



Project Brochure

Vol 1: The Essentials

Laying the Groundwork for Action Plans



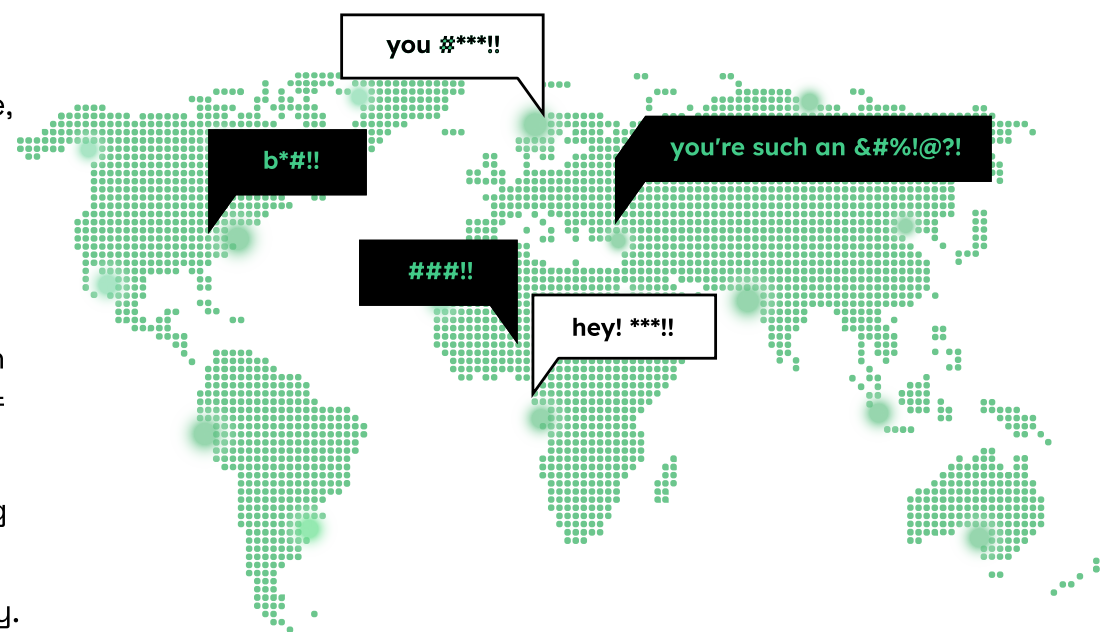
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Online Hate Speech: Why Active Participation Matters

Although online hate speech is not always reported or tracked, it is estimated that online hate speech affects millions of people around the world, especially minorities and vulnerable groups. Online hate speech is a serious problem that can lead to violence, discrimination, and social unrest. Therefore, it is important to combat online hate speech and promote respect and tolerance for diversity.

There is also often a disconnect between detecting hate speech and reporting it to the appropriate authorities. The anonymity of social media significantly amplifies hate speech within online communities. This is where users can make a difference. By being informed, responsible and engaged, users can help combat hate speech and create a safer and more respectful online community. Therefore, **we need to promote active participation as a key strategy in the fight against hate speech.**



The Project's Essence: What It Is Trying to Achieve?

FASTLISA is a project that aims to empower various stakeholders, such as young people, academics, experts, local authorities, and NGOs/CSOs/Associations, who work in the field of social inclusion. The project provides them with more advanced and in-depth skills to understand and counteract online hate speech, which is a major cause of racism, xenophobia, intolerance, and violence against those who are perceived as "different".

