Minority Rights Group Europe

Freedom From Hate – End of Project Evaluation

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**RIGHTS
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July 2020

"These counternarratives show the huge responsibility of different groups in
tackling discrimination, they make the problems visible and help to change the
online sphere – the activities reached a range of audiences including people
not directly affected by discrimination and make them aware this problem
exists, and they can have a say in fighting this issue" *~ independent expert
interviewed*

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Executive Summary

The 'Freedom From Hate: Empowering civil society to counter cyberhate against Roma' (FFH) project sought to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to implement effective counternarrative campaigns targeting hate speech against Roma, and; identify and share best practice with other CSOs, activists and IT companies, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and across Europe.

The project was funded by the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and spanned two years from 1 June 2018 to 31 May 2020. The project was led by Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) and delivered in partnership with five CSOs in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The project was designed to address the widespread discrimination against Roma that has translated into cyberhate across the EU. The project planned to deliver capacity building trainings; develop resources; test, pilot and evaluate counter-narrative campaigns; engage with IT and tech companies and disseminate and share learnings and best-practise.

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) contracted an external evaluator to conduct an evaluation of the FFH project from April-June 2020 to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project. The evaluation consisted of a document review, key informant interview programme and outcomes harvest.

There was a high degree of consistency in the data collected during the evaluation which indicated the significant relevance and need for a project that focused on combatting hate speech towards Roma in central and eastern Europe, and to test and find new solutions to tackle deep-rooted prejudice and harassment.

The evaluation found that MRGE and its partners were highly successful in meeting the majority of the targets set for their output and outcome level indicators. 118 CSOs/activists received training, 80-90% of which rated the training and accompanying resources as relevant and useful; the campaign material developed by project partners reached over 500,000 people and all partners reported specific improvements in their capacities, skills and/or confidence in being able to develop counternarrative campaigns. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, MRGE and its partners were able to respond efficiently and effectively to deliver their multiplier trainings through online sessions and webinars.

The indicators relating to MRGE's engagement with IT companies were not met - this was broadly seen to be due to an underestimation of the IT companies willingness to and motivation to engage with civil society on this topic; and the amount of time that would need to be invested to develop these relationships. This was not deemed to have a significant negative effect on fulfilling the overall project objective, MRGE adapted the affected project activities accordingly to provide meaningful support and learning opportunities to its partners.

The evaluator found that MRGE was effective in implementing the project activities, and in developing and maintaining a strong and supportive relationship with the project partners. Partners, project participants and experts generally felt the project was well coordinated and efficiently executed, despite facing a number of significant challenges (including the varied background of the project partners, Covid-19, a number of staff changes and lack of engagement from IT/Tech companies).

A broad range of outcomes were identified. Most significantly in the area of capacity building in terms of skills, knowledge and confidence (of individuals, organisations and civil society to develop and implement counternarrative campaigns). The partner organisations also reported residual benefits from engaging in the project, such as increasing their social media

profile and presence and thereby increasing their audience and reach; and enhancing their commitment to supporting Roma rights and/or combatting hate speech. Other outcomes identified also relate to positive changes for members of the Roma community, especially those involved in developing the campaign videos; challenging disinformation and assumptions; and contributing to debate (see the body of the report for more details). It is clear that the project has resulted in a number of important and valuable outcomes, which clearly have sustainability beyond the project. These outcomes have mostly derived from the trainings and experiences of developing and delivering different counternarrative campaigns, which have generated a sense of success and value for the project partners.

Having a project designed in a way that gave partners the freedom and flexibility to not only apply learnings from the training, but to have the resources and space to try something different meant partners could develop meaningful counternarrative campaigns that were relevant to their organisational context.

The project would have benefited from a stronger monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy to more effectively develop an evidence base for best practise and dissemination of learnings; the evaluation also found that a more structured and clearer vision from the project coordinator, and focusing more on the intended outcomes as opposed to activities would have helped to amplify the effectiveness and impact of the project. Aside from these areas of improvements, the project has laid significant foundations for the partners and project participants to build upon to further test and combat online hate speech towards Roma, influence the online debate and dialogue concerning Roma communities, and has given civil society, Roma activists and rights groups more tools in their arsenal to be able to combat discrimination.

Introduction & Background

Project background

The 'Freedom From Hate: Empowering civil society to counter cyberhate against Roma' (FFH) project sought to:

- strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to implement effective counternarrative campaigns targeting hate speech against Roma, and
- identify and share best practice with other CSOs, activists and IT companies, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and across Europe.

The project was funded by the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The FFH project spanned two years from 1 June 2018 to 31 May 2020. The project was led by Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) and delivered in partnership with five CSOs in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia (see project partner list on page 4).

The project was designed to address the widespread discrimination against Roma that has translated into cyberhate across the EU. In the context of increasing prominence of far-right groups and political parties, and growing nationalistic and xenophobic discourses, recent years have seen a rising tide in hate speech against Roma. Roma women are also disproportionately affected by cyberhate.

In preparing this project, MRGE undertook a survey of existing civil society programmes on cyberhate monitoring and prevention at a regional level. MRGE concluded that of the various groups most targeted by cyberhate in the EU, Roma were the population least represented

within prevention and monitoring projects, in terms of both involvement of Roma CSOs and projects developed specifically to address online 'Antigypsyism' in comparison with projects focusing on 'anti-Semitism', 'Islamophobia', 'homophobia' and 'anti-women hate'. MRGE's research also found that many CSOs working to counter hate speech online reported that "they were limited in knowing how to outreach to Roma and how to encourage Roma to participate in their projects" and that "often Roma CSOs were funded separately through specific Roma-focused programmes and were not integrated into mainstream anti-racism and hate speech networks".

It is within this context that MRGE sought to implement the FFH project, orientated around the following activities:

•   Training partner CSOs on countering hate speech online
•   Testing strategies by implementing counternarrative campaigns
•   Evaluating the campaigns to identify best practices
•   Convening a roundtable with CSOs and IT companies
•   Producing 'lessons learned' YouTube videos
•   Running a 'Training of trainers' session for partner CSOs
•   Conducting multiplier trainings for other activists

According to the project proposal, these activities were expected to contribute to the outcomes detailed in page 5 (Figure 1) (below)[1].

Project Partners

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), based in Hungary, has a long history of coordinating a range of development, media and Roma-specific programmes. MRGE has extensive experience in training activists, developing counternarratives, producing and disseminating authoritative materials on minority rights issues (including a major global report in 2014 on Freedom From Hate), and conducting advocacy.

Amalipe Center za mezhduetnicheski dialog i tolerantnost (Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance), based in Bulgaria, is a leading Roma organisation working for equal integration of Roma. The organisation plays a central role organising the Roma civil movement and advocates for Roma integration into government institutions.

Institut ludskych prav (Human Rights Institute, HRI), based in Slovakia, works to promote human rights through online and offline campaigns. The organisation has significant experience in tackling online hate speech, including an online campaign on housing issues for marginalised Roma communities.

Romedia Alapitvany, in Hungary, is a regional media organisation run by Roma people. Romedia runs media campaigns to promote awareness and understanding of the Roma community. A recent project involved delivering filmmaking and journalism training for Roma women.

Romsko nacionalno vijece (The Roma National Council, RNC), based in Croatia, is an umbrella organisation for the protection and promotion of Roma minority rights. The RNC promotes inclusion of Roma while protecting their historical and cultural heritage and promoting their identity.

Fórum pro lidská práva, z. s. (Forum for Human Rights), based in Czech Republic, focuses on international human rights litigation and advocacy in Central Europe. Its lawyers represent several strategic cases in the

A note on Covid-19
The evaluator felt it was important to contextualise the findings of this report by making it clear that the evaluation and the last quarter of the FFH project were conducted during the

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[1] This diagram was developed by the evaluator to summarise the project logic as described in the project proposal

Covid-19 pandemic and whilst the majority of countries involved, as well as that of the evaluator, were under strict lock-down conditions.

Both the project and the evaluation were impacted by the pandemic, which severely limited travel and face-to-face communications, meetings and access to documents. Most significantly, this impacted on the partners' ability to run the planned multiplier training in the final quarter of the project (although three partners piloted delivering these sessions online). This in turn impacted on the extent to which some of the outcomes could be assessed, e.g. the partners' capacity to share their acquired skills and experience with other CSOs and activists (and indeed any subsequent results of these trainings). The impact that Covid-19 had on the evaluation is further described in the 'Research and Data Limitations' section.

It should also be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated the need for such a project – due not only to an increase in use of online space, but also to an increase in online hate speech directed at Roma communities in the target region (this is discussed further in the Conclusions section).

Internet users exercise more critical thinking skills, are less prejudicial against Roma, and are less likely to promote, share or engage in online hate speech targeted at Roma

CSO Capacity Building

CSOs have enhanced and strengthened capacity to implement effective counternarrative campaigns targeting hate speech against Roma, and to identify and share best practices with other CSOs, activists and IT companies

CSOs and activists are better able to identify and report instances of hate-speech online

CSOs and activists have improved campaigning skills relevant to anti-hate speech campaigns

Improved data and analysis available regarding good practices in countering online hate speech with balanced narratives, and increased awareness of good practice among key stakeholders (CSOs, activists, IT companies, and others)

IT Company/Relationship Building

CSO's develop meaningful relationships with IT and tech companies

IT companies have improved understanding the impact of online antigypsyism, and strategies for countering it

IT companies have strengthened cooperation with CSOs to develop and promote counternarratives

Influencing The Narrative

Internet users in target countries have access to more alternative and accurate information about Roma communities

Increased (and better quality) positive and accurate counternarratives online regarding Roma communities that reach more people

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The evaluation

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) contracted an external evaluator to conduct an evaluation of the FFH project from April-June 2020 to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project (see Annex 6 for the full terms of reference). See Figure 2 for the agreed evaluation questions to be answered through this assessment.

Figure 2: Evaluation Questions

1. How effective and efficient was MRGE's development, coordination, problem solving and management of the project, its partners and support provisions?

2. How relevant was the project in terms of the needs of the key stakeholders (partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Roma community) and the methods chosen to meet these needs, particularly given their respective national contexts?

3. What are the specific outcomes realised during the programme period? How are they contributing to the desired impact and goals of the programme and how could this have been maximised/improved?

4. How has the project involved and impacted or met the needs of relevant vulnerable groups, e.g. Roma, women, other minorities?

5. After the project has come to an end, what is it leaving behind (i.e. sustainability), and what can MRGE do to ensure results and outcomes are sustained beyond the project?

Methodology

The methodology was designed in response to the agreed evaluation questions. As the scope and focus of the project related to capacity building of a small number of partner organisations, as well as testing and piloting of approaches, qualitative approaches were selected to better capture and identify key learnings, changes and outcomes resulting from the project.

The evaluation consisted of a document review, interview programme and outcomes harvest (described below in more detail). The original evaluation design also included a number of country visits where more detailed interviews and a greater range of stakeholders could have been engaged; however due to the Covid-19 pandemic, MRGE and the evaluator agreed this aspect of the evaluation research was no longer possible.

All data was analysed by the evaluator (with the exception of the campaign evaluation data which was extracted from an evaluation report conducted by a different evaluator, and the statistical output level data, provided directly by MRGE)
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Document review/meta-evaluation and desk research

The evaluator conducted an in-depth document review and meta-evaluation of the existing evaluation documents, reports and other relevant information provided. This focused on identifying key learnings and changes, identifying gaps in data that needed to be targeted through the other research methods, and 'harvesting' for outcomes which were then mapped back to MRGE's goals and objectives (see more on the outcomes harvesting approach below). The document review included training evaluation forms collected by MRGE and its partners during the project. A list of the key documents that formed the review can be found in Annex 3.

Key informant interviews

A semi-structured key informant interview programme was conducted. The semi-structured approach enabled the evaluator to collect data relevant to the evaluation, whilst allowing flexibility for the interviews to explore different topics and themes based on each participant's experience with the programme. Interviews were conducted remotely using encrypted platforms where possible. The key groups identified for interview were: MRGE staff; the partner NGOs; relevant independent experts who had contact with the project; Roma activists/community members; and participants of the multiplier trainings led by the partner NGOs.

A total of 16 interviews were conducted. All interviewees were given the option to remain anonymous or to have any attribution of their comments to their name removed. Table 1 summarises the number of individuals engaged in each informant group:

Table 1: Interview Programme Summary			
Group	**Target number of interviews**	**Actual number interviewed**	**Notes/comments**
MRGE staff	5	5	
Partner NGOs	5	5	
Independent experts (proposed by MRGE)	3-5	4	Additional experts were contacted and invited to interview but were unable to attend.
Participants who attended the partners' multiplier trainings	3-4	1	Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only three of the partners were able to conduct their multiplier trainings (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia). Most of these happened shortly after the research window. This limited the number of English-speaking participants available to participate.
Roma activists, organisations, community members	3-4	1	As these were planned to be conducted during the in-country visits (which were cancelled) it proved difficult for partners to facilitate interviews with Roma groups. One written interview was conducted which the local partner helped to translate for the evaluator.

Copies of the topic guides can be found in Annex 5.

Outcomes harvest

Outcomes harvesting is an approach for evaluating complex programmes, and is particularly useful in human rights and advocacy contexts. The approach involves generating specific evidence-supported outcomes statements and detailing the contribution of the NGO/project and relevance of the outcomes (see more on outcomes harvesting here). Outcomes identified in this evaluation were 'harvested' as part of the document review conducted by the evaluator. In addition, an outcomes template was sent to each partner, inviting them to identify outcomes relating to the FFH project. All five partners prepared at least one outcome. The outcomes were then reviewed by the evaluator and organised thematically into an 'outcomes bank'. Outcomes identified through the document review were interrogated/validated through targeted questioning during the interview programme. The outcomes provided by the partners were reviewed by the evaluator in light of the evidence provided for each outcome.

The outcomes template is provided in Annex 5 and the outcomes bank is discussed in the 'Findings' section and provided in Annex 2.

Initial findings discussion

The evaluator presented initial findings to MRGE as a way to further interrogate findings and gain a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the context, in order to be able to establish more nuanced and useful recommendations. This was conducted with MRGE's Director and FFH Project Coordinator.

Research and Data Limitations

As with any research and evaluation, it is important to acknowledge and identify any limitations to the data collected that might influence the interpretation of the findings.

Covid-19

As mentioned in the 'Methodology' section, the country visits were cancelled due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions. The country visits were designed to be a way for the evaluator to capture more in-depth information and develop detailed case studies on at least two of the five national partners, as well as providing the opportunity to engage with a wider range of individuals who had interacted with or were targeted by the project activities. However, partners were still supportive and cooperative with the evaluation process, and provided the information required and requested by the evaluator in order to develop the case studies.

