



**MELIA OBSERVATORY – Media Literacy Observatory for  
Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy**

**Data Collection on Media Literacy and the Re-  
lationship of Media Literacy to Democratic  
Values and Behaviours in Germany (WP T.1)**

*Project Partner – SoWiBeFo e.V.*

**SoWiBeFo** | Verein für sozialwissenschaftliche  
Beratung und Forschung e.V.

## **MELIA OBSERVATORY – Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy**

### **Most Significant Projects on Media Literacy**

SoWiBeFo e.V.

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Regensburg, 31 March 2021

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## **1. Introductory Remarks**

The description of the following projects on media literacy is based on information collected during the interviews with project managers of the NGOs described in the “Case Studies of NGOs Implementing Projects that Bridge Media Literacy and Democratic Values/Behaviours” and on information collected from the websites of the respective NGO.

## **2. Most Significant Projects on Media Literacy**

### **2.1 Teacher Trainings and Workshops for Youths (ufuq.de)**

Since 2020, ufuq.de (Competence Centre for the Prevention of Religious Radicalisation in Bavaria) offers two programs focusing on media literacy. On the one hand, ufuq.de offers teacher trainings and on the other hand workshops for youth with the goal of imparting media literacy. The interviewee stated that there had been multiple team discussions in the past to include programs focusing on media literacy in ufuq.de’s portfolio.

Since the trainers conducting the workshops have increasingly noticed that the media behaviour of the students and youth in their workshops differs from their own media behaviour, especially when it comes to the use of certain apps or programs, ufuq.de itself saw a need to expand their workshops program for youth with a workshop on media literacy.

On the other hand, one of ufuq.de’s funders, the Bavarian State Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs, encouraged ufuq.de to implement workshops for youth to protect them from the increasing dissemination of conspiracy narratives and disinformation online.

The Bavarian State Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs also encouraged ufuq.de to create trainings for teachers focusing on this field. The idea was to give teachers, as well as students, handling security regarding the increasing dissemination of conspiracy narratives (e.g., the Great Replacement<sup>1</sup>, anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives) and disinformation online.

As already mentioned in the profile of ufuq.de above, ufuq.de does not offer specific media literacy projects, but includes the imparting of media literacy skills in its offer of trainings and

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<sup>1</sup> The Great Replacement is a conspiracy narrative disseminated especially by the far-right according to which elites are plotting to successively “replace” the European “native” population with (Muslim) migrants.

workshops as media literacy skills play an important role in ufuq.de's goals, especially when it comes to the empowerment of Muslim youth and the prevention of religious radicalisation.

Thus, ufuq.de's projects on media literacy were created upon request of one of the main funders and because ufuq.de itself registered an increased need in this field, especially since the first phase of home schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ufuq.de conducts both projects on media literacy – the workshops for youths as well as the teacher trainings – independently, without any project partners. Each workshop is conducted by two teamers that ufuq.de trained in week long seminars.

The teamers are young adults between the age of 18 and 30 with different background employed on a freelance basis. The two-person teams conducting the workshops are then always composed by means of diversity in regard to their religious background (Muslim, or non-Muslim) or gender. ufuq.de regularly organises team meetings where the teamers have the opportunity to exchange their experiences and to develop best practices in regard to certain challenges they encounter in their work. ufuq.de also offers content-related trainings for the teamers (e.g., theology, educational science).

Every workshop unit consists of three parts, each lasting 90 minutes. Ufuq.de either conducts these workshops within a single project day or on several days – depending on the request of the teachers. The teachers normally are not present during the workshops.

The trainings for teachers and multipliers vary in its length. The trainings last at least 120 minutes, but ufuq.de also offers trainings lasting two days.

ufuq.de recruits its participants by means of word-of-mouth recommendation and benefits from existing networks and cooperations in the field of the prevention of religious prevention and youth work. Also, the interviewee stated that ufuq.de normally becomes involved after the request of a teacher which is why the NGO's outreach benefits from engaged and proactive teachers. When possible, ufuq.de also visits schools and seeks personal contact in order to promote its workshops and trainings.

### **2.1.1 Goals and Objectives**

Regarding the teacher trainings (on media literacy) the most important goal and objective is the sensitisation of teachers for the everyday experiences of (Muslim) youths. The interviewee described this goal as “discovering the issue behind the issue”.

