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The following report gives the overview of the research focus and material, preliminary research findings and policy recommendations (where applicable) according to the subtasks, formulated by the researchers themselves. The report is designed in line with the D 2.3. The actual research results will be published in academic (peer reviewed) formats. This document will be discussed at the mid-term meeting in Granada and constitutes the basis for D3.7 "Final report policy recommendations WP3".

T 3.2.1 Religious Tolerance in Online Media: YouTube channels

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1. Research Focus and Material

My research goal was to understand from where young (13-18 yrs old European) persons get information and ideas about religion and religious co-existence. Of course, it could be from friends, streets, school, sports groups and family (if religion is a topic in this particular family) or school, but probably more and more through mass media (films, TV series), internet and social media. In Europe as of January 2019 86% of all people use internet and 55% (462,5 million) are active social media users. Also according to a recent Pew study, 85% of teens use YouTube, making it the most popular platform among them. In US over 90% 18-24 yrs old use YouTube - and these numbers are annually rising.

I dived into YouTube as an anthropologist with a background in film industry and religious studies to better understand how we could use YouTube as a tool to develop knowledge about religion and religious co-existence. It is quite logical as YouTube has become the second most trafficked website and is also the second largest search engine in the world. My focus was mainly on English speaking material, as English is the main language in YouTube making 93,5% of uploaded videos (Portuguese 1,2, Spanish 1, German 0,5, Russian 0,45, French 0,42, other 2,63).

Since approx. 500 hrs. of fresh video are uploaded to YouTube every minute by 50 million different users who create content (a lot of those videos violate YouTube's guidelines and subsequently get taken down) it's impossible to determine the exact number of videos hosted on the platform. One person could spend an entire lifetime trying to watch all the content uploaded to YouTube in just one day. So, we can clearly state that this is an endless pool of audio-visual information, and any research findings and recommendations are strictly subjective and personal.

As previous European Commissioner for Consumer Protection, Meglena Kuneva said already in 2009: "Personal data is the new oil of the internet and the new currency of the digital world." Last year, the Economist stated that data has replaced oil as the world's most valuable resource. Unfortunately, it means that this precise data is very rarely shared with outsiders by big companies such as Google, which also owns YouTube. This means that exact statistical data is shared rarely. YouTube channels easily share information of subscribers and total views and views per video but not

demographic and geographic data, what is somewhere "there" but unfortunately not for everyone to access.

2. Research Findings

An important and encouraging discovery was that according to market research company Ipsos, 80% of Gen Z teens say YouTube has helped them become more knowledgeable about something and 68% say YouTube has helped them improve or gain skills that will help them prepare for the future. This drive for self-improvement is coming to life in unexpected ways. For example, *study with me* videos, where people film themselves studying to encourage good study habits, are a growing genre. We can think of them as a virtual study buddy. It shows Gen Z innovating a new video format that brings together a desire to learn with a need for togetherness and human connection. Category "how to" is the fourth most popular content category on YouTube. It shows that this is a good platform for getting more knowledge and information.

Roughly divided, YouTube has videos categorized into two types of material: UGC (user generated content) and PGC (professionally generated content). The amount of PGC is not so big compared to UGC, but Google has stated that it is giving PGC greater significance and encourages its usage. Which means it is harder to get clicks for single uploaded video versus established channel video with bigger submissions and fan base.

I divided YouTube channels as a source of religious diversity providers to teenagers into categories below:

- TV/Online news and coverages in the form of short documentary: Almost all members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and all bigger news channels are investing more into short visual news/documentary format and uploading it into the online platforms. Many of these have well curated YouTube Channels like DW Documentary, Guardian Culture, BBC Documentary, ARTE etc. These could be well promoted by teachers.
- Feature films and TV Series: Film trailers serve as an advertisement and stand as good examples of educational tool for religious tolerance. For example, trailers of award-winning films such as In the Fade, Tangerines, Dancing in Jaffa or What Will People Say.
- Educational channels: Focusing on channels that create content to school kids. There are tons of them, and many are surprisingly good. Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell counts 10,3 million subscribers, Ted ED 10,2m subs., Crash Course 10,1m subs or AsapSCIENCE 8,85m subs. Considering the general lack of civility elsewhere on YouTube the academic approach of those sites is a real breath of fresh air. Of course, information in these channels is extremely compressed on a verbal narrative level, plus

it is made more appealing and informative through animation, music, effects etc. It seems that fast forward style content, with compressed information and a twist of humour works best if you want to attract masses. Videos uploaded by these channels clearly have behind them a strong production team of scientists, animators and filmmakers. Videos are well scripted and worth of attention. Significantly smaller, but also relevant for the topic of religion and religious co-existence are Smarthistory (151k subs.), Religion for Breakfast (98k subs), and The Review of Religions (55k subs.).

- Popular youtubers/influencers: There are a countless number of youtubers. As of 2019, there are over 8.000 YouTube channels having more than 1 million subscribers and this number is rapidly growing (in 2016, there were only 2,000 channels that had over one million subscribers). The main style of popular youtuber videos that include religious content are pranks and (social) experiments. Some popular Muslim youtubers, who are dealing with religious topics, are for example Adam Saleh with 2,5m subs. His Pulling Hijab off experiment has over 21million views and Praying in public 15m views. Karim Jovian with 1,9m subs creates parodies and videos about Muslims and many of his videos became viral. His video "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman in Hijab" has over 18 million views. He has many videos with over 10m views. These types of experiments tend to travel from country to country. For example, a practically identical experiment has been done in different corners of the EU where a Muslim girl with hijab stands on a street with an empty poster with sign “I am Muslim… and that makes me…” Purpose of the experiment is to get people's reactions and to see what they would write to the empty board to complete the sentence
  (in Sweden https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukMGkHTD1F8,
  Italy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgLTVxL7kVc,
  and in Norway https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDXBvrX4WGI).
- Surprising one-off wonders: a good example is the viral hit “History of the entire world, i guess” by Bill Wurz, which has gained 78 million views and is known also in classrooms.

Problematic material which I did not cover but we should be aware of are religiously active preaching/missionary type of materials both from a Christian or an Islamic point of view which are also fighting with each other (it is not always easy for kids to separate mission from facts). Also Radical Islam and Martyrdom Videos and Alt right / YouTube right channels are booming in many countries and support radicalization. They are fixated on the subjects of immigration and Islam.

A problem is that we do not know much about YouTube algorithm, but it seems that its recommendations are directing users gradually to more extreme content. Some claim that YouTube could be a tool for political radicalization. The algorithm has also caused harmful content to be

recommended to children and the promotion of potentially endangering content. Mark Zuckerberg admitted last year that borderline content is more engaging. Google has not commented on whether the same is true for YouTube. However, as an individual user has no control and knowledge over recommendations it could lead to dangerous results.

3. Recommendations

- Substantially increased investment into media literacy – it is of utmost importance to promote media intelligence and critical thinking among young people as they are extremely vulnerable to propaganda and fake news. The most efficient interventions shall be initiated both at the universities that train schoolteachers and also as a part of the curriculum starting from elementary school until gymnasium level. Good partners would be all members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) who hold highest professional standards and knowledge of the field or regional think tanks.
- Greater investment into visual literacy - it gives educators a chance to increase the quality of their teaching and to connect with youth in a more engaging way. It could be done by supporting different film literacy programmes, for example through Creative Europe - Media that covers the whole of Europe. Which means investing more into audiovisual studies so that next generation could “read” visual material more critically.
- Investment into good online educational programmes with audiovisual input at their core. There are already many surprisingly good ones with fantastic content and a huge fan base like Crash Course, Ted-Ed, Kurzgesagt etc. The EU could create new similar high-quality learning sites which could use one shared animation/video script as a base which could be then translated into different languages through local partners (again maybe through EBU members?). Of course, quality subtitles would be a cheaper option, but local language voiceover or presenters would be more engaging. As social media experts have stated, the current digital revolution is grounded on relationships. It means a lot of work to build love for your channel, brand, product, or movement.