Language limitations

There were some smaller logistical limitations to the evaluation in terms of language – the evaluator does not speak any of the official languages of the five target countries and thus interviews were all in the participants' second or third language. Although the evaluator does not feel this had any significant negative impact on the participants' abilities to express their perspectives and respond to the evaluation questions, it did however limit the extent to which the evaluator could access some first-hand information, such as reports or media articles that may have been relevant for the evaluation. This also limited the pool of potential participants that could participate in the research interviews. To partially mitigate this, the outcomes template was designed in such a way that the partner organisations could work with their colleagues and develop their outcome statements collaboratively and in their own language if desired – with just the final version being provided in English to the evaluator.

Data gaps and access to participants

Some data from the training evaluation feedback forms was missing due to an error in scanning the documents. The Covid-19 pandemic also meant MRGE staff were not able to access the original hard copy files, meaning there are some gaps in the training evaluation data collected by MRGE. In addition, some of the scales used in the evaluation forms could

have been improved to capture more accurate and meaningful data (a separate annex has been provided to MRGE with proposed improvements and best practice in relation to monitoring and evaluation for future similar projects). MRGE also sent a follow up evaluation form 6 months after the 'train the trainer' training to the 5 partner organisations to identify how learnings have been applied. Unfortunately, only three of the five partners completed the forms.

The most significant limitation to the data is a lack of direct participation in the evaluation from Roma activists/Roma community (outside of the Roma-led/focused organisations). As only three partners were able to do the multiplier training, there were fewer Roma activists/Roma rights groups that directly participated in the project than foreseen. It was foreseen that during the country visits, the evaluator would have the opportunity to meet with Roma/Roma activists with facilitation/interpretation support from the partner organisation; however as the country visits were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this restricted the opportunities to engage and meet directly with individuals from this group. This meant the key questions around both relevance and impact are somewhat lacking from this perspective. Given the project is ultimately orientated to contribute to positive impacts for the Roma communities in these countries, this is a significant limitation. This has been mitigated where possible by gaining secondary data and information from partners which have worked directly with Roma communities in the development and promotion of their campaigns. In addition, it should be noted that three of the five national partners are Roma rights organisations, and thus are either Roma-led or highly engaged with the Roma communities in their respective countries.

Findings

The 'Findings' section includes a summary of MRGE's output and outcome indicators, as well as a summary of the data collected and reviewed as part of this evaluation. The 'Conclusions' section will then draw on these findings to make conclusions and respond to the key evaluation questions.

Unless otherwise stipulated, all statements/findings are based on at least 2-3 sources (e.g. multiple interviewees, feedback form data and interview data etc.).

The evaluator encourages MRGE to reflect on the findings of this report with a critical lens and consider jointly developing an action plan to address some of the challenges and limitations identified, in order to be able to maximise the opportunities for success should a second wave of the project be realised.

Output and outcome indicator summary

MRGE agreed a number of key output and outcome indicators to monitor and assess their progress towards achieving their intended project results – the results are summarised in Table 2 (outputs) and Table 3 (outcomes). Based on the information provided, MRGE and its partners were successful in delivering the key activities and outputs (with some minor, logical deviations as described later in the report).

Table 2: Output indicators (as defined in the FFH project proposal)		
Indicator	**Target**	**Actual Value**
Training materials developed	1	1
Campaign training for 10 CSO partner staff	1	1
Counternarrative campaigns	5	5
Counternarrative campaign products	30	34
'Lessons learned' report	1	1

Roundtable	1	1
'Lessons learned' YouTube videos	5	5
Training toolkit	1	1
Multiplier trainings	5	4

On an outcome level, MRGE achieved many of its targets, particularly those that related to building their partners' capacities and delivering useful/relevant training sessions for them. MRGE set a target of training 100 activists/CSOs to be reached via their own trainings and through the multiplier trainings. Despite the Covid-19-related travel/meeting restrictions which meant not all partners were able to deliver their multiplier trainings, MRGE and its partners exceeded this target, training a total of 118 CSOs/activists . MRGE and its partners responded effectively and creatively by delivering some of their sessions online despite a very challenging set of circumstances. In addition, there was clear intent and desire from those partners who did not deliver their multiplier trainings to do so as soon as reasonably possible. MRGE conducted an additional webinar to help reach more activists/CSOs forming 20 of the 118 individuals trained, the majority of which were volunteers and activists from the partner countries who were unable to organise their own multiplier training.

Table 3: Outcome indicators (as defined in the FFH project proposal)		
Indicator	**Target**	**Actual Value**
% of partners whose capacities have improved with concrete examples	100%	100% (all partners reported an increase in skills or capacity resulting from the project in at least one relevant area).
Number of CSO staff/activists trained	100	118
% of participants who stated training was useful and relevant, and who rated training materials as good or very good	80%	80-90%[2]
Number of key stakeholders who received/accessed deliverables	50,000	Reach: 153 745+[3]
Number of positive citations of report in conferences, academic and practitioner reports, on social media ('Lessons learned' report, YouTube videos and toolkit)	50	0
Joint commitments made by IT companies and partners and progress made after 3 months	At least 2	0

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[2] Based on the feedback forms of the campaign and ToT trainings

[3] Reach includes the number of individuals that were reached via social media posts related to the project deliverables/webpages hosting the resources. Please note, as this content is collected across multiple platforms, there may be duplication of individual viewers, and thus the number of unique viewers might be slightly lower. Not all partners reported the reach of their own social media posts of the deliverables at the time of writing. MRGE did not have relevant data from google analytics to accurately report on the number of downloads of the deliverables and therefor the number of people who actually 'access' the resources. MRGE's monitoring spreadsheet reports that approximately 111,882 viewed the lessons learned videos.

Internet users who follow perpetrators of hate benefit from access to alternative narratives[4]	50,000	598,609 – 603,609 (total campaign material reach, not unique)[5]

The stream of project activities which related to developing and establishing relationships and dialogue with IT companies was not successfully realised. MRGE and its partners noted a lack of engagement from IT companies – and were not able to establish useful communication channels with them, or secure their attendance at the roundtable meeting that was intended to result in more dialogue and collaboration between MRGE, partners and IT companies. This meant none of the planned joint commitments were made. Largely it was felt by those interviewed that MRGE had overestimated the willingness of IT companies to engage with civil society groups, particularly concerning online hate speech; and that MRGE could have invested more time in identifying the right IT company representatives to engage, as well as in identifying ways to make the prospect of engagement more attractive to IT companies. MRGE adapted its roundtable accordingly – instead of engaging with IT companies, the roundtable connected project partners with other key organisations and NGOs working in this space, resulting in an informal network of NGOs and opportunities for shared learnings and collaboration between partners. The roundtables seemed to be well received by the partners (as detailed in the 'Project activities' section), making a useful contribution to the project's capacity and network building objectives.

Table 3: Campaign reach (extract taken from campaign evaluation report)[6] [7]

Case	Bulgaria				Croatia		Czech				Hungary		Slovak		
Channels used for dissemination	FB page; FB group; Youtube				FP page; Youtube channel; Instagram; external TV program; external News Portal; external FB; page; external webportal		FB				FB; Instagram; Twitter		FB; Instagram		
	Reach	Engagement			Reach	Engagement	Reach	Engagement			Reach	Engagement	Reach	Engagement	
	Views	Likes	Shares	Com.	Views	React.+Com.+Shar.	Reach	Eng.	Shares	Comments	Views	Likes+Com.	Reach	Likes	Shares
Object 1	2631	143	43	50	1609	219	8787	1089	22		9699	568	64397	142	84
Object 2	118	31	7		6165	345	5127	237	3		16336	1792	37045	79	19
Object 3	543	48	9		1820	188	10862	1066	31	138	13096	1117	92700	751	104
Object 4	60	20	2	1	98	5	5915	393	11	58	6315	609	76484	218	219
Object 5		41	6		179	13	5335	370	9	29	N/A	N/A	46998	143	97
Object 6		20	2		72	2	1023	119	4	0			27537	513	177
Object 7					1010	48	6015	715	5	2					
Object 8					51293	540									
Object 9					30573	284									
Total of all objects	3352	303	69	51	92819	1644	43064	3989	85	227	45446	4086	345161	1846	700

The evaluator is not aware of any data/has not been provided with any data which suggests there have been positive citations of the lessons learned report/campaign evaluation in conferences, academic papers or on social media (beyond it being shared by MRGE or the partners directly). This is likely to be linked to the methodological limitations described concerning below.

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[4] See Table 3 for a breakdown of campaign reach

[5] MRGE and partners did not have data relating to the number of followers of hate speech reached – and this figure is relatively uncertain considering many of the partners did not expressly target these audiences. The number provided is the total reach of all campaign materials, and there is likely to be a degree of duplication of different materials reaching the same individual multiple times.

[6] This data was collected by a different external evaluator contracted by MRGE to conduct the campaign evaluation

[7] The evaluator was informed that the total reach of the Bulgarian campaign products was reported incorrectly – there was an additional 5k of individual reached through Amalipe's Facebook groups and networks.

These output and outcome indicators formed part of the monitoring and evaluation plan agreed with the donor. MRGE's monitoring and evaluation plan was mainly orientated around monitoring the project's delivery and budget management. MRGE also ensured it had systems in place to capture data relevant to the indicators agreed in its project proposal. In this regard, MRGE has successfully met the monitoring and evaluation standards set out in its project plan and agreed with the donor. However, in the evaluator's opinion (based on the evidence collected through this evaluation and the data provided), the monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy and plan was not sufficiently robust in order to meaningfully achieve the 'learning'-based outcomes intended by this project, particularly those relating to 'testing strategies', 'identifying best practice' and 'disseminating learnings'. MRGE and its partners did indeed trial different and new strategies for countering online hate speech through online counternarrative campaigns (which proved to be a valuable experience for those involved, see section on 'Campaigns') and some key learnings from these experiences have been captured. However, the learning and evaluation planning and approach was not designed in a way that would enable them to meaningfully identify best practice or truly understand the results and effectiveness of the campaigns. This obviously has a knock-on effect on the partners' opportunity and ability to 'share best practice'.

Although MRGE largely delivered on its core activities and outputs, it may have underestimated the resources and planning required to ensure the learning-orientated activities resulted in the intended outcomes on a more meaningful level. The evaluator has made a number of recommendations in this regard in Annex 1 to help inform the design of any future projects with a similar testing/piloting focus.

Outcomes
The key outcomes harvesting through this evaluation has been grouped in the themes below, with illustrative examples and descriptions of the types of outcomes identified. The evaluation has prioritised outcomes that have been fully realised – however it should be noted that the project has only recently concluded. The outcomes harvesting approach uses a specific definition of an outcome which considers any change in behaviour, policy, attitude, actions etc. by individuals, groups, institutions as a potential outcome.

A total of 36 outcome statements were harvested. Approximately half of these relate to capacity building outcomes in terms of skills, knowledge and confidence (of individuals, organisations and civil society). There were smaller groups of outcomes identified which related to:

- positive outcomes for the Roma community;
- enhanced commitment to counternarrative activities and/or Roma rights;
- challenging disinformation and assumptions;
- contributing to debate.

Certain types of outcomes are easier to identify, document and evidence, such as capacity building, therefor the number of outcomes identified is less relevant than the range of outcomes. If MRGE builds on this project in the future, it is likely it will be able to identify more outcomes relating to the other objectives and themes as campaigns develop, increase etc. (assuming a suitable evaluation plan is in place). The type of outcomes captured is also limited by the types of data collected throughout the project and the evaluation (e.g. more outcomes concerning Roma communities directly may have been identified had it been possible to interview more Roma persons).

The outcomes captured are detailed in Annex 2. Many of the outcomes are presented as reported by the partner organisation with small modifications made by the evaluator in light

of other evidence collected and the evidence provided by the partner. A small number of preliminary or 'intermediary' outcomes were also documented which relate to the potential of an outcome to be realised (however there is not yet the evidence to know for certain that there has been a change, and are thus making a reasonable assumption that the outcome has or will be realised).

The outcome themes are summarised below with illustrative examples (further details, including the relevant evidence source is provided in Annex 2).

Theme 1: Capacity Building

All partners involved in the project reported an increase in their knowledge, skills and or confidence in various (often different) areas relating to developing counternarrative campaigns, digital campaigning and/or legal frameworks concerning hate-speech in the EU. Not only were these skills reported, but those who gained this capacity through the campaign training had immediate opportunity to apply these skills, and a number of them have reported use of these skills beyond this specific campaign to compliment their other projects and organisations more generally.

> Example 1: HRI increased their ability to be able to simplify complex messages to reach greater audiences by using alternative media (memes) and making use of current topical issues (in this instance fake news). HRI adapted their messages to the 'memes' language so that a range of audiences, not only young people (usually associated with the use of memes) were following these simplified messages. HRI report that having focused on an ongoing topic of discussion, like fake news, instead of bringing something that was not at the core of the current social debate, like racial equality or minority rights, helped increase engagement. "We cannot change the current framework, but we can use it".

> Example 2: RNV has developed knowledge and experience and created capacity to continue activities combatting hate speech directed against Roma. Through this project RNV developed their skills to counter online hate speech against Roma through designing and implementing online campaigns, and to deliver multiplier trainings to other CSOs and activists. This is significant given RNV had no digital campaigning experience before. They report to have gained practical knowledge in the production of campaign materials needed to conduct narrative change campaigns in the media and in society; and reported greater confidence in working with national media; as well as stronger social media skills.

> Example 3: Amalipe increased their understanding of the importance of social media and social networks as an influencing tool. Prior to our participation in the project, they had a large Facebook group, but did not actively develop the organization's Facebook page. Amalipe now dedicate more time to maintaining and developing their social media profiles. This was the first time Amalipe had conducted this sort of activity and received training on this topic, and thus there is a significant contribution from the project directly.

Capacity building outcomes related to broader civil society and other individuals were also captured:

> Example 4: Volunteers and students involved in Amalipe's campaign have improved their audio-visual materials skills (to be used in campaigns). Since the first campaign, they have developed more videos with a number of improvements in their storylines and scripts.

Theme 2: Increased Reach

All partners reported an increase in their organisational reach as a result of the campaigns. Due to their campaign successes, many of the partners increased both the range of followers in terms of demographics, as well as the number of followers. This has a positive potential contribution to maximize the reach of future campaigns and counternarratives, other human rights activities and other projects and programmes which seek to advance human rights through public engagement or action.

Example 1: HRI were able to reach new audiences through their campaign materials and newly explored platforms and materials (e.g. Instagram and Memes). "We were expecting more reaction from activists and the usual suspects, this did not happen which is a good thing as it means we reached different and new audiences. The reach was much bigger and wider than expected – at least 5 times more. The age, the geographical location – this was not the normal audience we would reach".

Example 2: Romedia increased their audience and reach through the use of paid ads for the campaign materials which they been able to sustain through their enhanced social media strategy. According to Romedia "We experienced growth in our audience in terms of numbers as a result of our paying for advertisements that were tailored to them in terms of focus. We had many more comments, for instance…. we continued to apply the takeaways about sustaining a campaign online and strengthened our competency for storytelling, both as consumers and producers.