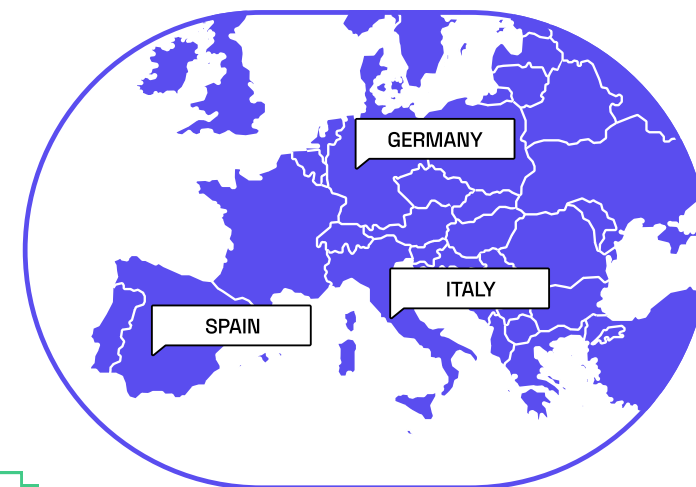
The main goals are:

- To promote active participation in understanding, detection and counteraction of online hate speech
- To develop a unified and cross-border tool and protocol that can effectively identify and address online hate speech



Where Do the Initiatives Come From?

The project focuses on **three specific EU cities and regions** (Ravenna in Italy, Santa Coloma de Gramenet in Spain, and Kreis Offenbach in Germany), where the presence of diverse cultural orientations poses challenges for social inclusion and respect for diversity, as well as risks of social exclusion and racism. The project also addresses the EU level, by developing trans-national models of conduct and policies that can be replicated to counter hate speech.



The **Project Consortium** consists of representatives of academia, city governments, and local organizations from each country where FASTLISA operates.

The project also has an **External Advisory Board** of 6-10 European experts on hate speech, who provide guidance and feedback to the partners on how to maximize the learning outcomes.

The **project's Ambassadors** are 60-90 young people who actively participate in the project and raise awareness on hate speech in their communities.

Engaging Stakeholders in Co-Designing Against Hate Speech

The project also engages **public authorities and policy makers**, such as national authorities, cities, police forces, and judicial courts, who help design and implement local regulations and practices against hate speech.

Finally, the project involves **NGOs and CSOs**, mostly through Ambassadors, who act as multipliers of the project, by receiving specialized knowledge on hate speech online and spreading awareness among their communities

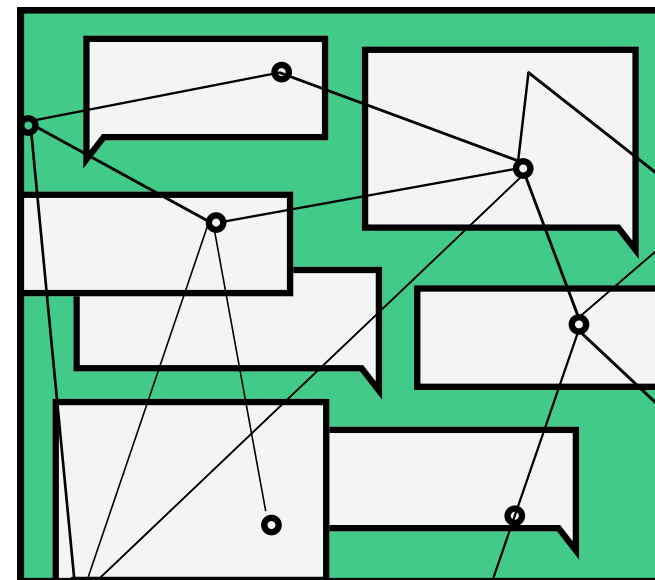
Steps Towards Active Participation

Phase 1.

Development of FASTLISA Use Cases and Tools

Online hate speech is a complex phenomenon that cannot be captured by a single definition. It involves various dimensions, such as legal, linguistic, psychological, sociological and technological aspects, that interact and influence each other. To understand online hate speech, we need to adopt a holistic approach that takes into account all these factors and their interrelations.

FASTLISA developed several methodological and technical tools, using **Artificial Intelligence** and **Natural Language Processing**, for analysing digital speech in different scenarios and contexts. We call them use cases.

