

CASE STUDY – UNDERREPORTING HATE CRIME / HATE SPEECH AGAINST LGBT PEOPLE

Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism - Belgium

Observation:

- Underreporting by LGBT people of cases of discrimination, hate speech, hate crime.
 - Discrepancy between the number of reports the CEOOR gets and various studies showing a high percentage of LGBT people having encountered discrimination or violence (verbal or physical abuse).
- ⇒ Underreporting by LGBT people is clearly established

What the CEOOR did so far:

- Awareness raising via traditional media when possible
- 2009: brochure “know your rights”-type. Dissemination via partners / field ngos
- 2011: “Report it” campaign: event + print advertising + webvertising



Results

Positive:

- networking with LGBT ngos
- Positive in terms of image

Negative:

- no remarkable impact on underreporting. Reports went slightly up just after the launch of the campaign, to decrease again later.

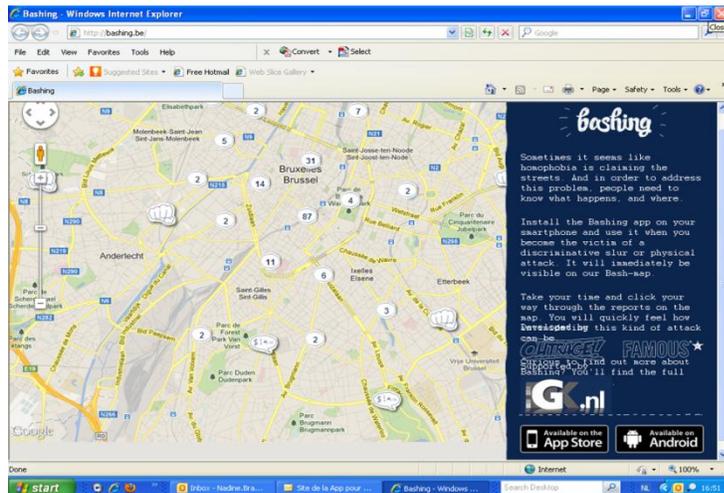
Remark: individual reports tend to go up after incident reports in the media – impact seems more important...

Has anyone achieved better results in Belgium?

Seemingly yes...: “the Bashing app”

Early 2012, Outrage! (open community based on the LGBT community) launched a smartphone app against homophobic violence. The successful app was then made available internationally.

It is a smartphone application that puts verbal and physical homophobic violence literally and figuratively on the map. Victims wishing to report a homophobic incident indicate via the Bashing app whether the violence is verbal or physical. Then they indicate on a map the location where the incident took place. It is the so-called 'Bashmap' that collects all the complaints. An overview of the reports can be seen on www.bashing.eu. Reporting an incident can be done in 100% anonymity. The Bashing app also offers some information about antidiscrimination bodies (i.e. the CEOOR in Belgium)



Results in +- 6 months:

300 « reports » (10% physical violence, 90% verbal abuse/harassment)
 = 30 x the number of similar reports lodged with the CEOOR in a whole year
 = 10 x the number of similar reports lodged with the police in a whole year

The downside is that the app was only conceived as a tool to raise awareness about this issue, to map it. It remains important that victims of homophobic violence lodge official complaints with the competent authorities...

Lessons to be learned – Questions raised

1. Weigh the importance of letting victims report in an anonymous and “unofficial way”

Some victims do not want to lodge an official individual complaint (lack of trust in institutions, fear of victimization etc). Should they not be given the opportunity to report their case for “awareness-raising and statistical” objectives? (And of course be given the right information and support if they do want to take the case further)?

This would also help Equality bodies to better map some facts and make more accurate recommendations to the relevant authorities to address specific problems.

2. Ask yourself exactly why there is underreporting

To address underreporting, we need to know the exact reasons why a specific group is underreporting. Is it mainly “too much hassle”, “fear of the consequences”, “resistance to victimization”, “lack of knowledge”, “lack of accessibility”,...?

Those reasons might be different from one group to another (which means strategies to address underreporting may be different for each specific group). For each specific group, Equality bodies may wish to conduct simple research to better identify the reasons for underreporting (e.g. a couple of focus groups with the support of specialized ngos).

