youth Affairs**

- **Ministry of Human Resources and New Generation Centre: DIP**  
DIP is a campaign against cyberbullying among Hungarian youths. The aim of this campaign to help protect youth from cyberbullying and teach them how to protect themselves in the event of such an attack (e.g. how to protect their own data).  
Source: <http://mydip.xyz/mi-ez-a-dip>
- **Telenor Hungary: Stop Cyberbullying Day Hungary**  
Each year, Stop Cyberbullying Day brings together corporations, educational institutions, media outlets, non-profit organizations, governments, and public figures to speak out against cyberbullying and digital abuse of any kind. Furthermore, participants are called on to defend the right to freedom of speech while adhering to the basic principle of mutual respect for others.  
Source: <https://stopcyberbullyingday.org/about/>

- **No Hate Speech Campaign**  
The No Hate Speech Campaign is a youth campaign of the Council of Europe for human rights online to reduce the levels of acceptance of hate speech and develop online youth participation, citizenship and self-expression.  
Source: <https://szubjektiv.org/en/no-hate-speech/>
  - **EU corporation with the Hungarian State: Safer Internet Plus Hungary**  
This hotline offers an online reporting platform for the public to report illegal, harmful, or abusive online content including cyberbullying or material promoting sexual abuse of children (and other, similarly harmful content). The hotline ensures that the reports are investigated and, if found to be illegal, that the information is forwarded to the relevant law Enforcement agency. In many cases, the internet service provider hosting the content also receives a notification about this content.  
Source: <https://biztonsagosinternet.hu/hu/rolunk>
  - **Program for Promoting Digital Education in Schools**  
This program strives to introduce and ensure dissemination of digital technology in public education institutions.  
Source: <http://ivsz.hu/en/focus/education%20>
- Digital Child Protection Strategy of Hungary**  
Within the framework of the Digital Comfort Program, the government aims strategically to empower children to meet the challenges of the modern day digital world.  
Source: [www.digitálisjoletprogram.hu](http://www.digitálisjoletprogram.hu)
- **UNICEF Hungary: I'm not alone campaign**  
The campaign's aim is to help young victims of cyberbullying.  
Source: <https://unicef.hu/nemvagyegyedul/>

## Poland

### **Stop Bullying! A human rights based approach to tackling discrimination in schools.**<sup>22</sup>

The aim of the project is to encourage school communities to be more receptive to human rights, better equipped and prepared to address exclusion, discrimination, and violence at school, and to make school a safe place for all. The project is directed at all members of the school community: students, teachers, parents, and administration workers, and is comprised of activities such as dedicated classes with students, support to students' and schools' projects, trainings for school management, workshops for parents, and coaching, mentoring, and support for groups and individuals. Started in 2018 as a pilot project in 9 schools in one of the Warsaw's city districts, it has since been extended by the Mayor of Warsaw to all Warsaw's primary schools with plans to reach as many as 211. This equates to approximately 188,000 students, 40,000 parents, 17,000 teachers, and 800 administrators and other school employees.<sup>23</sup>

The project is an initiative of the Mayor of the Warsaw's Ochota district and a response to a violent incident against a 14-year old girl of Turkish origin that took place in the area. The District Council took a strong stand, condemning all acts of aggression, intolerance, and discrimination, and demanded the Mayor take specific action particularly directed at school communities. The project champions a multi-stakeholder approach and engages with Warsaw's City Council, particularly its Center for Social Communication and Education Office, as well as the Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training (WCIES), a local government-operated teacher development facility. Anti-discrimination educators, often with long history of cooperation with civil society organizations, play a prominent role and support the project's implementation

### **Gdańsk Model for Equal Treatment**

In June 2018, the City Council of Gdansk adopted the Model for Equal Treatment – the first and most comprehensive of its kind to address discrimination and equal treatment for all, irrespective of sex, age, national origin, religious beliefs, disability status, or sexual orientation. Rooted in Polish anti-discrimination law and the City of Gdansk's urban policies, the Model presents 179 recommendations – out of which 32 are focused on education – to ensure equal treatment, including access to the job market, cultural activities, and education system. It also ensures a quick and targeted response by the city authorities if and when discrimination occurs.

