SELMA

HACKING HATE

Hacking Online Hate:
Insights from the SELMA Project

European Schoolnet

for Adolescent Health (F.A.H.)

SWGfL

THE DIANA AWARD

LMK
Landeszentrale für
Medien und Kommunikation
Rheinland-Pfalz

CfDP
Center for Digital Pædagogik

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT CONTEXT

In recent years, hate speech has increasingly become a problem on social media, and many young people and adults experience the internet as a hostile space. While the public debate often focuses on the legal implications of hate speech and the ways in which it can be regulated online, less attention is given to awareness-raising and prevention through a pro-active approach. The SELMA (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness) project aimed to help close this gap by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance and respect, empowering students to stand up to online hate speech. It was coordinated by European Schoolnet (EUN, Belgium) in partnership with For Adolescent Health (F.A.H., Greece), South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL, United Kingdom), The Diana Award (United Kingdom), LMK/Media Authority for Rhineland-Palatinate (LMK, Germany), and the Centre for Digital Youth Care (CfDP, Denmark). SELMA was a two-year project starting in November 2017 and was co-funded by the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The overall vision of the SELMA project was captured by its slogan: *Hacking Hate*. Hacking, while it is associated by many with immoral or even criminal activity, at its core describes the introduction of amateur innovation to an existing system. The notion of "Hacking Hate" thus holds a strong democratic dimension. Through hacking, existing problems can be fixed in a bottom-up approach that requires critical thinking and a pro-active attitude. In line with this, the SELMA project aimed to empower young people to become agents of change through a Social and Emotional Learning approach that would not only help them to better understand the phenomenon of online hate, but also provide them with appropriate tools and strategies to act and make a difference. The main activities conducted as part of the SELMA project included 1) empirical research, 2) the co-creation of the SELMA Toolkit for educators, 3) face-to-face and online training and counselling for young people, 4) a SELMA Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), 5) the SELMA Hackathon and 6) public monthly awareness-raising campaigns. Through these activities, the SELMA project engaged young people between the ages of 11 and 16, at the same time reaching their peers, teachers, parents and other professionals and carers in a multifaceted learning journey.

This final revaluation report will summarise the key lessons learned through the empirical research conducted as part of this project, drawing upon the full richness of qualitative and quantitative project data gathered. It will offer a brief summary of the results of the first set of research activities, an initial literature review and a first round of focus groups conducted with young people and educators. Its main focus, however, will be the results of the second and third round of focus groups, which related directly to the evaluation of the SELMA Toolkit for educators. It will elaborate on how content and resources developed have drawn upon the solid understanding of young people's needs regarding online hate speech, and discuss the insights gained through the continuous feedback and evaluation of the SELMA Toolkit by educators and young people. In addition, the report will offer a brief evaluation of SELMA outreach and training activities and present the project's key dissemination messages which echoed the nuanced empirical understanding established through research.

Thus, this final evaluation report will analyse in how far SELMA activities/outputs were successful in increasing the awareness, knowledge and skills relating to hate speech both for young people and professionals in formal and non-formal education. Moreover, it will elaborate on the remedial role of Social and Emotional Learning in order to educate and encourage young people to take a stand on tolerance, mutual respect and hate speech online.
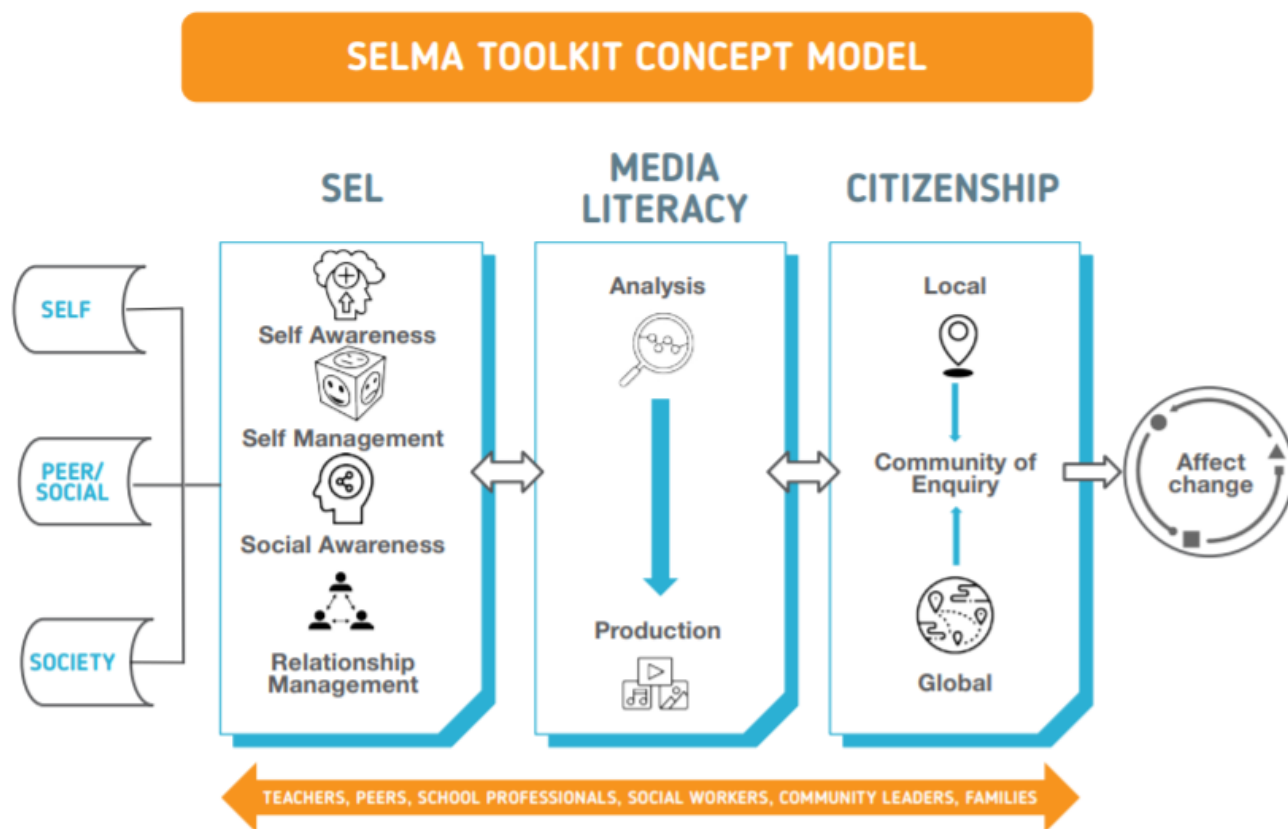
2 THE SELMA APPROACH

2.1 SELMA ACTIVITIES

In order to reach its main goal – empowering young people to pro-actively and creatively tackle hate speech – the SELMA project included activities that can be divided into three main categories. The first category includes research activities, such as a literature review and the running of three rounds of focus groups with educators and students, in order to create an evidence base for the development and evaluation of the SELMA Toolkit. The development of the Toolkit falls in the second category of activities, development of learning materials and tools, which moreover included a MOOC and an online Learning Event. Thirdly, outreach activities were conducted as part of the SELMA project, such as the SELMA Hacking Hate Hackathon, the Final Project Conference and a number of training and outreach activities with educators and young people in the national contexts of the partner organisations. These activity areas were not treated in isolation of each other, but as related throughout the project. For instance, the research conducted by the project consortium in the beginning of the project in the form of a literature review and the first rounds of focus groups fed the initial development of the Toolkit. In addition, the Toolkit development was accompanied by further research and evaluation in the form of a second and third round of focus groups, the results of which will be elaborated upon in this report. The Toolkit then inspired the development of other learning materials and tools, such as the Massive Open Online Course and online Learning Event. Equally, outreach and dissemination of project results consistently aimed to reflect the nuanced understanding developed through the SELMA research. The project activities are visualised in the timeline below.

