

Fostering Civic Responses to Online Harms

Learnings from the Online Civil Courage
Initiative and the Online Civic Fund

Cooper Gatewood, Iris Boyer, Cécile Guerin and Zoé Fourel



Fonds pour
le civisme en ligne
de **facebook**

ONLINE
CIVIL
COURAGE
INITIATIVE

About this report

This report summarises outputs and outcomes from the Online Courage Civil Initiative (OCCI) and Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne or Online Civic Fund.

Both programmes were funded by Facebook, supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) in France to tackle a range of online harms, including hate speech and harmful misinformation and disinformation.

The analysis draws on interviews with different organisations involved, as well as quantitative and qualitative feedback from beneficiaries of projects funded by the Online Civic Fund. It summarises key learnings, helping strengthen future initiatives to support CSOs in this field.

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Contents

About the authors	4
Acknowledgements	5
Executive summary	6
Introduction	8
About this report	10
The OCCI	11
Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne	18
Conclusion	33
Recommendations	34
Endnotes	36

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Any mistakes or omissions are the authors' own.

Executive summary

As everyday life becomes increasingly dependent on technology, we spend ever more of our social, cultural and political lives online.

This is particularly true for younger citizens, who – as digital natives – spend more time online than any other age group. According to Eurostat, 91% of young Europeans make daily use of the internet, while UNICEF (the United Nations International Children’s Fund) reports that 1 in 3 internet users are younger than 18 years old.

Younger citizens are already harnessing the web for everything from commerce and content creation to political activism and protest. While young people often show impressive dexterity in their use of the internet, this is not necessarily matched by an awareness of online harms, in particular the way digital platforms are designed to segment, funnel, reinforce or otherwise shape our worldview. New technologies provide ways to work and communicate, but also for malicious actors to spread hate and sow division. An important percentage of youth report being exposed to hateful or violent content online; according to Opinion Way 63% of young people aged 20–24 years old have experienced cyber-violence in 2019¹. This phenomenon has been thrown into even sharper relief by the Covid-19 pandemic. During lockdowns across the globe, internet usage spiked dramatically (there was an increase in internet usage of 30% in France during lockdown²), with a parallel rise in exposure to misinformation and disinformation, conspiracy theories, extremist ideology and otherwise harmful content.

Governments and technology firms have become more invested in fighting the spread of hate online, with new legislation such as the *loi Avia* (Avia law) in France, and social media companies updating their policies and moderation tactics. However, to date these two sectors have proved unable to counter a problem that is societal as much as technological or regulatory.

Civil society actors are uniquely placed to confront the issues they see online among the communities they serve, yet often lack the necessary resources – financial, technical or practical – to mount an adequate response. Small grassroots and community organisations sometimes lack broader networks to implement their solutions at scale.

It is this context that informed the development of efforts like the OCCI and Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne (the Online Civic Fund). These programmes seek both to bolster and co-ordinate civil society efforts to combat hate, harassment and extremism online. The OCCI, a partnership between the ISD and Facebook, provides timely research to inform the activities of CSOs, training to professionalise their efforts, and a network to co-ordinate and amplify their impact. Facebook’s Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne provides direct financial support to civil society actors, helping pilot and scale activities to combat hate and harassment online.

This report reviews the impact of the programmes in 2019, demonstrating how effective civil society actors can be when provided with the necessary resources and platform. The initiatives we spotlight tackle a variety of issues – from sexual harassment and bullying in schools to countering extremist narratives and developing digital citizenship skills. Our overview shows the significant impact that civil society can have in countering hate online and offline, providing key learnings, inspiring similar initiatives and demonstrating the ways the civil sector can co-ordinate long term.

These are our recommendations for civil society and its supporters, drawn from our review of the work of the two programmes studied in this report:

For funders

- **Funding bodies and other grant-making organisations should directly support CSOs that can tackle online harms creatively.** CSOs have credibility that is based on their prior expertise and/or position in the relevant community, and are thus well placed to respond imaginatively to challenges as they emerge.
- **Funders should invest in scaling and sustaining projects that have demonstrable impact.** Pilot programmes and one-off projects are important to trial solutions, but sustained funding is needed to continue to improve these responses and increase their positive effects. ISD's research into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on online discourse demonstrated that the ecosystem of online harms is ever changing, and CSOs need to be equipped and funded to respond to such shifts efficiently and in a timely manner. The best way to ensure this can happen is for CSOs to be given long-term, sustained funding.
- **When analysing and communicating the impact of any CSO, funders must lead in monitoring and evaluating them.** This will facilitate more strategic responses long term, including targeted investment and mobilisation around common aims. As the results of social good initiatives are often difficult to track or quantify, monitoring and evaluating in this sector can be piecemeal, and many organisations lack the expertise or resources to conduct rigorous, in-depth evaluations. The review of initiatives in this report includes all available metrics to assess impact, but these are broadly inconsistent or ad hoc. CSOs need greater support – both financial and technical – to conduct thorough analysis of their efforts, including theories of change, viable qualitative and quantitative metrics, and appropriate data-gathering methods. These frameworks should be integrated into projects from the outset, rather than thrown together retrospectively.

For technology companies

- **Technology companies and social media platforms should provide in-kind marketing, analytic and technical support to the under-resourced civil society sector.** Bolder and more sustained investment into multi-stakeholder frameworks is long overdue, helping spearhead innovation in civic tech solutions. This should include making data available to trusted research institutions for trend analysis, which in turn guides intervention, and training CSO staff in areas of expertise that companies have in-house, such as engagement and social listening.

For civil society

- **CSOs need to seek out partnership opportunities, exploring how existing initiatives can complement each other and scale impact.** Such a process should be co-ordinated by funding bodies, who often have a sector-wide perspective and are therefore well placed to broker links. This report shows how many organisations are working on similar issues, but is only a small snapshot of initiatives in France alone. It is important to share key learnings and collaborate in order to improve impact across the sector.
- **The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the need to focus on solutions to hate and harassment that leverage the latest communications technologies and are sustainable beyond moments of crisis.** Covid-19 is already changing the way our societies operate and the extent to which we rely on technology. This, again, underlines the importance of sustained funding, so that projects can respond to new online harms and externalities that impact project delivery.

Introduction

The challenge of online harms

New technologies and social media have radically reshaped our lives, and French citizens are spending more time online than ever before. A [study](#)³ by Médiamétrie released in February 2020 showed that 92% of households have an internet connection, 7 out of 10 people use the internet every day, and 6 out of 10 use social media and messaging apps. Young people aged 15–34 were the most connected, averaging over 3 hours per day. According to Eurostat, [91% of young Europeans make daily use of the internet](#), while UNICEF reports that [1 in 3 internet users are younger than 18 years old](#).

The internet and social media have provided new opportunities for connection, activism and idea sharing, but have also catalysed new harms. Increasingly, bad actors are weaponising these platforms to spread hateful ideologies, disseminate harmful disinformation and harass other users. An OpinionWay survey published in December 2018 showed that **59% of French citizens have experienced hateful attacks on social media** at some point in their life, and that **53% of young people aged 18 to 30 have suffered online abuse**.⁴

While online harassment can affect anyone, some groups are particularly vulnerable, with women and minorities proving particularly common targets. In the EU, 1 in 10 women⁵ has experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15, [according to a UN report](#); in France, the [Institut Montaigne's latest study](#)⁶ reports that young users are increasingly aware of online harms, even though their parents tend to underestimate such risks. For example, while 40% of parents believe their children have been exposed to violent content online, the actual figure for young people aged 11 to 20 is 47%.⁷

Equally, only 21% of parents think their children have encountered antisemitism, racism or homophobia online, when in fact the figure is closer to 31% (figures 1 and 2).⁸

A recent [report](#) by ISD⁹ highlighted the extent of such content on social media over five months; we identified more than 7 million hateful posts from a cross-platform sample in France alone. Similarly, Netino's 'Panorama de la Haine en ligne',¹⁰ which analyses samples of public Facebook posts, [recorded an increase in online hate in France from 2018 to 2019, flagging 14.3% of the comments as explicitly hateful](#). These threats increase as people spend more time online, which has been a notable by-product of the Covid-19 crisis. According to the content moderation app Bodyguard, 20 million hateful comments¹¹ [have been deleted](#) during the pandemic to date, representing a 56% increase¹² from the normal rate. Netino has also updated its 'Panorama de la Haine en ligne', showing there has been a [concerning rise in online hate amid the French lockdown](#).¹³

