ALS RESEARCH

Memorandum of the Nordic Council of Ministers' seminar on hate speech and sexism, from 2 to 3 November 2015.

HATE SPEECH AND SEXISM IN THE NORTH

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PREFACE

This memorandum sums up the Nordic Council of Ministers' seminar on hate speech and sexism held in Copenhagen, 2nd – 3rd November 2015. The memorandum is based on the presentations and discussions which took place at the seminar, as well as research conducted prior to and after the seminar, into the scope and character of hate speech and sexism, legal dimensions of the subject, and experiences with initiatives targeting the phenomenon.

Als Research would like to thank the speakers and participants of the seminar as well as the many scholars and experts who willingly participated in interviews prior to the seminar.

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Copenhagen, November 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

Background and aim of the seminar
Freedom of expression and freedom to take part in society regardless of gender are essential values of the Nordic countries. However, a significant proportion of politicians, commentators, and others who participate in public debate, find themselves subjected to hate speech and threats. Furthermore, women find that incidents of hate speech and threats are gender-based and often have a sexual nature. Additionally, there are indications of an increase in hate speech, due in part to the fact that much public debate takes place on electronic and social media platforms, where hate speech is widespread. It is in this light that the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Danish Presidency have chosen to address hate speech and sexism in the public sphere.

The topic falls within the framework of *Gender, equality and the public sphere*, an overarching theme for the Nordic cooperation programme for the Nordic Council of Ministers' gender equality sector. In this field of priority focus is on gender equality or inequality in terms of opportunities for participating in society and in public debate.

A range of scholars, government officials, NGO representatives and opinion makers from all of the Nordic countries and the autonomous territories were invited. Approximately 60 people participated in the seminar.

The seminar was structured around three overarching themes:
1. The scope and character of hate speech and sexism
2. Legal dimensions of hate speech and sexism
3. Experiences with and suggestions for preventive measures

These three themes are reflected in the present paper.

The purpose of the memorandum
The memorandum aims at summarizing the presentations and discussions at the seminar. The memorandum is based on a) the research conducted by Als Research prior to the seminar in preparation of the background note, b) the presentations at the seminar as well as group and plenary discussions and c) research conducted after the seminar, into, among other things, the initiatives that were identified, and the many references to research areas and initiatives which emerged at the seminar and which the participants passed on.

The structure of the memorandum
Section 2 below highlights the status of research into the field, the scope and nature of hate speech and sexism and the consequences that hate speech has for those affected by it and for the democratic debate. Section 3 describes the legal dimensions of the phenomenon and what opportunities, from a legal perspective, there are to counteract hate speech and sexism. Section 4 describes potential future initiatives and solutions, while Section 5 describes experiences with preventive measures.

2. THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF HATE SPEECH AND SEXISM

The following is an overview of existing research as well as a summary of some of the most important findings regarding the scope and nature of hate speech and sexism. Overall there is a lack of knowledge regarding hate speech and sexism in the Nordic countries. This was a recurrent theme in all of the discussions at the seminar.

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombudsman recently published a comprehensive report on hate speech and hate crimes[1]. The report states that:

> *Norwegian research on the nature, scope and damage caused by hate speech is lacking. Equally lacking is knowledge about various groups' experiences with hate speech, about who is responsible for hate speech and about what initiatives may prevent and limit the extent of hate speech.*

This conclusion seems partly adequate for the Nordic countries as a whole. As evidenced below, there has however been some research conducted into the scope of hate speech and sexism as well as into the ways in which women and men are affected differently.

The presentations and various debates at the seminar made it clear that there is a particular shortage of knowledge regarding the sources of hate speech and the motivations for making harmful comments. It would be valuable to know more about the age, education and professional background of the perpetrators of hate speech. Additionally lacking are studies which take intersectionality into account; that is, the ways in which the combination of variables (for instance gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation and gender identity) affect the risk of being subjected to hate speech and sexism, as well as the nature of the comments made. Participants at the seminar expressed a particular desire for more knowledge about how legislation works in the field of hate speech and sexism as well as experiences of how legislation is enforced. In addition, participants voiced the need for collecting the experiences gained by others who have cooperated with Internet Service Providers and social media.

In addition to presentations on hate speech, the Nordic Council of Ministers' seminar featured speeches on the phenomenon of *revenge pornography* or non-consensual pornography. The circumstances surrounding this phenomenon are similar to those surrounding hate speech: there is no current research-based overview of the scope and consequences of the phenomenon, or of what initiatives are efficient at counteracting it.

Overall, international and Nordic research indicates that men are slightly more exposed to hate speech than women, but also that the hate speech which women encounter to a much greater degree has a sexual or gender-based nature than the comments men encounter. In

[1] Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet 2015: *Hatytringer og Hatkriminalitet*. http://www.ldo.no/nyheiter-og-fag/brosjyrar-og-publikasjonar/rapporter/hatytringer-og-hatkriminalitet/

addition, research suggests that girls and young women (under the age of 25) constitute a group that is exposed to hate speech and sexism at disproportionately high levels.

Hate speech and sexism in the public sphere affect different groups of people differently. At one end of the continuum, we find ordinary people, particularly young girls, boys, women and men, who in various ways are harassed, subjected to hate speech, or subjected to online violations when images of a private and/or sexual nature are circulated on the Internet against their will. At the other end, we find public figures, particularly journalists, commentators and politicians who fall victim to hate speech, sexism, threats etc. as a result of their public statements on political topics. Both issues, however, have serious consequences.

