FREEDOM OF SPEECH ONLINE REPORT

ELSA INTERNATIONAL
2019/2020

elsa

The European Law Students' Association

Foreword

Dear Reader,

We proudly present ELSA's report on Freedom of Expression Online. During its International Focus Programme, the ELSA Network has chosen to focus its efforts on the interplay between law and technology, especially with focus on human rights. Therefore, ELSA International has been raising awareness on Freedom of Expression Online, and this report of part of those efforts.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Best wishes,

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1. Introduction

Each year, the ELSA Network organises a Europe-wide Human Rights Campaign falling under ELSA's International Focus Programme (IFP). The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness on the importance of human rights protection and create a forum for the voice of law students and young lawyers across Europe.

The Freedom of Expression Online Campaign was launched in 2019. The main aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the manifestation of such a fundamental right online within the law students' society, but also, in general, bringing light to the core legal aspects that need to be addressed, including media freedom, misinformation and online data protection.

For the pursuit of examining the awareness of students and young professionals across Europe about freedom of expression online, ELSA launched an awareness survey on this topic. The participants were asked general and specific multiple-choice questions about freedom of expression online. 1005 respondents contributed to ELSA's aim to promote the knowledge and awareness of the society on human rights through their participation in the survey.

The aim of this Report is to provide the ELSA network with the results of the survey conducted with commentary. With an aim of better presenting them, the results of the survey have been categorised in three groups. The first one includes all questions concerning the origin of the responses, the second one the general human rights questions and the last one the questions regarding the topic under discussion. The provided analysis of each question aims at offering the readers of this Report with basic knowledge, as well as food for thought for a series of issues that fall under the umbrella of the issue of freedom of expression online.

2. Freedom of Expression Online Survey

2.1. Origin of the Responses

The first part of this survey aimed to provide us with a general picture of the respondents. It addresses the permanent residence, age, gender and the field of study or work of the respondents.

The majority of the responses (76% of them) came from Europe and, more specifically, 64% of them were given by respondents permanently residing in the European Union. Taking into consideration ELSA's geographical scope, as the European Law Students' Association, it is a pleasant surprise that the survey gained the attention of non-European audience as well.

More analytically, the five countries, from which most of the respondents came from are Poland, Romania, Turkey, Albania and Greece, as seen in the chart below.
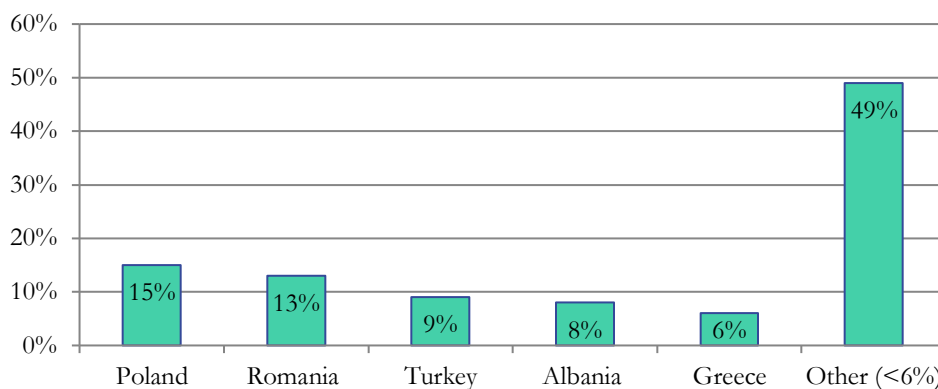
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Country #1

Figure 1: Permanent Living of the Respondents
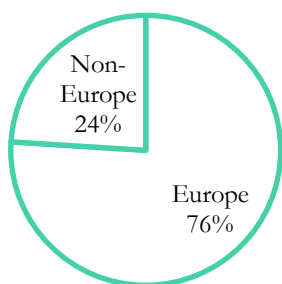
Country #2

Figure 2: Permanent Living of the Respondents
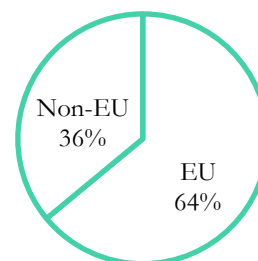
Country #3

