

Newsletter 2023

Monitoring of hate speech against the Ukrainian nation

From March 1st, 2023 until August 31st, 2023, the Association of Ukrainians in Poland (the AUP) implemented the project “Monitoring of hate speech against the Ukrainian nation”.

The project was implemented thanks to the support of *the Community Development Fund of the Ukrainian World Congress*, founded in 2022 on the initiative of UWC President Paul Grod. The purpose of the Fund is to support the development of Ukrainian communities and their institutional favorability, as well as initiatives that inform the international community about Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and advocate in support of Ukraine.

The project objective was to protect the image of Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation by monitoring and combating hate speech against Ukrainians.

In 2022 due to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the emigration of large number of Ukrainians, we witnessed a significant increase in hate speech against Ukrainians and an intensification of Russia’s disinformation against Ukrainians and Western societies aimed at falsifying the image of Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation as well as inciting hostility towards Ukrainians.

Disinformation is an instrument in the war led by Russia against Ukraine. Disinformation is a tool of Russian propaganda aimed at limiting the support for Ukraine and weakening Western society. Disinformation distorts the facts and uses hate speech. Hate speech dehumanizes, puts societies in conflict, influences the image of another nation.

Hate speech is a type of behavior which involves publicly insulting other people because of their nationality, inciting hatred based on differences of nationality, and unlawful threats against other people because of their national identity. According to Polish law, such behavior constitutes a crime and is subject to punishment.

During the project implementation:

- the AUP conducted monitoring of hate speech (online, in the press),
- the AUP submitted 72 notifications of suspected criminal offence,
- 29 decisions on refusing to initiate investigations or discontinuing them were issued by the prosecutor’s office,
- 1 indictment was submitted to the court by the prosecutor,
- 23 complaints against decisions refusing to initiate an investigation or discontinuing it were filed by the AUP to the court,
- a response to the appeal against the judgment was submitted by the AUP,
- other procedural documents were submitted by the AUP,
- previously initiated pending cases were monitored by the AUP.

Among the most common anti-Ukrainian terms used to insult Ukrainians or incite hatred against them were: *cattle, khakhly, boors, Khazars, dziady, savages, barbarians, fasists, Nazis, filth, scoundrels, riffraff, f*ck Ukraine, kabans, whores, nachodźcy (combining the word 'refugees' with 'intrusion', ukry, upadlińcy, upadlina (derivative words combining UPA and carrion), a good upadliniec is a dead upadliniec, upaina, upainians, ukrainization of Poland, neobanderites, banderization of Poland, scabs, parasites, a vile insidious nation, bastards, rezuns (butchers, murderers), svoloch, scumbags, trash, shoshons, scum, won, wynocha, wypierdalaj, wypierdalać, precz (variants of get the f*ck out of...), wukrajcy, wukraina, znajdzie się kij na banderowski ryj (we'll find a stick for the Banderite snout).*

Under Polish law insulting someone on specific grounds, i.e. because of nationality, is punishable (Article 257 of the Penal Code).

The perpetrators (authors of the entries), seeking to avoid criminal liability, explain that their statement does not refer to people of Ukrainian nationality, but to a specific organization or worldview. This is why, instead of words such as *Ukrainian, Ukrainians*, in combination with insulting phrases and those that incite hatred, they use such terms as *Banderite, Banderites, Banderovite, upadlińcy, upadlina, khazar, khazars, khazarski*. This way they disguise that their statement refers to Ukrainians and obscure that the reason for the insult is the Ukrainian nationality of the person to whom the statement refers.

The prosecutor's office and the courts, refusing to initiate an investigation or discontinuing it, argue that the statements 'are within the limits of freedom of speech' and that it constitutes 'criticism' of 'Ukrainian nationalists, Nazis, Banderites' and 'opposition to nationalist attitudes and views, violence, Ukrainian claims', despite the fact that the words and the context of their use have nothing to do with 'Ukrainian nationalists' and 'Banderites'.