Hate speech and sexism directed at politicians, journalists and opinion makers constitute a particular problem. In this context, research indicates that it is, in fact, a very widespread phenomenon targeting both men and women. Research shows, as in the case of hate speech in general, that there is no major difference in the proportion of men and women in these professions subjected to hate speech. As is the case for hate speech and sexism in wider society, women are nonetheless more often subjected to hate speech of a sexual and sexist nature. Hate speech and sexism directed at people who engage in the public debate as private individuals or as professionals is a problem unto itself as the democratic process and freedom of expression are put under pressure.

The following discusses in greater detail some of the main findings of the relevant international and Nordic studies.

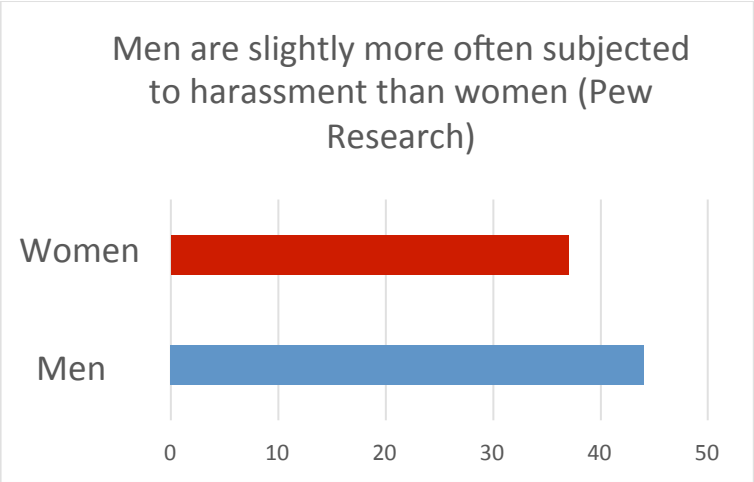
The scope and nature of experiences of hate speech and sexism

One way to determine the extent of experiences of hate speech and sexism is through surveys. PEW Research in the United States has conducted the largest study of its kind, addressing some of the questions raised by the Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombudsman, referenced on the previous page[2].

The study includes nearly 3000 Americans' experiences of harassment on the Internet. The survey shows that 40 per cent of Internet users have been subjected to online harassment, and 73 per cent have witnessed someone else being harassed in some way online. The study also shows that men are slightly more often subjected to harassment than women (44 per cent compared to 37 per cent, Figure 1). Of the 40 per cent who were subjected to harassment, 18 per cent were victims of more severe kinds of harassment such as physical threats, harassment over a sustained period of time, stalking and sexual harassment.

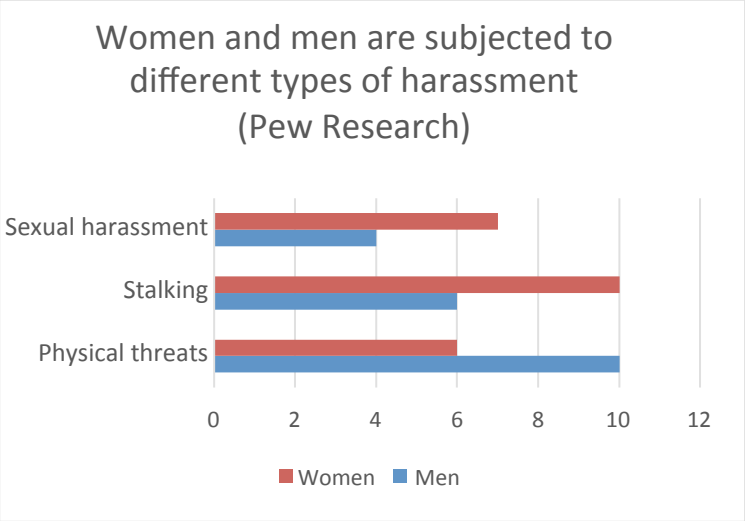
[2] Pew Research Center 2014: *Online Harassment.* http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/

Figure 1



In addition a key finding is that women and men experience different types of harassment. The survey shows that men are more frequently subjected to physical threats than women (ten per cent compared to six per cent) while women more often experience stalking (ten per cent compared to six per cent) and sexual harassment (seven per cent compared to four per cent).

Figure 2



In addition, the survey shows that age is a significant determinant for the risk of being subjected to harassment. Young people between the ages of 18 and 29 are generally more at risk, while young women between the ages of 18 and 24 are a particularly exposed group, falling victim significantly more often than other groups to more severe types of violations

including stalking (26 per cent) and sexual harassment (25 per cent). Likewise, Aina Landsverk Hagen's study of Norwegian journalists shows that young female journalists (aged 25 to 34) are subjected to twice as much sustained harassment as their male counterparts. Furthermore, the interview material in the same study indicates that, for example, female Muslim commentators are subject to more sustained harassment.

A Finnish-American study[3] employs a different question than the Pew Research study in order to gauge respondent exposure to online harassment, and finds a smaller proportion of people subjected to harassment. The study shows that slightly more men than women are subjected to harassment in the US, while the opposite is true in Finland, where women more often than men fall victim to harassment. The study does not take into account whether the harassment is sexual in nature. Another finding is that individuals with low self-esteem, people with eating disorders, and people who engage in self-harm, are far more subject to harassment. The study thus suggests that people who are vulnerable in real life are also more vulnerable to hate speech online.