Figure 3: Permanent Living of the Respondents

The majority of the respondents, namely 84% of them, were in the age group of 18-23. The second largest age group of respondents included people between 24-27 years old. The rest of the age groups constituted less than 6% of the sample. There is a tiny gender gap in the number of responses, since 63% of them are identified as female.
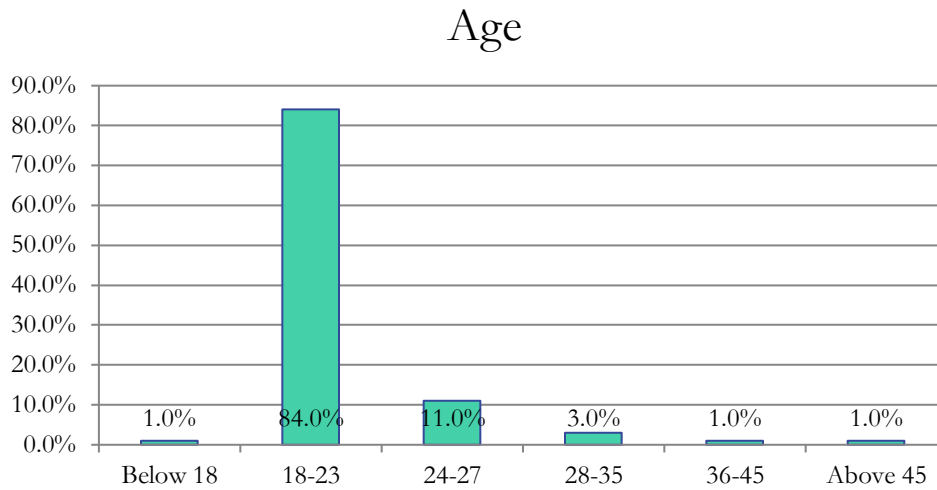
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Age

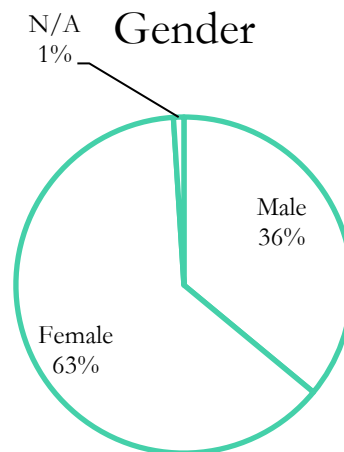**Figure 4: Age of the Respondents**

Gender

Figure 5: Gender of the Respondents

Last but not least, in this first part of the survey, the respondents were asked about their status, namely whether they are students or already graduated young professionals. Most of the respondents are students who study in the field of Law. In addition, the survey caught the attention of students of Medicine (3.6%), Political Science (0.7%), Physiotherapy (0.6%) and others. When it comes to the occupation of the graduates, 36% of them work in the field of law.

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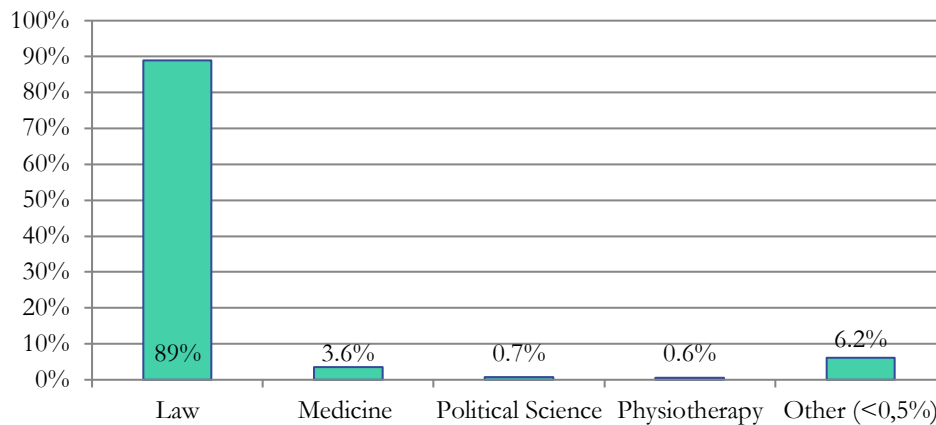## What is the field of your studies?