Theme 3: Enhanced commitment to combatting hate speech/advocating for Roma rights

The project has enhanced the commitment of the partner organisations to either continue or expand their work on Roma rights, or to continue and develop further initiatives combating hate speech.

> Example 1: Amalipe have developed a stronger focus on projects relating to combating hate speech and using counternarratives. After the FFH project started, they started looking for more projects that addressed this issue, and are now working on several. This indicates that the work is being sustained, and the issue and topic will continue to be addressed, as well as providing Amalipe more opportunity to meet with young activists and improve their campaigns.

> Example 2: Forum developed stronger relationships with Roma communities in Czechia which has made valuable contributions to their legal work in improving their own access to court applicants for strategic litigation concerning Roma issues – contributing to facilitating and advancing their ability to continue and commit to work concerning Roma rights.

Theme 4: Advancing Roma Rights/Roma Community Impact

A small number of outcomes were identified in relation to broader Roma rights and or individual level impact on people directly involved in the campaigns.

> Example 1: Individuals involved in Amalipe's campaigns have generated a sense of pride within their local community - although this outcome is on an individual level, the changes described and reported were significant for the students involvement, particularly the girl who won the video competition and met the president (see case study). Considering the potential negative consequences of hate speech on personal confidence and mental health, this is an important, albeit individual level, outcome.

According to Amalipe, "Roma Activists were proud, and were proud of the girl on the video. We want to have impact on changing perceptions but it's very hard …we don't change many attitudes, but we can change some, some peoples vision. I can see this in the people close to me, when they see young people trying to do more they start to think differently about Roma, it's the start of some change".

Example 2: Roma communities now better connected with Forum will have better access to justice and legal support through an enhanced relationship, some legal actions had already begun at the time of this evaluation, with Forum providing legal support to the Roma individuals they were now better connected to as a result of developing the campaign materials.

Example 3: HRI and some Roma rights organisations and activists in Slovakia are better connected and able to promote and share each others work and potentially collaborate. There's been prominent Roma organisations, activists, radios that have shared HRI's materials, and started following them on social media, and sharing other posts of theirs. HRI commented, "We are now more aware of one another's work, a relationship in this way which is new for us – they are sharing not only Roma related posts but others too. I guess they appreciated our efforts and now receiving our other comms and sharing these".

Theme 5: Contributing to debates and narratives

The sheer existence of the project, and the development of new campaign materials an counternarrative that would have otherwise not existed is a contribution it itself to debate and narratives concerning hate speech and discrimination of Roma.

Example 1: The counternarrative campaign implemented by Croatia RNV, reached new and broad audiences, their materials were used on the International Roma Day on 8 April by broadcast on television companies operating on a national level, contributing to important public debate on an issue rarely discussed. RNV reported that this was the biggest achievement of this campaign. This was achieved and evidenced through the significant reach of their campaigns, by securing substantial national media coverage on a range of media, and engaging local celebrities to participate in the campaign. RNV have evidence of the campaign reach (summarised in the evaluation report) and media coverage received.

Example 2: In March-April 2019, Forum's online campaign was one of the very few positive and accurate narratives on Roma housing in the online space amidst the heated discussion on legislative changes of housing benefits and mass-evictions of Roma families from the dormitories- their materials provided information to help contribute to the debate which was accessed by many people.

Theme 6: Challenging assumptions and changing opinions

A small number of concrete examples were identified to which there is a evidence that the campaign materials have to at least some extent made an important contribution to challenging assumption and changing opinions concerning the existence of hate speech, as well as perceptions of Roma groups by society more generally. The examples below highlight ways in which the narrative, at least temporarily during the period of the campaign delivery.

Example 1: During the campaign period, online debate about Roma (usually full of hate speech, stereotypes and disinformation) shifted on social media to a large

degree to discuss the realities of local corruption instead. This change happened shortly after HRI started to publish the products of the #pravdaoromoch ("truth about Roma") campaign on social media (Facebook, Instagram). The conciseness, directness and bluntness of the messages communicated contributed to the direction of how the online discussions were conducted. This was visible directly in the campaign materials comments and reactions themselves, and HRI also reported observations of similar trends more widely for which they feel their campaign has contributed. According to HRI, "The reach of the campaign speaks for itself, especially considering the ratio of organic vs. paid reach. While there could be an argument made that reach is mere vanity metrics, this is not the case when it comes to 'Roma positive' messaging in Slovakia especially when connected to financial matters. Hatred, misunderstanding and stereotyping is so widespread among all social classes, age groups and political affiliations, that this simply cant hold the ground. Furthermore, the content produced was reused by other actors and even reinterpreted and used as basis for different work (such as student blogs)".

Example 2: Prior to the implementation of this campaign, the dominant narrative within the media and in society as a whole was that hate speech against Roma does not exist or exists on a very small scale and is not a significant problem. The implementation of this project has initiated a process of changing attitudes towards specific manifestations of hate speech directed against Roma in the media in Croatia, on social media and indirectly in Croatian society in general. The change began to happen when RNV managed to include in their Campaign PROMJENI.net in various media and online (NOVA TV and Portal Dnevnik). With the help of this medium, RNV's message against hate speech against Roma reached more than 100,000 people in a very short time via the Internet alone, and an even greater reach was directly via NOVA TV, the most popular TV show PROVJERENO. The opening of this topic in that show also resulted in the opening of a wider debate on the extent to which hate speech against Roma is present in the Croatian media and social networks. By presenting examples of hate speech directed against Roma, RNV managed, through this project, to prove that hate speech against Roma is very widespread and very destructive for the position and perspectives of Roma in Croatian society. RNV commented, "We know that the change by implementation of this Project has really happened because for the first time the topic of hate speech was opened in the national media. A Campaign PROMIJENI.net spokesperson from RNV was also invited to other media to talk about the Campaign. RNV's activities in this Project have been recognized and acknowledged by the Office of the Ombudsperson of Republic of Croatia".

It is worth noting that no outcomes were identified relating to relationships with IT companies – this is perhaps unsurprising considering the challenges MRGE faced in engaging them in the project. In addition there were no direct outcomes identified relating to learning from or sharing best practice examples – again this is likely linked to the project's limitation in this area, as previously described. Despite this, it is clear that the project has resulted in a number of important and valuable outcomes, which clearly have sustainability beyond the project period (particularly those concerning skills enhancement, improved organisational reach and increased commitment to combatting hate speech online towards Roma). These outcomes, which have mostly derived from the training and experience of developing and delivering different counternarrative campaigns, are likely to be the reason why – despite some of its limitations – the project has largely been well valued, appreciated and considered successful by the majority of those interviewed. In particular, the commitment of many of the partners and MRGE to developing a second wave of the project is testament to its perceived potential value and impact.

Case Study: The power of effective messaging: HRI's Myth busting Meme Campaign

"Our focus was housing. We wanted to shift the dialogue from blaming Roma to highlighting and exposing local political corruption."

MRG's Freedom from Hate project marked the first time that Slovakia's Human Rights Institute (HRI) had received a financial grant for the express purpose of campaigning on the subject of Roma rights. "We are not a Roma organisation", said HRI, whose previous campaigning efforts on Roma rights had largely been ad-hoc and reactive. The new project required careful planning and execution. "One of the main challenges was to be sensitive about the topic, and about Roma people." The organisation took heed of where other well-known Roma rights campaigns in Slovakia had failed, or had even acted unhelpfully to reinforce certain myths about Roma people.

Challenges were also posed by the complexity of the issues surrounding prejudice against Roma people in Slovakia. HRI's organisers understood that any content produced and shared had to be comprehensible to a general audience. Their campaigning efforts benefited from insights derived from MRG's training event on countering online hate speech. In particular, the campaign checklist template offered a useful and methodical step-by-step strategy, "that aided thinking the campaign through." HRI therefore maintained an initial understanding that the campaign would not do well to go against the grain, but that it should "package messages into the narrative of the 'anti-fake news movement' currently prevalent in Slovakian society."

This belief led to HRI's first foray into experimenting with the social media platform Instagram. "Our age group missed out on Instagram", HRI's organisers said. "We were not familiar with the platform. But this campaign enabled us to nurture and grow our Instagram presence, and we learned how to successfully exploit the "meme" format. It was challenging - but we gained experience of many new modes of communication." Experiments with popular forms of humour were most successfully illustrated in the adaptation of well-known memes - depicting characters such as Morpheus from the *The Matrix* film trilogy and Willy Wonka - in order to lampoon commonly-held myths about the Roma minority in Slovakia.

Such content encapsulated what HRI had set out to do: "rebuke widespread fake news about Roma with data and hard-fact in order to produce an emotional reaction." Nor did HRI shy away from controversy. Their memes were as hard-hitting as they were humorous. "Our focus was housing. We wanted to shift the dialogue from blaming Roma to highlighting and exposing local political corruption", said HRI. They produced memes playing on damaging stereotypes about Roma receiving housing for free by citing examples of public officials who had allegedly benefited from corrupt property deals. These examples demonstrated to HRI that "Instagram could be an effective platform for political messaging."

"This was by far the most significant achievement of the project: learning about messaging and engaging young people", HRI said. "We were very surprised at how successful the campaign was. It had such a wide reach." Shares were in the thousands - over multiple social media platforms - and most of the comments received were either positive or neutral. Most importantly, HRI learned the benefits of using stratified messaging. "We learnt that certain demographic groups respond differently and resonate with different topics." Slovakia's Roma activist community even supported HRI's campaign. Some became "committed followers" because of the content. "There was no negative feedback from them.

They seem to have appreciated our efforts, and are now helping to share some of our wider myth-busting content."

For HRI, the project laid important groundwork for an understanding of how to approach and manage a formal campaign concerned with Roma rights. "We realised that such a campaign requires clever strategizing, and cannot simply be reactive. It needs serious thought and time invested in it." HRI came away with an idea of the importance of prior planning, but also that any strategy "must allow for the flexibility to change as the audiences' reaction changes." The organization also understood that such an ambitious project requires greater resources, constant monitoring, and frequent quality checks. Most significantly, MRG's project "laid the basis for cooperation" both nationally - with the Roma community and other groups - as well as internationally. HRI have expressed their desire to extend the impact of the project across borders and into Europe.

Project activities
This section addresses the findings for each group of activities delivered under the project in relation to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency in their delivery and ability to realise their intended results, and contribution to any signs of impact and sustainability. The activities have been grouped as follows:

- Trainings and resource development
- Campaigns, campaign evaluation and 'lessons learned' videos
- The roundtable
- Multiplier trainings
- Project design, administration and management[8]
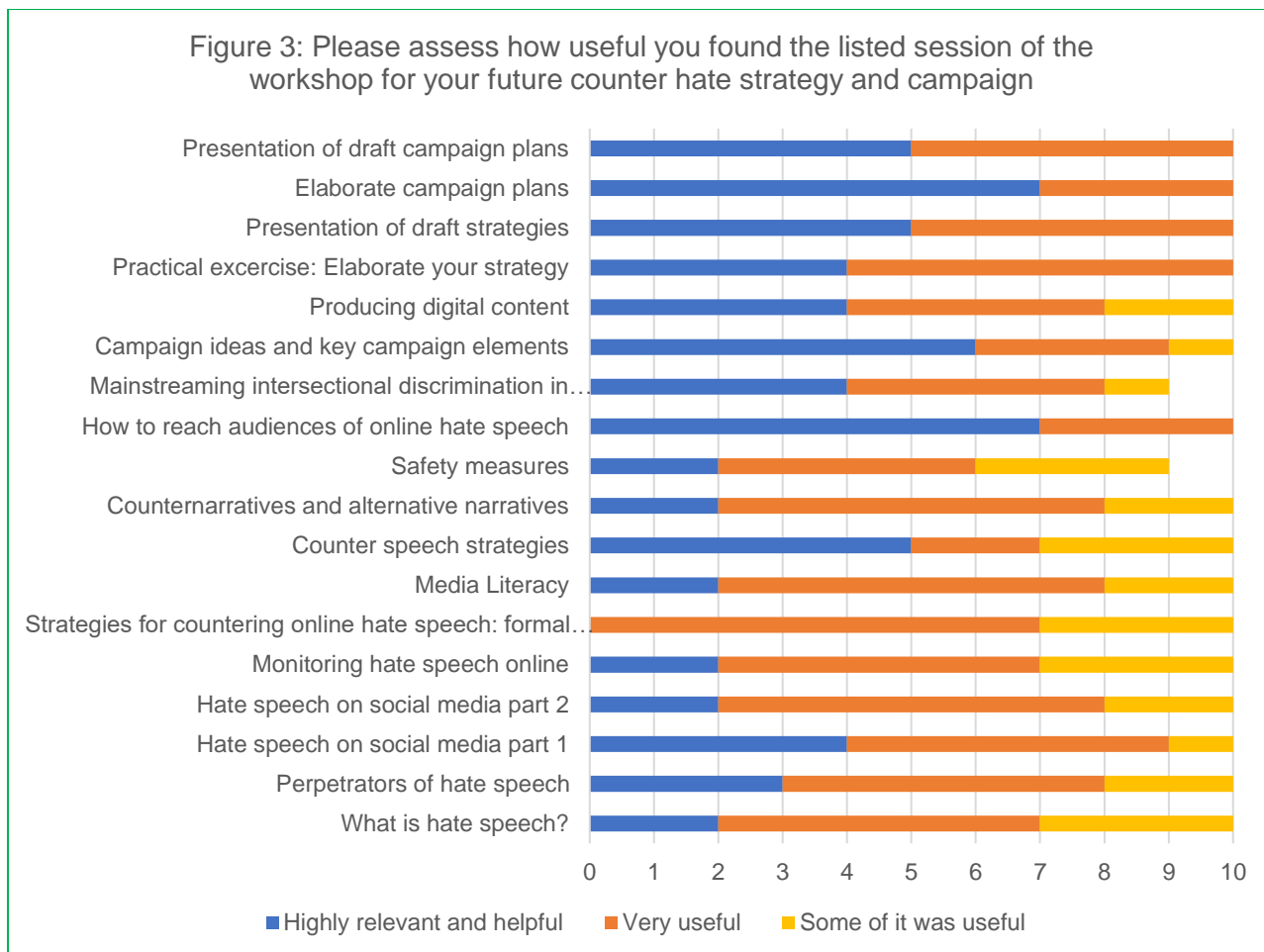
Trainings and resource development
In terms of relevance, both the campaign training and the 'Training of trainers' were highly relevant to the project goals, the needs of the Roma community and the needs of the partner organisations. The training resource can be accessed online on the [Minority Rights Group website](). The evaluation forms completed after the campaign training – as well as feedback from the interviews – reflect this: eight out of ten participants in the campaign training said the information provided to them at the training was highly relevant and useful. A summary of the ratings for each session delivered at the campaign training also indicates that participants regarded the majority of sessions as either highly relevant or very useful (see Figure 3)[9]. As observed in Figure 3 the most useful aspects of the campaign training were arguably the more practical sessions which focused more on developing campaigns and the practicalities involved, as opposed to the more theory-based sessions (although these were also received positively). Some of the partners acknowledged they had never before engaged in such a campaign or activity, which might explain why the practical sessions had a slightly higher rating in terms of usefulness – this is further echoed in participants' responses to the question "What else would you need to further advance your knowledge on countering online hate speech against Roma?", in which those who responded mostly suggested they would want more examples of campaigns and to gain more practical experience[10].