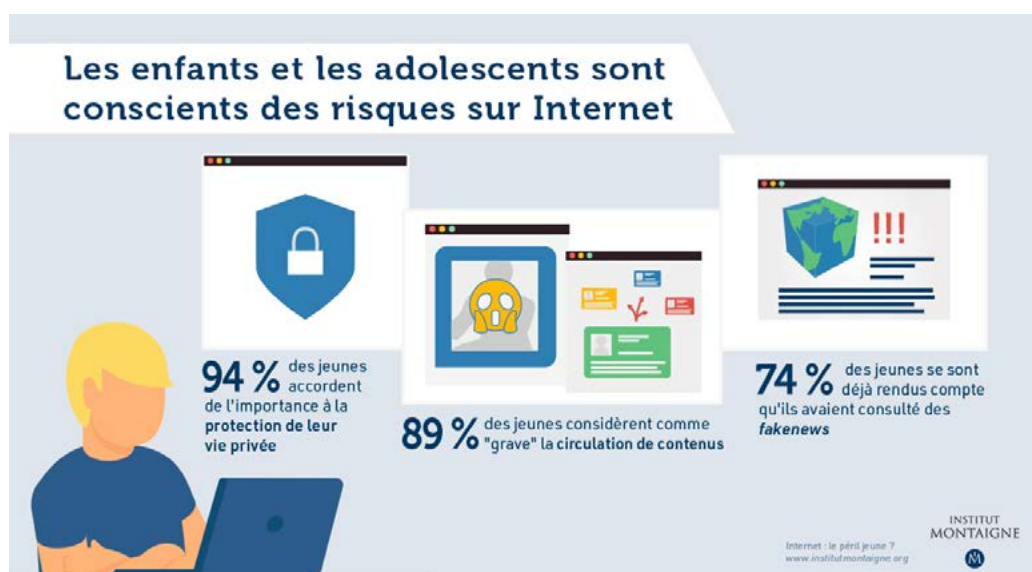


Figure 1 shows that children and teenagers are aware of online harms, 94% of young people think online privacy is important, 89% of young people believe online content circulating is serious, 74% realise they have already encountered fake news online.

Figure 1: Graphic from Institut Montaigne's study of youth internet usage

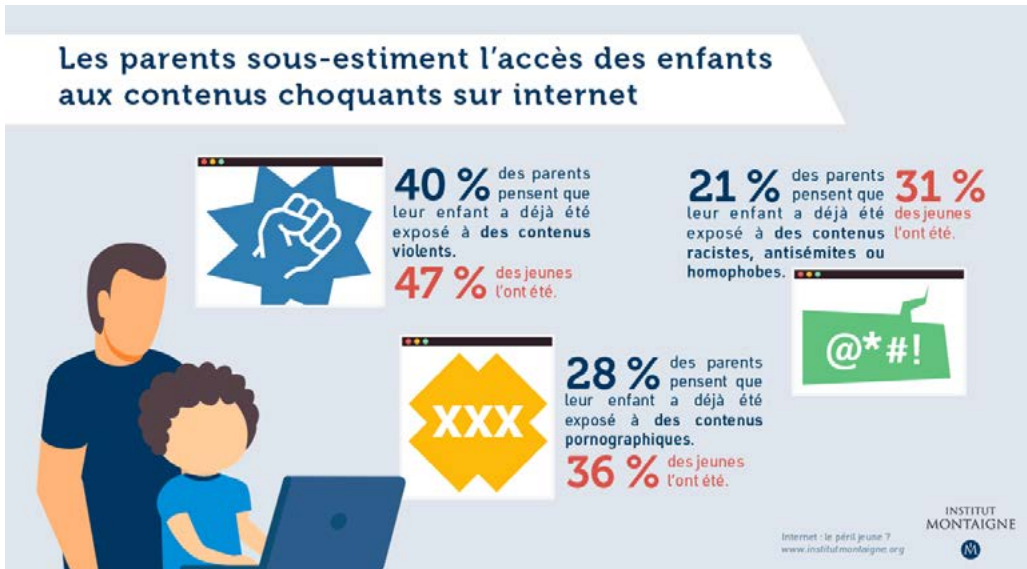


Figure 2: Graphic from Institut Montaigne's study of youth internet usage

Figure 2 shows that parents underestimate the harmful content children are exposed to online.

Only 40% of parents believe their children have been exposed to harmful content when in fact 47% have been; 28% of parents believe their children have been exposed to pornographic content, when in fact 36% have been; 21% of parents believe their children have been exposed to racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic content when in fact 31% have been.

Societies are increasingly aware of the need to safeguard online spaces and prevent the proliferation of online harms. Technology companies have stepped up efforts to protect users of their platforms; for example Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Dailymotion, Google+ and Jeuxvideo.com have committed to join the European Union Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech, a monitoring initiative involving NGOs from across Europe. Despite good will and some progress in this area, research by ISD has shown such responses to be suboptimal or systematically flawed in many cases, not least in the context of the Covid-19 epidemic, where actors are taking advantage of uncertainty to spread hateful narratives and disinformation.

Governments across Europe are implementing new legislation to tackle the proliferation of online hate. Following the adoption of the Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz (NetzDG law; Network Enforcement Act) in Germany, La République En Marche! (LREM) MP Laetitia Avia put forward a bill aimed to tackle online hate in France, and forcing tech companies to remove illegal hate speech from their platforms within 24 hours. The bill, voted into law in May 2020, calls for the creation of a dedicated court to address claims of online hate and an online hate observatory, marking a shift in the French government's approach to this issue. However, many central aspects of the law

have been deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Council, demonstrating the inherent (but not insurmountable) difficulties of legislating proportionately and effectively in this area.

Beyond legislation and corporate measures, socially engaged CSOs have leveraged the power of social media and the internet to tackle online harms. Existing initiatives are increasingly co-ordinated and international, showing how social media can lead effective cross-border campaigning. This report highlights the diversity of civil-society-led efforts in France and some of their impact to date; however, it also demonstrates the persistent challenges and gaps that present barriers to a more strategic and co-ordinated approach. To tackle the scale and nature of the threat, any future responses will require all three sectors – government, private companies and civil society – to work in concert in order to be effective. Each can influence a different aspect of the problem, providing stronger regulation and oversight, data transparency, counterspeech campaigns and widespread public education.

This report

In 2019, French CSOs mounted various responses to a range of online harms, by undermining violent and extremist propaganda, and training young people to be more resilient to online and offline threats. These initiatives operated at different scales – some with an international focus, some were hyper-local.

Often multiple initiatives target similar issues but work in isolation. ISD's engagement with grassroots organisations in the UK has demonstrated how support and co-ordination can significantly increase impact.¹⁴ Some civil society-led efforts have emerged to help fill the gap, including programmes like the OCCI and Facebook's Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne (Online Civic Fund). Support includes providing greater visibility to CSOs, thereby increasing their reach, inspiring other like-minded initiatives and encouraging broader systemic change. These two programmes have similar aims and complementary approaches. The OCCI, led by ISD with support from Facebook, provides action-oriented research and training that help professionalise activities and increase their reach. Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne provides direct financial support to initiatives in order to scale their activities and impact. Both approaches are integral to support civil society's efforts to combat online harms.

This report provides an interim review of the initiatives and their impact to date, teasing out key learnings that can be useful for others in the field. It also provides a panoramic view of these different initiatives, in an attempt to understand how they complement each other and can increase each other's impact. We hope it will serve to inspire similar programmes and encourage further civil society action in this space.

The report:

- showcases the impact of the OCCI and projects supported under Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne in 2019.
- provides useful insights to civil society actors working or wishing to work on countering online harms.
- shows the cumulative impact which can be achieved when civil-society-led efforts are co-ordinated and appropriately supported.

The programmes reviewed in this report cover a range of actions and target a variety of audiences, but all share a similar goal: to create a more cohesive and resilient society. The following section spotlights the varying impacts of these initiatives and demonstrates how they can achieve more working in parallel than in isolation.

Both the OCCI and initiatives funded by Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne have been able to achieve substantial impact on their target audiences, evidenced in both quantitative evaluations and qualitative feedback from the beneficiaries of each programme.

A brief summary of the activities, outputs, outcomes and impact metrics (where available) of each programme is given below.