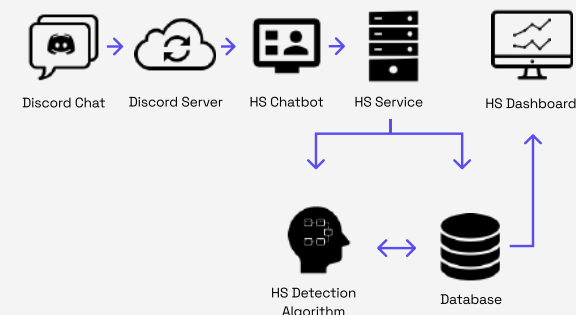


Use Cases

1 Use Case: Role-plays in Schools using Discord

Tool: ECHO, the Educational Chat about Hate Online

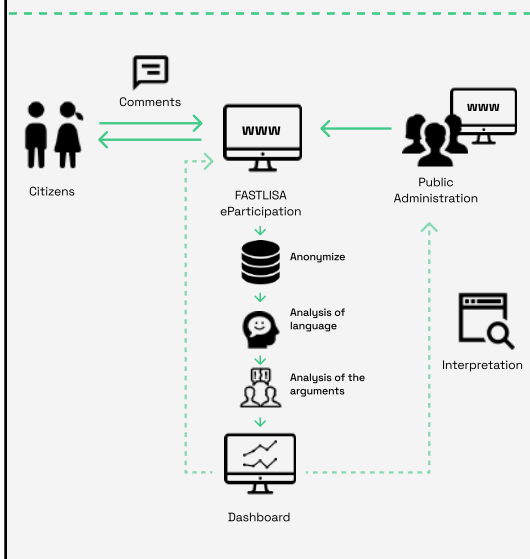
The aim of this use case is to help young people recognize and prevent hate speech online. It involves simulated debates on various topics in classrooms, where students are split into two teams, supporting or opposing the topic. The debates are carried out through **ECHO, the Educational Chat about Hate Online**, using anonymous accounts on Discord with a new language monitoring extension that incorporates a **Hate Speech Detection Algorithm**. The tool generates anonymous statistics, analyses, and graphs that are shown on the **Hate Speech Dashboard**. This allows teachers to identify and discuss with the students the patterns, behaviors, and language that could lead to hate speech.



2 Use Case: Public Consultation of administration proposals: e-Participation

Tool: FASTLISA e-Participation Platform - <http://fast-lisa.unibo.it/>

The **e-Participation Platform** is a tool that enables citizens in a specific community to participate in public discussions and consultations on topics that affect their lives. The platform is designed to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, while also using **Artificial Intelligence** to analyze the content of their posts. The AI produces a **Dashboard** that shows the main trends, opinions, and sentiments of the citizens, as well as any signs of hate speech or incivility. The Dashboard helps the public administration to understand the needs and preferences of the citizens, to moderate the debate in a respectful and constructive way, and to inform their policy decisions based on evidence and feedback. The aim is to foster a culture of digital citizenship, where citizens can express their views and influence the public agenda in a safe environment.



3 Use Case: Claims Collection

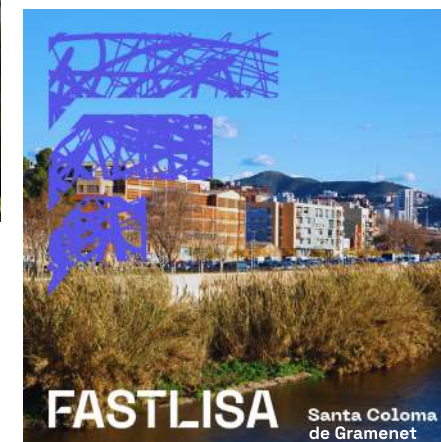
Tool: FASTLISA e-Participation Platform - <http://fast-lisa.unibo.it/>

The goal of this use case is to gather reports of hate speech incidents from citizens in a specific community and to understand the social perception and contextual factors in real life. The **e-Participation Platform** has a section where actual reports are collected. This enables the social team of FASTLISA to study and comprehend hate speech and the informatics to refine the classification of hate speech and to enhance the AI tools based on the lexicon and context.

Phase 2.