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[8] Although not a formal project activity, as this formed part of the evaluation questions, findings relating to MRGE project management and administration are treated as an activity for the purposes of this report.
[9] Please see Annex 1 for recommendations on improving the wording of scale questions to improve the accuracy of the data collected.
[10] Please note some data was missing as described in the 'Research and Data Limitations' section

"I gained more knowledge about how to do the campaigns, and how to target more people – after the training I started thinking about how to reach more people. It gave me better planning skills for campaigns."~ Amalipe

Figure 3: Please assess how useful you found the listed session of the workshop for your future counter hate strategy and campaign

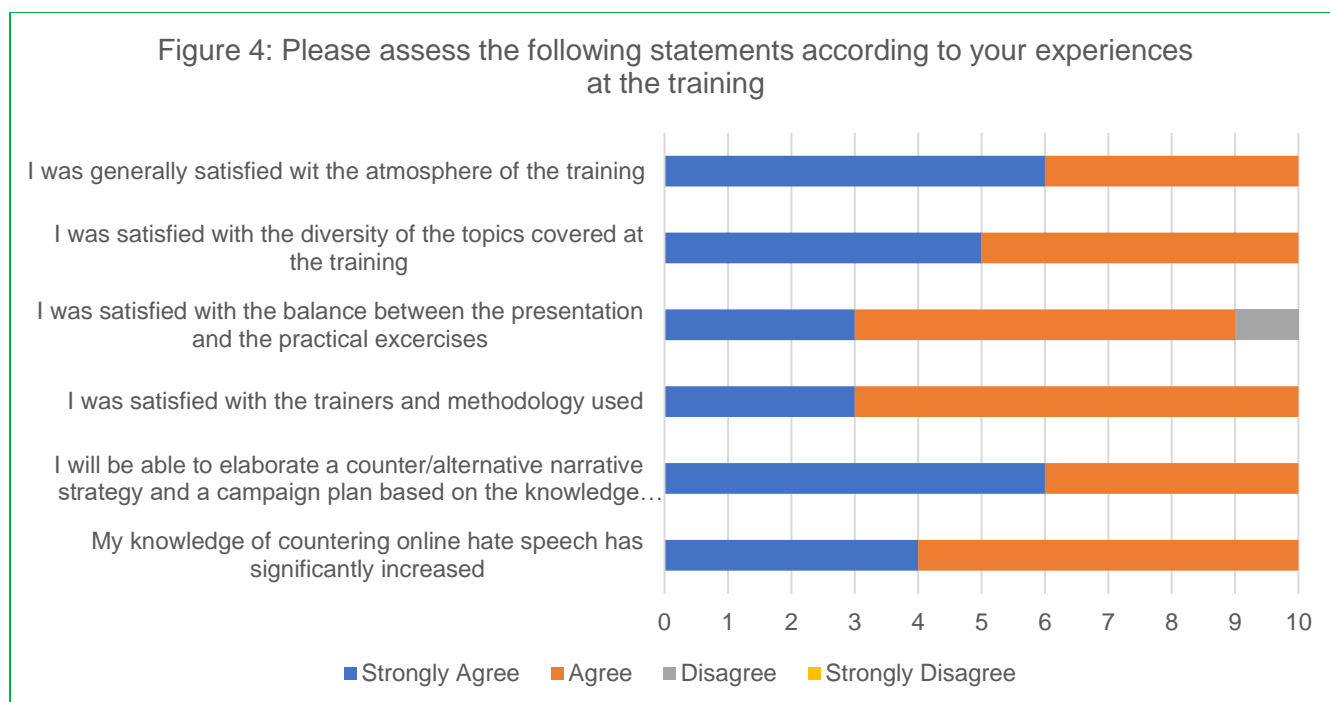Legend: ■ Highly relevant and helpful ■ Very useful ■ Some of it was useful

[11]

Figure 4 presents responses to a series of agree/disagree statements collected by MRGE through their evaluation forms – again, these suggest participants were broadly satisfied with the content, delivery, and quality of the training. In terms of designing the training, MRGE faced a significant challenge, given the partner organisations varied significantly in terms of experience. Designing a training that would be useful and relevant for all partners therefore required careful thought and consideration. For example, the partners varied greatly in size, capacity and focus. Three of the organisations specifically focused on Roma rights and two worked on a much broader range of human rights issues; some of the partners also had significant experience of online advocacy and campaigning whilst others were less experienced in this regard. Despite this, the positive feedback provided in the feedback forms suggests that MRGE was effective in the design and delivery of its campaign training (all ten participants said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I have significantly increased my knowledge of countering online hate speech'). However, this variation in skills and background did seem to have an impact on how beneficial some of the partners found certain aspects. For example one partner found the sessions on freedom of expression and hate speech less useful as they were already very knowledgeable on this, but found the campaigning aspects highly useful and effective, commenting that "Training on

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[11] "Not at all useful" was also an option, but was not selected by any participants for any session.

campaigning was very good – we had no experience before – from that perspective, we have improved our capacity" said the Croatian partner. Others who already had more experience in campaigns benefited most from having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their plans.
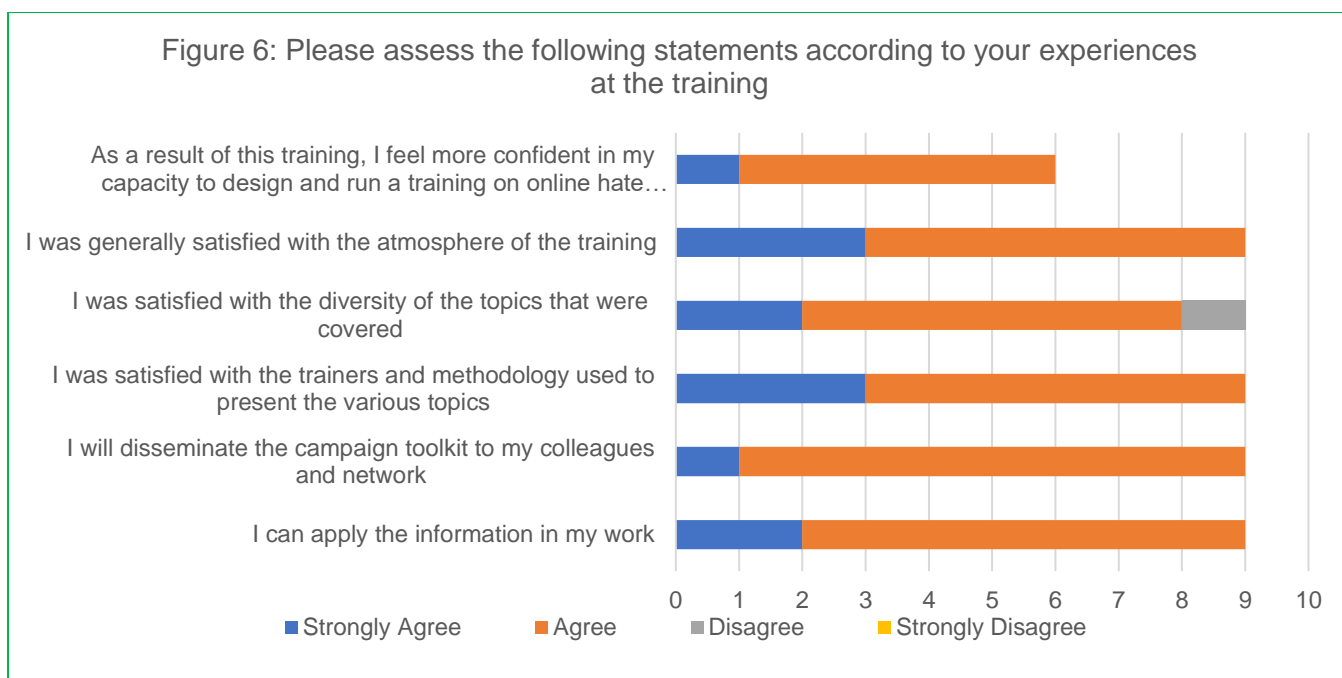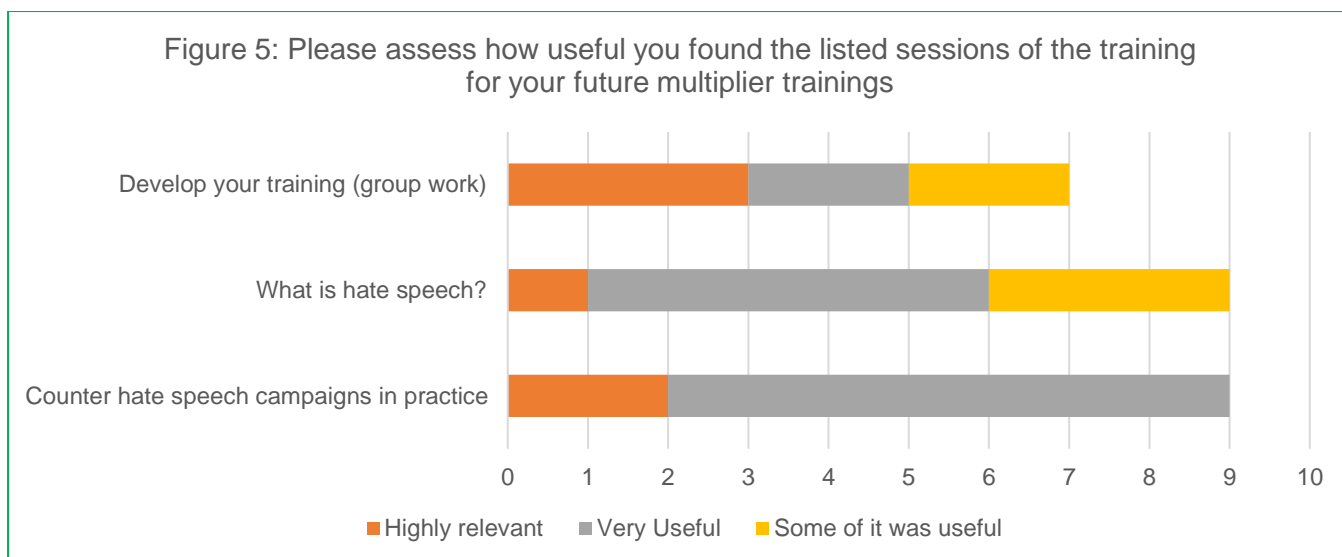
MRGE conducted an informal needs assessment ahead of the training, consulting with the partners on what topics they wanted to cover and what skills they wanted to develop – MRGE may want to consider conducting a more formal needs assessment in the future to better assess the existing skills and experience levels of the partners and help inform the design of such sessions, perhaps drawing more on the experience of its partners where appropriate to do so.

Figure 4: Please assess the following statements according to your experiences at the training

The impact of the campaign training is best assessed through the experiences and delivery of the campaigns themselves and is discussed in more detail in the 'Campaigns' section and the 'Outcomes' section.

The 'Training of trainers' feedback was similar[12], with eight out of nine participants reporting the training was highly relevant and useful. Likewise, the more practical elements of the training were rated more positively, and there was clearly a high degree of satisfaction for the training in general (see Figures 5 and 6). One participant commented on how they will approach the trainings they deliver differently as a result of the training, saying "I now realise the amount of thought I will need to put into things I didn't think of before, for example the evaluation of a training, and the preparation of a training – you need to really deeply think about who you are wanting to reach, what the goals are. I didn't consider these things in as much depth or as thoroughly before".

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[12] Please note some responses from the feedback forms were missing due to scanning errors and MRGE were unable to access the original documents due to Covid-19-related travel restrictions.

Figure 5: Please assess how useful you found the listed sessions of the training for your future multiplier trainings

Develop your training (group work)
What is hate speech?
Counter hate speech campaigns in practice

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

■ Highly relevant   ■ Very Useful   ■ Some of it was useful

Figure 6: Please assess the following statements according to your experiences at the training

As a result of this training, I feel more confident in my capacity to design and run a training on online hate…
I was generally satisfied with the atmosphere of the training
I was satisfied with the diversity of the topics that were covered
I was satisfied with the trainers and methodology used to present the various topics
I will disseminate the campaign toolkit to my colleagues and network
I can apply the information in my work

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree

Interviews with the partner organisations also revealed some areas for potential improvement. For example, one partner felt the 'Training of trainers' session needed to be a little more practical, commenting: "The first training was well-tailored. The second one less so, I expected something more practical. It was mostly theoretical. I expected more about how to deliver the training, what to do with the participants, what examples and tasks to give them etc." Although only one interviewee commented in this way, when paired with feedback that suggests the more practical elements are most useful, MRGE may want to ensure that future trainings are as practical as possible – for example, one comment in the feedback form stated: "It would be advisable to do more group work, to be less focused on presentation and do more discussion. Concrete application of the knowledge into reality, making more participants understand what you mean in practice".

The toolkit
The campaign toolkit has also been well received by the partner organisations and training participants who have shared the resource with other NGOs and colleagues. Although there were some comments in the documentation provided that the toolkit may not be responsive

to the different national contexts, this issue was explored directly during interviews and was not seen as a substantial concern or challenge – and many felt it achieved the right balance to be useful for CSOs in different countries in Europe. Understanding of the actual use of the resource is limited as only 3 of the partners were able to conduct their own training sessions (one of which did so after the evaluation interview), which limited the extent to which the usefulness of the toolkit could be assessed. It should be noted that other campaign toolkits exist, and thus the evaluator sought to identify the unique value added by this toolkit. The main additional value of this toolkit seems to lie in the fact that it is targeted at smaller NGOs with limited resources; that it was translated into local languages; and that it provides a specific Roma rights perspective – this final point was emphasised by many in terms of making the toolkit and information accessible to a wide range of CSOs.

For those partners that had conducted a multiplier training, the resource appears to have been useful for developing and designing their training. "We used it a lot to design the multiplier training, evaluation forms – [it was] useful for us to design the training". The toolkit also makes specific reference to and consideration of other marginalised and vulnerable groups, principally potential intersectionality between gender and Roma rights-related issues – this is an important consideration given that the project proposal states that "Issues concerning intersectional discrimination will be fully integrated across the programme". (Integration of intersectional discrimination is discussed in more detail under the section on 'Project design, administration and management').