In line with other studies, the above-mentioned Finnish-American study indicates that a high percentage of the people who experience harassment and sexism on the Internet have similar experiences in offline contexts. Similarly, a Swedish report on bullying and violations among children and youth online shows that 35 per cent of the respondents who were violated on the Internet indicated that they were violated by some of the same people offline[4]. The research thus suggests that hatred on the Internet cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon.

Questions regarding experiences of sexism are included in the battery of questions for the European Social Survey[5]. Overall, the results show that across the European countries more women than men reported having experienced sexism (29 per cent compared 18 per cent). At the same time, responses show that there are great variations in experiences of sexism from country to country. When it comes to women the Czech Republic scores highest with 47.5 per cent compared to Portugal with the lowest score of 15 per cent. Finland (39.9 per cent) and Sweden (37 per cent) score relatively high on the scale, while Denmark (26.8 per cent) and Norway (29.6 per cent) take a middle placement. Sweden tops the scale in terms of how many more women than men report having experienced sexism with 20 per cent. Norway and Finland rank 2nd and 3rd. Yet it is difficult to say precisely what these figures represent. Some scholars are thus of the opinion that the survey results reflect the extent of focus on the issue in different countries, rather than the level of sexism as such.

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[3] Räsänen et al. 2014: *Association Between Online Harassment and Exposure to Harmful Online Content: A Cross-national Comparison Between the United States and Finland.* Computers in Human Behavior, October 2014.

[4] Friends 2015. Nätrapport 2015. http://friends.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Natrapporten-final-webb.pdf

[5] Swift, H.J. & Abrams, D. 2012: *Experiences of Sexism. Findings from the European Social Survey, Eurage Research Report No 1*, EURAGE.

Experiences with hate speech and sexism among politicians and other public figures
In Norway, Aina Landsverk Hagen's book *Meningers Mot: Netthat og ytringsfrihet i Norge*[6] (*The Courage of Opinions: Online Harassment and Freedom of Speech in Norway*) was published in the spring of 2015. The book documents that nearly half of the country's journalists and editors have experienced violations, harassment or smear campaigning in the past year. In line with the Pew Research study described above, the book shows that men are subjected to harassment as often as women, but that the harassment experienced by women far more often has a sexual nature. The study also shows that harassment is mainly caused by men aged 35 to 50 years, which partly explains the differences in the nature of the harassment the two sexes are exposed to. Furthermore, the study shows, as did Aina's presentation at the seminar, that journalists and editors who are exposed to hate speech and sexism rarely get the support from their workplace that they need. Freelancers and bloggers are groups that are particularly vulnerable in the sense that they do not have the same workplace support as journalists and editors (albeit the support is inadequate).

In November 2014 DR Nyheder (the Danish Broadcasting Corporation News) published the results of a poll among 74 Danish parliamentary politicians, which showed that 60 per cent of both male and female members of parliament have been subjected to harassment online, and that 30 per cent of parliamentary members of both genders have experienced death threats[7].

An opinion poll conducted by Epinion for Djøf DeFacto[8] in December 2014 concerning perceptions of women and men's conditions for participating in public debate shows that every third woman is of the opinion that women have worse conditions for participating in political debate than men[9].

Who is behind hate speech and sexism and on which platforms?
Several studies suggest that the majority of the perpetrators of hate speech and threats are men. As evidenced by Aina Landsverk Hagen's presentation and her study on journalists and editors, men between 35 and 50 years old are significantly over-represented.

Pew Research's survey of online harassment shows that a stranger or unknown person was responsible for 64 per cent of the cases of hate speech or threats (Figure 3). In 24 per cent of the cases, an acquaintance was the source, while a friend was responsible for 23 per cent of the cases. Family members were responsible for 12 per cent, while 10 per cent were former romantic partners, and colleagues accounted for seven per cent.

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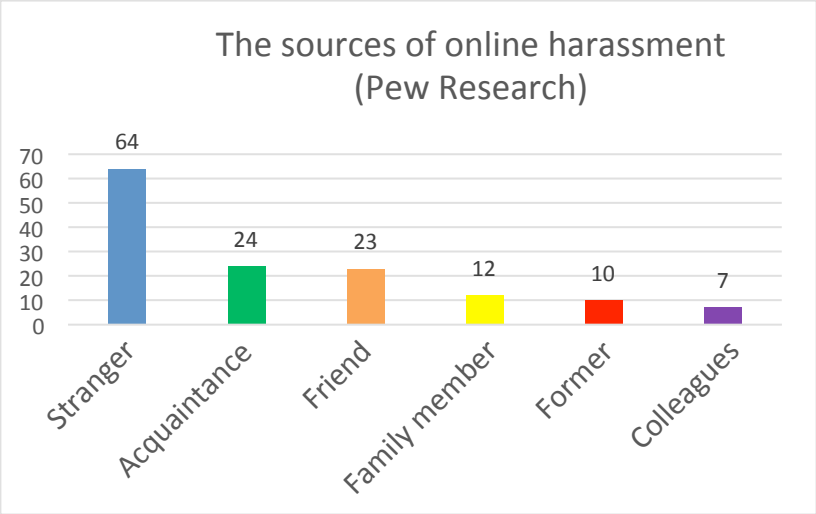
[6] Hagen, A. L. 2015: *Meningers mot - netthat og ytringsfrihet i Norge.* Cappelen Damm.
[7] http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/onlinehetz-saadan-chikanerer-danskere-politikerne, http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/kvindelige-politikere-udsaettes-sexistisk-chikane
[8] The newsletter for Djøf, the Danish association for graduates of law, business economics, and political and social sciences.
[9] https://www.djoef.dk/blade/defacto/udgivelser/2015/nummer-1/hver-fjerde-kvinder-har-ringere-debatvilk-aa-r.aspx