The OCCI



The OCCI

The OCCI is a strategic partnership between the ISD and Facebook that began in 2016.¹⁵ The programme began in Germany in 2016, and was expanded to France and the UK from 2017 onwards. It operates under four pillars of work: research, training, community and support. It combines technology, communications, marketing and academic expertise to bolster the civic response to online hate and extremism. These tools and skills are often out of reach for grassroots or activist organisations, and the OCCI seeks to fill that gap.

Our co-operation with the OCCI has allowed us to enrich our understanding of the phenomena of hate and extremism online and on social media, as well as to form alliances with other important actors in the sector and develop fruitful projects together.

Respondent from Civic Fab

Since 2016 and across all three countries, the OCCI has:

- **released 26 research reports**, which provide in-depth and timely insights to practitioners, including analysis of extremist propaganda, hateful discourses and the co-option of current events by hateful groups; feedback from network members indicate these reports have provided useful context for their campaigns and other activities, keeping them briefed on the latest online trends.
- **organised 27 conferences and roundtables**, bringing together diverse actors from the three countries – and further afield in Europe; these events helped members to share knowledge and research on countering extremism and polarisation, and to foster innovative partnerships between like-minded or complementary groups; **over 1,000 practitioners have been trained**, with participants consistently reporting increased knowledge and skills as a result.
- **established vibrant communities** of CSO actors who combat diverse types of hate and extremism; **dozens of collaborations** have emerged from this network, including the French chapter of the initiative #IAmHere: #JeSuisLa.
- **supported 45 counterspeech campaigns**, targeting a wide range of audiences – from vulnerable, at-risk groups to the general public – which have **reached almost 60 million people** with targeted, positive messaging to fight hate and extremism; the OCCI has also created two counterspeech campaigns as part of one-day hackathons – engaging over 2 million individuals to date.



The OCCI has been an invaluable resource during the planning and dissemination of our campaigns for good. Thanks to their strategic advice, we were able to reach wider audiences with our messages and incorporate best practices into our work for future campaigns.

Respondent from AJC Paris

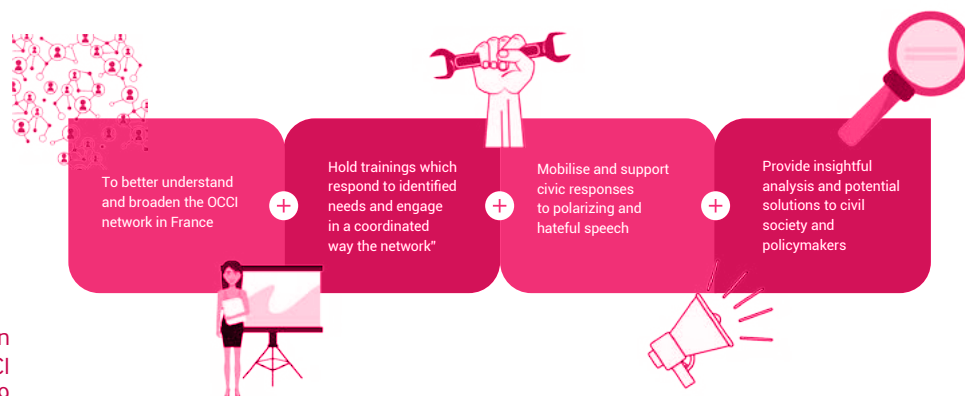
The ultimate aim of the OCCI is to unite a diverse set of actors, provide them with the latest research into hate and extremism online – and resources on campaigning and digital citizenship education – and foster a collaborative environment via conferences and hackathons. This will enable them to have a greater impact together than they would individually. Figure 3 shows what the main objectives of OCCI were in 2019.

Activities of the OCCI in France are informed by consultation with our Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the following organisations:

- American Jewish Committee Paris
- Civic Fab
- Contre discours online
- Génération Numérique
- Institut français de Géopolitique
- Institut français de Relations Internationales
- Inter-LGBT (an umbrella group of 50 lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans organisations in France)
- Le Refuge
- Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (Licra)
- Ligue des droits de l'Homme
- No Hate Speech Movement in France
- Renaissance Numérique
- SOS Racisme

Photo 1 (previous page):
The first OCCI European
Summit in Paris, April 2019

Figure 3: The main
objectives of OCCI
France in 2019

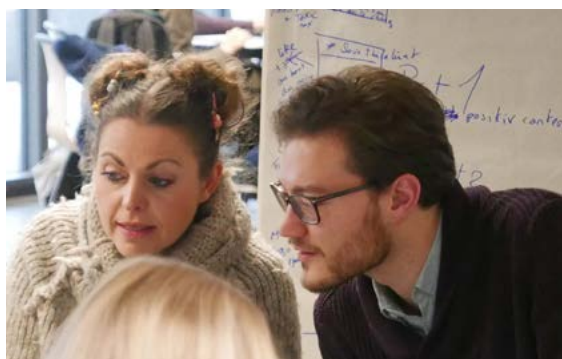




The OCCI brings critical support to the fight against hate and extremism by facilitating collaboration and professionalising the sector. Its trainings bring all the key actors together to share innovative ideas and best practices.



Respondent from the Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation (CIPDR)



The OCCI in France in 2019

In 2019, OCCI France released its first **long-form research report, Mapping Hate in France**,¹⁶ the most comprehensive study analysing online hateful speech at a national level. The research used natural language processing systems, spanning 11 different categories of rhetoric, and analysing – among others – hateful misogynistic, homophobic, anti-Arab and ableist speech.

The OCCI organised three roundtables and conferences, **training over 100 participants**, on topics including disinformation and content moderation. The year ended with the **OCCI's second European Summit**, held jointly with the European Commission's Code of Conduct Dialogue.

The OCCI also helped CSOs establish links with each other and other key actors in the sector, including government agencies and tech companies.

The OCCI supported **two co-ordinated campaigns to fight hate and disinformation**.

One was in collaboration with #JeSuisLa to counter disinformation around the European parliamentary elections, and another was shared with the European Commission Code of Conduct Monitoring Group to encourage positive and responsible engagement on social media.

These campaigns have **reached thousands of users** across social media platforms and across Europe.



Photos 2, 3 and 4: An OCCI event in Paris

The OCCI shows how the impact of individual organisations can be augmented through ongoing research and support, and by creating a diverse activist network.

It has helped train hundreds of practitioners with campaigning skills and improved understanding of trends in online extremism (figures 4 and 5). More can still be done – for example, network members flagged the need for more technical and creative support to campaigns, combined with ongoing graduate training programmes and cutting edge research – but the OCCI has already demonstrated that it has had a durable impact on CSOs in France and across Europe.



Data analysis is something that many activist and advocacy organisations do not have access to, so the OCCI's research is a great resource for informing our activities – making sure we're up to date on the latest trends in online hate.



Respondent from Licra

Figure 4: Example of the result of surveys demonstrating knowledge increase following an OCCI event in Nov 2017

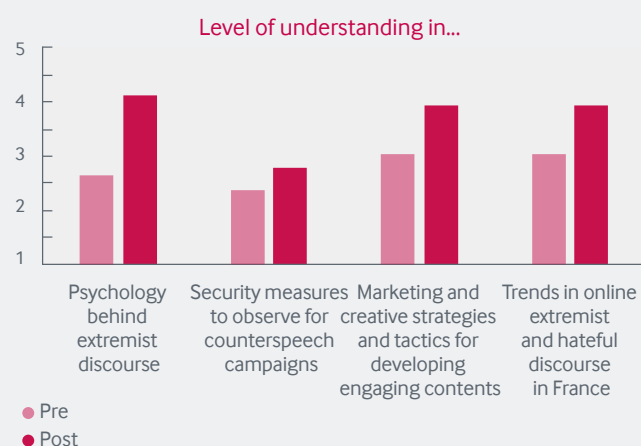
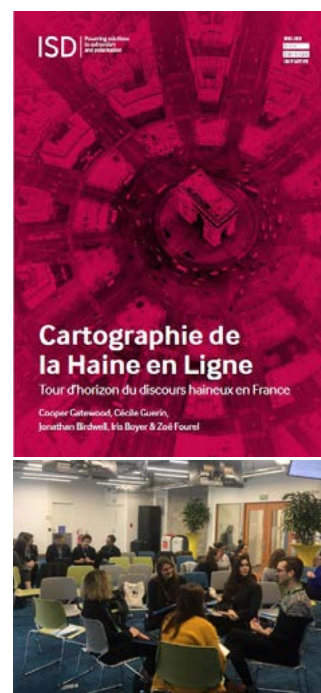
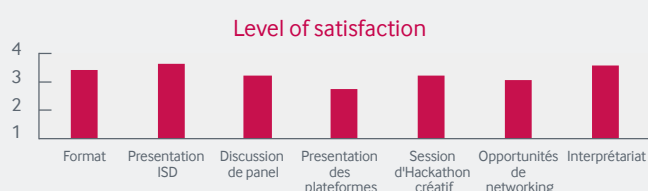


Figure 5: Satisfaction levels of participants with the OCCI European Summit in Dec 2019



Photos 5, 6 and 7: The launch event of the research report *Cartographie de la Haine en Ligne* ('Mapping Hate in France'), in November 2019

Jesuislà (#IAmHere)

The online civic initiative #JeSuisLa (Figure 6) started at an OCCI workshop hosted by ISD and Facebook in 2018, which focused on tackling hate-fuelled disinformation and addressing the limits of content moderation.