Work on the Model was initiated in September 2017 by the Gdansk City Council for Equal Treatment upon request from Pawel Abramowicz, the Mayor of Gdansk at that time, but it was preceded by years of tireless advocacy by civil society organizations. The Mayor's decision gave a

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<sup>22</sup> The Polish title of the project has been inspired by the Amnesty International project "human Rights Friendly Schools".

<sup>23</sup> The Polish title of the project has been inspired by the Amnesty International project "human Rights Friendly Schools".

green light to develop policies specifically directed at the most marginalized groups in a broad and consultative process, which lasted for 9 months, until June 2018. The process to arrive at the Model was as impressive as the final document itself. The City Council engaged with a broad group of actors – a group of more than 100 people, in large part experts and practitioners from civil society, in a strategic and participatory manner reflecting on the major causes of discrimination (sex, age, disability status, national origin, sexual orientation). This process led to a diagnosis which was then converted into concrete recommendations. Between May and June 2018, two rounds of social consultations took place. The breadth and width of the process ensured a high quality and diversity of the final recommendations, but also opened doors for anti-rights actors, who did their best to jeopardize the model. For example, The City Council Resolution to adopt the Model was taken to court by the local Voivode - a ruling party representative in the region - but was successfully upheld and the implementation is now on-going.

### **The Warsaw LGBT+ Declaration**

Warsaw's LGBT+ Declaration is a political declaration signed by the Mayor of Warsaw, Rafal Trzaskowski, to implement a 12-point action plan to address the urgent needs of the Warsaw's LGBT+ community during his time in office: 2018-2023. Signed on the 18th of February 2019, the Declaration promises improvements in the areas of security, education, culture, sport, administration, and employment, with actions ranging from providing shelter for LGBTIQ+ teenagers rejected by their families to anti-discrimination and sex education in schools. The Mayor's signing of The Warsaw LGBT+ Declaration is a direct result of political advocacy and lobbying efforts of Polish LGBT+ organizations led by the Love Does Not Exclude Association (MNW). Having recognized the fact that with the current federal government, neither advocacy nor dialogue are possible, LGBT+ activists turned their attention to the local governments. Responding to the strategic opportunity of local elections, which took place in Poland in October 2018, MNW communicated with mayoral candidates all over Poland and asked them to sign pledges consisting of specific LGBT+ demands – including one for Warsaw which later became The Warsaw LGBT+ Declaration.

The role of the LGBT+ organizations, led by MNW, has been absolutely central. Unlike in the case of the Gdansk Model of Equal Treatment, the initiative came from the LGBT+ community and required massive and bold social and media pressure, including naming and shaming, to see the process through to a successful end. Throughout the negotiations, which both the LGBT+ community and the city council officials openly acknowledged as difficult, it was agreed that the LGBT+ community would be a key partner for the Declaration's implementation and that their genuine engagement would continue to be crucial to its success. Signing the Warsaw LGBT+ Declaration triggered severe backlash from the right-wing ruling party, pro-government media, and the ultra-conservative arm of the Catholic Church, which warned of threats to the "traditional family" and "deprivation of children." Commitment to anti-discrimination education and comprehensive sex education, in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization, sparked the most severe reactions.

# Slovakia

## Examples of the most successful advocacy platforms

The **Youth Council Slovakia** (*Rada mládeže Slovenska*) is an association of NGOs that deal with youth and children. The Youth Council Slovakia works at the national level as an umbrella organization for 25 youth organizations across the country and it represents them on various issues. It represents and coordinates the demands of its members towards state institutions and is the key advocacy actor in the field of youth policy.

The **Association of Low-Threshold Programs for Children and Youth** (*Asociácia nízkoprahových programov pre deti a mládež*) is an association for organizations and programs engaged in social (field) work. Its main goal is to engage in advocacy activities in support of the work of the low-threshold programs in the country.