Figure 6: Occupation of the Respondents

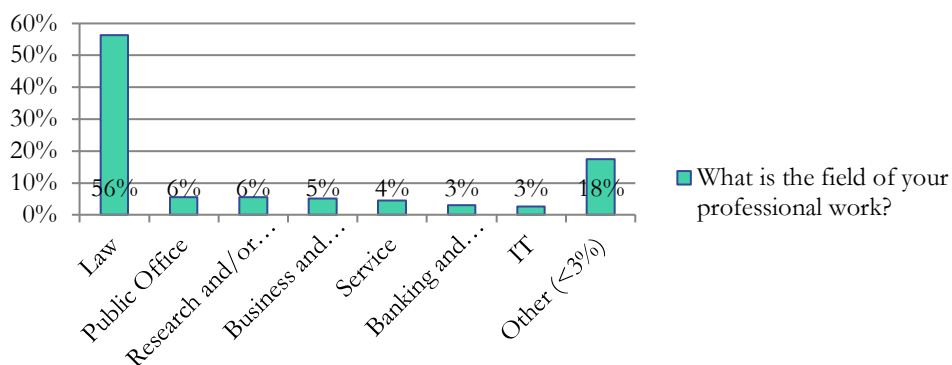## What is the field of your professional work?

Figure 7: Occupation of the Respondents

2.2. General knowledge on human rights

The second part of the survey consisted of questions regarding the general human rights awareness of the respondents.

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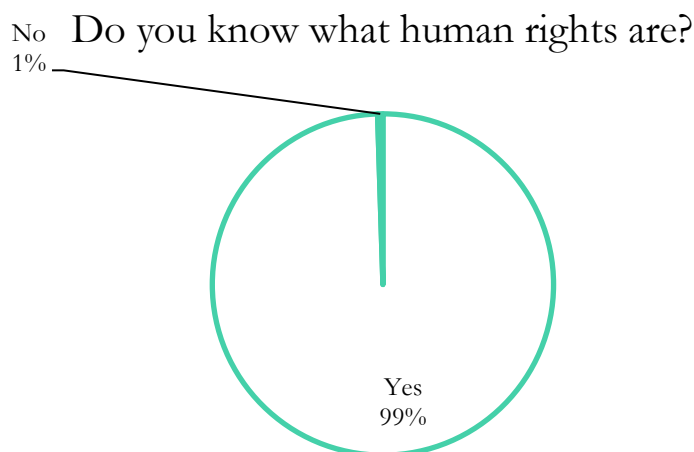**1st Question**: Do you know what human rights are?

The Data:

Figure 8

Luckily, almost all of the respondents are aware of what human rights are.

Commentary: Human rights are rights, which belong to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include, for example, the right to life and liberty, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without any discrimination.[1]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the most important documents in the history of human rights. The document has been drafted by representatives from different cultural backgrounds and legal systems and it was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. The declaration set out for the first time the fundamental human rights, which should be universally protected.[2] The document has been translated to over 500 languages.[3]

[1] United Nations. n.d. *Human Rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

[2] Ibid.

[3] United Nations. n.d. *Universal Declaration Of Human Rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

2nd Question: Do you know what the European Convention on Human Rights is and what is the content of it?

The Data:

Do you know what the European Convention on Human Rights is and what is the content of it?
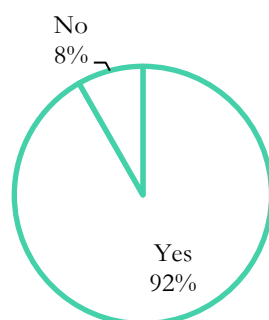
No
8%

Yes
92%

Figure 9

The majority of the respondents, 92% of them, had knowledge on what is the European Convention of Human Rights and what is the scope and content of it.

Commentary: The European Convention on Human Rights sets forth a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. The Convention is an international treaty between the states, which are members of the Council of Europe. It was signed in 1950 and entered into force in 1953. The Convention was the first instrument, which gave effect to the rights stated in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.[4] Parties of the Convention are obligated to secure these rights and freedoms to everyone within their jurisdiction. The Convention also establishes an international enforcement machinery, known as the European Court of Human Rights.

The Convention has been hugely important in raising standards and increasing awareness of human rights across Europe, and beyond, which constitutes basic knowledge on it necessary.

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[4] European Court of Human Rights. n.d. *European Convention On Human Rights - Official Texts, Convention And Protocols.* [online] Available at: <https://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=basictexts> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

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3rd Question: Do you know the scope of the activities of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)?