2.2 SELMA CONCEPT MODEL AND EDUCATION STRATEGY

Hate speech is a growing problem and it can have negative effects not only on the individual, but also on groups and society at large. In order to enable teachers to raise awareness about and address the consequences of hate speech at the micro-, meso and macro-level, the SELMA Toolkit is structured according to the sub-themes of 1) Self, 2) Peer/Social, and 3) Society. The **first theme Self** explores the emotional impact hate speech has on the individual, the **second theme Peer/Social** focuses on group dynamics in online communities, and the **final theme Society** considers the ethical and legal implications related to online hate speech. Through this approach the SELMA project aims not only to reach young learners and educators, but also to enable them to act as multipliers towards their peers, families and other stakeholders, to affect change on all levels.

In addition to these three levels of intervention, the SELMA Toolkit offers three different **methodological focus angles** from which they can be approached. These include **1) Social and Emotional Learning, 2) Media Literacy and 3) Citizenship Education**. As explained in the SELMA research report, these key principles underlying the SELMA Toolkit are based on the work of The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and they can be summarised as follows:

1) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and young people acquire and apply the following set of competencies:

- Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognise one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour.

- Self-management: The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself.
- Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.

2) Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media messages across a variety of contexts. A number of media analysis and media production activities are integrated into the SELMA Toolkit to foster young people's ability to critically analyse online hate speech messages, while exploring creative modes of expression to react in an online environment:

- Activity guidance, prepared questions etc. in the Toolkit to analyse and produce media.
- Why each issue is important.
- Resources and professional reading for teachers.

3) The ultimate goal of the SELMA Toolkit is to enable teenagers to make constructive and ethical choices about personal behaviour and social interactions. Throughout the SELMA Toolkit, learners will be encouraged to reflect and act in response to concrete online hate speech situations, which can be local, national, regional and/or global in nature. It enables individuals to put online hate speech into context, starting from an awareness and critical analysis of the eclectic range of diverging (and often conflicting) views and perspectives in a digital society, while exploring possible pathways of change towards mutual tolerance and respect.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING helps young people develop self–awareness, self–management, social awareness and relationship skills.

MEDIA LITERACY gives young people the ability to analyse, evaluate and create online media messages across a variety of contexts.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION empowers teenagers to make constructive and ethical choices about personal behaviour and social interactions.

Through these methodological focus angles and the multi-level approach, SELMA aims to help young people understand the wide implications of online hate speech and empower them to become pro-active agents of change in their online and offline communities. It is not the aim of the SELMA Toolkit to prescribe behaviours or establish categories of "good" or "bad", but instead to encourage and enable children and young people to critically and creatively engage with the problem of online hate speech and its possible solutions. SELMA embraces a holistic approach that takes the social and cultural dimension of online hate speech into account and aims to not only reach educators and young learners, but parents and other relevant stakeholders as well as the wider community too. The content and

resources in the SELMA Toolkit have drawn upon a thorough review of existing academic literature and a profound understanding of young people's needs regarding online hate speech, gained through the qualitative analysis of focus group results. The methodology for the collection of the focus group data as well as the SELMA research results are described in more detail in the following chapter.

3 SELMA TOOLKIT EVALUATION

In order to ensure the relevance and usability of the SELMA Toolkit, three rounds of focus groups were held, one before, one during and one after its initial development. All focus group sessions were organised by the project partners SWGfL, The Diana Award, F.A.H., CfDP, and the LMK in their respective countries, namely the United Kingdom, Greece, Denmark and Germany. In preparation of the focus groups, a structured protocol for the collection of feedback on the SELMA tools and resources was jointly developed by the partners, ensuring that all sessions would follow the same practical, methodological, and ethical guidelines. The project consortium paid special attention to the last aspect, given that the research involved youth participants. The ethical guidelines were integrated in the protocol and covered aspects such as the recruitment of participants, underlining the voluntary and active nature of the activities, the importance of informed consent, and the safe-keeping of the anonymity of the participants and their personal data in any publication of the focus group results. The results of the focus group session are detailed in this chapter. To further complement our focus group findings, we also provide an overview of evaluation data gathered as part of the SELMA training and outreach scheme. This will help to provide a more comprehensive overview of the overall project impact.

3.1 ONLINE HATE SPEECH: INITIAL FINDINGS

In early 2019, the SELMA partnership conducted a literature review with the aim to establish an evidence base that would guide the initial development of the SELMA Toolkit and related project activities based on most current academic insights relating to hate speech online. This revealed a plethora of definitions of the term hate speech that exist across academic and policy contexts. An additional layer of complexity was added by the observation that online hate speech is often considered different from offline hate speech in its reach and effect, and thus requires different prevention and coping approaches. These various elements cumulated in a definition of online hate speech as **any online content targeting someone based on protected characteristics with the intent or likely effect of inciting, spreading or promoting hatred or other forms of discrimination.**

The rich contextual understanding of the phenomenon of online hate speech that was developed through the literature review was complemented by qualitative research through a focus group with young people. This focus group was held in order to gather data about the needs and perceptions of pupils in regards online hate speech to ensure that SELMA materials would be tailored to children and young people across countries and age groups. Students were asked about their needs and experiences in a classic structured **focus group** format. These focus groups were led and moderated by a researcher/staff member from a SELMA partner organisation, based on a common interview guide and a set of primary and secondary questions. This was followed by a basic demographic **student questionnaire**. Based on the focus group transcriptions, partners all carried out a first-level thematic analysis. F.A.H. subsequently conducted a more comprehensive thematic analysis and synthesis based on all transcribed materials (translated in English), including also the demographic survey data.

In short, the quantitative survey confirmed the literature review's finding that online hate has become an inevitable part of young people's everyday media experience. Nonetheless, the focus groups showed that young people's knowledge and understanding of online hate speech is in general rather limited. Meanwhile, in a **teacher survey,** teachers indicated a somewhat better understanding of the phenomenon and mostly feel comfortable to discuss the topic. However, the development of concrete educational activities was considered difficult, and Social and Emotional Learning as well as Media Literacy are not concepts widely known or used by educators. In addition, the lack of a whole-school approach seems to impede the development of effective ways to tackle online hate speech in formal education.

On the students' side, the thematic analysis of the focus group results revealed six themes that capture adolescents' ideas and perspectives in relation to online hate speech, namely 1) Freedom of speech, 2) Offline and online hate speech, 3) Hate speech versus bullying, 4) Victims, perpetrators and bystanders, 5) Perceptions on ways to address online hate speech, and 6) The social impact of hate speech. While teenagers were often not able to define hate speech, they were able to provide examples and discuss the phenomenon in a rich and contextual manner in the guided focus group. The young people argued that, apart from regulation and adequate monitoring and reporting procedures, awareness-raising and education from an early age are essential to tackle online hate speech effectively. Concretely, educational activities "should help learners to systemise their thinking about the nature of online hate, its causes and its consequences. They should also address the normalisation of hate, and the indifference and polarisation it may cause. For this, a wholly different approach is needed, one which helps young people to understand and regulate their own thoughts, emotions and behaviours, while empathising with others, including those who are perceived to be different."[1] The detailed findings of both the literature review and the first round of focus groups are available in the SELMA project publication "Hacking Online Hate: Building an Evidence Base for Educators".

3.2 SECOND ROUND OF FOCUS GROUPS

3.2.1 Aim of the focus group

The second round of focus groups followed a slightly different structure than the first round, starting with a **SELMA Toolkit pilot activity** conducted by an educator with a group of young people. This activity was then evaluated through a **student survey** and a **student focus group** to gather young peoples' feedback about the Toolkit. In order to also receive feedback regarding the educators' use of the Toolkit and experiences in preparing and running the activity, the researcher equally conducted an **educator interview**. For this round of focus groups, the focus group protocol comprised of templates for conducting and reporting on the student survey, focus group and the educator interview, as well as of an information sheet for the educators who led the activity. Furthermore, a fact sheet to the attendance of participating pupils' parents was developed as a basis for their granting of informed consent to their child's participation in the focus group session.