"I kept using the checklist when creating the campaign – the step-by-step strategical process that helps us to think the campaign through." ~ Human Rights Institute

In relation to the relevance of such a training to meet the needs of Roma communities in the target countries, all partner organisations interviewed described a somewhat bleak picture of societal attitudes towards Roma communities in their countries, with particular concern and attention on how this manifests online. The need for civil society to develop new strategies to combat online hate speech is also clearly present. One of the experts interviewed commented: "Counter-speech and counternarrative might be some of the best tools to counter hate speech – but it needs to be complemented by others and more widely used. This is a skill and tool that needs to be in the arsenal of civil rights groups". Another expert commented that "CSOs need to open up to different strategies – they need to remain innovative and change the way they communicate ,CSOs need to keep pace with the changes in the way people communicate and they way hate speech is spreading". Whilst a third expert interviewed commented: "Hate speech online targeting minorities is somewhat of a new phenomenon, and it has serious consequence both online and offline… most organisations don't know what to do about it, there is no clear protocol, decision makers are too old to understand and tech companies are hard to do advocacy with". Desk research conducted by the partner organisations during the inception of the project supports such statements.

In this regard, the trainings were broadly seen as relevant to the problems facing Roma in the target countries and the needs of CSOs to develop new skills and approaches for countering online hate speech.

Campaigns, campaign evaluation and 'lessons learned' videos

The project was designed in a way that allowed the partner organisations to apply the skills and knowledge gained at the campaign training directly to the development and delivery of a counternarrative campaign – informed and tailored to the needs and contexts in the five countries and adaptable to suit each partner organisation's own strategy and priorities. This was intended to further enhance the partners' capacities to deliver counternarrative campaigns as well as to identify and document learnings and best practice (to be captured

by the campaign evaluation) which could then be disseminated to wider audiences via the 'lessons learned' videos.

The remit of this evaluation was not to evaluate the campaigns themselves, but to evaluate their role and effectiveness in contributing to the project's desired impact and goals. As intended, all five partners planned and delivered counternarrative campaigns which varied in terms of content and format – the counternarrative campaigns are summarised on the Minority Rights Group website, and the campaign evaluation/'lessons learned' report is also available online, along with the 'lessons learned' videos.

These campaigns, along with having the time, resources and space to be able to trial and develop new activities, seem to have been the most effective of the project's activities with respect to achieving the project objectives, particularly in relation to capacity building of the partner organisations. The experience of delivering these campaigns was highly valued by all the partners interviewed. Having a project designed in a way that gave partners the freedom and flexibility to not only apply learnings from the training, but to have the resources and space to try something different meant partners could develop meaningful counternarrative campaigns that were relevant to their organisational context. According to the Slovakian partner, "The space to try something was beneficial – this is part of what we are grateful for, being able to have the time and to have human resources to properly think about a counternarrative campaign for hate speech against Roma".

In addition, it is clear partners were encouraged to go through the key campaign designing steps covered in the training, which included:

- conducting preliminary research on the scale of the problem, the national legal framework in relation to freedom of expression and discrimination, and analysis of the types of messages and narratives about Roma;
- developing a campaign plan, including audience targeting and analysis;
- submitting an initial campaign report/evaluation.

A number of common themes emerged in relation to knowledge and skills development from the partner organisations which were gained through the experience of delivering the campaigns (as well as the trainings). These included:

- the importance of audience targeting – many mentioned analysing the target audience as an area in which they developed a better understanding;
- the importance of making time to develop a specific strategy for your campaign, and the importance of having a campaign plan;
- greater awareness of the resources needed to manage the campaign – part of which involved developing skills and experience in monitoring the reaction to the campaign and deciding when to intervene, respond to or remove comments.

There was little evidence to show that MRGE played a formal role in reviewing these plans and reports in terms of providing feedback or suggestions to help iteratively improve the planning and delivery of the campaigns. This has the benefit of giving the national partners a certain degree of autonomy and freedom in their campaign plans, which was indeed appreciated by the partners. However as the project coordinator, MRGE could have provided slightly more oversight and involvement in these processes to help improve the quality of the campaigns themselves, as well as providing further opportunities for reflection and learning by acting as a 'critical friend' in the campaign planning and design process. For example, although all partners completed their campaign plans, some of the plans contained certain blind spots, or lacked sufficient detail or clarity in their objectives.

An informal mentoring approach seemed to emerge between some of the partners and MRGE's Communications Officer which proved to be effective: "[MRGE's Communications Officer] was great – he really went the extra mile. He gave us lots of support and advice at a technical level and also a personal level, I knew I could call him and ask for his support" (Roma National Council). Planning for this kind of model, including at an earlier stage of the process, might ensure that knowledge and skills are embedded into the organisations in a more practical way, and that campaigns are of a higher quality without the partner organisations losing a sense of autonomy. This could also provide MRGE with more opportunities to identify learning and common challenges faced by its partners when planning and delivering counternarrative campaigns, which could in turn help to inform future capacity building activities. The evaluator would like to stress the importance of balance in this context. If we compare different partners' perspectives on the matter it is clear there may not be a 'one size fits all' approach:

- "I really appreciate that MRGE don't enforce solutions, they want partners to apply their context and knowledge".
- "We thought the campaigns would be more coordinated by MRGE, we were kind of left to choose the topics and choose the formats, which limited the project from a learning perspective".

In any future projects of similar consortia, MRGE should ensure it conducts a thorough analysis of the partners' expectations and needs in relation to support and coordination – ensuring partners maintain the freedom and autonomy that were so highly valued, but also have the right level of structure, support and feedback from the project coordinator to ensure activities have the best potential and opportunity to contribute to the project's intended objectives.

Despite the positive contribution the campaigns have made to the partners' capacity, there were a number of missed opportunities in the evaluation planning and campaign delivery which have affected their ability to generate insightful, evidence-based learnings about the campaigns and best practice. The main gaps in the evaluation plan included:

- Lack of specific short- and long-term objectives for each campaign (this is also mentioned by the external evaluator for the campaigns evaluation).
- A series of focus groups were run by each partner to test their messaging – although the majority of partners reported these were conducted, the learnings and insights from these are not documented anywhere. These would have provided a very valuable opportunity to capture learnings to understand how different campaign materials and content might invoke different reactions by the audiences.
- A lack of data monitoring, collection and analysis before, during and after the campaigns beyond reach and engagement.
- A lack of campaign material testing and trialling, e.g. A/B testing.
- Only limited analysis of the qualitative data, e.g. comments on campaign posts.

The absence of this information and data impacted on the campaign evaluation's ability to capture learnings and best practice examples. It also limited the extent to which the partner organisations could identify, share and disseminate evidence-based learnings, as well as the perceived quality of the campaign evaluation process. One partner stated: "If you read the analysis in the report it didn't really answer what we wanted to know: what is the best way to deliver a counternarrative?". Another partner echoed this sentiment, suggesting there was too great a focus on 'evaluation' and not enough on learning. This is a particularly significant limitation in the context of a project that was intended to have a strong learning, testing and piloting focus. As MRGE had a limited evaluation budget, it is recommended that in the future MRGE invests in engaging an expert to develop a more robust evaluation and

learning plan, as well as the systems and tools to implement it. This would enable future projects to generate more accurate and insightful learning and evaluation data that could then be more easily interpreted and analysed by MRGE themselves (see Annex 1 on 'Future monitoring and evaluation (M&E) recommendations' for more details).

Although these limitations were present, the delivery and evaluation of the campaigns did identify and document a number of more anecdotal learnings which have proved to be valuable to the partner organisations and were seen to be worth sharing amongst their networks and contacts, where relevant, and via the 'lessons learned' videos.

'Lessons learned' videos
Interviews with the project partners suggest there may have initially been a lack of understanding of what the 'lessons learned' videos were for and how they contributed to the project's objectives. This seems to have affected the extent of partners' engagement in the conceptualising and planning of this activity. It is also unclear if the videos reached their intended audience. However, the final products were well received by the partners and many felt the production quality was high. The partners saw them as a useful way to promote and share their work and the format was felt to be accessible and a refreshing change from a long written report. Partners generally felt the videos provided an engaging summary of their experience, and an accurate description of some of the challenges faced. Some partners also felt they would inspire smaller CSOs with limited budgets to realise they could take on such a campaign. Thus, they still made a positive contribution to the overall objectives of the project.

Inclusion of Roma
As the project ultimately seeks to make a positive contribution to the lives of Roma communities in the five countries, it is important to consider the ways in which the campaigns respond to the needs of Roma, and to what extent Roma participated in the development of the campaigns[13]. A truly participatory and inclusive project would involve the target groups at all stages of the project (needs assessment, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation) and thus it is important to consider the extent to which Roma communities were engaged as part of the campaign design, delivery and evaluation.

It is abundantly clear from the pre-campaign desk research conducted that all of the partners considered the needs of Roma communities in their respective countries to understand the context and scale of the problem, and analysed existing examples of hate speech towards Roma to inform the key messages of their counternarrative campaigns. With the exception of one partner[14], it is the evaluator's understanding that all partners then engaged directly with Roma (in different ways and to different degrees) to develop and deliver the campaign materials and counternarratives. This ranged from conducting interviews and focus groups with Roma communities to develop and test messaging and featuring first person accounts by Roma, to more participatory approaches such as Amalipe (Bulgaria), in which Roma students fully developed the campaign video messages and scripts and featured in the filming of the videos.

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[13] The evaluator had hoped to interview more individuals from the Roma community as part of the evaluation in order to comment on the relevance, impact and messaging of the campaigns; however due to time and travel restrictions this was not possible.
[14] HRI did not directly engage with Roma to develop the content due to a more distinct strategy of their campaign which was orientated around "myth-busting" and the presentation of factual information regarding housing benefits as opposed to stories/narratives. As HRI did conduct in-depth research into the context and key issues in relation to Roma to inform the basis of their content, the lack of direct involvement by Roma in the campaign materials is not necessarily a limitation, but may have provided additional value if HRI had the resources to do so.

The campaign evaluation sought to engage with Roma where possible; however according to the report, there was limited opportunity to do so due to logistical and time constraints (this final evaluation suffered from the same limitation). The campaign evaluator did succeed in speaking to a small number of civil society representatives from Slovakia. As with other evaluation recommendations, MRGE might consider integrating a more participatory evaluation methodology from the outset in the future, to ensure Roma are involved in the evaluation in a more robust way.

The roundtable

The original intention of the roundtable was to provide a platform for CSOs to engage with IT/Tech companies to improve cooperation and share learnings from their campaigns, ultimately resulting in joint commitments made by IT companies and partners. This activity was a key aspect of the project design, which all of the results concerning relationships with IT/Tech companies relied upon. Despite reaching out to different IT/Tech companies, MRGE was unable to establish a relationship with any or secure their attendance at the roundtable, limiting opportunities for MRGE or its partners to engage with them.

Despite this limitation MRGE has already begun identifying learnings and considering alternative approaches to engaging IT/Tech companies, for example approaching regional hub representatives as opposed to the main headquarters, or developing relationships through informal meetings and networking opportunities such as conferences. In this way, this aspect of the project has still added value to MRGE's own learnings about relationship building and engagement with IT/Tech companies which it hopes to build on in the future.

The roundtable was redesigned to convene a larger group of NGOs working to tackle online hate speech directed at minorities to share learnings, experiences and strategies. In this way, MRGE successfully adapted its programme to help contribute to its other desired goals. As one partner described the situation, "although it was a missed opportunity the roundtable still had an important contribution" said a representative from Forum for Human Rights. The roundtable was attended by 23 attendees[15] and hosted pro-bono by a UK law firm (making the event more cost-efficient) and addressed topics that were clearly relevant to the project, such as: methods of combatting online hate speech; how to engage IT and tech companies; community engagement; and challenging hate speech in court.

> *We appreciated hearing the experiences of others in order to better see how our own campaign fits into the wider campaign of tackling on-line discrimination. We particularly valued the opportunity to interact with our international colleagues personally and forge stronger collegial relationships…. Cross-fertilization between various sectors and issues, sharing of experience, and debating the most appropriate methods and strategies of engaging with targeted audiences and raising awareness has been some of the most constructive aspects of the meeting. ~ Romedia*

The roundtable also provided an opportunity for all of the project partners to reconvene face-to-face, which they valued highly. It also seems to have prompted the partners to share their own learnings from their campaigns. In addition, according to the project partners, the roundtable seems to have helped contribute to the sustainability of the project results by establishing contact between individuals and NGOs that might otherwise not have interacted. A mailing list between those present at the meeting was established which seems to have been used to a limited degree to share materials or seek advice, "The roundtable was very beneficial for us, we profited from meeting the project team and comparing our campaign with theirs. In addition, the other NGOs and participants at the roundtable made a

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[15] 32 individuals were registered to attend, however there were 23 signatures on the event sign-in sheet.

great contribution to our perspective on fighting anti-Roma hate speech online. We will definitely use the insights and ideas gathered during the London meeting in our further work" commented a representative from the Forum for Human Rights. Another partner commented that "numerous contacts for further communications have been established and some of the lessons learned have been already put to practice – such as experiences, dos and don'ts when dealing with technology companies, running social media".

One partner cited the learnings from this session as having a direct and positive contribution, prompting them to go through the process of getting the 'trusted flagger' status for their organisation with Facebook, having applied some of the knowledge gained to develop cooperation with Facebook Policy EMEA Counterterrorism & Dangerous Organisations – however at the time of writing, any key markers of progress or formal progression of this relationship had yet to materialise.

Multiplier trainings

> *"I was very happy to be able to talk with others on this sensitive issue – normally we talk about events and strategy – we do not always have time to talk about hate speech – how we feel and what we can do. Without this session, we wouldn't have talked about it at our organisation. Having space for reflection and sharing learnings was very helpful for everyone, this reflection opportunity is rare." ~ Participant of the multiplier training run by Forum for Human Rights*

As mentioned, two of the partners were not able to run their multiplier training sessions due to the Covid-19 meeting restrictions – clearly this was beyond MRGE and its partners' sphere of control. MRGE took a sensible and adaptable approach to this scenario and, where possible and deemed appropriate to do so, three of the partners trialled delivering the sessions online. MRGE also delivered an additional webinar to help share and promote the learnings from the project more widely. The webinar (15 May) had 20 participants – the agenda included:

- Features of hate speech online with a focus on online antigypsyism;
- "Recognise it (a brief introduction on what is hate speech); Reject it (decide whether you want to tackle it); React (react online, report, lodge a complaint) and
- Counternarratives": a focus on the campaigns and some of the main learnings
- Campaign planning tips
- Reporting tips to Facebook and Twitter
- Q&A

At the time of this evaluation, three partners (Human Rights Institute, Romedia and Forum for Human Rights) had adapted their sessions to be delivered online and delivered them within the project timeframe. A total of 17 participants attended Romedia's training, 20 attended Human Rights Institute's training and 11 attended Forum for Human Rights' training. Based on the information accessible to the evaluator, these sessions: were highly effective for sharing and disseminating skills and learnings; helped to develop partner organisations' networks and relationships; and provided valuable opportunities for participating CSOs to reflect on their own approaches to combatting hate speech against vulnerable groups as well as against themselves directly – deeming the activity highly relevant, the Hungarian partner commented "Most of the participants said they experienced online hate speech, either individual or organisationally".