To end with a positive note, I will cite TED founder Chris Anderson who has said: “Face-to-face communication of the type that online videos convey has been fine-tuned by millions of years of evolution. What Gutenberg did for writing, online video can now do for face-to-face communication. That it's not far-fetched to say that online video will dramatically accelerate scientific advance, and that video contributors may be about to launch the biggest learning cycle in human history."

As a conclusion, I state that YouTube has become the biggest informal classroom of the world and we should embrace it and create better content into it instead of fighting against it.

T 3.2.2 Analysing representations depicted in TV-series

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1. Research Material

The focus of this research concerns how religious peace and tolerance is represented in TV series in the Balkans and in Western Europe. This research took place between September 2018 and December 2019. The TV shows analyzed by Ivan Stefanovski are the following: "Koreni" (Roots) – a Serbian TV show depicting the political and economic life in early 20th century rural Serbia; "Vikings" – an internationally popular TV show reflecting on the life, adventures, and cultural habits of the Vikings; "Prespav" – a Macedonian TV show taking place in a small touristic village close to the natural lake of Prespa, where diversity (ethnic, religious, ideological and sexual) tries to prevail over the conservative local narratives; "Na Ista Strana" (On the Same Side) is a documentary show presenting the different religious groups peacefully co-existing in North Macedonia. It deals with many issues like inter-confessional marriages, inter-religious co-existence in small villages throughout the country, cooperation between local religious leaders etc.; and "The Borgias" – a popular historical TV show presenting the life of Pope Alexander VI – Rodrigo Borgia, and his misuse of the powerful religious position for enrichment and military purposes.

A special case is the TV show "Citizen Khan", analyzed by Mikko Ketola. Citizen Khan (a playful reference to Orson Welles' famous movie, Citizen Kane) is a BBC 1 comedy series created by actor and comedian Adil Ray (born 1974), a British Pakistani Muslim. His father was a Pakistani Punjabi and his mother a Kenyan Asian. He also stars as Mr Khan in the sitcom that ran for five series in 2012–2016. Citizen Khan is set in Sparkhill, East Birmingham, in the United Kingdom.

Mr Khan calls Birmingham in the series "the capital of British Pakistan". In fact, Birmingham has the second largest Pakistani community in the United Kingdom, London holding the first place. Within Birmingham, Sparkhill has one of the largest concentrations of Pakistanis. Currently there are around 1,17 million Pakistanis in the United Kingdom, making them the second largest ethnic group in the United Kingdom. The largest ethnic group in the country is the Indian with a population of 1,45 million.

Citizen Khan is the first BBC sitcom where the action centered around British Pakistani Muslims. The wider South Asian culture has been explored already in the late 1990s in popular BBC comedy series such as Goodness Gracious Me. Citizen Khan was accused by some critics and viewers of mocking Islam and perpetuating racial stereotypes, and Adil Ray received death threats. However, the series

proved quite successful, every episode garnering several million viewers in the UK. The show originally aired on BBC 1, and reruns are on Gold. Outside UK the show has been aired on Comedy Central India in India. All the series are also available on DVD.