At the event Shani Benoualid, Head of Communications at American Jewish Committee (AJC) Paris, and Xavier Brandao, founder of grassroots organisation *Répondre aux Préjugés* (Respond to prejudices), met and brainstormed campaign ideas. They discussed their desire to encourage people who see hate online to challenge it.

They then decided to create a French version of the #IAmHere movement, which was initially launched by Mina Dennert in Sweden, and to adapt its strategy to a French context. Within a month, their [Facebook group](#)¹⁷ gathered thousands of members and a strong pool of hundreds of volunteers co-ordinating 'love bombs' to flood toxic comment threads with shows of support to victims of harassment, or to offer direct challenges to hateful, divisive and misinformed narratives with fact-based and empathy-driven arguments.

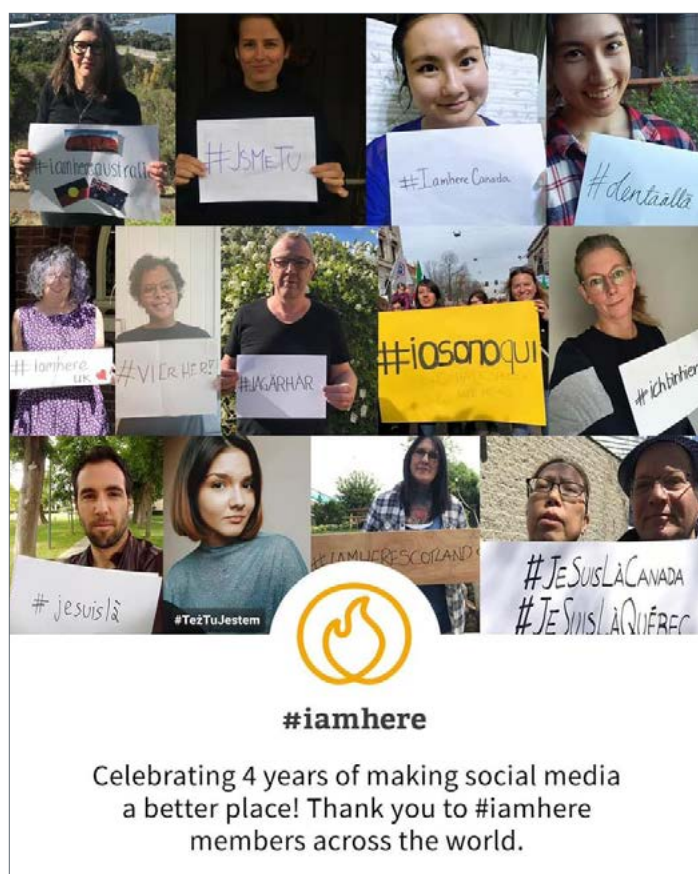
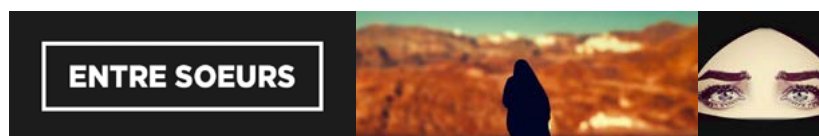


Figure 6: Facebook page of #JeSuisLa

OCCI Campaign Spotlights

Entre Sœurs (Between Sisters)

The OCCI paired documentary filmmakers with activists countering Islamist extremism online. The filmmakers had interviewed French and Belgian female returnees from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), who were highly skilled in engaging in online communities and discourse. Together they created an engaging Facebook page targeting young French women with snapshots of these interviews, attempting to dissuade them from joining Daesh by deconstructing the group's propaganda.



Et toi, le Jihad?

Social enterprise [Civic Fab](#)'s project co-ordinator is a passionate cartoonist. She met the founder of [Et toi, le Jihad?](#) at an OCCI creative hackathon and started to volunteer and draw comic strips for this counterspeech initiative, challenging Islamist extremism through satire.



L'Association Zy'Va and France Fraternités

The founder of l'Association [Zy'Va](#), a grassroots association, and a video producer at NGO [France Fraternités](#) met at an OCCI workshop and collaborated on a [campaign](#) promoting youth activism and local social engagement.

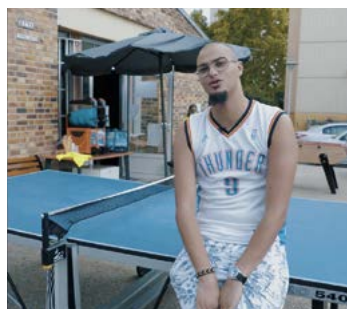


Figure 7: Graphic from the Entre Sœurs campaign; Figure 8: Illustration from Et toi, le Jihad?;
Figure 9: Screen capture of a post from the Zy'Va and France Fraternités collaboration

Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne

Facebook France launched the first iteration of Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne¹⁸ (Online Civic Fund) in November 2018, to further support civic initiatives countering hate. One of the key recommendations from the OCCI is provide direct and sustained financial support to frontline actors in France, including grassroots organisations, social enterprises, start-ups and others fostering the responsible use of technology. This €1 million fund endeavours to meet this need.

The Fund focuses on three programme areas:

- **countering cyber-harassment:** initiatives to support victims of online hate and abuse, or to raise public awareness on the scale and impact of online harassment
- **countering hate speech online:** projects countering hate based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and class
- **developing critical thinking:** initiatives promoting key digital literacy skills, particularly for young audiences.

The projects were selected in a two-phase process. First, applications were reviewed by the Facebook France Public Policy team and Sparknews, a company that amplifies social good initiatives and administers the Fund. A jury of experts and activists interviewed the pre-selected applicants. They also set the strategic orientation of the Fund, decided which initiatives would be funded, and awarded the Grand Prize.

The jury for the 2019 Fund consisted of:

- Raymond Artis, President of the Federation of Parents of Pupils
- Julie de Baillencourt, Safety Policy Manager at Facebook
- [Lola Dubini](#), social media influencer engaged in countering online harassment
- [Patrice Huerre](#), child and adolescent psychiatrist
- Frédéric Potier, head of the Délégation Interministérielle à la Lutte Contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Haine anti-LGBT ([DILCRAH](#); Inter-ministerial Delegation for the Fight against Racism, Antisemitism and Anti-LGBT Hate)
- [Iannis Roder](#), Professor of History and Geography at Seine-Saint-Denis.

In total, 12 initiatives were funded and received one year of support from Facebook, 11 of which received grants ranging from €50,000 to €80,000; one received the Grand Prize of €200,000. The grants were announced on Internet Safety Day, 6 February 2019.

Digital literacy and online hate



Bibliothèques Sans Frontières

Bibliothèques Sans Frontières¹⁹ (BSF; Libraries Without Borders) was created in 2007 to promote access to information and education and advocate for cultural co-operation, donating books to libraries and partner associations and ensuring the sustainability of libraries around the world, particularly in vulnerable areas.

In 2014, BSF created the open source program Les Voyageurs du Numérique (Travellers of digital space), which teaches computer programming to a diverse audience.

With the Fonds, BSF developed a digital citizenship module for this program, integrating new curricula and teaching material. This content was distributed across BSF's network of partners and through offline interventions, targeting disadvantaged areas in particular. BSF will hold train-the-trainer type workshops for a target of 500 volunteer and professional facilitators to deliver this new curriculum.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

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new digital citizenship education modules were developed for BSF's massive open online course (MOOC). Since the creation of these modules, use of the online platform has increased by 25%.