This round of focus groups was conducted to pilot test the SELMA tools and resources between December 2018 and March 219, while the Toolkit was still under development. Thus, its primary goal was to gather first-hand feedback about the implementation of SELMA Toolkit activities. This included on the one hand impressions of educators especially regarding the clarity and relevance of the Toolkit, its usability, and its effectiveness as an education and awareness-raising tool, and on the other hand

---

[1]   "Hacking Online Hate: Building an Evidence Base for Educators", SELMA project, July 2019, https://hackinghate.eu/assets/documents/hacking-online-hate-research-report-1.pdf.

feedback from young people. Special attention was paid to the activities' dynamics and the ideas or feelings that students indicated the activity might have triggered. Moreover, the focus group discussed the perceived changes in students' understanding of hate speech, as well as any potentially resulting behaviour changes. The feedback from both stakeholder groups, educators and pupils, was then analysed in order to identify strengths and shortcomings of the Toolkit activities and extract lessons learned to guide the further development and adaptation of the Toolkit.

In order to pilot test the SELMA activities at the time of the second round of focus group, educators were provided with the first SELMA Toolkit module in PDF format, which focuses on the theme of "How do I recognize hate speech" primarily from the perspective of the individual learner. They then chose an activity from this part of the Toolkit which they conducted with their students, and which was evaluated by the researcher through the student survey, student focus group, and educator interview. The results were analysed by the SELMA project team and are presented below.

3.2.2   Key figures

In line with the age range of students for which the SELMA Toolkit activities were developed, the target group for the second round of focus groups were students age 11 to 16. As specified in the focus group protocol, focus group sessions were conducted with students between the age of either 11-13 or 14-16, to ensure that the SELMA Toolkit activity could be tailored to the needs and experiences of those specific age groups. Even though the educational setting for the focus groups was not strictly defined beforehand and the project consortium agreed that the Toolkit could be tested in formal and non-formal educational contexts, all focus groups took place in a classroom setting. The activities were thus led by teachers in different roles, including language teachers, a life education teacher, and a teacher also fulfilling the function of director of student welfare, among others.

The educators conducted the SELMA Toolkit activities for groups of 7 to 25 students, with the average group size being 19-20 students. The total number of students who took part in this piloting activity, including the surveys and focus groups, was 195. Apart from one session, in which all students were female, special attention was paid to diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity and social background in the composition of the student groups, as specified in the focus group protocol. This diversity ensured that the experiences of students of different backgrounds were taken into account in the development of the Toolkit, especially considering the sensitivity of the topic of hate speech and its potential personal relevance for students and young people, particularly those having protected characteristics or experience with the issue of online hate speech.

Since each of the project partners conducted the focus groups in their own country of registration, they were usually held in the native language of the educators and students. However, LMK held their two sessions in English rather than in German, since the chosen educator was a foreign language teacher and the Toolkit activity did not only offer an opportunity to discuss hate speech, but moreover to introduce relevant subject material, namely vocabulary around emotional expression. In addition, one group in the United Kingdom, where the focus groups were held in English, was composed of students with a native language other than English.

3.2.3   Main findings

3.2.3.1   Toolkit usability (for educators)

Feedback on the usability of the Toolkit and its resources was gathered in relation to the Toolkit navigation as well as the implementation of the concrete learning activity. While teachers mentioned that they found the Toolkit's overall usage straightforward, some suggested that the modular approach of the Toolkit was lacking a linear logic that would make it easier to follow the progression within the

activities. Similarly, one teacher mentioned that it would be useful to indicate which resources are stand-alone and which build on other activities or materials, so that teachers could immediately recognise whether activities can be conducted within a single lesson or need to be implemented consecutively in a series of activities or lessons. One educator also mentioned that the inclusion of SELMA Toolkit activities in everyday teaching practice could be facilitated by providing structured lesson plans or building blocks for lesson plans, rendering the preparation of the activities easier and less time-consuming.

In addition to this feedback on the navigation logic of the Toolkit Module, several teachers mentioned that the accessibility of the Toolkit could be increased by providing resources in editable formats such as PowerPoint or Word documents. This adaptability was considered crucial not only in order to adapt resources to the specific subjects that were being taught, but especially to ensure that the resources would cater to the cultural context in which the school was situated and even the narrower personal backgrounds of students in the group. Moreover, several teachers mentioned that it would be useful to be able to adapt the activities to the age of their students, and that the Toolkit itself should indicate for which age group the respective activities are suitable. It should be noted in this context, however, that the focus groups with students revealed discrepancies between the teachers' and the students' assessment of whether the conducted activities were age appropriate. Moreover, student groups across countries as well as students within one classroom, all within the same age range, sometimes also disagreed whether the pilot-tested activities were age appropriate or not.

Finally, a last point regarding the adaptability of materials that was repeatedly raised and considered crucial by several teachers was the possibility to translate resources and materials. As a comparative analysis of the focus group results and the researchers' observations showed, the ways in which hate speech was discussed depended not only on the student group, their age and cultural context, but also on the language and implicated associations with certain words and phrases. The importance of the cultural and language dimension was not only recognised by the teachers, but indirectly by the students as well, who identified paraverbal clues, cultural context, and humour as crucial dimensions for the assessment of speech online. Thus, the pilot testing confirmed the added value adequate translations and the adaptability of materials could have to make the Toolkit accessible across languages and cultures and to thus be able to transmit the content in the most suitable and relevant manner possible.

3.2.3.2 Toolkit response and impact (students and educators)

Awareness for online hate speech

In a first instance, the analysis of the student surveys showed that the baseline knowledge students had about hate speech was different across groups, and especially across age groups, with older students generally having a more concrete understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, students indicated different sources for the knowledge they had acquired about online hate speech, with a few reporting that it had been discussed in school, with friends, or that they had heard about it in online videos. Regardless of the source and extent of the students' pre-existing knowledge, virtually all students indicated that their understanding of online hate speech had increased after the SELMA Toolkit session.

SEL and student engagement

Overall, teachers as well as the researchers documenting the focus group sessions reported high rates of engagement from students. In the focus groups, students clearly reflected upon feelings, and not only the feelings of people affected by hate speech, but also on the ways in which the SELMA Toolkit activity led to emotional reflection for themselves. Thus, the SEL approach fostered emotional reflection and learning. As one teacher pointed out, the student group with which they ran the session had often been rather disruptive and the teacher had been concerned about running a session tackling an issue as sensitive as online hate speech with them. However, the topic proved very relatable and the SELMA approach engaging for the students, including on an emotional level, rendering the session more constructive than expected. In accordance with the SELMA Toolkit approach, peer-sharing and learning

was considered very effective by students and teachers, and the engagement of students with each other was appreciated by teachers and considered an added value by educators and youth in all focus group sessions.

One suggestion for the improvement of the Toolkit that particularly referred to Social and Emotional Learning was the inclusion of real-life scenarios in the SELMA Toolkit, and one teacher suggested using the experience of students directly. However, while on the one hand many students and some teachers indicated that the depiction of real instances and experiences might add depth and create stronger feelings of empathy, the abstraction used in the Toolkit activities was valued by others. Especially teachers appreciated activities that for example included the alien Xorg, a fictitious, non-human character which is confronted with hate-speech. It allowed them to introduce the topic in a non-threatening way, eliminating judgement and sensitive references to protected characteristics from the activity. In any case, many students underlined that the SELMA Toolkit sessions did prompt them to reflect about the topic not only on a cognitive, but also on an emotional level, increasing their feelings of empathy for targets of hate speech.

Relevance and sensitivity of online hate speech

As mentioned above in relation to the positive feedback regarding student engagement, it was suggested by educators that the Toolkit should embed the possibility for students to share their own real-life examples and personal experience. This was echoed by comments in the student focus groups, who appreciated the relevance of the Toolkit's topic for their own life and that their concerns were being taken seriously, but equally would have liked more time to share their own experiences. At the same time, students as well as teachers acknowledged the sensitivity of the issue and the resulting difficulty of addressing it in the classroom, especially in groups in which incidents of online hate had occurred. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of students expressed that they felt comfortable sharing their views and participating in the activity. In no case did a student leave a session early due to discomfort with the topic or the way in which it was approached. On the contrary, most students emphasised that they appreciated being given the opportunity to participate in the activity and the importance of creating safe environments in which they can speak about their personal experiences in the absence of judgment.

