***Titolo:*** Gender ideology in social network groups, regulations and policy recommendations

***Durata:*** 24 mesi

**Abstract (in English)**

The general objective of this research is to do an experiment with the aim of exposing social groups to content streams shared on social media in order of trying to change the attitude towards hate speech in social networks. The aim is therefore to analyze, at first, the attitudes of users in Facebook (or Twitter) groups once they are confronted with issues such as feminism or transgender people (which can generate hate speech). The impact of approaches and opinions in the information flow will serve as a basis for developing legislative processes and internal policy recommendations for social networks. Accordingly, more generally, the project also aims to propose which type of legal and public policies some Member States and the European Union can implement to protect the human rights at stake.

Specific objectives are:

1. A pilot experience on exposure to social media content streams setting to change certain hate speech in certain social networks (Facebook and Twitter) on the italian context.
2. Identify and analyze the internal regulations of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.
3. To propose legal (and non-legal) interventions and public policies to address this type of hate speech on social networks and mainly online.
4. Propose workshops, information days and school education programs with primary and secondary school students on gender difference and hate speech.

**Abstract (in italiano)**

L'obiettivo generale di questo progetto di ricerca è quello di effettuare un esperimento pilota incentrato sull’esposizione di gruppi sociali a flussi di contenuti condivisi sui social network con il tentativo di cambiare il loro atteggiamento verso le parole d'odio. Lo scopo è quello di analizzare, in un primo momento, gli atteggiamenti degli utenti nei gruppi di Facebook (e/o Twitter) una volta che si sono confrontati con temi come il femminismo o le diverse identità di genere (che, ormai è noto, possono provocare discorsi d’odio). Tali comportamenti sulle piattaforme online saranno analizzati al fine di elaborare strategie in grado di poterli moderare e per delineare strategie d’intervento per arginarli e per prevenire la vittimizzazione. L'impatto degli approcci e delle opinioni nel flusso di informazioni servirà come base per fornire indicazioni nello sviluppo di processi legislativi e raccomandazioni di politica interna per i social network. Di conseguenza, più in generale, il progetto mira anche a proporre quale tipo di politiche legali e pubbliche gli Stati membri e l'Unione Europea potrebbero adottare per proteggere i diritti umani in gioco.

Obiettivi specifici sono:

1. Un'esperienza pilota sull'esposizione a flussi di contenuti per cambiare alcuni discorsi di odio nei gruppi che condividono tali informazioni sui social network (Facebook e/o Twitter) nel contesto italiano.
2. Identificare e analizzare le regolamentazioni interne proprie dei social network come Facebook e Twitter.
3. Proporre interventi legali (e non legali) e politiche pubbliche per affrontare questo tipo di discorsi di odio sui social network.
4. Proporre workshop, giornate informative e programmi di sensibilizzazione con studenti delle scuole primarie e secondarie sulle differenze di genere e sui discorsi d’odio.
5. **Project background & needs assessment**

Today we are witnessing an increasingly “virtual” public debate. The opinion that was proclaimed in the square and the large public gatherings have recently been replaced by social networks. The creation of a personal opinion on a wide range of topics is taking place in the age of internet increasingly on online platforms where users share information, news, thoughts and of course opinions. The most sensitive topics for the public, the most divisive ones that touch on people's intimate beliefs and ideological positions move a constant flow of data online and polarize discussions on social networks. As a result, arguments such as gender difference, gender identity, feminism, create and nurture not only considered reflections but also real violence and hate speech. These new forms of direct, immediate and widespread communication that reaches everywhere thanks to digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, allow users, even anonymous ones, to spill hate speech and verbal violence online without the fear of being recognized or recognizable. Anonymity, perhaps hidden by a nickname, contributes to the spread of online hatred. However, abuses can be prosecuted, and we are now able to trace the perpetrators who incite violence even on social networks. Also because, online aggression, cyberbullying and hatred can have direct consequences in the real life of people (Moore, Nakano, Enomoto & Suda, 2012), of victims and cause sometimes extreme consequences. As a result, the balance between freedom of expression and the protection of people subject to violence is the challenge of regulating online hatred. Hate speech establishes therefore a tension between the freedom of expression, that is one of the fundamental rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights, and the safeguarding of the dignity of persons who must be considered under the protection of the principle against discrimination (Art. 14 ECHR[[1]](#footnote-1)) in all Member States of the Union.