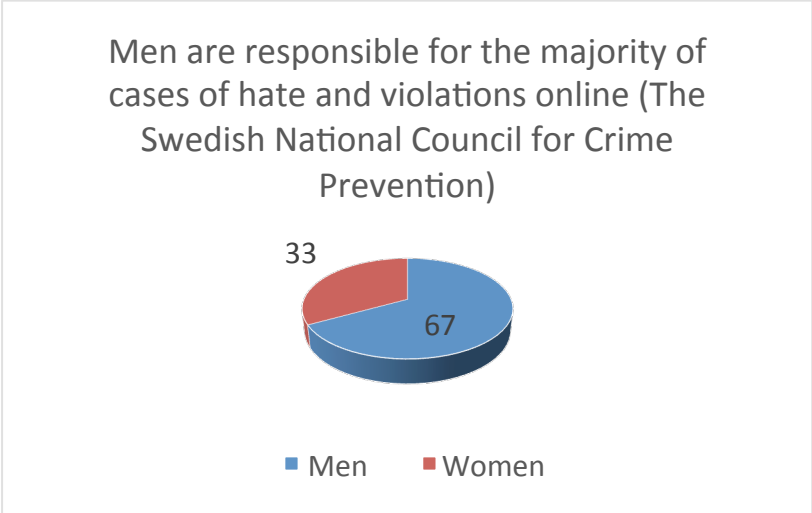
Figure 3



The survey also shows that 66 per cent of those who had experienced online harassment said that their most recent incident occurred on a social networking site or app (for instance Facebook), while 22 per cent had experienced it in the comment section of a website (such as a news medium) and 16 per cent had experienced it in connection with online gaming.

In Sweden, the National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande rådet*) has investigated hate and violations against individuals on the Internet[10]. The study focuses explicitly on gender differences and is based on 713 police reports and preliminary investigations in 2012. The study shows that in 67 per cent of the cases in which the alleged offender's gender is known, a man is responsible. For both male and female victims of hate speech and violations, the majority of those responsible for the violation are men.

Figure 4



[10] Andersson et al. 2015: *Polisanmälda Hot och Kränkningar mot Enskilda Personer via Internet.* Brottsförebyggande rådet.

The cases reviewed in the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention investigation must generally be perceived to be more serious than those addressed in the Pew Research survey. Perhaps for this reason, there are more cases of hate speech where the perpetrator is known in the Swedish investigation. In 22 per cent of cases, a current or former partner is responsible, while 40 per cent are either friends or acquaintances. The perpetrator is anonymous or unknown in only 33 per cent of cases.

What themes are most often related to hate speech and sexism?
In the aforementioned Norwegian study among journalists, based on over 1000 responses, the following themes emerged as those which are most often related to hate speech and sexism (triggering themes):

- Immigration / minorities (66 per cent)
- Political conflicts in general (62 per cent)
- Feminism / gender equality (53 per cent)
- Religion (45 per cent)

The percentages are an expression of the proportion of journalists who have written about the above topics and who have been subjected to harassment, threats or violence in the past five years. The results thus indicate, in line with other studies, that there are certain topics of debate, particularly immigration / minorities and feminism / gender equality, which are associated with harassment, threats, etc.

Hate speech and sexism in an intersectional perspective
In addition to the fact that women and men, as seen above, are subjected to hate speech and sexism in different ways, there are a number of other contributing factors, about which we currently lack knowledge.

For instance, there is much to suggest that women with ethnic minority backgrounds are more exposed than other women. There may be several reasons for this: a woman with an ethnic minority background may find herself exposed to hate speech with racist content from individuals from the ethnic majority, but she may also be exposed to hate speech from within the ethnic minority community, who may find that her public image and statements violate values prevalent in the minority community. It was evident at the seminar that there is a lack of knowledge in these areas and that such knowledge is in great demand.

In addition, attention should be paid to the combination of having a gender identity / sexual orientation that is different from the majority as well as an ethnic minority background and how these interact. In Denmark, for example, we know that immigrant LGBT persons are far more vulnerable to discrimination than other LGBT persons[11]. However, we lack knowledge

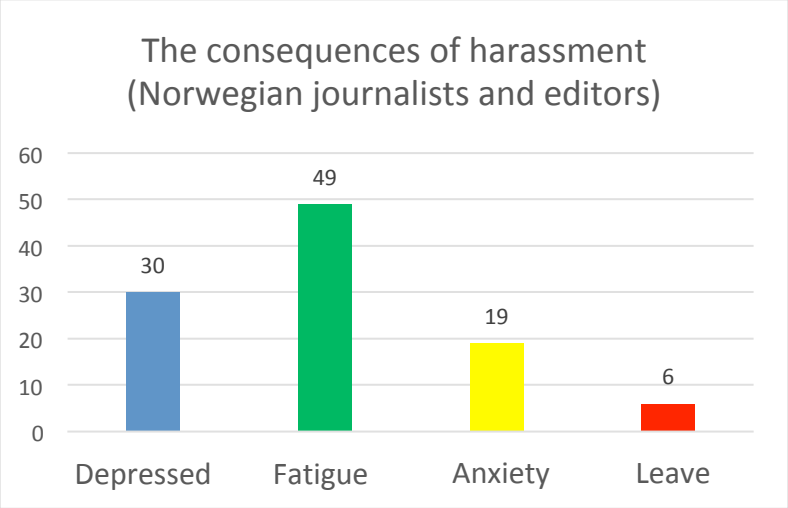
[11] Følner, Bjarke & Dehlholm, Mikkel (2015): Nydanske LGBT-personers Levevilkår. Als Research. http://www.alsresearch.dk/uploads/Publikationer/Nydanske_LGBT-personers_levevilkaar.pdf

about how the combination of ethnic minority and LGBT status specifically affects how exposed people are to hate speech and sexism.