The trainings were also perceived to be tailored to the countries in which they were delivered. Particular value was placed on their delivery in Slovakian/Hungarian/Czech, respectively, making the training more accessible for a wider range of CSOs; and on their

content in terms of materials being adapted to the specific national context and legal processes. The evaluator was able to interview one attendee of the Forum for Human Rights webinar who agreed with this assessment, with this individual particularly appreciating that the Forum had provided specific information on laws and court procedures in the Czech Republic, thus making it more relevant to their own context.

> *"The webinar served to open a debate on how to create and share more positive content in online space, but also how to protect and defend victims of online hate crimes. Possible future partnerships in this area were formed thanks to this webinar. We and our trainers have transmitted know-how onto other CSOs who do not necessarily know the counternarrative techniques developed by the MRGE and during the project" ~ Forum for Human Rights*

According to the partners, the webinars appear to have been successful in providing a format for sharing the skills the partners developed through their trainings and the experience of running their campaigns, as well as providing a basis for relationship and network building for the partner organisations. "The webinar was a good tool to form partnership among CSOs to counter online hate speech. It also served as a support to often very frustrated CSO employees who are often themselves victims of online hate speech or who work with people or groups targeted by online hate speech".

Evaluation forms from the online sessions suggest the webinars were well received by the participants[16], "discussion [was] very fruitful, everyone felt it was a safe space and that they could express themselves. We felt safe enough to share what didn't work….everyone was engaged".

Project design, administration and management
Design
In considering the project design process, it is important to consider the positioning of MRGE as the project coordinator. Generally, the independent experts, project partners and other individuals interviewed unanimously agreed that MRGE was well positioned to engage and lead a project focused on testing alternative strategies to combat hate speech towards Roma. In particular a number of key factors were mentioned, including: its reputation; its network; its ability to bring a minority rights/Roma rights perspective and focus to this line of work; and its experience in managing and coordinating multi-partner projects/institutional funding. Although some interviewees acknowledged there may be other, larger NGOs with more established digital campaigning backgrounds, they felt the value MRGE brought as a minority rights focused organisation, with substantial experience in working specifically on Roma rights, by far outweighed this limitation – exemplified by the research conducted by MRGE and its partners which found that no other organisation was using counternarratives as a strategy to combat anti-Roma hate speech.

The evaluator is limited in his ability to comment in detail on the project design process due to several staff changes at both MRGE and the partner organisations. Despite this, a number of assessments can be made concerning different aspects of the project design and how they have manifested in practice. In terms of selecting and identifying appropriate activities, clear intention and thought went into this process. In particular, a project focused on testing and piloting of different strategies, paired with trainings and opportunities to put learnings into practice, was needed, and was both effective in building capacity and well received by the main project partners and participants (as described in more detail in the 'Project activities' section).

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[16] Please note, the evaluator did not have direct access to the evaluation forms or data. Satisfaction with the training webinars was assessed through the national partners' own analysis of the evaluation forms.

As detailed previously, the design of the project did not provide for a sufficiently rigorous evaluation and learning methodology to meaningfully achieve the objectives relating to lesson learning and dissemination. This is not to say that MRGE did not deliver a quality project, however the evaluator is of the opinion that the project's vision was too multi-faceted and more ambitious than its resourcing allowed. This opinion was also held by at least one interviewee from each of the groups of stakeholders interviewed. The project sought to pilot and test counternarrative strategies; build the capacity of CSOs; develop meaningful relationships with IT/Tech companies; as well as execute counternarrative campaigns that would make a meaningful contribution to combatting hate speech towards Roma – all within a two-year window and a relatively modest budget. MRGE may have underestimated the resources and time that would be required to meaningfully achieve all of these objectives. This may also have led to an impression, held by some key informants, that the project lacked a clear enough vision and strategy, exacerbated by a number of key staff changes from MRGE at the beginning of the project (in particular the project designer).

Despite these challenges, the general perception was that the project was indeed well designed and was executed to the best of MRGE and its partners' ability, given their relatively modest resources. For future projects, it is suggested that MRGE creates and documents a more specific vision; sets a primary objective; and iterates its objectives and activities in line with the resources available for the project. In addition MRGE should develop a project-level theory of change in collaboration with the project partners, mapping out how they believe their campaigns will result in positive changes in the longer term.

Administration and management

MRGE's project administration and management were well perceived by the partner organisations. In terms of relationship management and coordination of the partners and activities, generally perceptions have been very positive, with partners feeling that MRGE was approachable, supportive, well organised and available to provide support and advice when needed, "It was the best project kick-off meeting I have ever attended" said the Slovakian partner.

Despite some initial teething problems in relation to new financial procedures and processes for some of the partners (MRGE had not received a grant from this particular department of the EC before, and some of the partners had never received an EC grant), the financial management processes were largely deemed to be straightforward and manageable. Many of the partners commented on the clear and specific instructions, templates and support received from MRGE's finance officer.

MRGE also had a clear process in place for monitoring the delivery of the project on an activity and output level (regularly reviewing its progress towards completing activities to identify and highlight any delays or problems). MRGE may have been able to maximise on the results and effectiveness of the project had it added a system for monitoring results and outcomes (which were not routinely captured or monitored) to work in tandem with the activity/output monitoring.

The project monitoring and management processes are also closely related to the degree of oversight MRGE had on the project outputs and the structure of the partner management processes. As detailed previously, MRGE as the project coordinator allowed the partners a great degree of freedom, but at the expense of certain project efficiencies and missed opportunities. An example of this was the partners' quarterly reporting obligations – MRGE did not provide a reporting template or formal guidance on the type of information partners should provide. As a result, the reports varied significantly in length, content and quality, and were largely devoid of meaningful information that wasn't already discussed and minuted in project meetings. For example, one partner repeated in each report a list of project meetings

they had attended, along with the date and time etc., or regurgitated the agendas of MRGE-organised trainings they had attended (this is of course not an efficient use of partners' time, nor does it provide new information to MRGE). A structured template could have been developed by MRGE to capture learnings, outcomes, changes and results – whilst also saving the partners time and ensuring their time was spent more meaningfully. "I think we got more than we bargained for with MRGE but if we work in the future, I would insist on more assistance from central office to standardise things. Of course, this needs to be done in a balance", commented one partner.

A similar approach could be taken with the monitoring visits – although these provided a good opportunity to check in with the partners and develop relationships and communication with them, the outputs of these meetings (summary reports) did not contain any information that could not have been captured remotely or filled in by the partners themselves – and thus an opportunity for the partners and MRGE to reflect, identify learnings and jointly problem solve may perhaps have been missed.

As described previously, MRGE perhaps missed an opportunity to enhance the quality of the campaign materials by being more involved or acting as a critical friend to the partners in the development of their campaigns – this may have helped to enhance the quality of some of the campaigns in areas that would not be overly intrusive for the partner organisations. For example, reviewing the English subtitles of materials to ensure there were no typos in the translations; providing tips and guidance on subtitle positioning and placement to ensure they were readable and accessible; or identifying and preventing the use of problematic language and terminology that can result from sensitive content being translated.

Another area of improvement for future project managers at MRGE is that of facilitating dialogue and networking between partner organisations. This did not materialise in the project and there was little engagement outside of the formal project meetings and, in some cases, partners felt they could not approach the others for advice or suggestions. This was lamented by most partners interviewed, although all conceded this was not necessarily the fault of MRGE. Although most partners reported that they would have liked more of this, they also acknowledged that they had not made much effort for this to happen either, although some felt that as the project coordinator, MRGE could have taken a stronger lead in facilitating this network/dialogue. One partner commented, "There was no relationship outside of the meetings. We weren't following what others were doing, but we could have done more to help each other". Another partner stated, "The horizontal sharing could have been more present – it would have been useful to have more exchanges before we do the campaigns, after we start etc. It wasn't a huge problem but there wasn't much communication between partners. I personally missed a little bit of that space for horizontal learnings".

Many of these improvement areas would obviously have resource and staffing implications for MRGE and, given the resources at MRGE's disposal, the fact that there were some missed opportunities is understandable. MRGE succeeded in delivering an effective and efficient project, despite the challenges presented for example by Covid-19, staff changes during year two of the project (which do not seem to have had any serious negative impact on the project) and supporting a diverse and varied portfolio of partners. Thus the limitations described should not be seen as failings for the project or its impact, but rather viewed as opportunities for reflection and considerations for how to improve future projects and make best use of the resources, activities and time available.

Intersectionality and gender
The project proposal states: "Promoting equality between the genders will be mainstreamed throughout the action. MRGE and partners have considerable experience of work on gender

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programmes as well as mainstreaming gender into general programmes. Roma women are exposed to multiple and intersecting discrimination, based on their gender and ethnicity, but also on other intersecting variables such as social class, nationality, level of education etc. The differential ways in which Roma women and men experience online hate will be explored and considered in the initial partner research and training, in the national campaigns, the 'lessons learned' report, roundtable, multiplier trainings and evaluation." As such one aspect of this evaluation was to explore and consider the extent to which gender, and the rights of other vulnerable groups, intersected with discrimination against Roma.

It is clear from the project proposal than MRGE had conducted analysis in regard to intersectionality between Roma rights and gender and there was a clear intent to incorporate this as a component of the project. This manifested in a number of specific ways in the project:

- MRGE collected gender-related data on the project participants to monitor participation levels by gender (approximately 62% of training participants were female);
- The campaign training included a session on 'mainstreaming intersectional discrimination in campaigns';
- The toolkit makes specific and explicit consideration of the disproportionate effects of hate speech on women, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities; as well as concerning intersectional discrimination in relation to gender-based violence and racist violence concerning Romani women.

In terms of the campaign designs, delivery and evaluation there was little intentional consideration given, or action taken, to analyse or consider a gender dimension. Generally speaking, there was participation and representation of Romani women in the various campaigns – however the aggravated discrimination against this intersection was not raised or featured by any of the campaigns directly, in the ways described in the project proposal. When this topic was explored with partners, the majority commented that the more pressing intersection in their campaigns was that of restrictions of the economic, social and cultural rights of Roma which intersected with discrimination and hate speech. For example one partner stated: "Hate speech towards Roma doesn't have gender intersection for this project. There are of course gender-related issues affecting Romani women, e.g. early marriages and dropping out of schools, but these were not a relevant focus for this project. For this project, we chose to focus on the issue of hate speech [in] schools" added the Bulgarian partner.

If MRGE aspired for this issue to materialise more substantially and directly in the campaigns, it may have needed to make this a more explicit part of the expectation setting with partners, and incorporate this into the planning and evaluation templates. For example, in the country research templates, gender is generally not explored (MRGE could make this a mandatory section of the report in the future). One MRGE staff member interviewed also commented on the need for MRGE to take this further in terms of analysing and understanding the results of the campaigns and activities more generally, to understand the gender analysis of the audience and how they react or respond differently to campaign materials. However, in general, MRGE was seen as doing what it could in regard to highlighting these issues. One expert said, "MRGE went as far as they could go on this, they didn't take a top-down approach to this component", while another expert, commenting on the importance of intersectionality, stated, "Intersectionality is often avoided as it is complex, but it should be embraced more with minority rights, I haven't seen so much done on this and when it is, it's ad-hoc and at an individual level – not a systemic analysis of problems. Maybe MRGE have done this but I haven't really seen it".

It should be noted that in many of the campaigns, as highlighted by many of those interviewed, intersectional issues were organically incorporated, such as disability and children's rights, the right to education etc. Although this may not have been part of an intentional design, as many of the organisations in the project worked on a range of human rights issues, these considerations were likely to be somewhat intuitive.

Case Study: Pride in Participation - Amailpe's Student Storytellers

"We are not useless or good for nothing. We want to move forward and chase our dreams. It was really important for me to show that to people"

Amalipe's highly participatory campaign responded to the needs of Bulgaria's Roma community by enabling young people to tell their own stories of discrimination and hate speech. The campaign took the form of a student competition for short films and other visual materials. Both Roma and non-Roma teenagers were given the chance to direct, develop, and star in their own videos, which were intended to refute harmful stereotypes concerning the academic potential of Roma children, as well as to highlight prevailing practices of segregation within Bulgarian schools. "Many schools do not offer places, or offer too few places, to Roma children", Amalipe said. "Principals and teachers think that Roma children are simply not clever or good enough to graduate."

The first and most successful production, *A Tolerance Movie*, depicted emotive scenes of hateful and loving deeds acted out by young students. Amalipe's campaign materials were able to impact their main target group, high-school students, because the participants were themselves volunteer peers. Viewers could therefore feel "a close affinity with the actors." The videos proved to be empowering for those who took part, especially the Roma students. "When they hear bad things about themselves, it can be all too easy to do nothing or to respond with aggression", said Amalipe. "Now they realise that it is possible to respond to discrimination and hate speech with a positive and affirmative message, to demonstrate to others that Roma are as smart and as capable of achievement as anybody else."

18-year-old Roma student Bogomila Samuilova won Amalipe's video contest for her directorial debut, *From Hate Speech to Happy Speech*. Bogomila has faced personal experience of discrimination because of her background. "I have been in situations when I say that I am Roma, and people immediately think that I am a bad person and a thief. They think that nothing good will happen to me and that I am not capable of doing anything good." Bogomila decided to get involved in the video contest to take a firm stand against prejudice. "We are just like anybody else. We are not useless or good for nothing. We want to move forward and chase our dreams. It was really important for me to show that to people."

Student's short films instilled a sense of pride in the local community, including among the Roma minority. "Roma activists were proud of the films, and especially of Bogomila", Amalipe said. "Roma communities are so used to hearing negative things about themselves, so it is an incredible thing when they share their success stories." Amapile were able to use their existing networks of over 290 schools to push the materials far-and-wide, to thousands of students, but part of the natural appeal of the campaign was that the videos were widely shared by student peers within the Roma minority and beyond. For Bogomila, the impact was immediately obvious: "People were happy for me. I think the campaign had a big reach, and that it caused some people to begin to think differently about us Roma people."

Bogomila also had the chance to meet the President of Bulgaria, Rumen Radev, in order to speak about the campaign and Roma issues. The Freedom From Hate project resulted in Amalipe gaining access to influential decision-makers, including ministers and ambassadors, and the organisation was able to involve them in discussions about the challenges faced by the Roma minority in Bulgaria. "Hate speech is a big problem within our national institutions. The fact that our message reached the president, which marks the first time that an acting president has agreed to engage with our organisation, is a significant step in overcoming discrimination against Roma. It's the beginning of an exciting new relationship. This could only happen because of our campaign."

MRG's project also allowed Amalipe to develop crucial experience of how to execute digital campaigns, an area in which they had no prior experience. For the first time, the organisation was able to grow a strong social media presence. "We had a Facebook page and a group but it had not been developed much. We learnt how important it is to reach people because of this campaign", the organisers said. Amalipe has since witnessed impact on its other projects, including a campaign to donate laptops to schools for socially-disadvantaged students. One representative from a large IT company approached the organisation with a generous donation. "It is only because our social media presence grew as a result of the campaign that we were able to reach new people. Such a donation would not have happened last year. People did not take us seriously when we did not have a professional Facebook page. But now they do. It's one unexpected result of the project."