When youths who identify as Muslim get negative attention or show provocative behaviour and legitimize their behaviour with their religion, teachers are often insecure and tend to see the behaviour of the youth through a culturalistic perspective.

It is important, however, to learn for the teachers, that religion might not be the only reason for their behaviour that is perceived as “non-compliant”, but also socio-economic factors like living and housing conditions, the experiences of not being welcome in the German society, fear of the future and also the societal discourse about Islam or simply individual personality traits and behaviours, also found in native Germany youth (as the typical phenomena of adolescents).

ufuq.de wants to show teachers that the subject of religion can also be a resource in teaching without being paternalizing. ufuq.de observes that the educators do have the dexterity and tools, but are often insecure when dealing with the topic of Islam and religion. The goal is to resolve this uncertainty and to impart teachers the necessary handling security.

Regarding the workshop for youth (on media literacy), the most important goal and objective is the empowerment and the strengthening of the identity of these youth as well as the initiation of processes of self-reflexion especially regarding the danger that emanates from the offers of extremist groups online and anti-democratic beliefs.

ufuq.de wants to provide a safe space for these youths where the trainers can engage in a dialogue with the youth without being judgemental. Of course, when youth cross a threshold and express anti-pluralistic views, defamatory statements or the claim to the absolute truth, ufuq.de intervenes decisively – preferably in a pedagogical setting.

### **2.1.2 Activities**

The most important activities for both projects on media literacy – the teacher trainings as well as the workshops for youth – are on the one hand the implementation of the projects and on the other hand the constant evaluation of the projects.



For ufuq.de the debriefing with teachers after the workshops is of utmost importance. The teachers stay in contact with ufuq.de and report back about the impact of the workshops and if for example the climate in the classroom changed for the better, stayed the same or also if it has worsened.

ufuq.de remains in exchange with the teachers and also refers to their networks partners when teachers report back about challenges or problems in the classroom that exceed the competences of ufuq.de. The preminent motive in all activities is the protection and empowerment of the youth.

Regarding the offers for teachers, also the continuous and steady advertising for the trainings is one of the main activities. ufuq.de informs schools and youth social workers at the schools about its offers.

### **2.1.3 Impact**

The interviewee stated that it is very difficult to assess the actual impact and sustainability of the projects. Because even if ufuq.de keeps in touch with the teachers after the workshops, ufuq.de is mostly only present for one school day – the interviewee described this as short-term intervention.

ufuq.de advertises among multipliers for the firmly and long-term establishment of ufuq.de's offers in schools in order give youths the opportunity to regularly engage with topics of political education, societal diversity, empowerment and social participation what is often neglected in class due to an already full schedule.

One of the main milestones in ufuq.de's project work (on media literacy) is the establishment of permanent workshop sites in four Bavarian administrative districts<sup>2</sup> (Swabia with a workshop site in Augsburg, Middle Franconia with Nuremberg, Lower Franconia with Würzburg and Upper Palatinate with Regensburg) in the last five years, where local (municipal) project partners are now in charge of coordinating the workshops for youths. ufuq.de aims at establishing permanent workshop sites in all seven Bavarian administrative districts.

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<sup>2</sup> The state of Bavaria has seven administrative districts (*Regierungsbezirke*): Upper Palatinate (*Oberpfalz*), Upper Bavaria (*Oberbayern*), Lower Bavaria (*Niederbayern*), Upper Franconia (*Oberfranken*), Middle Franconia (*Mittelfranken*), Lower Franconia (*Unterfranken*) and Swabia (*Schwaben*).

The interviewee also stated that until the begin of the COVID-19 pandemic, ufuq.de registered an exponential growth of requests for workshops and trainings.

#### 2.1.4 Outreach

The interviewee could not give information on the specific outreach of the projects on media literacy because these projects are embedded in ufuq.de's program offers along with other workshops and trainings. Also, the workshops and trainings on media literacy have been created and implemented just recently (May and December 2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is probably why the latest data on outreach is not yet available to ufuq.de.

However, as already stated above, ufuq.de was able to reach 1.200 youths and 850 multipliers in 2019, whereas in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic 720 multipliers and a small number of youths could be reached.