The consequences of hate speech, sexism and non-consensual pornography

A study focusing on Norwegian journalists examined the consequences of harassment and threats in relation to four parameters. Figure 5 below shows that 30 per cent of the respondents report that they have felt depressed as a result of harassment and threats. The corresponding figure for fatigue is 49 per cent, while 19 per cent have experienced symptoms of anxiety and 6 per cent have taken leave due to illness.

Figure 5



These figures should be seen in light of the fact that a considerable proportion of Norwegian journalists have been subjected to harassment and threats.

The same survey shows that 41 per cent of those who have experienced harassment and threats have had trouble sleeping, while 15 per cent said they seriously considered leaving their profession (as journalists). Individuals who get involved in public debate non-professionally also experience consequences of various kinds.

The aforementioned Pew Research survey also shows that women generally perceive harassment as more upsetting than men. 38 per cent of the women questioned thus found their most recent experience with harassment either extremely or very upsetting, compared to 17 per cent of the men (the average for both sexes is 27 per cent).

3. LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF HATE SPEECH AND SEXISM

The legal dimensions of hate speech and sexism were also discussed at the seminar. Legal sociologist Karl Dahlstrand (SE) from Lund University gave a presentation on the legal framework of sexism and hate speech in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions. Furthermore the participants of the seminar discussed, both in groups and in plenum, the opportunities and limitations of addressing hate speech and sexism via legislation.

There seemed to be consensus at the seminar that legislation does play a part in preventing and addressing hate speech and sexism. However, it was also conceded that legislation cannot stand alone. Information campaigns must go hand in hand with legislation in order to change social norms regarding what is acceptable. An additional topic of discussion at the seminar was the need for increased support of victims, who are subjected to forms of hate speech and sexism that are not in fact illegal but nonetheless affect the persons exposed to them.

In the following paragraph the legal framework related to sexism and hate speech in the Nordic countries is outlined. The paragraph is based on legal sociologist Karl Dahlstrand's (SE) presentation at the seminar as well as supplementary literature.

Common Traits in the Nordic Countries
In the Nordic countries and autonomous territories legislation related to gender equality and hate crimes is relatively similar. Additionally, countries that are members of the EU are subject to the same EU legislation regarding gender and hate crimes.

From a judicial-sociological perspective one can furthermore point out the similarity in social factors of the Nordic countries, which influence public perceptions of the legal system and the ways in which it deals with gender equality and hate speech. Comparing the so-called 'self expression values' of all the societies of the world, one finds that the Nordic countries and autonomous territories value the choice of the individual particularly highly compared to other societies. Hence, violations of the individual are perceived as particularly unjust in the North. As an indicator of how this relates to the populations' relation to the legal system, it may be highlighted that we in the North have the highest rates of reporting violations in the world.

Legal Framework within the EU
Prohibition of discrimination is incorporated in a number of EU directives as well as The European Convention on Human Rights. In both the directives and the convention this prohibition contains a number of discrimination grounds, which include gender. Article 14 of the convention reads:

> *"The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this European Convention on Human Rights shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."*

Furthermore the legal framework of the EU guarantees the population's right to freedom of speech, both within The European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights. However, freedom of speech entails duties as well as responsibilities. Article 10 of The European Convention on Human Rights reads:

> *"The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary (…) for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others (…)."*

As part of the EU's shared values the first paragraph on shared provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon also includes the equality of men and women (article 2):

> *"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."*

National Legislation in the North

In the following paragraph Swedish legislation is used as an example of legislation in a Nordic country, as the legislation across the Nordic countries and the autonomous regions is similar.

One of the two main concepts of the seminar was 'sexism'. The term originates from the American women's liberation movement in the 1960s, where it was used as a parallel to 'racism'. Sexism can entail, for example, illegal discrimination based on a person's gender or sexual harassment, which designates behaviour of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity. The legislation related to this type of discrimination covers work life, education, the selling of goods and services, insurance, and public authorities. In Sweden The Equality Ombudsman is a central authority in relation to citizens' access to protection. Similar institutions exist in the other Nordic countries and autonomous regions. Legislation does not only prohibit discrimination, it also prescribes active measures to prevent discrimination in certain areas, hereunder schools and employments. The Swedish Education Act, which commits schools to actively work against the violation of students, provides an example:

> *"The principal shall ensure that measures are taken within the framework of each institution towards preventing degrading treatment of children and pupils."*[12]

[12] *"Huvudmannen ska se till att det inom ramen för varje särskild verksamhet bedrivs ett målinriktat arbete för att motverka kränkande behandling av barn och elever."* Chapter 6, article 6.