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hackathons were held, with a total of 179 participants, to create innovative ideas for digital citizenship education. From these events, 23 unique projects were conceived; BSF will develop four of them further.

Over 100

new teaching resources were created, comprising 20 digital citizenship education modules, including subjects such as managing online identity, securing personal data, safeguarding online privacy and verifying information.



BSF trained **772 education professionals** to use the new curriculum in train-the-trainer workshops;

92% of participants expressed their satisfaction with the training, noting in particular the module addressing the security of personal data.



These trained educators delivered **800 workshops**, reaching **33,500 students**.



As a result of the programme delivered by BSF, educators have felt **more equipped to teach digital citizenship education programmes independently**. Quantitative and qualitative feedback from the trainees has demonstrated how this initiative is helping French youth develop greater critical thinking and media literacy skills.



Photos 8, 9, 10: Workshops led by Bibliothèques Sans Frontières

Civic Fab

Civic Fab²⁰ is a CSO which promotes social cohesion and innovative online solutions to prevent radicalisation, counter-hate speech and extremist narratives, and improve critical thinking. Civic Fab combines a range of online and offline activities in its work, including digital counterspeech campaigns reaching around 15 million people and workshops across France to engage vulnerable youth.

With the Fund, Civic Fab launched a creative workshop series entitled 'History of...',²¹ a digital citizenship education programme empowering youth aged 13–24 in disadvantaged areas (e.g. suburbs in Paris, Lyon, Marseille and rural areas). In the first phase, sessions encouraging the development of critical thinking skills were delivered with young people, followed by a short film competition. Participants created video pieces on a topic which resonated most with them during the workshop discussions (e.g. rumours, friendship, faith), aiming to spread a positive message among their peers and counter hate or emotional manipulation online.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



In Phase 1 Civic Fab trained **20 young facilitators** to deliver the **4 youth workshops**.



The 'Histoire de...' workshop leaders trained **180 youth participants** in critical thinking skills.



As a result of the workshops, **20 short video clips** were created for the counter-hate film competition (still under way).



On average, **86%** of workshop participants were able to give an **example of online manipulation** and **85%** could identify how to **protect themselves** against rumours correctly; 90% of participants reported having a **better understanding of disinformation**, with 81% able to provide at least two examples online.

A jury member of the short film competition told us:



'I found that both shorts had a good storyline, the subject is well addressed and you can sense the work that went into the writing.'

(« Je trouve que les deux courts métrages proposent un bon récit, le sujet est bien abordé et on sent le travail d'écriture. »)



Photo 11: Workshop of the initiative 'Histoire de...'

L'École Supérieure du Journalisme de Lille

The École Supérieure du Journalisme (ESJ; Advanced School of Journalism)²² is a well-known French institution founded in 1924. The ESJ Association, launched in 1961, fosters innovative programmes that support universal access to education, and encourage youth to develop critical thinking and better recognise and counter disinformation.

With support from the Fund, ESJ launched the Newstruck initiative, an immersive experience that encourages teenagers to think like a journalist. A team of media professionals drove the 'mobile studio' equipped with radio, TV and web materials used by journalists to economically deprived and rural areas in Northern France. ESJ staff delivered workshops to discuss critical thinking, learn how to recognise fake news, and encourage youth to act to counter hate speech online.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



The Newstruck, equipped with all necessary audiovisual and pedagogic material, was used to deliver **120 training sessions** in over 70 high schools, reaching over **2,500 youths**.

Over **25**

journalists were trained to use the pedagogic tools within the Newstruck.



To accompany these training sessions, **2 educational board games**, an immersive escape-style game and a series of 12 videos were created.



In addition to building **media literacy skills** (e.g. learning how to conduct an interview and how to write an article), students reported increased understanding in **key digital citizenship competencies** (e.g. how to identify false information).



A majority of participants surveyed thought it was important **to verify information before sharing it**, another important digital citizenship skill



Teachers provided positive feedback, appreciating in particular the **interactive nature of the educational games**.



Photo 12: The 'Newstruck' ESJ uses;



Photo 13: The team delivering an activity

Tralalere

Tralalere,²³ established in 2000, develops engaging educational content online. With 25 in-house education experts, the organisation works primarily in Paris and Southwest France. It has previously partnered national actors from both the formal (e.g. European Commission and Ministry of Education) and informal (e.g. the Ligue de l'enseignement) education sectors.

In 2018, Tralalere developed *Info Hunter*²⁴ for Internet Safety Day with the support of the Ministry of Education. This educational experience helped young people develop critical thinking, targeting two specific age groups: children in primary school (ages 6–10) and high school (ages 16–18). The Fund provided Tralalere with financial support to continue this project, finish designing online resources, add new functionalities to the educational content, and launch online content with the help of 700 civil society volunteers and 5,000 facilitators.



Photo 14: A workshop delivered in a school;

Photo 15: The Info Hunter resource

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



A **new editor function** was added to the platform, allowing facilitators to customise the tool for different settings and audiences.



Train-the-trainer sessions have been delivered for facilitators from the Ligue de l'enseignement and Bibliothèques Sans Frontières, who are now equipped to roll out the new version of Info Hunter with their key audiences.



Since the beginning of 2019, there have been **over 6,000 unique users** of the web tool. The new version was launched for students in early 2020.



Over 5,700 educators have used the previous version of Info Hunter, reaching an estimated **50,000 students**.



Students are engaged throughout training sessions, and surveys before and after them show that participants **develop reflexes to question information** they encounter as a result of the training.

Some students commented that they will be **'more attentive to details'** when consuming information, while others stated that they will **'ask themselves more questions' in the future** – comments frequently heard following training sessions.

It was a really interesting day, participants (both youth and teachers) asked many questions and said they were satisfied. In the morning session 4 classes from year 7 participated in these workshops.



The project has empowered students to spot instances of misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories, helping them understand what these concepts entail and how to spot them in practice online. Furthermore, it has encouraged students to check the cognitive bias in the information they encounter and apply their critical thinking skills online.



Tralalere now plans to build **a module on hate speech** and other key topics, following positive feedback from users.

InFocus

Created in 2014, **InFocus**²⁵ is a multimedia production company and association, which designs, produces and showcases films with a broad public interest whose content seeks to create behavioural change and encourage the audience to act. InFocus has developed communication campaigns, web series and programmes, including a TV documentary which was awarded a prize at the Deauville Green Awards film festival.

Working with the nursery and primary school le Blé en Herbe, InFocus created a series of 13 videos designed for online dissemination. The objective was to increase critical thinking and social cohesion in the classroom and more broadly, using testimonies from school children themselves. The content features students discussing their experiences with tools, methods and exercises which promote critical thinking, and the outreach strategy is primarily targeted at parents and teachers.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



InFocus created **a public-facing platform** to host the 13 videos.



Although the official campaign launch has been delayed, **a comprehensive outreach strategy** aims to reach parents and educators across France.



InFocus has established **partnerships with other networks** to increase its reach and impact, including the French Ministry of Education and Ashoka.



Photo 16: Extract from an In Focus video called 'Conseil de classe – vis ma classe'; in English 'Class council – live my classroom'

Licra

Founded in 1927, the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (Licra; International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism)²⁶ counters racial and religious hatred while promoting human rights and French democratic values. Licra comprises a network of 62 chapters with about 3,000 activists on the ground in France and abroad.

During the 2017 French presidential elections, Licra created an online anti-racism 'campus', with resources to engage youth in a more direct, entertaining manner. Different thematic programmes are now available with materials discussing a wide range of themes, including anti-racism, antisemitism, discrimination, secularism, conspiracy theories, holocaust denial, remembrance policies, culture, freedom of speech and radicalisation. Licra will use its grant from the Fund to expand the reach of this programme, aiming for 5,000 young people to be registered on the platform in France and other francophone markets.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



Licra created **10 new modules** for the online platform, featuring experts in different areas including discrimination, radicalisation, conspiracy theories and anti-racism.



The visibility provided by the grant from the Fund has allowed Licra to **integrate new partners into the project**, including Fonds du 11 janvier, Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah and CIPDR (a French government agency that counters radicalisation).



Photo 17: Example of a 'facing facts' resource

Génération Numérique

Génération Numérique²⁷ promotes critical thinking and broader online safety, conducting workshops online and offline. It also creates resources to mitigate the challenges of digital citizenship education. Since 2004, its team has interacted with over 5 million teenagers and an estimated 900,000 adults (parents, teachers, social workers).