Resilience, agency and behavioural change

As became apparent in the focus group discussions, the Toolkit activities in most cases did not only lead to an increased knowledge about online hate speech and emotional engagement with the topic. In addition, they also triggered reflections about the students' own roles in tackling it. In fact, two cases emerged in which students who seemingly had engaged in hate speech before began to reflect upon their behaviour and articulated that they wished to change it. More generally, several students wished to dedicate more time to the perspective of the perpetrators of hate speech in the Toolkit activity. This included young students who seemed to realise, through the focus group session, that they had engaged in online interactions that could be considered hate speech, without however explicitly stating this during the focus group.

While the SELMA Toolkit activities seemed to have raised awareness on hate speech especially with students who had engaged in it, and for the negative consequences hate speech can have on its targets, some students expressed that they were not sure how to react if they found themselves in the role of bystander after the session. Rather, they would still be likely to ignore the problem, for instance not reporting hate speech if they came across it on an online platform. In relation to their role as bystanders and the possibility of the SELMA Toolkit to affect change in the students' perception of personal agency, many suggested to include concrete actions that bystanders can take if they witness

online hate speech incidences, as well as coping strategies.[2] This uncertainty of how to act was expressed by students of all ages. However, the focus group discussions revealed differences between the younger and the older students' perceived agency. While younger students often described that they simply did not know how to react to hate speech and approach the perpetrators of it, older students showed a certain disillusionment. While younger students tended to describe perpetrators as lonely peers, several older teenagers remarked that they did not react to hate speech online since the perpetrators held bad intentions and knowingly sought to provoke, and that they themselves would be unable to make a difference in this regard. At the same time, the student survey showed that most students, including older students, agreed that the participation in more SELMA activities similar to the one they had attended would likely lead to longer-term behavioural changes.

3.2.3.3   Hate speech in formal education

Since all ten focus group sessions took place in a classroom setting and the activities were led by teachers, the reflections upon the activity included aspects relating to the inclusion of social and emotional learning in formal education. As mentioned in the previous section, students reported that the chosen activities were relevant to their daily experiences, and several students mentioned the need for online hate speech education to be included in formal education, especially through learning approaches in which they can share their own experiences. In one group, this need for structural integration into formal education was argued strongly based on the argument of equal education and opportunities. Since the students perceived online hate speech as a prevalent issue that affects their daily life, their standpoint was that education about it should reach all young people who might be or become perpetrators or targets of hate speech, as well as bystanders, and that the topic would thus need to be structurally integrated in formal education.

The general consensus among students was that education about online hate speech should start at an early age, when children first begin to access the internet or smartphones, suggesting to build awareness and resilience preventively. Meanwhile, some younger students rated the importance of tackling hate speech in formal education as lower than older students, possibly because they had not been exposed to it to the same extent. Nonetheless, in both age cohorts students identified online hate speech as an everyday life experience and emphasised the importance of hate speech education for all their peers. From the side of the teachers, the relevance of hate speech education was equally emphasised, especially considering that online hate speech incidences influence formal education and classroom practice even if they occur outside of the school. However, the implicit question of how to embed the topic in formal education did not produce a straightforward answer, as it depends on factors such as curricula, national context, and school culture, among others. During the pilot testing activities, online hate speech was for example linked to history education in Germany and Greece, while in the United Kingdom it could fall under the subject of "Life Education", which does not have an equivalent in most other countries.

Generally, hate speech and the SELMA Toolkit activities were seen as cross-curricular issues that would need to be implemented across subjects, because online hate speech relates to several different subject areas. However, according to the educators participating in the SELMA activities, the cross-curricular implementation might prove challenging, as it can create ambiguities regarding the question of which teacher is responsible and trained for addressing the issue. In addition, as one teacher from the UK mentioned, conducting cross-curricular activities of any sort can prove challenging, as teachers must often prioritise subject matter relevant for examinations, rather than being able to concentrate on more holistic learning approaches and transversal competences. This is the case especially for older students who often are anxious about studying for final exams and for whom more cross-cutting subjects such as

---

[2] It should be noted at this point that the activities chosen by teachers in the second round of focus groups were taken from the introductory Toolkit module that centred around the questions "What is hate speech?" and intervenes on the level of the Self, rather than offering pathways for action, which are present in later Toolkit modules.

Life Education are no longer part of the curriculum. An alternative idea to integrating hate speech education in the curriculum from the side of teachers was to link it to existing school initiatives and events, such as Safer Internet Day. Importantly, teachers mentioned two crucial aspects for successfully conducting awareness-raising and educational activities around the topic of hate speech, no matter within which framework, namely the support from school staff and management and the accessibility of adequate teacher training. These aspects should thus be kept in mind as prerequisites when discussing a more structural inclusion of online hate speech activities in schools.

3.2.4   Key lessons learned

The second round of SELMA focus groups aimed to gather first-hand feedback from students and educators about the Toolkit activities while they were still under development. As described above, the analysis of the second round of focus groups presented new insights about the Toolkit's conceptual and educational approach, as well as about the topic of hate speech in education and broader society. In relation to these aspects, the following main messages could be extracted:

- **Relevance of the topic**: The topic of hate speech is highly relevant to students' everyday life. When conducting the SELMA Toolkit activities, it is essential to be mindful of young peoples' realities and include their personal experience in the learning process. Hate speech is a sensitive and often personal topic, and more safe spaces need to be created to discuss the topic in the absence of judgement.

- **Value of the SELMA approach**: The SELMA methodological focus angles were considered an added value by students and teachers, and students reflected on the topic of online hate speech not only on a cognitive but equally on a socio-emotional level. Regarding the behavioural dimension, changes are visible in several students especially regarding the role of perpetrator of online hate speech. For the role of bystander, a perceived change in personal agency on the side of the students is observed to a lesser extent. This is not surprising considering that the Toolkit activities in the second round of focus groups were targeted rather at the Self than the Peer/Social or Societal dimension. Nonetheless, students agree that repeating SELMA Toolkit activities in the future would likely lead to a change in their behaviour.

- **Expanding hate speech education**: Students recognise the importance of online hate speech education, including in formal education and starting at an early age. However, this appeal is constrained by several factors, in the view of teachers.

In relation to the Toolkit's usability, the focus group sessions equally brought valuable results, which led to adaptations of the Toolkit before its publication and the third focus group round.

- **Adaptability of resources**: Based on teachers' feedback, resources were made available in editable formats to allow for adaptations to the students' age, cultural and social backgrounds and specific group characteristics, as well as for translation. Moreover, SELMA activities were made available in lesson plan formats or building-blocks to facilitate the integration of SELMA resources and activities by teachers.

- **Toolkit Navigation**: Toolkit Pathways were introduced that lead through Toolkit activities in a congruent way, each Pathway serving a different educational purpose, in order to provide series of curated activities building on one-another. It is equally possible to access the Toolkit by Theme or Focus, and to search its resources by keyword.

- **Translation:** Apart from enabling the translation of materials by making them available in adaptable formats, Toolkit resources and materials have also been directly translated into the project languages German, Greek, and Danish within the project. The importance of translating

the accompanying educational guidance was equally recognised and was ongoing at the time of the third round of focus groups.

3.3 THIRD ROUND OF FOCUS GROUPS

3.3.1 Aim of focus group

Based on the feedback from the second round of focus groups and with the initial research results in mind, the SELMA Toolkit was further developed and adapted to match the identified needs of young people and educators. A third round of focus groups was conducted between October and November 2019 with the aim of collecting feedback about the final set of SELMA Toolkit materials and activities. The criteria to be examined were identical to the ones in the second round of focus groups and included the usability of the Toolkit for educators, its effectiveness as an awareness-raising tool, and the dynamics of different activities as well as their potential impact on the emotions and behaviours of the children. The focus group protocol largely remained identical as well, following the same structured process, including the student survey, focus group and educator interview, as well as the role of the researcher.

3.3.2 Key figures

As in the previous rounds of focus groups, the sessions were held with young people between the age of 11 and 16, for which the SELMA Toolkit was developed. To ensure that the respective activities would be tailored to students' ages, groups included children within the ranges of either 11-13 or 14-16 years, with two groups including students between 14-17. In total, eleven focus group sessions with 5-46 children were conducted, reaching a total of 254 and an average of 23 young people per session. All focus groups were held in the language of the local partner organisations, which for the vast majority of participants was identical to their mother tongue. Most focus groups were conducted in a classroom setting and led by teachers, including a music teacher, a drama teacher, and a teacher of personal, social and health education. One session was held in a school by an external youth trainer in a voluntary after-class session, and two focus groups were held by a social worker in a youth centre.