The second main concept of the seminar is 'hate crime', which is a general term for various crimes motivated by prejudice against an identifiable group — a so-called hate motif. The Criminal Code allows for a hate motif to be an aggravating factor in criminal cases.
The Criminal Code also prohibits hate speech, which publicly calls for agitation against an identifiable group. These are also called *'hadytringer'* in Danish or *'hets mot folkgrupp'* in Swedish. Gender is not included in these two Criminal Code Articles as a basis for discrimination. Instead both criminal sections mention:

"(…) race, colour of skin, nationality, ethnic background, faith or sexual orientation (…)"

At the seminar it was discussed whether gender should be included as a judicial basis for protection in relation to hate crimes. However, this was a topic which participants did not agree on.

Furthermore legal sociologists discuss "reflexive law", referring to the need to promote self-reflection in social systems. As a legislator one must accept that the population to some extent sets the limits for what is acceptable and what is not. This applies for instance to the development of new norms of social interaction in online media, where one cannot expect to be able to regulate in detail.

Online Violations and the Penalties Act
In the legal field, it is particularly interesting to examine what might be called 'online rights violations', because the law in this area is challenged by rapid technological development. There are indications that few of the illegal online violations that take place are prosecuted. Presently there are studies from Sweden[13] that point to this, but according to a number of surveyed professionals it is likely that the situation is similar in the other Nordic countries and autonomous territories.

The aforementioned study by The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention shows that only four per cent of the reports of online rights violations received by the Swedish police in 2012 led to legal cases. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention estimates that 20 per cent of the reports related to incidents that are not punishable under the Criminal Code. Regarding the other incidents The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention points to various reasons why the reports have not resulted in prosecution. The council's statements are consistent with Schultz's description of the challenges associated with using the framework of criminal law to combat online rights violations in Sweden:

- *New violations, old law:* It can be difficult for police and prosecutors to find out which law applies to a specific online violation. Some online violations such as non-consensual pornography are rarely covered by legislation.

[13] This paragraph is based on Brottsförebyggande rådet 2015 p. 26-34 and Schultz 2014 p. 192-194

- *The authority of the prosecutor:* In Sweden, the prosecution is only authorized to pursue a case of libel if it is in the public interest. Only a very limited number of cases fulfil this criterion.

- *Investigation and evidence:* In 44 per cent of the total number of cases investigated by The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the case was not prosecuted due to problems with the investigation and evidence. In nearly half of these cases, a perpetrator could not be identified. In other cases, it was difficult to prove who had been sitting at the keyboard. Investigation is also challenged by the lack of IT skills as well as resources to strengthen IT skills in police departments and prosecution.

- *Global Internet, national legislation:* The Internet is global, but the legal framework to protect citizens against violations is anchored nationally. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention explains that obtaining information about violators from companies such as Facebook and Instagram has proved difficult. In the mean time, the national police have developed a partnership with these two companies, but the challenge will continue to emerge as new Internet companies gain ground.

4. EXPERIENCES WITH PREVENTIVE INITIATIVES

At the seminar there were presentations by three representatives of various organizations working with a preventive approach to hate speech and sexism in a Nordic context:

Irene Manteufel (DK) reported about the work of the **Everyday Sexism Project** on documenting everyday sexism in Denmark. The Everyday Sexism Project collects stories of women's experiences with sexism via the website www.danmark.everydaysexism.com, and additionally conducts advocacy against sexism in society. The Danish division is part of an international organization with branches in 18 countries.

Ingrid Aspelund (NO) reported about the work of **Stopp Hatpratkampanjen** on promoting human rights and confronting hate speech online. The Norwegian division, which uses the platform www.stopphatprat.no, is part of a European campaign under the Council of Europe. The aim is to equip young people to actively say no to hate speech online. The work particularly focuses on hate speech, which is not illegal.

Helena Dal (SE) reported on the work of **Swedish Media Council** on educating Swedish youth about online hate speech and the limits to how one may interact on the Internet. The Swedish Media Council works broadly with children and young people's use of media, and you can read about their work here: www.statensmedierad.se. They are, among other things, responsible for setting age limits for movies.

The above three representatives spoke about the organizations' experiences when working specifically with sexism and hate speech. The participants of the seminar had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the presentations. Overall, participants showed great interest in the various forms of collective action on hate speech and sexism that Irene Manteufel and Ingrid Aspelund presented. Additionally, participants showed interest in Swedish Media Council experience in working systematically with school-based prevention among young people.

The following section outlines the specific initiatives against hate speech and sexism that were presented at the seminar by the above three representatives. Furthermore, two additional initiatives are presented, which were introduced at the seminar by Thordis Elva (IS) and Aina Landsverk Hagen (NO). Finally, an initiative from the United States is presented, which, in the light of the problem of non-consensual pornography being discussed in detail, could be of interest to seminar participants.

Documentation and Advocacy on Experienced Sexism

The Everyday Sexism Project in Denmark has been successful in focusing on everyday sexism against women such as harassment, groping, threats, stalking etc. In March 2015 they released a report on sexism in public transportation, which was delivered to the Minister of Transport. The Minister subsequently appointed a group of experts to kick-start the debate about behaviour in busses, trains and metros. One of the focus areas for the expert group will be sexism. The Everyday Sexism Project also works with three unions in order to turn the spotlight on sexual harassment at workplaces. The project focuses on giving employees the

opportunity to document harassment anonymously, thus creating knowledge about the extent and nature of harassment at each workplace, which thereby becomes better equipped to address the harassment.