The Data:

Do you know the scope of the activities of the European Court of Human Rights?
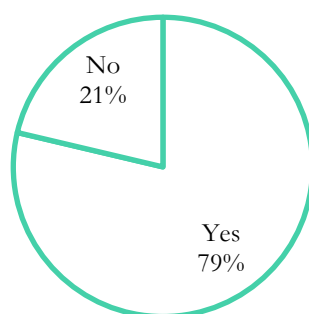

Figure 10

When it comes to the function of the Court, a bigger number of respondents were not aware of the ECtHR's activities (21%), however the majority of the respondents gave the positive answer (79%).

Commentary: It seems that, in contrast with the European Convention on Human Rights itself, knowledge on the Court activities is more limited. The ECtHR is an international court set up in 1959. It exists as a safeguard of the Convention, deals with individual and inter-State petitions. In almost fifty years, the Court has delivered more than 10,000 judgments. The parties to a case must follow the Courts' judgments and take all necessary measures to comply with them. The Court is based in Strasbourg, in the Human Rights Building.[5]

Since the ECtHR's interpretation of the Convention's text makes it a living instrument and one of the most relevant present day human rights Conventions, better understanding of the Courts' activities is desirable.

[5] n.d. *The Court In Brief.* [ebook] European Court of Human Rights. Available at: <https://echr.coe.int/Documents/Court_in_brief_ENG.pdf> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

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4th Question: Was the topic of human rights mentioned during your education at school?

The Data:

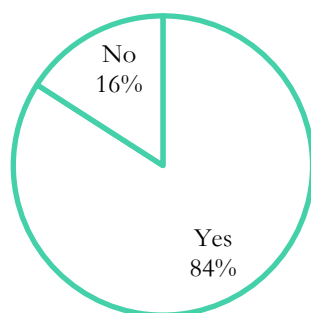### Was the topic of human rights mentioned during your education at school?

Figure 11

The majority of the respondents gave a positive response (84%).

Commentary: According to the preamble to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948: *"Every individual and every organ of society … shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms."* Human rights education has been defined by the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education as "education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights".[6]

Good education in human rights does not however only provide knowledge about the rights themselves and their protection mechanism but also passes on the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in our daily lives. Human rights education especially advances the attitudes and behaviours, which are needed to uphold human rights for all members of society.[7]

5th Question: How do you rate the access to information about human rights and human rights violations in your environment?
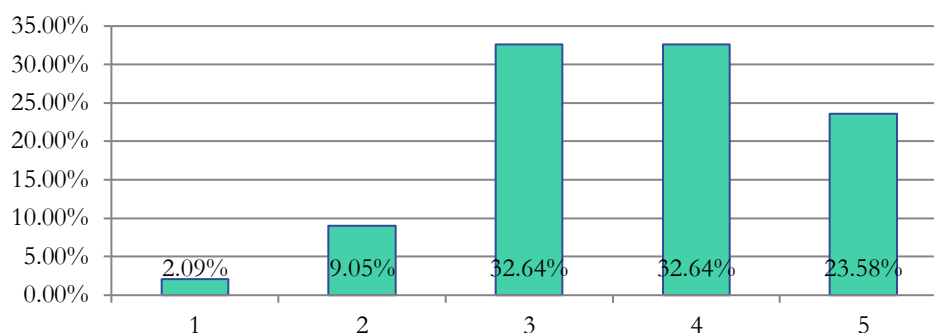
The options were from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning no access at all).

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[6] Council of Europe. n.d. *Compass: Manual For Human Rights Education With Young People - Introducing Human Rights Education.* [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/introducing-human-rights-education> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
[7] Ibid.

The Data:

How do you rate the access to information about human rights and human rights violations in your environment?

Figure 12

Most of the respondents stated that they do have rather good or even very good access to such information. Only a small percentage of the participants had bad or no access at all.

Commentary: The positive result shows that the right to information, an integral part of the right to freedom of expression online works accordingly with the international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[8] The Declaration states in Article 19 that the fundamental right of freedom of expression encompasses the freedom "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

2.3. Freedom of expression online

The third part of the survey aims at revealing the level of awareness around freedom of expression online and its legal framework.

1st Question: Do you feel like your freedom of expression on the internet is sufficiently protected?

The respondents could answer from 1 to 5 (with number 1 meaning very insufficient and number 5 very sufficient).

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[8] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948.