Conclusions

Based on the findings and analysis above, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the project in response to questions posed by this evaluation.

How effective and efficient was MRGE's development, coordination, problem solving and management of the project, its partners and support provisions?

"The project coordination was very good – we have been in partnership previously, including with other international partners, but MRGE management is on a level on its own – one of the best projects we have been a part of" ~ Human Rights Institute

The evaluator found that MRGE was effective in implementing the project activities, and in developing and maintaining a strong and supportive relationship with the project partners. Project partners and other project participants and experts generally felt the project was well coordinated and efficiently executed, despite facing a number of significant challenges (including the varied background of the project partners, Covid-19, a number of staff changes and lack of engagement from IT/Tech companies). MRGE responded to all of these challenges in a considered way, ensuring any negative impacts on the project were mitigated as much as possible. MRGE's responsive and flexible approach to managing the partners was also valued by those involved.

The design of the project, which featured structured trainings paired with the opportunity to test and apply the trainings in a supported environment, proved to be highly effective in contributing to developing the skills and confidence of the partner organisations in regard to delivering counternarrative campaigns online to combat hate speech. Had this been paired with a more structured and considered learning and evaluation strategy, MRGE and its partners would have been more effective in achieving the desired outcomes concerning identifying and sharing best practice. Despite this limitation, MRGE was resourceful in the way the identified learnings and experiences were disseminated and shared in useful and engaging ways (via the roundtable, YouTube videos and campaign toolkit, etc.).

Where MRGE can make the most improvements in this regard relates to ensuring the project is not only efficiently implemented at an activity level, but is also managed in a way that is

effective in achieving its desired outcomes. Generally, there was a need and also an appetite for MRGE to take a more proactive and structured role in the coordination and management of the project to make processes and systems more efficient; promote greater engagement from the partner organisations; and ensure the partner activities are delivered in a way that maximises their contribution to the desired project objectives and outcomes.

If MRGE pairs these positive experiences and areas for improvements with a clearer and more structured strategic vision and goal for this stream of work, it is likely to be able to build on the foundations of the work begun on testing counternarrative campaigns and building capacity to generate more meaningful results and impact in the future. It will be important for project partners to be on-board with this vision and strategy to ensure they go beyond focusing primarily on their national/organisational-level activities and objectives, and make space and time to contribute to the broader project goals.

How relevant was the project in terms of the needs of the key stakeholders (partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Roma community) and the methods chosen to meet these needs, particularly given their respective national contexts?

> *"We would love to use communication skills to promote our strategic litigation, even though we don't always have the capacity or resource for this, we will definitely use these skills in our work" ~ Forum for Human Rights*

There was a high degree of consistency in the data collected during the evaluation, indicating the significant relevance and need for a project that sought to focus on combatting hate speech towards Roma in central and eastern Europe, and to test and find new solutions to tackle deep-rooted prejudice and harassment. MRGE's initial scoping, the national-level research conducted by partners and the views, opinions and experiences captured through this evaluation clearly demonstrate the scale and scope of the problem MRGE and its partners wanted to address, and importantly the need to test and pilot new solutions in order to tackle online hate and discrimination. Many of those interviewed were also keen to stress the impact that online hate has on real-world violence and discrimination. The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated the need for such a project – with Roma increasingly used by the media and governments represented in the project as scapegoats and, according to some Roma rights groups, government actions and media presentation resulting in further stigma and online hate directed towards Roma communities.[17] In this regard, the timing of the project also remains highly relevant. Some of the partners interviewed also commented that the project has now better prepared them to be able to respond to these types of problems, at a time when people are increasingly spending more and more time in virtual space.

Having only had limited opportunity to engage directly with Roma activists during this evaluation, the evaluator cannot conclusively comment on the extent to which the way the activities and campaigns were realised and actualised remained relevant to Roma communities. However given that many of the organisations engaged in the project were Roma-led or had significant engagement with Roma; that Roma were actively involved in the development and delivery of many of the campaigns; and that the non-Roma-led organisations developed new and positive relationships with Roma activists and groups, we can assume a certain degree of relevance in responding to the needs of the Roma populations in these countries, and therefore potential value of these contributions.

The capacity building component of the project also proved to be relevant to the needs of the partner organisations, with all of the partners identifying specific areas in which their skills

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[17] See for example https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30381-9/fulltext

improved either through the training itself or through having the space to experiment with a new type of campaign. The relevance and need for skills and capacity development in these areas is exemplified by the fact that all of the partner organisations were able to comment or give examples of how they plan to use or apply the skills and experience gained in their work more generally, or of how they plan to continue to use and adapt counternarrative and campaigning skills to complement other strands of their work.

What are the specific outcomes realised during the programme period? How are they contributing to the desired impact and goals of the programme and how could this have been maximised/improved?

> *"These counternarratives show the huge responsibility of different groups in tackling discrimination, they make the problems visible and help to change the online sphere – the activities reach a range of audiences including people not directly affected by discrimination and make them aware this problem exists, and they can have a say in fighting this issue" ~ independent expert*

The 'Outcomes' section and outcomes log (see Annex 2) detail a number of important and interesting outcomes relating to positive impacts for the Roma community; enhanced commitment to counternarrative activities and/or Roma rights; challenging disinformation and assumptions and contributing to debate; and most prominently capacity building outcomes in terms of skills, knowledge and confidence. Although these results are on a somewhat smaller individual or organisational level, they have laid significant foundations for the partners and project participants to build upon and contribute further to continue to test and combat online hate speech towards Roma, influence the online debate and dialogue concerning Roma communities, and have given civil society, Roma activists and rights groups more tools in their arsenal to be able to combat discrimination.

The 'Recommendations for Future Programming' section has made a number of recommendations which MRGE and its partners should consider in order to maximise and build on these outcomes – most importantly, the development and articulation of a clearer vision and goal for its work to combat hate speech; a timeline for the changes it hopes to see; and more rigorous and in-depth pre-campaign analysis and targeting and objective setting. This, paired with a stronger learning and evaluation framework, would help to ensure MRGE makes a greater contribution to its outcomes concerning promoting best practice and develops a better understanding of what does and does not work in relation to counternarratives. A stronger stakeholder analysis and mapping would also help to ensure it can more realistically engage with other key players such as IT/Tech companies to advance its objectives.

How has the project involved and impacted or met the needs of relevant vulnerable groups, e.g. Roma, women, other minorities?

The project's response to the needs of Roma is summarised in Question 2. Broadly speaking, the evaluation identified some initial preliminary outcomes for the Roma rights organisations and individuals directly involved in the project and campaigns, as well as positive contributions to developing and presenting counternarratives about Roma which the project hopes will make a longer-term contribution to Roma groups in the target countries. However it is important to acknowledge that the scale of the campaigns was relatively small while the problem is of course significant and systemic, meaning it is likely to be too early in MRGE and its partners' activities in this area to identify true longer-term impact.

In terms of considering and responding to the needs of Romani women, MRGE was successful in implementing this as a cross-cutting issue in those project activities over which

it had greater control (e.g. training, toolkit development), but was less successful in ensuring the intersectionality of gender cut across the partners' campaigns in an explicitly considered and needs-assessed way. There was of course fair representation and involvement of women and Romani women across the project activities and campaigns, however MRGE may have needed to embed this component of the project more explicitly in its project design and delivery to ensure its partners more effectively integrated this into their campaigns (assuming this was the intention, as described in the project proposal). The partners' campaign materials did of course respond to the most important issues identified by their pre-campaign research, and organically addressed a range of issues which intersect with discrimination against Roma, such as disability, children's rights and economic rights, etc.

After the project has come to an end, what is it leaving behind (i.e. sustainability), and what can MRGE do to ensure results and outcomes are sustained beyond the project?

> *"Everyone has used this project in ways that will be useful beyond the project. It has generated something we can use again" ~ MRGE staff*

There are some promising indicators of sustainability of the project outputs and results. On a material level, MRGE created training materials and a toolkit which have been shared and promoted through various networks, and will be accessible online in the future for civil society groups looking to trial counternarrative campaigns – at this stage, it is of course an assumption that it will be accessed in the future and MRGE may want to monitor its access and use where possible.

All of the partners reported an increase in their digital, campaigning or social media skills – ranging from how to better use different online platforms to reach new and different audiences, to more specific campaign planning and analytical skills. These also have the potential to be applied beyond counternarratives themselves, and could help to improve the organisations' reach and online presence more generally. As with many capacity building projects, there is a risk that the skills developed by individuals might not be sustained by the organisation if those individuals were to move on or change sectors – this is to some extent mitigated under this project, as some of the results of the skills enhancement relate to organisational-level improvements in their social media reach. Many of the partners reported a significant increase in their social media engagement following their campaigns, which in some cases has already been effectively galvanised for other activities and work.

Evaluation participants described this pilot project as building the foundations for future work to combat online hate speech, for example Amapile said that the "problem is too big to have one solution; these are the first steps – we are creating positive narrative and with that we need to then get people to engage more with that narrative". Some also commented on the importance of MRGE being able to ensure its counternarrative work is considered and complemented by other initiatives attempting to tackle the problem. One of the experts interviewed commented that "more data is needed on this issue, and MRGE are strategically placed to monitor this data, this data can then help to inform and improve campaigns". This supports some of the partners' feedback that the counternarrative and campaigning work will complement other campaigns, litigation or other activities they use to combat discrimination against Roma.

MRGE and many of the partners involved in the project have already begun planning for future iterations – a testament to the perceived value and potential sustainability of the initial results of this project.

Recommendations for Future Programming

The following recommendations are proposed by the evaluator based on the evidence and analysis presented in this report:

Capacity building
- For future capacity building projects of a similar nature that have a training followed by a structured application of the skills covered, MRGE should consider the viability of a mentoring model, involving their own specialist staff or even engaging relevant external experts where appropriate to do so. This could ensure knowledge and skills are embedded into the organisations in a more practical way; partners feel more supported throughout the process; and the final outputs are of a higher quality. This could be a flexible and adaptable approach based on the needs and approaches preferred by individual partners so that they do not lose a sense of autonomy. This could also provide MRGE with more opportunities to identify learning and common challenges faced by its partners when planning and delivering projects, which could in turn help to inform future capacity building activities.
- Wherever possible, MRGE should continue to ensure and maximise a practical emphasis and focus, so that participants have the opportunity to apply and test their skills and knowledge in actual practice/examples.
- There was perceived value in providing capacity building activities and content in relevant national languages. The translation of guides, and delivery of national-level trainings in the primary language of the audience, should therefore continue to be applied in future programmes.

Consortium/project management
- MRGE should develop standardised partner reporting templates for partners to report back to MRGE. This could be a simple structure of 3-4 questions regarding progress on activities, signs of results, key learnings and reflections, etc. It may also be advisable to suggest a word limit to make them efficient for both the partners to complete and for MRGE to review. The emphasis for the reports should go beyond descriptions of the activities and focus more on how learnings have been applied, changes and results, etc.
- The financial management support and guidance were seen to be strong, easy to follow and useful – MRGE should continue to provide support to partners in a similar way in the future, and perhaps consider dedicating more kick-off time with the relevant finance staff of the consortia members.
- MRGE should ensure it agrees clear protocols, expectations and project management processes with its partners to ensure all partners enjoy a mutual understanding of their role in the project, what is expected of them and the level of oversight they can expect from the lead partner. The risk of being perceived as intrusive can be mitigated if these protocols are developed collaboratively and in conjunction with individual partner organisations.
- In general, greater emphasis should be placed by MRGE and its partner organisations on understanding and focusing on achieving the project outcomes, as opposed to the delivery of activities. This might include adopting a more results-based management approach to its projects and programmes.
- MRGE should take a more proactive approach to facilitation of shared learnings and exchanges between partners; and partners should take a more proactive approach to sharing their knowledge, skills and experiences with one another. Future projects may want to plan for more physical meetings, with space for more casual exchanges in-between more formal meetings to develop rapport and relationships. In addition, a

project with more joint activities and action might generate more networking and relationship building.

Strategy and vision

- It is strongly recommended that MRGE (and partners as relevant) undertakes a theory of change development process for its stream of work relating to combatting online hate speech towards Roma. The process of developing the theory of change and the articulation of the strategy, with clearly articulated steps and routes towards achieving changes and outcomes, as well as the assumptions made by the project, may have helped to avoid many of the limitations experienced during this project and to conceive and deliver an even more impactful project. This can also be a useful tool to promote partner engagement, guide project implementation and support the monitoring and evaluation of the project. The process would also help highlight different dependencies, pushback and external factors, as well as ways in which other MRGE or partner activities might complement or contribute to the higher-level goals. It would also help MRGE to consider how to build on the initial intermediary outcomes achieved so far. For example, if MRGE has started to build a network of skilled CSOs or reach new audiences, how can it bring this to the next stage to achieve higher-level outcomes.

- MRGE would benefit from undertaking an in-depth stakeholder analysis and mapping exercise in which it identifies the stakeholders it hopes to influence and considers their current attitudes and motivations in relation to the project goal, as well as the different ways they can be reached or influenced. Within the context of this project, this might have included IT/Tech companies, other civil society organisations, government bodies, far-right groups, etc. This could help inform the planning, delivery and risk mitigation of the project – and help MRGE to understand the most realistic ways to engage with these stakeholders, and set a realistic goal for the extent to which it might influence them.

- A theory of change approach to MRGE's programme on combatting hate speech could also be adapted on a campaign level. Once the campaign targets are identified, partners/MRGE could map the steps involved and actions they hope campaign audiences will take, and how that will contribute to their wider goal. This would also make it easier to develop more specific and targeted campaign objectives, helping to ensure messaging is appropriately tailored, targeting strategies are coherent, and progress can be more accurately measured.

- To further help the audience targeting process for campaigns, MRGE might also consider a more in-depth analysis of the different audiences it might target, creating typologies of the different campaign targets (these might include demographics, attitudes, the actions or attitudes it hopes to change, what media the audience currently accesses, interests, etc.). Again this would help to ensure a more coherent target, strategy and vision for the campaign.

- For future projects and proposals, MRGE should ensure it carefully considers the staff resources needed to implement its plans to the standard required to achieve all of its objectives.

Gender and vulnerable groups

- MRGE may want to take a clearer and more decisive stance on the extent to which it plans to incorporate gender or the needs of other vulnerable groups who, while not the primary target of its project, may experience multiple/aggravated types of discrimination – and the level of priority it will give this dimension of the project. Once decided this can be incorporated accordingly into all project plans and documents, and expectations clearly communicated to partners. For example, if it is decided that gender is a cross-cutting issue to be prioritised across a similar project, this should

feature in the project's needs assessment, country-level research, campaign planning, etc.

- To ensure projects remain relevant, sensitive and impactful for their end target groups, MRGE might also want to consider taking a more participatory approach at all stages of its project design and implementation, by including Roma more actively and directly at key points in the process (including design, kick-off phase, reviews and evaluation, etc.), for example through a project advisory board or consultation group.