2. Research Findings

- In one sense, "Citizen Khan" is quite a traditional sit-com with a family set-up. The main characters are Mr Khan who proudly calls himself "a community leader", his wife Mrs Khan, their two daughters Shazia and Alia, son-in-law Amjad and Mr Khan's mother-in-law Naani. Assorted other characters recur, such as Dave, the local mosque leader, and Mr Khan's friends Riaz and Omar. A lot of the action takes place in just two settings: the Khan home and the mosque office.
- Adil Ray plays with common prejudices and stereotypical ideas about British Muslims. For example, it has been quite usual that when a spokesperson from the Muslim community in Britain has been needed to comment on a subject on television, it has usually been a bearded older man who has made angry noises about whatever the matter in hand. In the series, Mr Khan, the father, is also a bearded older man who himself thinks he is an epitome of a successful Muslim businessman. Sometimes he is angry but just as often he is shown to be quite foolish in his anger. It is often his wife who makes him see sense.
- Another skillful handling of a stereotype is how Mr Khan's younger daughter is depicted. In reality she does not differ from other teenagers of her age, being interested in partying and boys and inseparable from her smart phone. But when Mr Khan is at home, she puts on her hijab as it should be, pretends to read the Koran or another religious book or talks about going to the Mosque for prayers. Mr Khan is convinced that she is a very pious girl who is not at all interested in boys. This was an aspect that angered many Muslim viewers who claimed Ray was being blasphemous. On the other hand, many Muslim viewers found these depictions to be spot-on and something that made the series worth watching.
- The big service for the wider public the series does is that it "demystifies" the British Muslims' status and character as some sort of a sinister alien presence. Mr Khan is proud of both his Pakistani heritage but also his Britishness. He is in a sense a rather secular Muslim. He views more recent immigrants to Britain with prejudice and stereotypes them. "Immigrants are the Eastern Europeans, coming over here, taking our jobs, jobs meant for us Pakistanis!" When his home Mosque gets a new director who is a ginger-haired Scotch convert, Mr Khan treats him with suspicion because he is "not brown" like real Muslims. Also, in his opinion, all Scots tend to be alcoholics. However, they become quite good friends.

- All TV shows analyzed by Ivan Stefanovski present both religious co-existence and peace, but also minor elements of intolerance, conflict, war and cleavages.
- The TV shows cover different historical periods, and different geographical regions. Two of them are more "global" – Vikings and The Borgias, while three are more local: "Koreni", "Prespav" and "Na ista strana".
- "Na ista strana" and "Prespav" are rather positive examples, propagating religious co-existence and promoting peace and tolerance. This is mostly represented through the common agency of the people, the *rites de passage*, as well as the clothing and the external religious signs worn during daily routine activities or celebrations.
- "Koreni" is a dominantly positive show in terms of religious tolerance and co-existence. The village square and a local small restaurant are the main places of action where positive signals of co-existence are created and nurtured. Still, the limited bad examples of intolerance are more linked to political cleavages rather than religion. The only Muslim family which is fiercely attacked at a certain period is the subject of that because they sided with the Liberals.
- "Vikings" presents a dominantly negative sentiment of religious intolerance, dominantly presented through the raids of the Vikings and their conflicts with the English, the French and the Muslims in today's MENA region. On the other hand, several episodes present a certain level of peaceful co-existence, but also exchange of rituals and *rites de passage*, especially between Ragnar Lothbrok and the English monk Athelstan.
- "The Borgias" is focused entirely on negative representation of religious co-existence and peace. The show underpins the misuse of religious dominance, in this case the influence of the Catholic Church, in order to acquire enormous wealth and military power.

Conclusion

Recommendations based on research about Youtube channels and television series can be concluded as follows.

- Media literacy is the competence that needs to be developed among the young people in order to avoid unfortunate developments in understanding of youth about the world. Here the teacher training in universities and school curricula need to be developed together with media institutions, noting the European Broadcasting Union as the possible leading partner and also the local partners in different countries.
- Visual literacy programmes with the help of Creative Europe – Media (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe_en) are necessary in order to teach young people to critical watching of visual material.
- High quality learning site with online educational programmes with audiovisual input at its core that uses many different languages is needed - possibly also with help of EBU-members.
- In case of television series the responsible media companies (EBU again) may think about the programmes that are based on real historical stories about the religious tolerance to compete with the domination of narrative about religious conflicts.
- Also comedy series can be created to ease the tensions between different ethnic and religious groups in society – using the authors from minorities who have a recognition among their minority group.