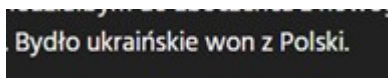
Anti-Ukrainian content frequently touches upon historical events (such as the Ukrainian-Polish conflict, Stepan Bandera, OUN, UPA), economic issues (economic migrants in Poland, 'Ukrainians taking the jobs', 'Ukrainization of the labor market'), social issues ('dangerous Ukrainians', 'Ukrainians bringing infectious diseases to Poland', 'crime rate increasing'), Russia's war against Ukraine ('hordes of Ukrainians heading for Poland', 'it's not our war'), are linked to spreading anti-Ukrainian and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories ('Ukropolonia', 'Ukropol', 'Ukropolin', 'Heavenly Jerusalem', 'New Jerusalem', 'Khazaria'). Anti-Ukrainian content is used in the current political fight and to mobilize the electorate. This is done to make society afraid of the 'Ukrainization and banderization of Poland', and to announce campaigns such as 'Stop the Ukrainization of Poland' and 'Stop the Banderization of Poland'. Spikes in anti-Ukrainian hate speech coincide with events gaining substantial media coverage.

The scale of hate speech aimed against Ukrainians is evidenced by the increase in the number of anti-Ukrainian content on the Polish-language Internet. In the period of February 2022 – February 2023, that is since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, almost 400,000 anti-Ukrainian posts with 547 million views appeared on the Polish-language internet (see report by the "Never Again" Association). In 2021, 3,342 posts insulting Ukrainians appeared on Twitter, while in the period of February – December 2022 the number was up to 90,000 entries (see report by the Geremek

Foundation). Between November 2022 and March 2023, 300,000 such posts appeared, which means 84 entries per hour (see report by Demagog.pl and IMM).

Within the project we submitted a notification in the following cases:

- an entry of January 29th, 2023 (www.banbaye.com) saying 'Bydło ukraińskie won z Polski' (Ukrainian cattle out of Poland),



- a Facebook post of April 18th, 2023, '... kurestwo z zachodniej Ukrainy ... kurewska swołocz ...hołota Banderowska' (whores from Western Ukraine ... mother*cker svoloch, Banderite riffraff).

In the judgment of May 30, 2023, the District Court in Warsaw sentenced the perpetrator for the following statements insulting and making illegal threats to a person of Ukrainian nationality: "you are just good for grazing sheep, you need to be held tightly by the face, upadlińcy, we'll find a stick for the Banderite snout, kneel down, Ukrainian boor, peasant, you are sawing your Ukrainian boorish face, ... you dirty bastards, you need to be held by your Khazarian faces, you shepherds, you unwashed boors, you bastards and degenerates, you are just a fertilizer to fertilize the Polish land, an inferior element to be disposed of, a Ukrainian is worse than a shepherd, I always associate it with dirt and stench, oh you Ukrainian boors, you should be beaten with whips on your Khazarian faces" (VIII K 69/21).

In May 2023, the 55th Children's Festival of Ukrainian Culture – Elbląg 2023 took place in the city of Elbląg. On May 22, 2023, an article about the festival was published on the www.info.elblag.pl website, including a photo of Ukrainian children taking part in the event. Under the article, an Internet user posted a comment containing the words: '*Pogonić za granicę sk... (chase out of the country these sons of bitches)*'.

'sk...' is not short for a name of a country. It is short for an insulting word '*skur*ysyny (sons of bitches)*'. The context for the comment and the use of the word was unequivocal. It referred to Ukrainians, Ukrainian children who took part in the festival. The AUP submitted a notification of suspected criminal offence of publicly insulting people because of their Ukrainian nationality (Article 257 of the Penal Code). The prosecutor's office refused to initiate investigation. The AUP submitted a complaint to the court against this decision.

More information about the activities within the project can be found:

- on the AUP's website www.ukraincy.org.pl in the "Hate speech monitoring" tab,
- on the AUP's Facebook page,
- in the "Nashe Slovo" weekly.

Warsaw, August 2023