#### 2.2 Media Literacy Workshops for Youths (CEC-Connect e.V.)

Since 2016, CEC-Connect e.V. offers various workshops and seminars for youth in the field of media literacy. In 2016, the organisation took its first steps in this field with a weekend course on the safe usage of the internet (use of search engines, chatting without risks etc.) with eight youths. The initiators then identified the need for imparting media literacy when noticing that the youths could indeed use smart phones but were lacking experience with computers and basic (web) applications (e.g., e-mail programs).

##### 2.2.1 Goals and Objectives

The organisation aims at imparting a critical approach to media while at the same time imparting technical skills and fun concerning the use of media. Because the target groups of the workshops are youths, it is important to create youth-friendly offers. The interviewees are also active on the social media platforms that are especially used by youth (Instagram, TikTok) in order to send a signal to youth and help to reduce possible inhibitions. The goal is that youth approach their parents or the social workers in the organisation when encountering problematic content online.

**Kommentiert [AK1]:** haben wir wirklich nix in Bayern? Die Kollegen sind in Kamp Lintford. Das wird u.U gar nicht auffallen, aber anyway, bayern wär besser :-)

The interviewees reported on an incident in a school class, where a video of a child murder was shared via WhatsApp, whereupon only one child informed its parents.

The organisation wants to establish a relationship of trust with local youth and also to raise awareness among parents about the dangers youth encounter online. CEC-Connect e.V. therefore aims to problematise the issue of negative internet phenomena but without judging the youths. The goal is to establish itself as a contact partner for youths in all matters and also regarding problems arising from the usage of social media. For this reason, the organisation aims to find the right balance between the mediation of “serious” contents (e.g., negative internet phenomena) and youth-appropriate communication and activities.

### 2.2.2 Activities

The main activities in the media literacy workshops for youth is the training of the participants in the use of media. This training entails both – the mediation of technical skills (e.g., producing of YouTube videos, image editing, copyright) – as well as imparting media literacy skills, thus the critical and conscious use of media. The organisation offers inter alia the following free workshops for youths from the age of 13 (programme series *MedienTeen*, [https://cec-connect.de/?page\\_id=2423](https://cec-connect.de/?page_id=2423)), which are each offered once a week:

- “Become an urban planner” (*Werde Stadtplaner*): The participants are encouraged to show their favourites parts of the city and explain why these public spaces are special to them. The team leaders film these spaces in the city with a 360-degree camera and jointly assess with the participants what can be designed better. The goal is to giving youths a greater say in urban design matters which directly concern them. The organisation thus aims to mediate between (juvenile) citizens and the city administration. In this way, the organisation already achieved some success (e.g., achieving the installation of garbage cans at meeting points of local youths to impede dispute with residents).
- “Ka-Li goes Hollywood“: The participants create and product their own video project. The interviewees reported that a lot of participants processed traumatic refugee experiences.
- “Become an influencer” (*Werde Influencer*): The participants produce contents for Social Media with the possibility to use professional equipment (studio light, cameras).

- “Action, stop and go”: The participants produce their own stop motion film with the help of the workshop instructors.

### 2.2.3 Impact

Even if it is difficult to assess the actual impact and sustainability of the projects on media literacy, it can be stated that the organisation firmly established itself as a partner in youth work and in the field of imparting media literacy in the local community. The interviewees also feel confirmed in this assessment when observing that youths who participated in the early programs of the organisation still participate in the current projects and initiatives.

### 2.2.4 Outreach

As already stated above, each of the organisation’s activities and workshops on media literacy (“Become an urban planner”, “Ka-Li goes Hollywood”, “Become an influencer”, “Action, stop and go”) is conducted one a week and in each workshops normally 8 to 12 youth participate, whereby one interviewee stated that the optimum number of participants comprises six youths, because a smaller group allows a more intensive work on the subject.

It can be concluded that CEC-Connect e.V. has established itself as contact partner for municipal institutions in Kamp-Lintfort in the field of youth work, work with refugees and imparting media literacy. Currently, the organisation is planning the development of an online blog operated by elderly people (mostly retired teachers) in the district of Wesel, which is called “Blogging against racism” (*Bloggen gegen Rassismus*). In doing so, the organisation also extends its target group to elderly people and parents.

Furthermore, by fostering the digital and media competences of elderly people, CEC-Connect e.V. enables the online volunteer work (homework support, reading sessions) of elderly people for children and youths that is currently especially needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviewees describe this as a win-win situation.