The grant from the Fund helped Génération Numérique to launch *Chasseurs d'Infox*,²⁸ which delivers youth workshops for children aged 9–12. These interventions provide theoretical tools and practical exercises when discussing topics such as online safety, online ads, media literacy, cognitive bias and responses when judging information.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



Throughout the 2019 programme, **105 digital citizenship and education workshops** were delivered, reaching over **3,100 students** across France.



Génération Numérique trained **17 facilitators** to deliver these workshops, expanding the reach and impact of the programme.



With this initiative, Génération Numérique has helped students **develop greater critical thinking**, and increased their capacity to fact check the information they encounter, in particular helping them recognise misinformation and disinformation.

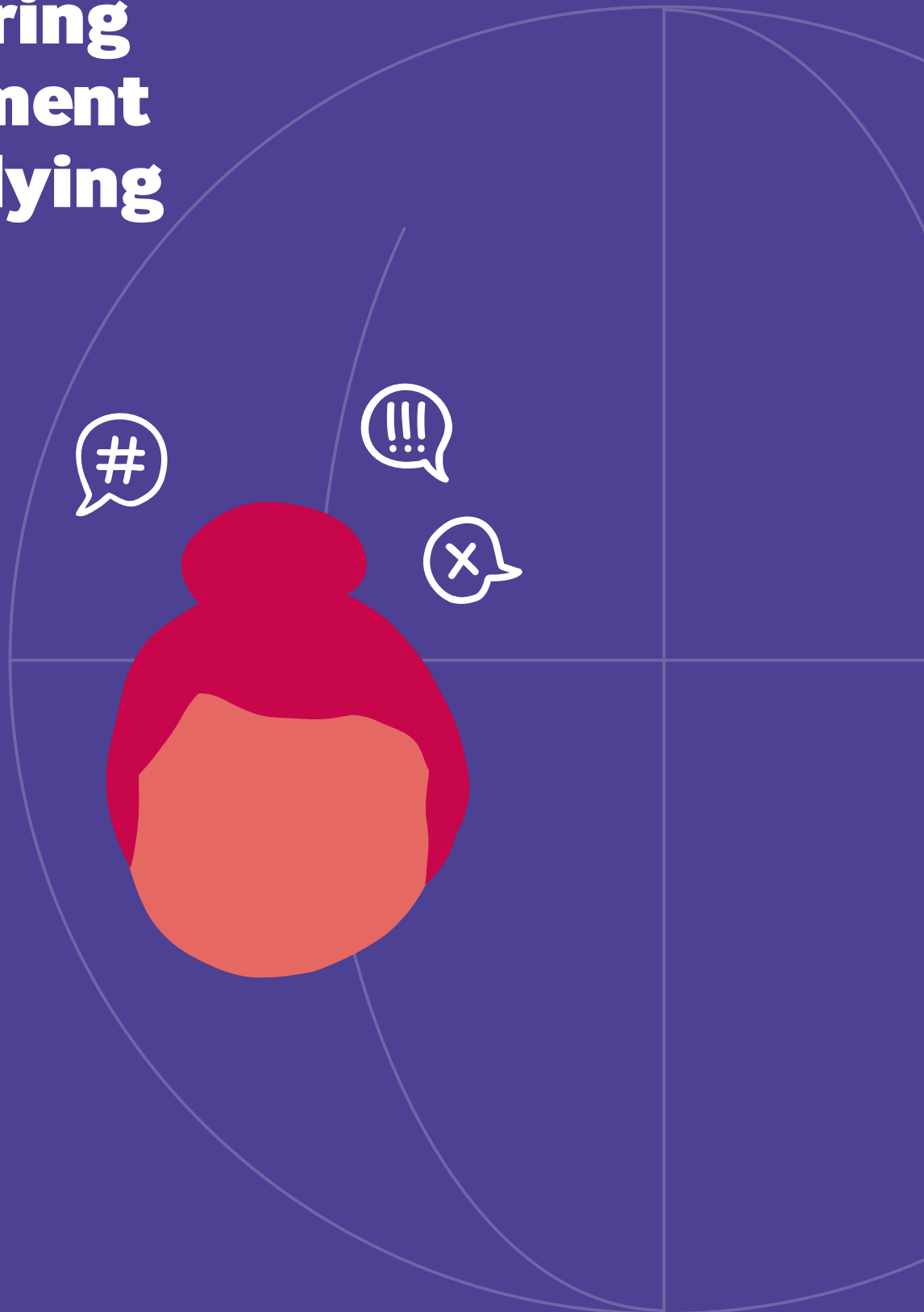


Professors and principals of schools that took part in the workshops provided enthusiastic feedback on the sessions, highlighting how useful they were in providing youth with **practical, durable skills to assess and respond to online content**.



Photo 18: Discussion between Karim Amellal (Civic Fab) and Cyril Di Palma (Génération Numérique) at the 'Fond pour le Civisme en Ligne' event

Countering harassment and bullying



Grand prize winner: Resonantes

Resonantes²⁹ was founded in 2015 to foster innovative solutions to countering violence against women and girls (with a specific focus on young women aged 15–25). Resonantes campaigns to raise awareness of the nature and consequences of misogyny and gender-based violence. The organisation provides support and safe spaces to victims or witnesses of abuse, and acts to prevent violence against women. It combines a wide range of activities both in offline spaces (intervention in schools, youth centres) and the online sphere (digital tools to help victims or witnesses of violence).

Resonantes used its prize-winning grant to improve and promote its mobile application, **App-Elles**,³⁰ which was created as a free service in 2015, designed to help victims or witnesses of gender-based violence. In addition to facilitating access to relevant resources, App-Elles allows users to contact close friends, emergency services and other support associations rapidly when they experience harassment. The app acts as a supplement to state sponsored services, and can be used with a Bluetooth bracelet to contact emergency services discreetly. With support from the Fund, Resonantes created a new version of App-Elles for the iPhone operating system (iOS), updated the version already available on Android, and ran a communications campaign to promote the resource at a greater scale (initially aiming for 100,000 downloads).



Photo 19: Diarata N'Diaye, founder and CEO of Resonantes, receiving the Grand Prix (grand prize) with former Secretary of State for Gender Equality Marlène Schiappa, at the Civic Online Fund event, 2019

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



App-Elles has tripled its user base since it has been available on iOS as well as Android software, and hopes to have an estimated 200,000 downloads by the end of 2020. This will enable **more women to access information to prevent harassment** and Resonantes will be able to support more victims or witnesses of domestic abuse.



As a result of the public campaign, RATP (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens, the independent administrator for Paris Transport) and TRANSDEV (French public transport agencies) announced plans **to integrate the app into their emergency support**. Some high schools have also begun leveraging App-Elles to support their students, and the app has had international impact, with the city of Dakar, Senegal, announcing plans to employ it at a municipal level.

More than 3,000

support associations are now registered within the app, increasing the relevance and provision of resources to victims.



The app has become more visible among the general public, raising awareness of issues surrounding domestic violence and harassment, and increasing the likelihood that victims or witnesses will benefit from its services. As a result of the communications campaign there have been **over 30 media mentions** of the app, including on major outlets such as Le Monde and France24.



Qualitative feedback shows that the app has proven **useful in resolving cases of harassment and restoring users' confidence** when in public spaces.

Cap'Ados Caen

Founded in 2005 in Caen, Normandy, Cap'Ados is developing innovative programmes to support child and teenage psychiatric treatment at Caen's University Hospital.

The association is based on the hospital's premises. Over the years it has developed a range of mental health and preventive programmes for children and youth, from the establishment of a therapeutic garden to artistic and cultural initiatives to enhance young people's mental health.

Cap'Ados identified that psychological harassment was a growing concern for hospital staff, and a major cause of mental health problems among French youth. Using data obtained via qualitative interviews with 30 young victims, Cap'Ados developed a new programme targeting young people in schools across the region. This entailed a range of group activities to empower victims of harassment, including the creation of a forum theatre programme involving 24 young people over one year. In addition, Cap'Ados launched a therapy programme for families of young people who have been victims of harassment to share their experiences and provide mutual support.



Photo 20: The Cap'Ados team with Patrick Bruel at the Civic Online Fund event, 2019

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



The theatre workshop curriculum was developed, two facilitators were trained to deliver it, and 10 young people participated in the series of **22 workshop therapy sessions**.