**Not In Our Town** is a regional-level civic platform that operates as a network of anti-extremist and human rights NGOs and activists from Banská Bystrica. The network members collaborate on eliminating and preventing extremism in the Banská Bystrica region. The platform brings together representatives of organizations engaged in community work, volunteering, and human rights, but also civil society activists and active citizens. The platform has successfully organized a number of public campaigns and educational and awareness-raising events. It has furthermore established dialogues with both the representatives of the city of Banská Bystrica and the autonomous Banská Bystrica region regarding adopting strategies for preventing group hatred and intolerance at a local level.

## Best tools for advocacy<sup>24</sup>

**Individual contacts and meetings:** Individual (informal) personal contacts were identified as the most important and efficient advocacy tool, both for ad hoc relationships and long-term strategically formed ones. In many cases, the success or failure of an advocacy initiative was perceived as being closely connected to the individual representatives of the participating parties. This means that if the contact person left their position in the state institutions, it constituted a major setback for the advocacy initiative.

**Participation in the committees and councils:** Advisory bodies that are established by state actors (typically ministries) and mostly function as interdepartmental working groups with both ministerial and NGO representation have been identified as a best practice for pursuing an advocacy agenda. These representatives usually have to undergo a selection procedure, since the number of NGO representatives is limited. While this necessarily implies rather limited access for most NGOs, it is simultaneously the best and most effective way to influence policies, agenda-

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<sup>24</sup> Based on the prevailing opinion of Slovak respondents.

setting, and priority setting. Members of such committees and councils also participate in the development of the action plans and other strategic documents relating to the topic they address, even though the final decision is made by the state authorities (usually approved and adopted by the government). Within the topic of interest, there are three key bodies of such nature:

- *Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Racism*: An interdepartmental advisory body with selected NGO sector representatives.
- *Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality*. An interdepartmental advisory body with selected NGO sector representatives. Also the umbrella organization for the Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Racism and the Committee for Children and Youth.
- *Committee on Children and Youth*. An interdepartmental advisory body aiming to monitor and ensure the implementation of policies that guard the interests of children and adolescents, including the creation of policies and mechanisms which strengthen the position and participation of children and adolescents in the public policy-making process.

**Campaigning and public pressure:** Public pressure is brought forth through media involvement that can be a crucial factor in the success of an initiative.



## **Across all partner countries**

The CEE Prevent Net Draft Mission Statement<sup>25</sup> project presents an overarching good practice strategy across all partner countries. It begins by introducing its key terms and objectives in the most general and sensible way. The statement's title is: "Safeguarding young people and supporting tomorrow's societies – in Central and Eastern Europe." Seen semantically, the statement mostly refers to objectives of "safeguarding young people," "supporting the local communities and areas," "enhancing the youngsters' wellbeing and skills," and "buttressing youth welfare." These are indeed the project's most important objectives, since they also are cross-partisan and represent common goals. The argument ultimately feeds into a focus on "the local communities and areas in which young people live" and on "supporting tomorrow's societies" at large.

On a deeper level, the mission statement gradually addresses the topic of "improving the youngsters' skills of dialogue and tolerance, among similar skills." Alone, these key words may trigger reservations with some stakeholders who, within highly polarized political discourses, may not de facto agree that "dialogue and tolerance" are important for young people's wellbeing. Therefore, the mission statement adds that "empirical research has shown that people with limited ability to dialogue with and be tolerant towards others are also less healthy and become less intelligent ... and do not live as long as they could," and thus again appeals to cross-partisan objectives of supporting common welfare. This careful, gradual process is well suited to establishing a common ground and developing a good understanding with a wide spectrum of interlocutors.

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<sup>25</sup> See CEE Prevent Net Mission Statement. Available at: [http://www.ceepreventnet.eu/files/Publications/Mission%20statement%20CEE%20Prevent\\_5.pdf](http://www.ceepreventnet.eu/files/Publications/Mission%20statement%20CEE%20Prevent_5.pdf) (Accessed August 9, 2019).