Monitoring and evaluation
A significant number of the key recommendations relate to the monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy and are detailed separately in Annex 1.

Report Annexes
Annex 1: Future monitoring and evaluation (M&E) recommendations

Evaluation resourcing and planning
- A project level theory of change should be developed for future projects, with specific consideration given to the different levels of outcomes and impact and the assumptions MRGE is making in order for the theory to run true. This is a very valuable tool to then frame and guide the evaluation planning process, which should seek to test these assumptions. All of the recommendations below could then be considered with reference to collecting data in relation to these outcomes and assumptions.
- For future projects with a significant piloting and testing approach, or that seek to generate learnings and evidence-based good practice, MRGE should front-load its M&E expenditure. In the context of this project, MRGE may have benefited more from an external evaluation consultation to help develop and design a robust learning and evaluation plan and strategy, as well as the tools, templates and systems needed to collect and organise the data. This approach would ensure MRGE collects relevant information and higher-quality data from the outset – and that this data could be more easily analysed by MRGE or its partners themselves to draw learnings and conclusions. This may have resulted in a more learning-focused approach to the project, a more efficient use of its limited M&E budget to more meaningfully contribute to the project goals, and greater learnings from the project's progress.
- In terms of budgeting for evaluation, it is commonplace, and generally accepted by most institutional donors, that 3-5% of the project budget should be spent on monitoring and evaluation. For pilot and learning projects, this will generally be even higher in order for the organisation to understand the effectiveness of its pilot project.
- For consortia projects, MRGE might also consider allocating part of its M&E budget to provide M&E training or support to its partners to ensure they are better equipped to capture, analyse and use data generated by the different learning and evaluation activities.
- Regardless of whether MRGE engages an external evaluator in future projects at any stage, it should ensure it develops a clear evaluation plan at the beginning of the project so it has a clear vision of its evaluation goals and standards, and can ensure it makes the most of the various data collection opportunities throughout the project. A data mapping exercise is a useful way to develop this plan, helping to identify all of the opportunities at which data can be captured during the project so that these opportunities can be best tailored to capture useful information.

- MRGE could consider developing an evaluation steering group, consisting of MRGE staff, partners and target beneficiaries. This would help to increase ownership and engagement with the evaluation at different levels, as well as ensuring M&E is considered throughout the project period.
- . It is best practice when collecting evaluation data to inform participants how their data will be used, why it is important and how the findings will be shared with them. Wherever possible, when communicating the reason for collecting this information, the focus of this should be on learning and improvement rather than donor accountability to generate more honest responses, and more meaningful data.
- Generally, and in particular for capacity building projects, it would be beneficial for the evaluation to collect a baseline of individual or organisational capacities in order to be able to reassess these at the end of the project to measure the degree of change. This can be as simple as a short self-assessment form at the start of the programme, which is then re-administered at the end of the project – or it could be a more robust analysis of the organisation or individual's knowledge or skills.

Data collection tools

- When developing feedback forms and questionnaires, care should be taken to ensure questions are as precise and clear as possible. There were several instances of typos/unclear language used in the evaluation forms which could make it difficult for participants to respond in the way intended.
- When using scales in feedback forms, avoid asking people to rate something on multiple qualities at once (e.g. relevant and helpful), as it makes it challenging for participants to respond accurately (they may have found the content relevant, without necessarily finding it helpful).
- Similarly, wording should be consistent across the scale. e.g. when asking people to rate 'usefulness' make sure all of the scale headings refer to different degrees of usefulness (the current form has 3 degrees of usefulness and one of relevance). See https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf for guidance.
- Add clearer structure to reporting templates to ensure they capture information relevant to the evaluation plan and questions. This could be using simple headings with clear written guidance provided, or more specific targeted questions that capture information relating to project delivery and results on different levels (e.g. outputs, outcomes, impact, learnings). MRGE may want to ensure it engages more meaningfully with partners' reports in the future – seeking clarity, sharing useful information, or providing feedback to the partners on the type of information they are expected to include.
- MRGE should make more use of monitoring visits and other face-to-face meetings to capture useful learning and evaluation data. When in-country, this could have been a valuable opportunity to not only document and capture learnings from partners that could be shared with others, but also to gain access to other key stakeholders, e.g. Roma activists or other campaigners. A more precise plan and objective for these visits should be developed in the future.
- For learning-based projects, MRGE should plan and embed more internal reflection opportunities in order to best identify changes and learnings, and to ensure learnings are acted upon. This could be achieved through facilitated learning workshops at periodic internals, having an MRGE staff member from outside the project to facilitate discussions, or creating more formal 'lessons learned' logs that are periodically reviewed and discussed with project stakeholders.

Developing project indicators and targets

- MRGE used a 'DPME template' to monitor key outputs and activity progress. It would be advisable to use a similar structure with a more comprehensive set – and review – of outcome level indicators to ensure these formal review periods address not only the execution of the project, but the progress towards achieving its goals and objectives. Many organisations use a 'key performance indicator' system to report to key project stakeholders, identify delays and areas of achievement, and as a jumping off point to uncover other project information.

- When setting targets for indicators, MRGE should ensure it takes a considered approach – wherever possible using a baseline or benchmark to inform the target setting, and considering why it is important to achieve that particular target. For example, MRGE aimed for 50 citations of the learnings report – but it is not clear as to why the target was set at this level, or its significance or relevance.

Campaign evaluations

- An important consideration when evaluating campaigns is ensuring there are clear and specific campaign objectives and very clearly defined campaign targets. MRGE/partners need to have a clear idea of how they expect their campaign to contribute to longer-term impacts, and to identify all of the key steps and stages along the way in order to realise this impact. For example, MRGE and its partners should have a clear objective for what they hope their campaign targets will *do* as a result of seeing the campaign, i.e. what changes in behaviours, actions, attitudes etc. do they expect? This is imperative for creating a useful plan to then monitor and evaluate whether or not this is happening.

- When piloting campaigns, especially in relation to understanding what types of campaign may be more effective, A/B testing of campaign materials should be considered. For example, changing the messaging or campaign content slightly to create two different versions and sending these out to small groups/audiences, then comparing how the reach and reaction differs to inform the final version of the campaign. Most social media platforms provide the functionality to do A/B testing.

- Audience testing via focus groups or similar is another valuable way to assess the content and messaging of a campaign to determine how people interpret the campaign materials, what resonates with them, as well as to increase understanding of what conversations and debates stem from the campaign. This type of in-depth research can help to build an evidence base for the impact of the campaign itself as well as potentially identifying tips and good practice.

- The A/B testing and the campaign itself could be complemented by a text-mining approach – where comments and reactions to the campaign are more rigorously coded and analysed to better understand the dialogue and debate that stems from the campaign materials, and to better understand the likely impact of the campaign materials on the audiences. This is of course a more rigorous and time-consuming process that would likely require external resources and support, but would contribute positively to understanding the effects, risks and benefits of counternarrative campaigns and different messaging and targeting strategies.

- To truly be able to test the effectiveness of different counternarrative strategies, MRGE and partners need to do more comparative 'experiments' with their materials. For example, distributing the same campaign materials to different audience groups and comparing how those groups react and respond, or sending slightly different

messages or materials to the same audience profile and seeing whether there are differences in the way the audience treats or engages with the messaging.

For guidance and information on different M&E approaches and strategies, the Better Evaluation website is an excellent resource: https://www.betterevaluation.org/.

Annex 2: Outcomes log

Please see attachment

Annex 3: List of documents reviewed

The following documents will be used for reference and background material:

- Campaign toolkit
- Agendas and participant lists ('Train the Trainer', roundtable)
- Kick-off meeting minutes and agenda (Skype and face-to-face)
- Project proposal
- Campaign materials

The following documents were reviewed in-depth to harvest data relating to outcomes and other key evaluation questions:

- Quantitative Reporting on Policy
- Campaigns Evaluation
- 2018-19 Progress Report
- 'Train the Trainer' Evaluation Forms
- Internal Monitoring Form 'DPME' February 2020
- Campaign Training Evaluation Forms
- Bi-monthly Skype Meeting Minutes (11 meetings from 30 August 2018 – March 2020)
- Narrative Partner Reports for Qs 1-4
- Monitoring Sheets from Partner Visits
- Follow-up Questionnaires – 6 months after training (from 3 partners)
- Campaign Material Reports
- Partner Research Reports

Annex 4: List of interviewees

Name	Organisation	Date Interviewed
Anna Schreilechner	Zara	27 April 2020
Nicole Garbin	MRG Europe	28 & 30 April 2020
Tamas Berecz	INACH	29 April 2020
Denitsa Ivanova	Amalipe	30 April 2020
Balint Josa	United Against Racism	30 April 2020
Viktoria Villanyi-Nosko	MRG Europe	30 April 2020
Zsofia Farkas	MRG Europe	6 May 2020

Peter Weisenbacher and Alena Krempaska	Human Rights Institute	6 May 2020
Neil Clarke	MRG Europe	7 May 2020
Marco Cadena	MRG Europe	12 May 2020
Alexandra Dubova	Forum for Human Rights	12 May 2020
Sejal Palmer	Central European University	14 May 2020
Beata Matheová	Organisation for Aid to Refugees	15 May 2020
Georgina Laboda	Romedia	27 May 2020

Annex 5: Research/data collection tools

Outcomes Template

Outcome statement - *Outcome statements should consist of 3 key components:*
• *A description of the change (who/what)*
• *Details of when and where the change happened*
• *An explanation of who or what caused the change and how*
Short, precise and specific outcome statements are encouraged.
Significance/Relevance:
Why is this outcome important, relevant or significant given the Freedom from Hate Project and/or your national and local context and environment?
Contribution
What was the specific contribution that your organisation/the Freedom from Hate Project had made to achieving the outcome?
Evidence sources:
How do you know that the change described has really happened? And that you/MRG/the project contributed to the change?
Detail, link or make reference to specific evidence sources e.g. press, media, reports, speeches, video, interview or survey data, testimonies/case study, knowledgeable observer, witness etc. – include contact details if relevant

Your name, organisation and email (so I can follow up with you during the analysis process)

Topic Guides

All interviewees were informed of the following:

- The scope and rationale for conducting the evaluation
- That the evaluator will be taking notes during the interview and findings will be shared with MRG in the form of a report
- That participation is optional (consent was confirmed verbally that they are happy to participate)
- That all questions are optional and can decline to answer any question
- That they have the option for their comments to remain anonymous if they prefer

Semi-structured topic guides were used to structure the interviews – with bespoke questions developed for each interview, with a focus on the most relevant topics to each interviewee, as well as flexibility for the discussion to take its own direction depending on each interviewee. The topics covered for each group of stakeholders were as follows:

MRG staff

- Background and their role in the project
- The project design process, including how needs were assessed
- Challenges, successes and problem solving
- Engagement and relationship with partners
- Observed changes in behaviour, skills or strategies of partners
- Changes in MRG's approach to design, delivery etc.
- Perception of project successes and results and/or lack of progress
- Resources and lessons sharing/dissemination
- Perceptions of impact (or progress towards)
- Key learnings and changes
- Ideas and suggestions for improvements
- Description and opinion of gender analysis
- Whats next – how does it fit into a bigger strategy?

Partners

- Background and their role in the project
- The project design process, including how needs were assessed
- Challenges, successes and problem solving
- Experience of working with MRG (what worked and what didn't)
- Assessment of the trainings received, and changes made as a result/changes in behaviour, skills or strategies of their own organisations/what are they doing different as a result of the project?
- Relationship and collaboration with other project partners (or wider CSO's)

- Perception of project successes and results and/or lack of progress
- Resources and lessons sharing/dissemination
- Perceptions of impact (or progress towards)
- Key learnings and changes
- Ideas and suggestions for improvements
- Description and opinion of gender analysis
- What's next – how does it fit into a bigger strategy?

Experts
- The relationship between the interviewee and the project partner, activities etc.
- The challenges concerning the Roma community in X country, their assessment on the value and relevance of a counter narrative campaigns
- Any key changes or developments in the sphere of attitudes, policy, law, organisations in relation to hate-speech and Roma
- Observations of any changes (positive or negative) since the campaigns/or linked to the campaigns
- Intersectionality with other marginalised groups

Roma community
- The relationship between the interviewee and the project partner, activities etc.
- Their opinions and reactions to the campaign material developed
- Observations of any changes (positive or negative) since the campaigns/or linked to the campaigns
- Their assessment on the value and relevance of a counter narrative campaigns

Attendees from sessions led by partners
- The relationship between the interviewee and the project partner, activities etc.
- Why they wanted to attend
- Opinions on quality and usefulness of the training and resources
- Changes in skills, confidence etc.
- What have they done differently since (or what do they plan to do differently)
- Suggestions for improvements

Annex 6: Evaluation Terms of Reference

1. Background of the project

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRG), a Budapest-based non-governmental organisation has implemented a 2-years primarily EC-funded programme ' **Freedom from Hate: Empowering civil society to counter cyberhate against Roma**' to test and evaluate effective counter narrative campaigns targeting online hate speech against Roma communities in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and across Europe. The programme works with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the target countries to develop effective campaigns to challenge online hate speech. See more about the project and Minority Rights Group here: https://minorityrights.org/what-we-do/freedom-from-hate-empowering-civil-society-to-counter-cyberhate-against-roma/

The results originally foreseen for the project were as follows:

The overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to implement effective counter narrative campaigns targeting hate speech against Roma, and to identify and share best practices with other CSOs, activists and IT companies, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and across Europe

Expected results:

1. Strengthened capacity of CSOs in target countries to counter online hate speech against Roma through designing and implementing counternarrative campaigns
2. Increased availability and dissemination of positive and accurate narratives about Roma communities online
3. Enhanced understanding of good practices in using balances narratives to counter online hate speech among key stakeholders

2. Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the Final Evaluation are:

1. Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Freedom from Hate: Empowering civil society to counter cyberhate against Roma ' Programme Document and furthermore, provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning', with the aim of learning from the progamme design and implementation processes.
2. Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE and its partners activities.
3. To report to the EU and other funders on the usage of their resources in the project.

The evaluator will need to be independent of MRGE and its partner organisations, its donors, the project targets and participants and will need to demonstrate that no perceived or actual conflict of interests would arise during the evaluation. The evaluator will need to work within the time frames outlined below. The evaluation will need to satisfy all the requirement of the European Union and evaluation guidelines issued by them.

3. Key evaluation questions

Outcome level:

Where completed as planned, did the activities contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened and explain how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not). Document any changes in the external environment that may have helped or hindered the project. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about. The evaluation should pay attention to and comment on the mainstreaming of gender and other forms of intersectional discrimination and cross cutting issues in the project.

Impact level:

Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose will be achieved, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

4. Key deliverables

- Evaluation work plan /inception report
- Preliminary findings (max. 3 pages) at mid-term of the evaluation period
- Final evaluation report (max. 40 pages excluding annexes)