These new forms of direct, immediate and widespread communication that reaches everywhere thanks to digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, allow users, even anonymous ones, to spill hate speech and verbal violence online without the fear of being recognized or recognizable. The hate speech against gender theories is one of the most invisible and recent types of hate speech. It usually denies violence against women, trans people and homosexuals and the existence of direct or indirect forms of discrimination against minority groups in our societies. So why do we talk about the invisibility of certain online hate behavior? Because they are often implicit speeches that invoke cultural ideas and ideologies based on the safeguarding of social constructions such as the traditional family at the disadvantage of other relationships. It is therefore difficult to implement policies and legislative actions that are able to counter such subterranean hate phenomena. Moreover, the fact that hate speech takes place on social networks where private companies have power over their content makes it even more challenging to implement universal regulatory interventions at national and European level. Thus, there is an inherent risk that such practices will occur against the usual democratic rule of law (Quadrado & da Silva Ferreira, 2020).

1. **Description of the work (activities)**

The general objective of this research project is to analyze an experiment to expose social groups to content streams shared on social media with the attempt of changing the attitude towards hate speech in social networks. The pilot experience will consist in the selection of two groups of people (representing similar samples, for example two groups of university students), that will put together in a Facebook groups and be provided with two different types of flows of information. The aim is therefore to analyze, at first, the attitudes of users in Facebook (or Twitter) groups once they are confronted with issues such as feminism or transgender people. The impact of approaches and opinions in the information flow will serve as a basis for developing legislative processes and internal policy recommendations for social networks.

The activities of the project would be:

* Qualitative and quantitative analysis of hate speech against gender minorities on social networks in Italy especially Facebook groups and Twitter accounts (such as those of right-wing and far-right political orientation).
* Analysis of a pilot experience on exposure to to social media content streams to change certain hate speeches in certain social networks (Facebook and Twitter).
* Analysis of the self-regulations of Facebook and Twitter in relation to both hate speech and crimes
* Legal and non-legal proposals to prevent and deal with hate speech by political parties at a national and European level
* Organization of workshops in school contexts in Italy and educational information days on the hate speech phenomenon

Expected results & outputs:

* Report (in English) on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of hate speech against gender minorities on social networks in Italy
* Report (in English) on the analysis of a pilot experience on on exposure to social media content streams setting to change certain hate speeches in certain social networks
* Report (in English) on the analysis of the self-regulations of Facebook and Twitter in relation to both hate speech and crimes
* Report (in English) on the legal and non-legal proposals to prevent and deal with hate speech by private companies in the social media sector in Italy and at the European level.
* Feedback on information days and school workshops
1. **Methodology.**

The methodology options of the project would be:

* Legal analysis and analysis of case law in order to establish the legal framework applicable to hate speech against gender theories in Italy and at European level.
* Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the hate speech against gender minorities on social networks in Italy
* Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the pilot experience on exposure to social media content streams to setting to change hate speeches in certain social networks.
* Analysis of self-regulations policies to propose legal and non-legal strategies for the protection of minorities based on gender difference
* Workshops or training sessions with entities from the public administration (schools) or organization of educational days with the civil society to the topic of hate speech in general.
1. **References.**

Convention for the Protection of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Rome, 4. XI. 1950.

Moore, M. J. *et al.* (2012). Anonymity and roles associated with aggressive posts in an online forum. Computers in human behavior, *[s. l.]*, v. 28, n. 3, p. 861–867.

Crosset V., Tanner S., Campana A. (2019). “Researching far right groups on Twitter: Methodological challenges 2.0”, New Media & Society, vol. 2, n. 41, 939-961.

Quadrado J. C., da Silva Ferreira E. (2020). Hate and intolerance in digital social networks, Revista Katalysis, Vol. 23, N°3, 419-428.

1. The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)