Facilitators observed **improvement in participants' capacity** to process the shame resulting from their bullying, and work through the trauma of their experience productively.



Participants reported forming bonds with others who had similar experiences, which in turn increased self-confidence. **This process has helped decrease the fear and anxiety** associated with their school environments, helping participants to rejoin the classroom.



The project team established **a network of relevant actors in the region**, including principals, professors and psychologists, in order to identify cases of bullying and harassment that may benefit from this programme.



Following the success of this pilot, another **14 youth participants began the workshop programme** in 2020.



The project team published **an academic article about their methodology and outcomes** in the journal *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* to inform future research and interventions.

Urban Prod

Urban Prod³¹ was founded in 1998 by a group of keen photographers. It empowers local residents in Marseille to use digital tools for creative purposes. The organisation leads a number of artistic projects, including digital workshops for underprivileged areas of Marseille, and runs a production company supporting film directors from the city. It also runs projects outside Marseille elsewhere in Europe. As part of its project Podcast Factory, Urban Prod launched **YESSS – Un Podcast de Warriors (YESSS – The Warriors’ Podcast)**,³² which features testimonials and debates to support women’s rights and fight sexist harassment. The podcast was designed by journalist Anaïs Bourdet, founder of the anti-sexism initiative Paye Ta Shnek.

The project financed by the Fund expanded the YESSS podcast, rendering it one of the most widely listened to feminist podcasts in France. The show provides a platform for women who have faced sexist abuse and highlights the everyday impact and trauma generated by such harassment. It also provides practical information to victims, including those going through legal proceedings as a result of harassment.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



Urban Prod produced **16 podcast episodes** in 2019, which amassed over 500,000 unique downloads and around 30,000 regular listeners.



The team organised live events discussing sexism in French grandes écoles and the music industry, reaching over **400 participants**.



The podcast was covered by **9 media outlets** and received the Ministry of Culture Prize at the Paris Podcast Festival in 2019, increasing its reach.



The initiative has raised public awareness of sexual harassment across France, increasing solidarity among women and men to address sexism in their everyday lives.



The organisation of live events has enabled the team to **engage young audiences around specific issues**, for instance an event at Sciences Po to discuss experiences of sexism in a university context.

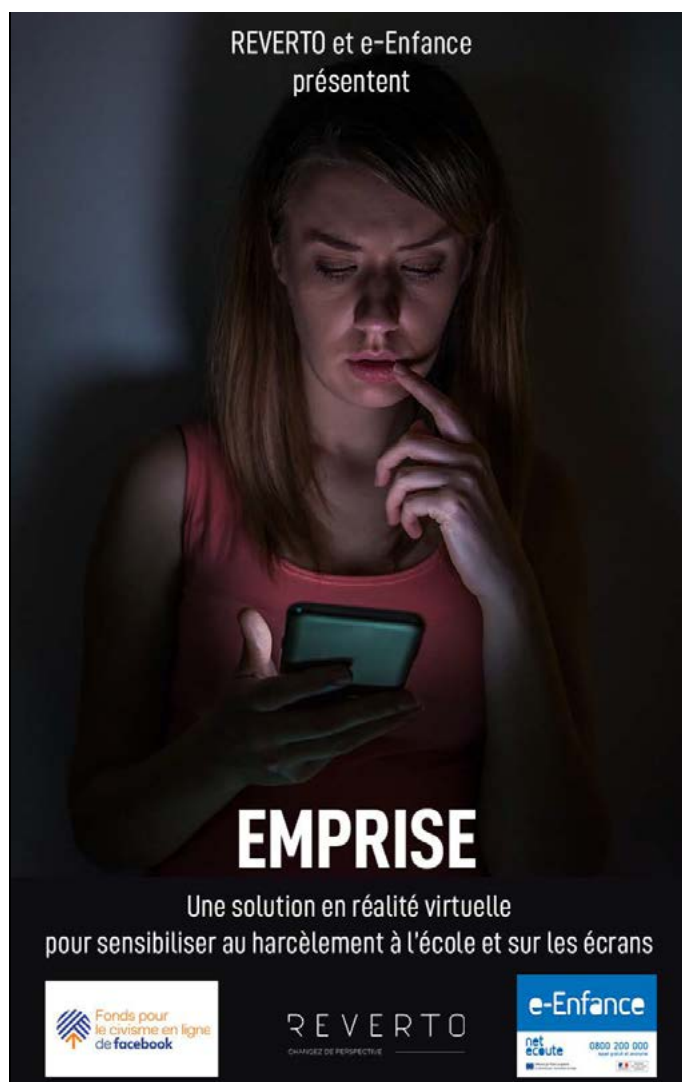


Photo 21: A live event of podcast YESSS; Photo 22: YESSS receiving the Ministry of Culture award at the Paris Podcast Festival; Photo 23: A live event of the podcast YESSS;

e-Enfance and Reverso

e-Enfance³³ is an association dedicated to protecting children and teenagers on the internet, and informing families about best practices online. The association carries out a range of awareness-raising activities in primary and secondary schools in France, including training education professionals.

With assistance from the Fund, e-Enfance created a short virtual reality film with the expert team at Reverso to highlight the risks of online and offline harassment. The film allows young viewers to witness the experience of a victim virtually, thereby raising awareness of harassment and increasing empathy with those targeted. The script of the film is based on testimonials gathered through Net Ecoute, a helpline run by e-Enfance for victims of harassment.



OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



Reverso used testimonials gathered by e-Enfance to write and produce **a virtual reality film scenario** with seven actors. A two-minute teaser was produced for wide dissemination.



The virtual reality film was tested in the same school where it was produced, with overwhelmingly positive feedback: 90% of the students who participated **found the video useful for awareness-raising around bullying** and 40% identified with witnesses in the video.



While the outbreak of Covid-19 has delayed wider roll-out, e-Enfance and Reverso are collaborating on **ways to make the film available and useful outside guided school contexts.**

'This solution can cause a spark, a wake-up call for those who remain passive in these situations (of bullying).'

Opinion given

Photo 24: Campaign poster of the e-Enfance and Reverso initiative

MRJC

The Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne (MRJC; Rural Christian Youth Movement)³⁴ is an education NGO working to revitalise rural regions across France. It is run by under-30s and organises youth activities including community cohesion projects related to agriculture, local democracy and the environment. The organisation is active in 40 *départements* across the country.

Supported by the Fund, MRJC launched a project to map the scale of gender and sexuality-based harassment in rural parts of France, and to develop effective ways of addressing it. It has created an online platform to gather testimonials from young victims of harassment, and made a series of short films and communications materials to raise awareness of the problem.

MRJC also organised a national conference to establish recommendations for combating stereotypes, violence and harassment based on gender and sexuality.



Photo 25: Screenshot of the MRJC video 'Unique en mon genre: Olivier et Hugo'; in English, 'One of a kind: Olivier and Hugo', 'genre' also means gender in French

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



MRJC created and launched **an online platform** called 'Unique en mon genre' to gather testimonials; it has a detailed communications strategy.

10

testimonials were selected for the initial video series on 'Unique en mon genre', and by summer 2020 eight had been produced. Activities associated with gathering these stories have reached **over 500 young people**.



The short films that were launched in 2019 accumulated **over 2,500 views on YouTube and over 7,100 on Facebook**. More have been posted throughout 2020, increasing the reach of the project and potential impact of its messages.



MRJC organised a roundtable on the topic of gender and sexuality in rural zones with 25 participants from across France.



The video-based campaign has raised **greater awareness of the experience of LGBTQ+ communities living in rural areas**, providing voice and visibility to those whose stories often go unheard.