3. Use the right tool / channel

A/ Smartphones are not just the latest hip trend. A lot of our target audiences now use them (including the so-called “not easy-to-reach” ones). 1/4 of smartphone users use this device as a primary or only way to access the Internet. 1/3 of these respondents come from cell-only households that don’t have home computers. This is particularly true among smartphone owners under the age of 30, with a non-national origin, and smartphone owners with relatively low income and education levels.

⇒ You may want to weigh, e.g., investing more into social media against investing in a smartphone app/site.

B/ Generally speaking, try to use a (mental) grid to pick up the most relevant channel to reach your target audiences.

Example: Release of a report about homophobic violence

	Selected target audience	"Report kit"	Website / newsletter	Social media	Press event	Launch event	Expert Seminar	Presentation to specific groups	Interpersonal communication	Campaigning material	Day-to-day communication
<u>Direct target audience</u>											
(potential) victims				(x)					x		
Public authorities	x	x	x	x	(x)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Private sector	x	x	x	x	(x)	x		x	x	x	x
<u>Indirect target audience</u>											
"General public"	x		x	(x)					x	x	
<u>Stakeholders</u>											
Local partners	x	x	x	(x)	x				x	x	
NGOs	x	x	x	(x)	x	x	x	x	x		
Lawyers - law officers	x	x	x	(x)		x			x		
Trade unions - social part	x	x	x	(x)	x				x		
Experts	x	x	x	(x)	x	x					
International partners	x	x	x								
<u>Multipliers</u>											
Media	x	x	x	x				x	x		
Opinion formers	x	x	x	(x)			x	x			
Opinion leaders	x	x	x	(x)			x	x	x		
Teachers	x						x		x		
<u>Internal comm</u>											
Staff	x	x	x	(x)	x		x				x
Board	x	x	x	(x)			x				

4. Use the right language

The “one-size-fits-all” brochure doesn’t work. Channel + language need to be adapted to your target audience, even when you want to give them the same overall information.

+ Your material needs to be tested by the end users.

Tip 1: write your dissemination plan/strategy before you start writing your publication

Tip 2: develop a network of “testers” (ngos, partners and other stakeholders may not be the best testers, because they already know the law very well. It is the real end users who should test the material and check its accessibility in terms of content and language).

5. Don’t underestimate the importance of Interpersonal and Peer Communication

(The Bashing app was developed by LGBT group for the LGBT community.)

People are often not so engaged by advice that comes from ‘above’, such as governmental bodies. Information received from peers is perceived as being more relevant and trustworthy. This is also why peer communication (using discussion boards, social media or other platforms) are becoming more common.

- ⇒ We need to learn from marketers who have developed purchase strategies based on peer-to-peer communication.
- ⇒ We need to identify the social networks (online communities) of our target groups and use them
- ⇒ Always stress your independence in your external communication: you do not want to be perceived by your target audience as being the executive arm of the government

If relevant, discuss the opportunity of personalizing more some of your external communication; i.e. by having a public “disability” expert, a public “lgbt” expert, a public “age” expert, etc (public faces and link to your different target audiences)... without it getting out of control! The right balance needs to be found.

6. Pick up the right opportunity

Your objectives and messages will always get more media attention when some incident has suddenly made them a hot topic...

As cynical as it may sound, if you need the mass media, capitalize on this trend!

Develop media factsheets, campaigning material and other tools... and keep them in the fridge until the right opportunity arises.

Anticipate...

Questions to be debated

Have you conducted research on underreporting amongst specific groups?

What is your experience with publications and other types of communication channels? How much do you experiment with other types of communication channels. How successful have you been?
Any experience with smartphone apps?

Dissemination of material: have you explored “non-conventional” avenues (i.e. other than partners, NGOs etc)?

Your opinion about “official” reports of discrimination vs “anonymous – unofficial” reports?

Who makes the decision about selecting the appropriate tool/channel + dissemination strategy? (comm officers, WG,...?)

Other tips, experience to share? Good & bad practices?