"Take Back the Words"

The Stopp Hatprat campaign in Norway is working towards a collective change of tone in online discussion threads, and to support individuals who are exposed to hate speech online. For example, a group of campaign participants can decide to get involved in a comment field that has a negative tone, write a number of comments and "like" each other's comments so the overall tone is changed. Specifically, the Stopp Hatprat-campaign has launched a Facebook campaign to "take back the words". Among other things, participants have supported a young woman who had been called by another online commentator "stupid-head". They have changed their profile picture to a picture in which they hold a sign reading "I am stupid-head". In another initiative in which the words were taken back, the campaign participants changed the wording from "the Muslims" or "the Jews" to "those of us who are Muslims" or "those of us who are Jews". This was done in order to promote inclusive language in the online debate.

www.stopphatprat.no

Educational Material on Online Hate and Legal Framework

It was repeatedly discussed at the seminar that it is important to focus on the education of young people in order to promote a non-discriminatory culture on the web. Both the Swedish Media Council and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society have published educational materials on online hate to use in schools. The educational materials consist of leaflets aimed at schoolchildren in the older classes, background materials for teachers and methodology manuals for teaching sessions. Among other things the material focuses on helping youth to understand the judicial framework, what is legal and illegal online.

http://statensmedierad.se/larommedier/manniskanonline/sakandumotverkanathat.343.html
http://www.mucf.se/publikationer/hat-pa-natet

Workshops on "Sexting" for Parents

During discussions on non-consensual pornography at the seminar it was repeatedly highlighted as an issue that very young people deal with intimate images in new ways that put them at risk. In Iceland Thordis Elva has worked with "sexting" via a series of workshops for parents of adolescents. The purpose of the workshops has been to make parents aware of the consequences it may have for young people to share intimate pictures of themselves with others, but also what to do if an intimate picture of your child is being posted on the Internet.

Task Force with Expertise in Online Hate

A relevant problem concerning online violations is that the police lack skills in relation to technical possibilities and legal frameworks. Aina Landsverk Hagen spoke about an initiative which has helped to upgrade the skills of local police across Norway. The police in Oslo have set up a special task force with expertise in online assaults. Citizens throughout Norway can report assaults to the task force, after which they travel to the place in question and assist the local police in investigating the case. In practice the task force operates as capacity building for the local police districts they visit, in relation to knowledge on how to work with online assaults.

Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (USA)

In the US the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative has put a determined effort towards supporting victims of 'non-consensual pornography', and, through lobbying, to improve the possibilities of getting the pictures removed from the Internet and the perpetrators prosecuted. A number of achievements have been reached, including photos being removed from Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Instagram and Periscope. A number of US states have introduced specific legislation against 'non-consensual pornography' and website owners have been prosecuted. Their greatest success, however, was to make Google remove nude pictures from all search results, at the request of victims.

www.endrevengeporn.org

5. PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

At the seminar a number of proposals for future actions emerged, which players of the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers should consider working on. The general attitude was that some goals can be reached via legislation, but that other steps are needed and will probably prove more effective. At the seminar there was a large degree of consensus among stakeholders and thus also a basis for joint Nordic initiatives, in which the Nordic Council of Ministers could play a facilitating role. At the seminar it emerged that one of the main gaps in our knowledge about the phenomenon of hate speech and sexism is who the violators are. Some research suggests that people between 35 and 50 years are over-represented among the violators. Meanwhile, most attention in relation to initiatives against hate speech is directed at young people (students etc.). Hence, there is a particular need for more knowledge about the violators and, extending from this, campaigns directed towards the groups that are mainly responsible for hate speech and sexism.

In the following a number of proposed actions, which may prove advantageous to move forward on, are presented. The proposals are based on discussions and presentations at the seminar and thus do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Als Research.

Research
Already during the preparation of the background note, it became clear that research in this area is insufficient, a point also repeatedly argued by the participants at the seminar. Research is lacking on the nature and extent of sexist hate speech and the victims who are particularly affected by it, but also on the impact that hate speech has on men's and women's participation in the public debate, and not least on the perpetrators responsible for hate speech and the reasons for their utterances.

At the seminar there was broad consensus that funding should be allocated to research projects that examine issues in the field. Among other things, it was proposed to draw up the existing knowledge on the field to identify the areas that merit further work. At the same time it was proposed to increase Nordic cooperation in this area and coordinate research between the Nordic countries.

Focus on the Perpetrators
Among the participants of the seminar, there was broad consensus that focus should be directed towards the perpetrators responsible for hate speech and sexism, since there is, as mentioned earlier, virtually no research on the subject. But to target measures focused on the group of perpetrators, it is necessary to know more about who they are. A Norwegian study shows that men aged 35 and 50 are over-represented among perpetrators. However, knowledge of who the perpetrators are and what motivates their utterances is lacking, which complicates the task of solving existing problems with sexism and hate speech.

Preventive Work and Education

As mentioned above, the lack of knowledge of both victims and perpetrators means that it is hard to work on focused preventive initiatives. However, there was at the seminar broad consensus that long-term, preventive initiatives can be advantageously used to prevent sexist hate speech. Education in schools and other institutions was highlighted as a key element to prevent the problem. Girls and boys need to learn about how to communicate online from an early age. Several participants felt that the cooperation between local authorities and schools should be increased to ensure that education in schools, youth and sports clubs addresses the issue and focuses on issues such as equality, cyber-behaviour, democracy and political participation, as well as counter-strategies, such as skills for dealing with harassment and hate. This should include developing informative material for professionals working with children and adolescents. It was pointed out that there are already good education materials in Norway, but the use of the material could with merit be coordinated nationally.

Topics such as online sexism and hate speech should also be incorporated into educational materials prepared for sex education in schools. Several participants felt that the material could benefit from having a norm-critical approach to the topics of gender and sexuality.