Conclusion

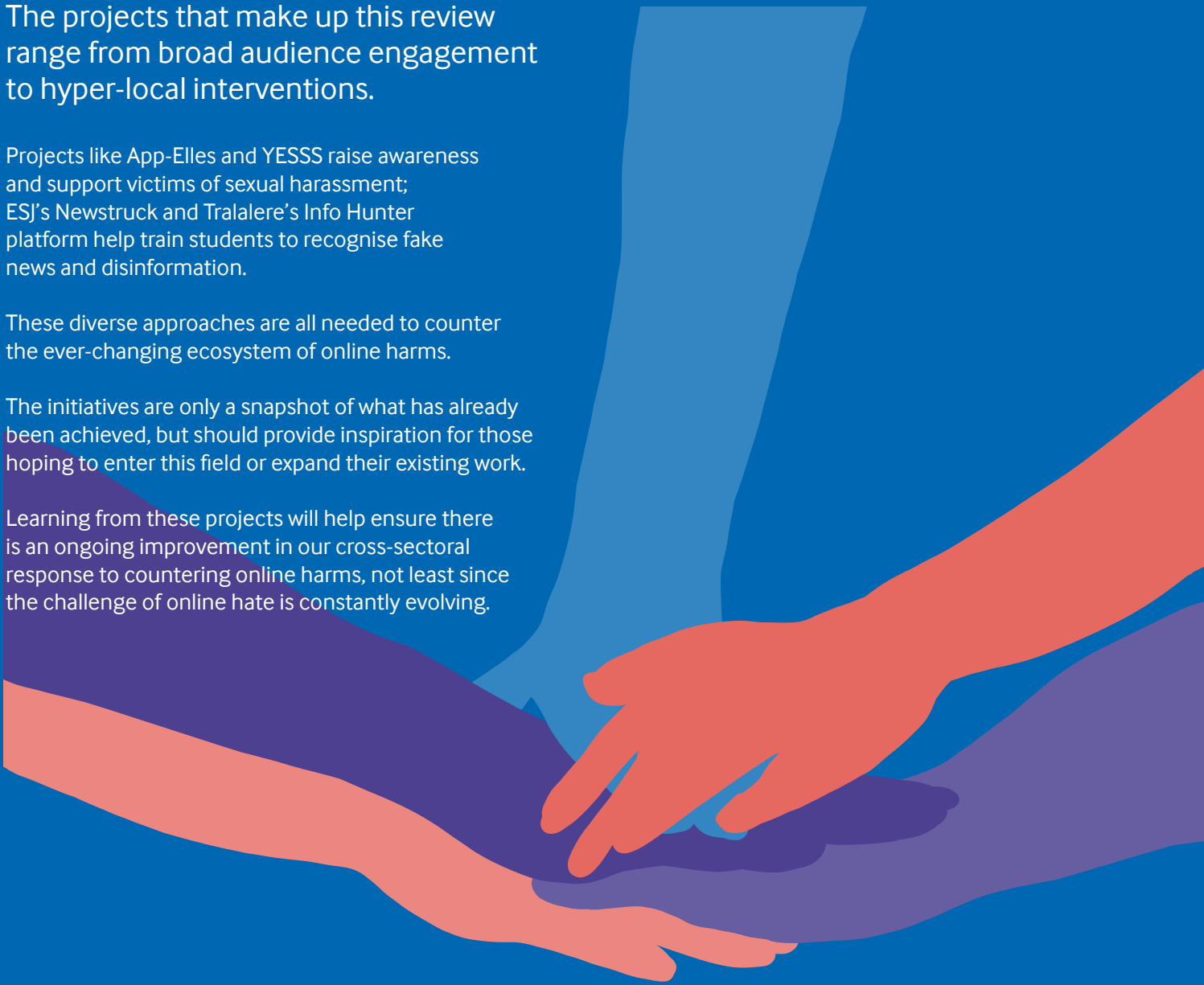
The projects that make up this review range from broad audience engagement to hyper-local interventions.

Projects like App-Elles and YESSS raise awareness and support victims of sexual harassment; ESJ's Newstruck and Tralalere's Info Hunter platform help train students to recognise fake news and disinformation.

These diverse approaches are all needed to counter the ever-changing ecosystem of online harms.

The initiatives are only a snapshot of what has already been achieved, but should provide inspiration for those hoping to enter this field or expand their existing work.

Learning from these projects will help ensure there is an ongoing improvement in our cross-sectoral response to countering online harms, not least since the challenge of online hate is constantly evolving.



Recommendations

For funders

Funding and other grant-making bodies should provide sustainable, long-term support to CSOs that can address online harms creatively.

Many CSOs have developed credibility based on their experience or position in the relevant community, and are thus well placed to tailor responses as new threats emerge. Mechanisms like the OCCI and Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne can generate innovative solutions, but resources are needed to build these past the pilot phase. As demonstrated in ISD's research into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on online discourse, the ecosystem of online harms is ever changing, and CSO staff need to be equipped to address such shifts in a timely manner. Having to engage in lengthy, often onerous, applications when each new crisis strikes not only delays the response, but preoccupies vital staff in times of greatest need.

This issue is heightened by the fact that very few funders adopt a consistent set of impact metrics or long-term goals for countering hate – in the worst cases, funding bodies offer no guidance on the expected impact of projects, asking applicants to develop their own targets from scratch, or more often reinvent the evaluation framework with each new funding pot. Applicants are thus expected to reimagine their activities for every proposal, adjusting to constantly shifting language and criteria on monitoring and evaluation. The results of social good initiatives are often difficult to track or quantify, especially for smaller bodies. As a result, monitoring and evaluation is too often piecemeal or ad hoc, and many organisations lack the expertise or resources to assess their projects in a meaningful way. This makes comparison between different initiatives impractical, hindering a more comprehensive understanding of impact, and preventing strategic and co-ordinated responses.

Funders must lead efforts on monitoring and evaluation, helping analyse and amplify the impact of CSOs. This will facilitate more strategic responses long term, including targeted investment and mobilisation around common aims.

CSOs need greater financial and technical support to conduct thorough analysis of their efforts, including theories of change, viable qualitative and quantitative metrics, and appropriate data-gathering methods. These frameworks should be integrated into projects from the outset, rather than thrown together retrospectively. Post hoc efforts often miss important baseline metrics that allow a true assessment of impact, attribution and so on. Support may include monitoring and evaluation training provided by grant-making bodies, or centralised templates, frameworks and approaches which are made available to grantees. It could also constitute better co-ordination across funders themselves – grant-making bodies in this area should, where possible, adopt common evaluation criteria that allow comparison between projects, and build a collective picture of impact. This would highlight which projects are particularly effective, and standardise data collection so that activities can be evaluated according to the same criteria.

For technology companies

Beyond financial support and public relations opportunities, technology companies should provide in-kind marketing, and analytic and technical support to the under-resourced civil society sector.

Bolder and more sustained investment into multi-stakeholder frameworks is long overdue, helping spearhead innovation in civic tech solutions. This should include making data available to trusted research institutions for trend analysis, which in turn guides intervention, as well as training CSOs on areas of expertise that companies have in-house, such as engagement and social listening.

Initiatives like the OCCI show how timely insights into the online ecosystem can improve CSOs' responses to online harms. Technology companies are often reticent to publicise the risk of encountering harm online on their platforms, but this step is integral to ensure there is an effective cross-sector response. Platforms should continue to increase transparency, allowing verified CSOs to address threats in a nuanced and tailored manner. The Covid-19 pandemic has renewed the urgency to tackle hate and harassment in a way that leverages new technologies (e.g. MOOCs, scalable and remote education interventions, messaging and video platforms, automated alerts or digital campaigns), but has also provided new barriers to delivery. Funding mechanisms should adapt to the external context – projects like Info Hunter or 'Unique en mon genre' may be easily scalable, while others – like Civic Fab's 'History of...' – will need adaptation given ongoing restrictions around large group gatherings. This again underlines the importance of CSOs receiving sustained funding, so that projects can respond to new online harms and external events that impact project delivery.

For civil society

CSOs need to seek out partnership opportunities, exploring how existing initiatives can complement each other and scale impact. Such a process should be co-ordinated by funding bodies, who often have a sector-wide perspective and are therefore well placed to broker links.

This report shows how many organisations are working on similar issues, yet offers only a small snapshot of initiatives in France alone. Collaboration is vital to improve impact across the sector and achieve economies of scale, particularly for smaller or hyper-local CSOs. OCCI members consistently identify this aspect of networking to be a concern and consider it among the greatest benefits of the programme. Over time, funders can develop a strong overview of activity in the civil sector, particularly for defined areas like counter-hate – beyond their role in providing financial support, they should not underestimate the importance of building networks and awareness across the sector, for example through regional match-making events or grant programmes that incentivise partnership. Funds such as Le Fonds pour le Civisme en Ligne and the Google.org Impact Challenge on Safety,³⁵ alongside government-led grants like those of DILCRAH,³⁶ CIPDR³⁷ and the London Mayor's Shared Endeavour Fund³⁸ offer good models to achieve such a goal.

Endnotes

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