Regardless of their setting, careful attention was paid in all groups to diversity regarding gender, ethnic and social background. It is worth mentioning that one SELMA session held in Northern Ireland addressed a student group of mixed denominations and religious affiliations. Meanwhile, the focus groups held in the youth centre included young people affected by social and emotional challenges. The attention paid to diversity within and across groups was considered crucial. This helped to gather feedback from young people with different backgrounds, in order to ensure that the final SELMA Toolkit would speak to youth in different situations and with varying experiences regarding online hate speech.

3.3.3 Main findings

3.3.3.1 Toolkit usability (for educators)

While in the second round of SELMA focus groups educators were provided with a preliminary version of the first Toolkit module in PDF format, for the third round they were given the choice between all final Toolkit activities. In order to facilitate the selection of one or several activities, the project team however pointed out links to different Toolkit Pathways. These Pathways were introduced as a result of the second round of focus groups in order to provide educators with suggestions for structured and scaffolded

activities and thus increase accessibility for educators who are not yet familiar with the Toolkit and/or aim to tackle a specific area or task, such as setting up a peer-mentoring scheme. Given these options educators chose different activities and indicated a variety of factors that influenced their decision. For instance, one teacher emphasised the importance of students' involvement, while others deliberately picked introductory activities based on the levels of experience they and their students had with the topic of online hate, or based on age-appropriateness. Thus, while some teachers opted for introductory activities such as prompting questions, exercises to recognise and communicate emotions or identify hate speech online, other educators chose activities that included media production elements or advanced self-reflection, and one educator set up a peer-mentoring activity for creating a safe space online.

Overall, the diversity of the Toolkit activities was appreciated by the educators and represented in the activities they chose. Educators equally valued the rich and broad content of the Toolkit, and even though two educators found the Toolkit overwhelming at first sight most others agreed that the Toolkit was well-structured and easy to navigate. The difficulty to navigate the Toolkit for the two afore-mentioned educators seemed to be linked at least in part to the fact that they had to access resources in two different languages as part of the focus group setting, which required them to jump back and forth between the Pathway page and the accompanying resources in the local language. While this was perceived as inconvenient, both educators agreed that it would likely become easier to navigate the Toolkit with experience. They also expected that teachers who had used the Toolkit once would probably "come back for more". Nonetheless, it was suggested to add a short description of each activity as well as the didactic goals to the Pathways in all Toolkit languages. Another educator suggested to create a light version of the Toolkit that only included introductory materials to enable a "quick-start" and a third educator mentioned that it might be interesting to produce short guiding materials in print. All three suggestions aimed to facilitate the initial access to the Toolkit for teachers who, as several of the educators in the focus group sessions mentioned, usually lack time. Finally, a suggestion to simplify the integration of Toolkit activities in the classroom was to link them to subjects and provide a designated time for each activity in the Toolkit.

Apart from its rich content and – for the most part – easy and straightforward navigation, the educators especially appreciated the adaptability and scalability of Toolkit activities, as well as the editability of Toolkit resources. The modular approach which allows for the combination of different Toolkit activities as well as for the integration of other exercises from the side of the teachers was consider a key feature of the Toolkit that made it practical for educators in different settings, and engaging for children across groups. Educators agreed that once the activity was selected the preparation was quick and easy, and especially considered the Toolkit section outlining the purpose of the activity helpful. As one teacher mentioned, the explanatory text accompanying the activities facilitated not only the preparation of the session, but also the reaction to students' questions and comments during the activity, and they therefore suggested that these background explanations could be expanded. Another teacher expressed that for certain activities more teacher guidance and answer sheets would be valuable, as teachers might not always have the time to read through all materials in detail before the lesson or might not be familiar with online hate speech and e.g. its legal implications.

3.3.3.2   Toolkit response and impact (students and educators)

Awareness for online hate speech
In brief, the results of the third round of focus groups largely resembled the results of the second round regarding the increase of knowledge related to online hate speech after the SELMA Toolkit session. While the young people produced significantly different self-evaluations regarding their knowledge before the

activity, nearly all 254 children reported that they perceived an increase in their knowledge in the post-activity pupil survey, with participants with a low baseline knowledge reporting the highest increase. One group noted that they previously were much more aware of terms such as cyberbullying and had not heard of online hate speech, while another group mentioned that they had discussed the topic with a teacher in primary school after some concrete incidences had occurred in the class.

SEL and student engagement

In all focus group sessions children and educators reported high engagement rates during the Toolkit activities, including the groups in the non-formal educational setting, for which the educator also reported extraordinary involvement. In these sessions it was helpful for young people that the chosen activities were hands-on while leaving enough space for children to determine their own degree of participation. This way, participants could take breaks when they encountered difficulties to concentrate or interact socially for a long period of time. Generally, as was the case in the second round of focus groups, it was much appreciated that the sessions were interactive and collaborative and activities that allowed students to share their own experiences tended to prompt the highest levels of engagement and positive feedback. According to the anonymous student survey and the focus group sessions, students felt they gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of hate speech and the importance of the context in which it takes place. All groups moreover valued the opportunity to participate, interact and share their own experiences as well as learn about their classmates' feelings. This was particularly true for a group in which all participants played online games and in the beginning agreed that hateful language was part of the gaming experience, but through the SELMA activity were then able to reflect on the negative emotional effect hate speech had on them. They consequently began to develop and share coping strategies for situations in which they were targeted by hate speech or felt the urge to engage in it.

In comparison to the previous round of focus groups, the issue of age-appropriateness was much less discussed, possibly because the Toolkit materials had become more adaptable in the meantime. Only in one group did students find the activity including Xorg the alien too childish, while in another group of younger students several would have liked to hear more about it. A few students found sessions too short overall, and upon closer analysis it became evident that several students who had rated the sessions as neutral rather than good or excellent in the Pupils' Survey commented that they did so because the sessions were too short and/or superficial and they would have liked to learn more about the issue. Different students who rated the session as good or excellent equally asked for longer and/or more sessions and especially more opportunities to discuss their own experiences. Overall, students rated the session as positive and very effective to raise awareness for the highly relevant topic of online hate speech and its effects.

Relevance and sensitivity of online hate speech

Regardless of the knowledge young people had about the phenomenon of online hate and the feelings and experiences they connected with it, it became evident once more that online hate speech is a wide-spread phenomenon that the vast majority of young people in the focus group sessions had encountered. Therefore, most of them considered the topic not only highly relatable, but also relevant. For most educators this was equally true, with one educator in non-formal education explicitly mentioning that he decided to begin working on the topic because hate speech online was having a negative social and emotional impact on young people enrolled in their institution.

Overall, it was appreciated by youth and educators alike that the topic of online hate speech, including controversial aspects, could be discussed and a plurality of opinions as well as personal experiences expressed. However, while the majority of students reported feeling comfortable during the session, a

few students indicated otherwise. An especially strong discrepancy was observed in a group of children in which one student spoke up early-on about very unpleasant online hate comments the student had received targeting their disability. Similarly, one group was asked to create hurtful comments as part of a Toolkit activity and seemed to not feel comfortable with this. These examples reveal the contextual sensitivity of educational work on online hate speech and might therefore require further ethical scrutiny. Nonetheless, most students reported high levels of comfort and especially children in the non-formal educational setting mentioned that it helped that the discussions were not abstract but that the session was relatable and included real experiences, while at the same time recognising that the use of funny, if offensive, examples rather than personal experiences from the group made it easier to discuss the topic in an open and honest way.

Educators equally agreed that sensitive topics were discussed respectfully and were surprised by the maturity levels displayed by their students, including in one group that discussed the concrete case of a student with a disability. In fact, the educator involved in the latter activity found the Toolkit so useful to engage in sensitive discussions with vulnerable youth that he promptly began arranging another session with colleagues working in special needs education. Thus, while the sharing of personal experiences seemed to raise ethical concerns in one group, other groups explicitly expressed that they enjoyed sharing personal experiences and receiving support and encouragement from their classmates in person. As one educator indicated, reactions might differ because the children's participation depends on the one hand on their personalities, but on the other hand on their relationship with the teacher and on group dynamics. Therefore, in line with guidance provides in the Toolkit, they established a group agreement prior to the session to prevent possibly harmful behaviour. In their group, this helped to nurture an engaging and open discussion.