Public Awareness and Political Attention

In addition to teaching in schools and youth clubs, it was pointed out that there is a need for information and public awareness in the field, both from political and private actors. Some participants believed that politicians should be engaged to speak on the subject. This may be done with inspiration from the Everyday Sexism Project's campaign where stories about everyday sexism on public transportation were collected and handed over to the Minister of Transport, who then focused on the issue in the press.

There is a need for information campaigns that focus on the problem. It was also suggested to draw inspiration from the HeForShe campaign, where men and boys are engaged to fight for women's rights. In general, several seminar participants believed that it would be beneficial to involve men in the campaign as ambassadors in the gender equality debate.

Upgrading of Police and the Development of Registration Systems

The role of the police in the issue of hate speech and sexism was repeatedly discussed. Some participants at the seminar felt that the police should be trained to handle problems related to sexist hate speech. It was further argued that some victims of violations find that they are not taken seriously when they report cases to the police, which can lead to violations not being reported.

An additional problem in several Nordic countries and autonomous territories, with the exception of Sweden and Finland, is the lack of registration of hate crimes by the police. By registering cases of a sexist and hateful nature the police may serve as a source that can help to elucidate the extent of sexist hate crimes. Several Norwegian participants highlighted the work of the Norwegian police as a suggestion for how to work with the optimization of police competence in relation to hate crime. The Norwegian police work, as stated in Section 5

above, focuses on upgrading the local police via a task force, which travels around Norway and assists in relation to hate crimes.

Victim-blaming

Victim-blaming, in which the victim of hate speech, sexism etc. is held entirely or partially responsible for the harm that befell them, was repeatedly cited as an issue occurring when victims of hate speech etc. report their experiences to the police or in other ways speak out about the violations they have suffered. Participants at the seminar pointed out that victim-blaming can be a problem with the police and in the judicial system, but also noted that there is a need for a change of culture in the way victims of sexist hate speech are referred to in the media.

It was also mentioned that public responses to the problem are of particular importance in terms of the individual's experience of the violation that she/he has been subjected to. It was pointed out that it is important to put the issue on the agenda, so that victims of sexist hate speech do not feel shame and conceal their experience in fear of external responses. For commentators and journalists who have been subjected to sexist hate speech, it is essential that the employer takes the issue seriously and takes responsibility for employee wellbeing. Several participants expressed the need for more campaigns focussing on victim-blaming in order to reduce the scale of the problem.

International cooperation and cooperation with key Internet players

Several participants at the seminar highlighted the need for international co-operation. In addition to broad international cooperation, an intensification of the Nordic cooperation was also proposed, both in terms of coordination of research, but also in the form of joint Nordic campaigns and action plans on how the problem can be reduced. Such collaboration could for instance be established through the departments for gender equality in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions.

In addition to cooperation across nations, the establishment of an intergovernmental collaboration with network providers and websites like Facebook was also proposed. Looking to Germany, one finds for instance Facebook collaborating with the German government in order to reduce racist hate speech about refugees. At the same, the technological possibilities for tackling online abuse should be examined. On the whole, it was agreed that "major players" on the Internet should be required to address the problem.

The role of the media

Discussions at the seminar also revolved around what role the media should play. Among other things it was emphasized that the media industry should address the problem and regulate media users' online behaviour. Moderators should be responsible for raising the issue and sharing knowledge about the consequences that sexist and hate speech have for the victims. Several participants felt that the media have a key role to play in countering the problem.

Non-consensual pornography

The issue of non-consensual pornography, also called revenge porn, was repeatedly discussed at the seminar. Some participants proposed the introduction of legislation that specifically addresses non-consensual pornography, suggesting that this could reduce the problem more efficiently than more generalized legislation in the area. In addition, social media, search engines and other related Internet players should be engaged in removing content that is shared without the consent of the victim.

It was also suggested that a hotline, to which victims of non-consensual pornography can turn, be established.

Counterstrategies

A discussion topic at the seminar examined the actions victims of sexist hate speech can take when they are subjected to sexist hate speech online. It is particularly difficult when the comments made are not real threats and thus non-punishable, but nonetheless affect the recipient negatively. The participants at the seminar pointed out that people who are frequent victims of offensive, sexist comments develop 'harassment skills' which enable them to evaluate the threat level of different types of hate speech and sexist comments. This is one way of handling the problem. However, the development of harassment skills does not counteract the problem. A hotline, to which victims can phone in and get support and information concerning their rights, was suggested. The Danish Women's Society (*Dansk Kvindesamfund*) and Stop Hate Speech (*Stopp Hatprat*) are also working to counteract the problem with a joint counter-strategy, where many members of the same Facebook group team up to support each other in discussion threads in order to promote a better tone and to make it clear that sexist comments are not tolerated.

Legal

As mentioned previously, seminar participants discussed the fact that gender does not currently have judicial protection status in relation to the prohibition of hate crimes. It was mentioned that one could consider whether gender should be included as a judicial basis for protection. It was also pointed out that gender-based hate speech should be reported and tried, given the need for a case to be put through the legal system, in order for it to serve as a precedent for other similar cases. Furthermore, it was discussed that a central legal challenge to online hate speech is that it is difficult to prosecute Internet providers that are subject to a national legislation other than the injured person's, for instance if intimate photos of a European person are posted on an American website. In this context it was suggested that working with supranational legislation inspired by international regulations (of, for example, aviation and sea) would be beneficial.