FASTLISA Capacity Building Program

The **project's training program** was the main focus of the Capacity Building, which aimed to empower the Ambassadors in the three FASTLISA target areas - Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Ravenna and Kreis Offenbach - with the necessary skills to disseminate the project's actions and results among their local communities. The Capacity Building Program was a key component of the project's strategy to foster social innovation and inclusion in the three areas.



Ambassadors: the drivers of change

The Ambassadors are the key actors of the project, as they were chosen for their passion, dedication, teamwork abilities, personal and academic backgrounds, and volunteering activities. The Ambassadors are a diverse and cohesive team of young people who are aware of the situation of their communities. They can relate to the project's topic, since many of them have experienced hate speech. Motivation drives them. This common challenge inspires them to work hard and ensure the project's outcomes.



"...It's about learning how to act and try to make everyone feel comfortable in some way, especially on social media. We want people to think this is a safe place where they can express their feelings and not be judged for their conditions, race, sexual orientation, gender or anything else. So, we're just trying to ensure that everyone is comfortable in their own body and does not hurt others' feelings..."

Mireya / Student / Santa Coloma



"I have also experienced hate speech online, on social media, and in real life, because of my immigration background. I'm from Albania. We face stereotypes and prejudice every day. When I was younger, I didn't have anyone to help me with this. And now I want to be the person who helps others who need help."

Ron / Student / Kreis Offenbach



"... It's not just a matter of one person who offends others. It's something much bigger, in my opinion. And as a community, we need to understand that each one of us has a part and a role in it."

Elena / Student / Ravenna

The project partners and external experts have delivered the **capacity building program**, using a participative approach and non-formal education methods. They have also involved researchers, policymakers and third-sector representatives as trainers and mentors in some sessions.

The training was a **40-hour program**, aimed to enhance the Ambassadors digital, relational and intercultural skills for identifying, addressing and preventing incidents of hatred, discrimination and intolerance (online and offline).

The training included **interactive workshops and stimulating discussions** which helped in building self-confidence, promoting critical thinking, building the sense of team and preparing the participants for their roles and responsibilities as project Ambassadors.



Valuable skills and knowledge learned by the Ambassadors:

- They explored the **different aspects of hate speech**, from its origins and meanings to its effects and consequences.
- They chose topics that were relevant and important for their own communities, such as **migration, gender, or politics**.
- They learned **how to spot and analyze hateful messages** that target specific groups or individuals, using both verbal and visual cues.
- They also engaged in **constructive debates** on these messages, understanding the root causes of hate speech.
- They learned about various aspects, such as **diplomatic protocols, cross-cultural communication, computer applications, legal implications and GDPR compliance**.
- They were able to identify the **risks and challenges** that hate speech poses for their communities and societies, and came up with creative and effective solutions to counter it.



The key role of Ambassadors implementing the FASTLISA strategy

Ambassadors learned how to use the FASTLISA Tools during the Capacity Building. They explored the tools and developed the technical and social skills needed to run **Role-Playing sessions on Discord** and moderate Public Consultation on the e-Participation Platform. They also practiced with the Dashboard, a key tool for sharing project information with the public.

Moreover, they discussed and learned about ethics and privacy issues related to the project. They understood the rules of GDPR, anonymization of personal and sensitive data, discrimination topics, prejudice narrative, fake news and the fair use of the technology.



Closing the Capacity Building Program: Santa Coloma International Camp

14 - 16 September 2023

All Ambassadors gathered for the first time to learn from experts and from each other's insights on the local contexts and realities. More than 90 people from partner organizations participating in the project, including speakers from Ravenna, Kreis Offenbach and Santa Coloma, as well as academic and institutional experts attended the event to exchange knowledge, experiences and **best practices on how to prevent, identify and counter online hate speech.**

The International Camp also aimed to generate synergies between partners and provide Ambassadors with additional knowledge and specific resources to design and develop their local action plans. The International Camp was also intended as a space where people of interest such as the police cybersecurity departments of Bologna and Santa Coloma could meet and explore possible future professional links.



Partners





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