Finally, several teachers mentioned the importance of introducing online hate speech and its definition properly and to moderate the session accordingly, even though objectivity was considered a challenge by one educator in the face of certain statements and opinions voiced about the topic.

Resilience, agency and behavioural change
Apart from investigating the focus group participants' knowledge and understanding of online hate speech and their (emotional) engagement with the SELMA Toolkit activities, feedback was also gathered about any potential behavioural changes that the SELMA Toolkit sessions might prompt.

In this regard, children gave varied answers, within as well as across groups. In the pupil survey most students agreed or strongly agreed that their behaviour would likely change if they took part in more SELMA Toolkit sessions, and one student emphasised that this would be the case especially if follow-up sessions gave concrete ideas for action. Students voiced that the Toolkit activities were useful to raise awareness for online hate speech, helped them feel more comfortable online and change their behaviour. On the one hand, students indicated that the Toolkit activity helped them to understand where and how to seek help if they were being targeted by online hate speech. On the other hand, others considered the activities useful to help teenagers to cope with online hate speech themselves. This could for example take the form of supporting the person targeted by it, confronting the perpetrator or reporting the incident.

Students furthermore expressed that SELMA Toolkit sessions might help to develop empathy and thus change the behaviour of perpetrators if they took part in them. As in the second round of focus groups, it seemed that the potential for behavioural change is rated highest by young people who seem to have actively spread online hate. In any case, nearly all students seem to have become more aware of their role in online hate speech, the group dynamics around it and the consequences of their activity or

inactivity online. As one participant mentioned, this discussion is made more complicated and simultaneously relevant by the fact that a lot of online communication, especially between young people, moves from the public online sphere into closed messaging and groups, amplifying the influence of group dynamics and peer pressure.

3.3.3.3   Hate speech in formal education

As in the second round of focus groups, tackling online hate speech in formal education was deemed crucial across groups, especially by students. For the groups who took part in SELMA activities in non-school settings, one group, despite their insistence that the Toolkit session in the non-formal learning environment was useful, expressed a desire to discuss the issue in the classroom on a more structural and regular basis. They wished for their experiences to be taken into account and taken seriously by teachers. The other group agreed, but equally feared that teachers might be less open minded to discuss personal experiences than social workers and educators in other settings. In another focus group, young people even voiced the wish to discuss online hate speech weekly in every grade and age group, in order to achieve a permanent impact and long-lasting behavioural changes. One educator emphasised the importance of addressing online hate speech through a Social and Emotional learning approach, saying that "[the focus group session] was a great opportunity and the kids really enjoyed it. It's great to have an assembly but it's also really helpful to have a small workshop in a more intimate group – it is the way forward for things like this. It gets people to speak that wouldn't otherwise be comfortable sharing. […] It was really, really good."

The third round of focus group sessions also illustrated that schools play a crucial role in reaching all children and ensuring equal education. In several sessions individual students spoke up about their experience, including a student who enquired about legal action they could take because they had been the target of online hate. In fact, several SELMA Toolkit sessions already prompted follow-up consultations between teachers and individual students about their behaviour and experiences online. Thus, the SELMA Toolkit can open avenues for dialogue between students and teachers and bring to light experiences with which students often feel left alone or do not know how to cope. In this regard, students emphasised not only the schools' but also the parents' responsibility and mentioned that their awareness of online hate speech and its consequences should equally be raised in order to effectively tackle the issue.

Regarding the more structural integration of online hate speech education and Social and Emotional Learning in schools, educators agreed that the SELMA Toolkit is an effective tool that can be useful for building a curriculum. One educator even mentioned that it might be worthwhile to contact publishers of schoolbooks in Germany to ask them whether they would be interested in including SELMA activities for the topic of reflection on language use, which is mandatory in some regional curricula. Finally, one school began exploring the potential for a school ambassador to support students and encourage overall positive discussion of the issue and its promotion in school.

3.3.4   Final take-aways

The third round of focus groups largely confirmed the results of the second round regarding the crucial relevance of the topic as perceived by educators and especially youth. It also underlined the effectiveness of the SELMA approach to raise awareness and promote change at various levels, as well as the necessity to expand education about online hate speech through Social and Emotional Learning. Moreover, this round of focus groups showed that similar observations regarding the Toolkit's impact can be made in non-formal educational settings as in the classroom. In fact, the wider variety of Toolkit

activities that teachers chose showed that rather than the educational setting, the intended purpose of the activity influenced the results. For example, activities specifically targeting SEL evoked more feedback about emotional engagement than others.

Regarding usability, the changes made to the Toolkit described in section 3.2.4 of this report as a result of the previous focus group results indeed facilitated the access to and navigation of it. Nonetheless, some teachers offered further suggestions for simplifying the initial engagement with the Toolkit. Once engaged with the Toolkit educators considered the implementation of the activities they had chosen easy and effective. This was facilitated by the well-organised and clear resources in the Toolkit and the adaptability of the resources, as well as the provided background materials.

3.4 TRAINING AND OUTREACH

In the first half of the SELMA project, the consortium agreed upon a common definition of training and outreach, in order to ensure consistency across activities and throughout the project duration. According to this internal definition, training includes activities that provide specific guidance or teaching on how to use the SELMA Toolkit to persons or groups with the clear intention for them to use the Toolkit in their work. Outreach, on the other hand, refers to presentations of the SELMA project and Toolkit as part of a dedicated session in a conference or similar event that use engaging elements and are at least 30 minutes long. Both categories, training and outreach, should not be confused with dissemination activities, which refer to the raising of awareness for the Toolkit for example online or through the distribution of flyers.

This section provides an overview of the online and offline training and outreach activities related to the SELMA project and Toolkit as well as the main results from the Hacking Hate MOOC and Learning Event. Meanwhile, the main dissemination activities are detailed in section 3.5.

3.4.1   Face-to-face and online outreach and training activities

The training and outreach activities conducted as part of the SELMA project included a series of face-to-face and online webinar activities in partner countries. Through these, young people, teachers, school professionals, social workers, parents and other carers were provided easy access to SELMA resources and materials and trained in their use. Providing training and support for educators in person also facilitated the building of an ambassador network and a community of multipliers.

More specifically, 10,574 individuals were reached through offline and online training and outreach activities across the various target audiences, *not* including additional participants in the Hacking Hate MOOC and Learning Event (see *3.4.2.*).

A more detailed breakdown across target audiences is as follows:

- 3,925 people received SELMA training for educators/carers, through a total of 97 sessions. The majority of professionals who attended these sessions were teachers. Indeed, looking at the audience make-up of our sessions, 2,103 (54%) of our audience were teachers attending teacher-only training or outreach sessions. The remaining 1,822 (46%) of our audience attended sessions designed for a range of educators and professionals working with young people, which included teachers but also carers, policy makers, counsellors, industry players, those working in academia, civil society representatives, online safety professionals, associations for adult education and vocational education, as well as police officers.

1,143 (29%) of those who were introduced to the 'Educator/ carer' strand of SELMA did so through direct training, whereas the remaining 2,706 (69%) attended outreach sessions. Finally, 76 individuals (2%) were reached through indirect training.

- 5,051 people received SELMA training for Peer Mentoring, through a total of 114 sessions. Due to the nature of the Peer Mentoring strand, the majority of those trained in Peer Mentoring sessions were young people aged 11-16, accompanied by one or more education professional(s) for each session. Indeed, 4,531 (90%) of those who received Peer Mentoring training were young people aged 11-16. They all attended sessions designed specifically for young people. The remaining 520 (10%) who received Peer Mentoring training did so by attending sessions designed for a broader audience. Those attending included young people, but also teachers and mature age students.