Even if the interviewees repeatedly stated that the organisation’s offers are open to anyone, the main focus lies on the support of young people and not for example on parental work. Nevertheless, both interviewees agreed that an extension of the target groups, wherever feasible and appropriate, should always be considered.

### 2.3 No Hate Speech Movement<sup>3</sup> (New German Media Professionals e.V.)

No Hate Speech Movement was initiated by the Council of Europe in 2013 as a youth campaign targeted towards young net activists and also young internet users in general. Since then, branches of the campaign have been established in many European and also non-European states, like Morocco, Mexico and Canada. In 2016, the German branch of the campaign was initiated under coordination of the non-profit organisation New German Media Professionals e.V. (see “Case studies of NGOs implementing projects that bridge media literacy and democratic values/behaviours”).

The interviewee stated that the Council of Europe had the idea for the project already earlier but the public awareness for hate speech online was not as strong as it is nowadays. After the 2011 Norway attacks in Oslo and Utøya, the public awareness regarding hate speech and online radicalisation however increased, which is why projects in this field have increasingly been launched since then.

The interviewee assumes that the reason why the German campaign was launched rather late in 2016 is the circumstance that hate speech online as a serious social problem became more virulent and visible after the so-called “refugee crisis” in Germany in 2015 and 2016, when also autochthonous German politicians became a target for hate speech online and thus the need for action was perceived as urgent.

At the beginning in 2016 and 2017 the project was solely funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ*) within the federal program *Demokratie leben!* (“Live democracy!”) (<https://www.demokratie-leben.de/en/>).

Since 2018, the project is also financed by other funders, like the *ZEIT-Stiftung*<sup>4</sup>, the *FAZIT-Stiftung*<sup>5</sup>, Twitter, Facebook Germany, the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (*Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und*

<sup>3</sup> Website of the project: <https://no-hate-speech.de/de/>

<sup>4</sup> Associated foundation of the liberal weekly newspaper *DIE ZEIT*.

<sup>5</sup> Associated foundation of the liberal-conservative daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ).

**Kommentiert [AK2]:** Hier wollten wir uns mal nach Projektfördermöglichkeiten umsehen! Bitte bleib da auf dem laufenden. Ggf auch mal mit Andreas sprechen!

*Integration*) and the Open Society Foundations<sup>6</sup>, while the federal program *Demokratie leben!* is still the main funder of the project.

Since, 2020 No Hate Speech Movement Germany is part of a European project network, inter alia consisting of the Council of Europe and partners from Belgium, Italy and Romania (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/inclusion-and-antidiscrimination/wecan4hrs>), which is why the project meanwhile also receives funding from European sources.

The interviewee stated several times that No Hate Speech Movement Germany is in a very privileged position. On the one hand, the project was one of the first campaigns regarding hate speech in Germany and with an intense investment in public relations work at the beginning of the project, No Hate Speech Movement Germany established itself as one of the most important civil society players in Germany in the field of countering hate speech online. Because of this privileged position and the fact that the project is very well known in Germany, the interviewee pointed out that it is relatively easy to secure funding. The interviewee pointed out that the main funder (the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth) is very supportive of the project, which is why also other German public authorities (Ministry of Justice, Foreign Office) know and support the project.

Even though funding is therefore relatively secure, the interviewee stressed that the project-related funding is nevertheless challenging for the long-term planning and structural funding of the project. Another challenge is the extensive reporting that is required to secure the funding which can be hard to achieve with only one and a half full-time employees on the project without neglecting the actual project work (e.g., developing material and trainings).

The interviewee emphasized that the reporting of the project is extremely important because the funding pools also consist of tax money. However, the interviewee stated that the bureaucratic requirements to secure funding increased and became more complicated in recent years, which could be traced back to the increasing influence of right-wing populism in German politics. The project itself is also target of attacks by right-wing actors and parties. Despite of this, the respective parties cannot be directly criticised because the project is mostly funded by public grants, which of course complicates the project work that is explicitly countering right-wing extremism.

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<sup>6</sup> Grantmaking network founded by business magnate George Soros.

### 3.3.1 Goals and objectives

The main goal and objective of the initial No Hate Speech Movement campaign initiated by the Council of Europe, was the training of youths to become “online human rights activists”. The interviewee pointed out that this was never the main goal of the German campaign.

