



Promoting better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean –How Do We Promote Sensible Societal and Political Discourse Around Migration

The Problem

Stop Funding Hate are not a migration campaign; our focus lies solely on trying to combat the significant rise in xenophobia and other forms of hatred and discrimination in the British media.

Our concern is that there is currently such a climate of toxicity surrounding any discourse in the media on migration that it has led to a significant and unacceptable rise in hate crime and racism in the UK. Our priority therefore is prevention of harm to those who already live or come to live in our country.

We do not have a policy position on migration, our purpose is to try to ensure that it is possible, whatever your policy views, to have a measured debate about migration that does not result in increased xenophobic or racist attacks or otherwise put people at risk of harm.

Our campaign was born out of an increasing concern over the divisive and hostile tone of some sections of the British media when discussing a number of particular communities, not just migrants.

Women, Muslims, the LGBTQ community, travellers, disabled people; all have been repeatedly attacked and vilified by parts of the British press, making any sensible discourse of the issues facing these communities very difficult indeed.

There has been a seismic cultural shift in the last couple of years. The rhetoric of extremism has started to appear in mainstream debate everywhere and is in danger of becoming normalised. Stop Funding Hate supporters fear that the way that these issues are being discussed in the media is leading to hatred and division in our society, and in some cases, manifesting in hate crime on our streets.

We are also aware that there are significant problems with the use of social media and, while our campaign is resolutely non-political, we share the widespread concerns over how social media is being used as a platform to abuse and threaten public figures, including parliamentarians.

Like most decent minded people, we were appalled and devastated by the murder of the British Member of Parliament, Jo Cox, in June of 2016. Her death was a shocking illustration of the dangers of extremism and a wake-up call to all of us about the urgent need to challenge the growing culture of hate within our public discourse.

We were honoured to receive the Jo Cox Award last month at the UK anti-hate crime awards and we strongly believe that parliamentarians have a vital role in challenging hate and discrimination, in all its forms, and in the promotion of a more tolerant and measured public discourse.

What the Experts Say

The huge outpouring of public concern over the issue of the media fuelling hate crime has also been echoed by public comments from the experts.

The Sun, the Daily Mail and the Express have all been individually called out for “fuelling prejudice” by the United Nations for Human rights¹. A report by The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on hate speech and discrimination in the UK further singled out the Daily Mail and the Sun².

Now again, we do not take any position on Brexit, but official Home Office statistics evidence that reported hate crime in particular against immigrants in the UK has sky rocketed in the immediate aftermath of a referendum that was characterised by an overwhelmingly negative focus on immigration.

Racist or religious abuse incidents recorded by police in England and Wales jumped 41 % in the month after the UK voted to leave the EU³.

UK academics are making the link between that increase in hate crime and the content of our newspapers, warning that it is being “*fuelled and legitimised*” by the mainstream media.

Professor Neil Chakraborti, of the Centre for Hate Studies has said that “*the relentless demonization of ‘others’ within those newspapers perpetuates*

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15885&LangID=E>

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/press/the-sun-and-daily-mail-fuelling-prejudice-racist-violence-hate-crime-speech-uk-ecri-report-a7351856.html>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37640982>

stereotypes, drives a wedge between communities and legitimises acts of targeted hostility'.⁴

Our campaign

So what can we, in this room, at this Conference, do about it?

Well, you can start by supporting Stop Funding Hate!

The big idea behind the Stop Funding Hate campaign is the concept of ethical advertising – the idea that advertising is, and should be, a Business and Human Rights issue.

If a newspaper is publishing stories that demonise migrants and fuel xenophobia, then the advertisers who fund that newspaper have to take some responsibility.

If we want to tackle xenophobia effectively then we have to talk to advertisers and encourage them to switch their advertising away from publications that demonise migrants – and towards those outlets that behave responsibly, fairly and encourage measured discourse.

Stop Funding Hate so far

The Stop Funding Hate campaign started in August 2016 but we already have nearly 80,000 followers on Twitter and over 200,000 followers on Facebook. Our campaign videos have been shared hundreds of thousands of times on social media and have been seen by millions of people.

We think that the reason we've seen this huge response is that a great many people in the UK are deeply concerned about the rise in xenophobia and the role of the UK media in that problem. Those people are looking for constructive things that they as individuals can do to push back.

We know that if enough of us use our voice as consumers, then companies will start to respond. And they have.

The campaign's first big success was last year, when the global toy brand Lego agreed to end its promotional partnership with the Daily Mail⁵.

In recent months we've heard from a number of other recognisable companies who have told us that they have switched their advertising as a result of the campaign.

The Body Shop, JOY Clothing, Evans Cycles, PlusNet⁶ together with a number of other companies that we believe have quietly, behind the scenes, pulled their advertising from the offending newspapers.

International Movement

⁴ <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2016/june/politicians-and-media-fuel-hate-crime-in-britain-2019-say-university-of-leicester-experts>

⁵ <https://www.ft.com/content/08995af6-a8fe-11e6-809d-c9f98a0cf216>

⁶ <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/02/17/the-body-shop-ceases-advertising-with-daily-mail-owing-clash-editorial-stance> <http://www.cyclingweekly.com/news/latest-news/evans-cycles-blacklist-351710>
https://www.buzzfeed.com/saraspary/the-fashion-chain-joy-has-accused-the-daily-mail-and?utm_term=.tmZ6NyxKW#.chdjvXQa

And it's not only in the UK that this growing push back against platforms that demonise migrants and other minority groups.

In the United States over nearly 2,600 advertisers have stopped their promotions with the notorious Breitbart website following a consumer campaign organised by another very new group called Sleeping Giants.⁷

There is a growing global movement of ordinary citizens who are working together to push back against the rise in xenophobia and racism by using their power as consumers. Stop Funding Hate is a part of that movement.

We think that this shows that ethical advertising is an idea whose time has come. We think that it's an idea that – if applied on a large enough scale – could really help to tackle this demonisation of migrants within the media.

Business model of hate

We know that part of the reason that these hateful stories are getting published is that hate is part of the business model.

This drip-drip of front page stories, demonising migrants, is clearly very divisive. But it can also be a very effective way for a newspaper to boost its sales. And this in turn boosts its advertising revenue.

So if we want to change this we have to find a way to make hate unprofitable.

We need to reach a critical mass of big companies who will publicly commit to advertising ethically – to make it part of their corporate social responsibility policy that they will not advertise in publications that incite hatred.

Recommendations to conference

1. Member States of the Inter-Parliamentary Union can lead by example by publicly committing to the principle of ethical advertising – and ensuring that any government advertising campaigns are not channelled through media that have a track record of inciting hatred.
2. We would also encourage any agencies and large NGOs that work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to do the same for any advertising that they have commissioned.
3. Obviously the private sector is where most advertising happens – so we think it's critical for all stakeholders to find ways of engaging constructively with the private sector on this issue. The more voices there are supporting ethical advertising, the easier it will be for businesses to come on board.
4. We would recommend that the Inter-Parliamentary Union puts forward to the United Nations that next year's new Global Compact includes, within its strategy for tackling xenophobia, guidelines for business on ethical advertising.

⁷ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/breitbart-news-latest-advertising-companies-pull-business-far-right-white-supremacist-nationalist-a7904041.html>

5. Awareness campaigns are important, but so long as it remains profitable for media to publish these xenophobic stories, it's going to be an uphill struggle. So any strategy for combating media xenophobia has to include measures for cancelling out the financial incentives that are driving this hostile media coverage. Ethical advertising could help to make hate – and xenophobia – unprofitable.

If we dial down the hate, a more nuanced discussion around global migration policy might finally be possible.