  4,347 (86%) of those who were introduced to the 'Peer Mentoring' strand of SELMA did so through direct training, whereas the remaining 390 (8%) attended outreach sessions and 314 individuals (6%) were reached indirectly. In many cases, again due to the Peer Mentoring model established for the project, sessions took the form of intensive direct training events with small groups of young people (<30). At least one professional (e.g. a teacher if delivered in a school setting) was always in attendance for these sessions.

- 1,598 people received SELMA training for Counselling for Vulnerable Groups, through a total of 37 sessions. Those who received this training included a mixture of counsellors working with vulnerable groups, teachers, other professionals working with young people, online safety professionals and experts and policy makers.

  429 (27%) of those who were introduced to the 'Counselling for Vulnerable Groups' strand of SELMA did so through direct training, whereas the remaining 1,169 (73%) attended outreach sessions.

Since many of these participants took part in the activities on behalf of a school, a network of professionals, or a different kind of institution or organisations, the estimated number of people reached indirectly through outreach and training is likely to be substantially higher.

In as far as possible, participants in face-to-face and online webinar outreach and training activities were asked to provide feedback after the sessions through an online evaluation survey which was made available in English, Danish, German and Greek. An analysis of survey results (N=201) showed that 91% of respondents rated the session they attended as either "engaging" or "highly engaging", 88% of respondents said they either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the session they attended increased their understanding of online hate speech as a professional, and 86% of respondents said that they planned to use the SELMA materials after attending the session. This included in a classroom setting (40%), with a youth group or similar (28%), in counselling sessions (24%) and in other settings as well (14%).[3]

3.4.2   SELMA – Hacking Hate MOOC and Learning Event

3.4.2.1   Aims and content

The "SELMA – Hacking Hate" Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was hosted on the European Schoolnet Academy platform and ran from Monday, 16 September, to Wednesday, 23 October 2019. The MOOC drew upon SELMA Toolkit materials and project approaches in order to make teachers aware

---

[3] Please note that respondents could select more than one option when asked about which settings they would use the materials in, which is why percentage totals exceed 100%. The data reported is % of the 201 respondents who chose each setting option.

Funded by the Rights, Equality
and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)
of the European Union

P A G E | **20**

of the issue of online hate speech and train them in the use of the SELMA Toolkit online. The concrete learning outcomes of the online course read as follows:

- understand the approach of Social and Emotional Learning as a way to prevent and tackle online hate;
- learn how to create a personal digital portfolio to curate interesting course materials and contributions of other participants;
- develop sustainable strategies to effect widespread positive change around online hate speech;
- learn about the SELMA Toolkit and other ways to be involved in the SELMA project;
- learn how to use the resources of the SELMA Toolkit to create a successful peer-led programme.

In order to achieve these goals, the MOOC comprised of four interactive Modules, all of which included tools to spark discussion between participants, such as Padlet walls, polls, the course forum and many SELMA Toolkit resources. The first module "Online Hate and Myself" introduced the Social and Emotional Learning approach and defined the topic of online hate. It also included guidance on how to develop a learning diary and how to use Twitter as a backchannel for the course and as a tool for continuing professional development. The second Module "Online Hate in your Social Life" explored online hate occurring in social groups and its impact, as well as strategies to take action. The third module "Online Hate in the Digital Society" focused on the wider picture of online hate, the social issues around it, and how it affects the digital society. It also discussed the role of online platforms in relation to online hate speech. Finally, after these three modules about the main SELMA themes Self, Peer/Social and Society, the fourth module aimed to "Disrupt Online Hate" by inviting teachers to hack online hate in their personal context and discussing how they can enable their students to do the same. Moreover, teachers were invited to take part in the final activity of creating an action plan to tackle the topic with their students using the SELMA Toolkit in the classroom.

Apart from the four modules and the embedded tools for interaction, the course also offered the opportunity to take part in a Twitter chat moderated by MOOC coordinator Bart Verswijfel, EUN, on 26 September. MOOC participants were equally invited to attend three live events. The first event, an introductory webinar also hosted by Bart Verswijfel, introduced the MOOC, its structure and aim on 16 September 2019. Secondly, an expert talk entitled "How can Social and Emotional Learning a programme of cultural change" took place on 3 October 2019 and was hosted by Ken Corish (South West Grid for Learning) who was co-led on the development of the SELMA Toolkit. The third live event offered participants the chance to share their experiences and present their work in the MOOC in a TeachMeet on 9 October 2019.

3.4.2.2   Participants and results

The "SELMA – Hacking Hate" MOOC was open to teachers, school leaders, social and youth workers, and parents, as well as anyone interested in the topic of online hate speech, regardless of previous knowledge. In total, 1,333 people from 67 countries registered to take part in the MOOC and 463 actively engaged with the course. Out of this group, 298 participants passed all course requirements including the final activity and received a course certificate. This corresponds to a 35% engagement and a 64% completion rate.[4]

---

[4] The course engagement rate is calculated by dividing the total number of participants who at least started the first compulsory module of the MOOC by the total number of registrations. Starting a module goes beyond clicking on a Module page and instead implies interacting with a feature in one of the module pages, such as a video or activity.
The course completion rate is calculated by dividing the total number of participants that completed the course (and were thus awarded a certificate for course completion) by the total number of participants who started at least the first compulsory module of the MOOC.

As a survey circulated across participants before the start of the course (N=436) indicated, the majority of course participants (81%) were secondary school teachers, female (84%) and 36 years old or older (83%), with the largest age group represented being 36-45 years (41%). Out of the 67 countries from which participants joined the MOOC, these were the top ten countries with most participants who started and completed the course:

Top 10 countries by number of participants that

Started		Completed	
Turkey	72	Turkey	45
Greece	61	Greece	39
Italy	59	Italy	35
Portugal	46	Portugal	32
Croatia	33	Croatia	22
Romania	31	Romania	20
Spain	17	Spain	13
Ireland	16	Ireland	12
Serbia	11	Macedonia	8
Poland	10	Poland	6

Engagement was high in the embedded MOOC tools throughout the course, and according to the post-course survey (N=143) sent out to participants after the end of the course, 98% of respondents rated the overall value of the course as "Good" or "Very good", 99% Agree or Agree strongly that they will use the ideas/examples presented in the course in their everyday work, and 98% would recommend this course to a colleague or friend. In addition to the high satisfaction with the course, the post-course survey equally revealed a strong increase in the participants' knowledge about online hate speech as well as Social and Emotional Learning. In both cases, baseline knowledge was varied across participants, but at similar overall levels and displaying similar levels of increase. More specifically, the percentage of participants who rated their knowledge about online hate as either high or very high jumped from 51 to 96%. For Social and Emotional Learning, the percentage of participants who perceived their knowledge as high or very high increased from 49% to 95%.

According to the comments in the post-course survey and on the course platform, participants especially appreciated the mix between theoretical knowledge conveyed in the course and the high number of quality resources and activities. They equally underlined the usefulness of interactions with other MOOC participants and with course moderators and experts, for example through the Twitter Chat and Live Events. Finally, the importance of the topic and its immediate relevance for students and teachers was appreciated and participants felt better equipped to discuss and disrupt online hate speech with students in school or other educational contexts.

3.4.2.3   eTwinning Learning Event
In order to maximise the visibility of the SELMA Toolkit and train as many teachers as possible in its use, a so-called Learning Event was organised from 11 November to 25 November 2019 for teachers in the eTwinning community. In this closed online course for which teachers had to apply through the eTwinning platform, the SELMA approach and Toolkit were introduced to 200 teachers from 29 countries. The Learning Event built largely upon the SELMA Toolkit and MOOC, using different resources

to introduce online hate speech, Social and Emotional Learning, the dimensions and consequences of online hate, as well as ways to disrupt it using the SELMA Toolkit in the classroom.

Out of the 200 participating teachers, more than 70 received a final certificate after having completed all three mandatory tasks, including a quiz, an online discussion and designing an action plan for a SELMA session in their classroom. In addition, 34 teachers conducted Toolkit session in their classroom as part of the Learning Event. The feedback to these sessions as well as the general feedback in the course underlined the importance of tackling online hate speech in the classroom, since many teachers indicated that they had been confronted with the issue. Several teachers equally expressed that they had been hesitant to talk about the issue with their students despite its relevance, since they did not know how to include it in their classroom, and considered the SELMA Toolkit very helpful and "eye-opening" in this regard.