At the beginning of the project, the main focus was on public relations work in order to raise public awareness regarding hate speech online. After having established this awareness and the huge reputation of the project, the main goals and objectives shifted towards advocacy work for the ones affected by hate speech and the training of Social Media editors and media professionals in tackling hate speech.

The interviewee pointed out that the advocacy work for the ones affected by hate speech and also the networking with affected persons or relevant initiatives became more and more important and should have been approached and focused on much earlier. The interviewee stated that the project is now much more in contact with initiatives from marginalised groups that have approached the subject hate speech online much earlier, because “they simply had to”.

The interviewee also expressed regret that the project has not established these connections from the beginning, as the project work would have benefitted from the expertise of these initiatives and also could have empowered and supported them as these initiatives (often without the status as non-profit organisation) in many cases lack financial resources and the privilege to generate effective outreach.

In general, it can be said that the overarching goal of all activities is the empowerment of those who are affected by hate speech online.

### 3.3.2 Activities

The main focus of the project’s activities has always been on the public relations work and the trainings for social media editors and media professionals on how to handle hate speech and the threat situations that come along with it (e.g., leaking of the private address and (offline) threats to family and friends). Regarding this, the project also formulated a guideline for media professionals in 2019 (<https://www.neuemedienmacher.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Leitfaden-gegen-Hassrede-2019.pdf>) and installed an online helpdesk (<https://www.neuemedienmacher.de/helpdesk/>).

**Kommentiert [AK3]:** Vielleicht kann man noch ein paar von denen finden...bevorzugt in BY

In 2020, No Hate Speech Movement extended its activities and focused more on the support and the specific needs of the ones affected by hate speech. The interviewee also pointed out that since 2020, a new main activity of the project is actively building networks to provide the space and the framework for all initiatives in the field of anti-hate speech to network and thus build synergies to promote actual change. For this purpose, No Hate Speech Movement founded a national committee in order to establish the project as a platform for all relevant actors (NGOs, activists, public authorities, politicians) in this field (<https://no-hate-speech.de/de/netzwerk/>).

### **3.3.3 Impact**

The interviewee stated that it is generally very hard to assess the actual impact of the project “in numbers or even in words”. Nevertheless, the interviewee personally evaluates the impact as high, based on the relatively long duration of the project and the high profile that has been able to be established.

The interviewee however reported on becoming more and more aware of the fact that the high profile of the project is mostly recognised in “its own bubble” and by people who are already interested in the subject. The aim of the project and also the project itself is not yet included in many important processes because the general awareness for hate speech online and the dangers it poses for the democratic system is still not high enough.

The interviewee concludes that even there is an impact, there is still a lot to achieve and it is also necessary to develop new approaches.

### **3.3.4 Outreach**

As already indicated, No Hate Speech Movement Germany is very well established in the field of civic engagement against hate speech and is probably the most important non-profit organisations in this field in Germany. In 2020, No Hate Speech Movement also won the German National Prize (*Deutscher Nationalpreis*) for its engagement against hate speech online.

Regarding the canvassing of participants for the project’s activities, the interviewee stated that the way how participants are generated for the project is very different to the way the coordinating organisation (New German Media Professionals) generates participants. While New German Media Professionals can generate outreach and participants mostly via e-mail distri-



bution, No Hate Speech Movement first conducts researches to determine the most important initiatives and actors in the respective fields (mostly civil society organisations) and then individually approaches these initiatives and actors by e-mail and telephone or network partners.

In the end of the interview, the interviewee again stated that the project will further extend its activities in the field of advocacy work and consultation work for the ones affected by hate speech as well as towards more networking and building synergies.

When asked, if the project should extend its target groups, the interviewee pointed out that it is indeed of course expedient to also include e.g., activists that are especially affected by hate speech online and not only primarily media professionals. However, it must be taken into account that not all of the developed materials and trainings can be used for other target groups.

For example, the guideline for media professionals on how to tackle hate speech online and the threat situations could be adapted to other target groups like activists but then it is crucial to include representatives of these target groups in the process of adapting the already existing material.

The interviewee stated that it is not necessary to “reinvent the wheel” in every step of the project and that material that has proven to be efficient could also be used for other target groups. However, it is important to leave the development of materials for other target groups than media professionals to initiatives and projects with expertise in these respective fields (e.g., when it comes to the development of pedagogical material for students or psychological counselling for people affected by hate speech online).