4 KEY DISSEMINATION MESSAGES

An important pillar of the SELMA project was the dissemination of the messages established through the empirical research and outreach regarding the SELMA Toolkit and related project activities.

To do this, the SELMA project used several channels, tools and campaigns, aiming to reach primarily teachers and school professionals, young people, parents, organisations promoting (digital) citizenship and media literacy and/or addressing (online) hate speech, Ministries of Education, and other educational stakeholders. In a second instance, the SELMA dissemination activities also targeted local authorities and community leaders, religious communities, civil society organisations and social media and platform providers. The summary below provides a brief, non-exhaustive overview of the main dissemination channels and activities.

4.1 SELMA WEBSITE AND TOOLKIT

In order to establish consistent branding, share information and developments relevant to the project, connect key stakeholders and partner organizations and provide visibility to partner organizations, a SELMA mini-website was established in June 2018. Until May 2019, 7,240 users, 26,477 page views and 11,371 sessions were registered on this mini-site. On 22 May 2019, a re-developed was launched to interactively showcase the SELMA Toolkit. In total, this new SELMA website was visited by 12,089 users in 19,270 sessions, amounting to a total of 107,086 page views between its launch in May 2019 and the end of the project in November of the same year. Out of all this engagement, the SELMA Toolkit was the sub-site with the most views, and the SELMA Toolkit, themes, focuses, and resources landing page received a total of 22,658 page views, of which 13,261 unique views. As this only includes the landing pages, while there are of course many more pages within the Toolkit, this can be considered a rather conservative estimate of the overall Toolkit site visibility.

Generally, the introductory pages to the Toolkit themes, resources and focuses were the most viewed, but different themes equally received a high number of clicks including "How does hate speech make me feel?" (850 views), "What's my role and what can I do?" (673 views), "Why is there hate speech content out there?" (605 views) and "Social and Emotional Learning" (454 views). The most popular resources included "How do I recognise hate speech: Social and Emotional Learning" (1,693 views), "Media analysis: What is hate speech?" (612 views) and "What is hate speech? Media production" (510 views).

4.2 SOCIAL MEDIA AND CAMPAIGNS

The achievement of milestones in the SELMA projects such as the Toolkit, MOOC, Research Report, Hackathon or final project conference as well as any other project news relevant to the public were largely communicated via social media channels. For this the #SELMA_eu was used across platforms by EUN, the lead project partner on dissemination, on its Facebook (22,325 likes), Twitter (22,436 follower) and YouTube (2,910 subscribers) accounts, and a SELMA project Facebook page was established (713 likes, 742 followers). Dissemination was strongly supported by all project partners under the same #SELMA_eu. One example of this is the SELMA tweet with the most organic engagement below, in which klicksafe, the German Safer Internet Centre run by LMK, promotes the SELMA Toolkit and awareness for different roles young people can take when confronted with online hate speech. The Facebook post with most organic engagement reaching 10,630 people in turn promoted the SELMA MOOC.
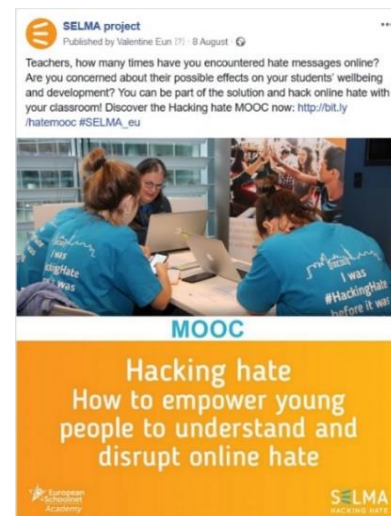
Apart from news about ongoing project activities and milestones, social media was also used to disseminate monthly awareness-raising campaigns with tailored themes and messages:

- January-February 2019, **"Identifying hate speech"**: This campaign was targeted at a broad audience to introduce the topic of hate speech and raise awareness for what it is, to engage a variety of stakeholders.

- March 2019, **"Hacking into the head of a hater"**: Especially targeted at educators and young people, this campaigned aimed to explore and understand why people create, spread or promote hate messages online.

- April 2019, **"Recognising hate speech online and its consequences"**: The main objective of this campaign was to raise awareness about the consequences of hate speech online on a personal, peer and social level. It also looked at what constitutes online hate speech, emphasising protected characteristics. This linked directly to the introduction of the then upcoming SELMA Toolkit.

- Mai 2019, **"Promoting tolerance and empathy"**: This campaign raised awareness about the importance of developing and promoting tolerance and empathy online and targeted educators and young people as well as other stakeholders.

- June 2019, **"Counter-narratives to hack online hate":** The diffusion of hate speech through counter-narratives was the focus of the June campaign. It included practical tips for young people and educators on how to develop such campaigns.

- July 2019, **"Promoting the power of peer":** This campaign stressed the importance of peer mentoring programmes as a tool to tackle the problem of online hate speech in schools, and out-of-school communities that impact on young people's well-being.

- August 2019, **"Hacking online hate, a multi-stakeholder approach":** In August, light was shed on the role of policy makers and of online platforms and providers in preventing and tackling hate speech on the internet.

- September 2019**, "Back to school with SELMA":** This monthly campaign provided teachers with a better understanding of how they can make the SELMA model work in their schools by looking into the benefits of whole-school approaches.

In addition to these monthly campaigns, the SELMA project organized the Hacking Hate Week from Monday 7 to Friday 11 October 2019, targeting a different stakeholder each week and inviting them to engage with SELMA activities and join forces to hack hate online.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though online hate speech has become a widespread phenomenon that especially affects young people, approaches to tackle it often concentrate on legal action and regulation, while only little attention is given to pro-active awareness-raising and prevention. The SELMA project aimed to provide opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders, but particularly young people and professionals in education, to disrupt online hate by developing educational and outreach materials based on thoroughly researched and monitored needs of these target groups. This final evaluation report set out to illustrate in how far SELMA activities and outputs were successful in increasing the awareness, knowledge and skills relating to online hate speech both for young people and professionals in formal and non-formal education.

Considering the findings elaborated above, it should in a first instance be noted that during awareness-raising and outreach activities of the SELMA project the most dominant reaction by young people and educators was to underline the importance of the issue and its relevance for their life and/or job. Nonetheless, it became apparent that young people and educators often lack the necessary knowledge and strategies to discuss, cope with and actively disrupt online hate speech. The empirical findings presented in this report show that trough the engagement with the SELMA Toolkit and related activities such as the SELMA MOOC the knowledge levels as well as emotional engagement with the

topic of online hate speech can be increased for individuals across different countries and cultural, language and social backgrounds. In addition, many young people who took part in the second and third round of SELMA focus groups expressed an increased sense of agency, especially if they participated in a Toolkit activity that aimed to promote the disruption of online hate. Regarding changes in young people's behaviour, the Toolkit was successful in promoting different strategies for action, strengthening the resilience of young people. In order to affect such change at individual, group, and wider societal level, Social and Emotional Learning proved an effective approach, appreciated by educators and especially young people. The results of the SELMA project equally showed that there is a strong interest from the side of educational professionals and young people to integrate hate speech education in formal education more structurally, ensuring equal education and long-lasting changes.

Overall, the SELMA project has revealed not only the relevance of the topic of online hate speech for educational stakeholders and students. It moreover confirmed the effectiveness of the holistic SELMA approach and resources, which were successfully developed and adapted throughout the project based on the feedback of these stakeholders. As the SELMA project has shown, activities that build upon a comprehensive understanding of Social and Emotional Learning and aim to promote awareness and respect can affect change in the knowledge and behaviour of individuals. At the end of this two-year project, a powerful educational tool is freely available online. It enables educators, young people and other stakeholders to tackle online hate speech, opening avenues for them to become agents of change, with the potential to hack hate in the long run.

SELMA
HACKING HATE

www.europeanschoolnet.org

www.youth-life.gr

www.swgfl.org.uk

www.diana-award.org.uk

www.lmk-online.de

www.cfdp.dk

CONTACT US
www.hackinghate.eu | info@hackinghate.eu

FOLLOW US
#SELMA_eu | @hackinghate