The Data:

Do you feel like your freedom of expression
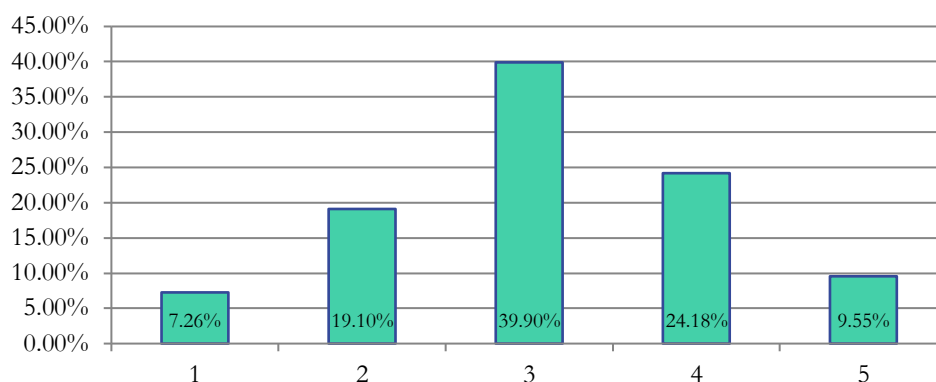on the internet is sufficiently protected?

Figure 13

According to the survey, a large number of the respondents feel like their freedom of expression online is rather well protected and exercised. Only a small percent of the respondents feel that it is not protected or exercised at all.

Commentary: Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and to access to information. This right applies to both offline and online, and it should be balanced with other legitimate rights and interests. For individuals to enjoy freedom of expression online, the Internet needs to be open for everyone. Technical failures and intentional disruptions can impact access to online and information regardless of frontiers. Therefore, for example, the Council of Europe has developed a framework of international cooperation to prevent and respond to eventual disruptions of the Internet.[9]

2nd Question: Are you aware of any specific legal provisions on the right to access the Internet in your country?

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[9] Council of Europe. n.d. *Protecting Freedom Of Expression And Information*. [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/protecting-freedom-of-expression-and-information> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS PROGRAMME

The Data:

Are you aware of any specific legal provisions on the right to access the internet in your country?
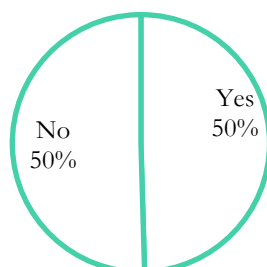

Figure 14

Surprisingly only half of the participants responded positively.

Commentary: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, with its Resolution 1987 of 2014, recognised the right to Internet Access and defined it as "*the right to access, receive and impart information and ideas through the Internet without interference from public authorities*".[10] The same Resolution calls Member States to undertake all appropriate measures to ensure its realization of the right, since it is acknowledged as an essential requirement for exercising rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The result of the survey demonstrates that a high number of the countries have specific legislation regarding the access to the internet, while others keep imposing multiple restrictions. It is suggested to the readers of the Report to make a thorough research on the situation in their national legal orders.

3rd Question: Are you aware of any general legal provisions which could restrict your access to the internet?

[10] PACE. n.d. *Resolution 1987 (2014) - The Right To Internet Access*. [online] Available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20870&lang=en> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

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The Data:

Are you aware of any general legal provisions which could restrict your access to the internet?
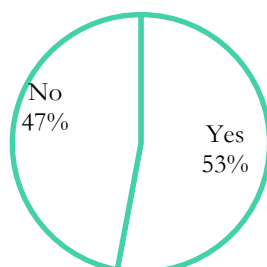
Figure 15

The question divided the respondents almost in half. 53% of the respondents answered yes as the 47% of the respondents answered no.

Commentary: The fact that only 53% of the participants gave a positive reply follows the previous answer regarding the knowledge on provision, which provides access to the internet.

According to the aforementioned Resolution 1987 (2014) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, any restrictions to the right to Internet access "*should be provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim and be necessary in a democratic society*"[11].

4th Question: Are you aware of any specific (public or private) hotline, entities or similar to where you can report potential illegal content on the Internet (e.g. hate speech or IP violations)?

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[11] Ibid.

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The Data:

Are you aware of any specific (public or private) hotlines, entities or similar to where you can report potential illegal content on the internet (e.g. hate speech or IP violations)?

No 44%

Yes 56%
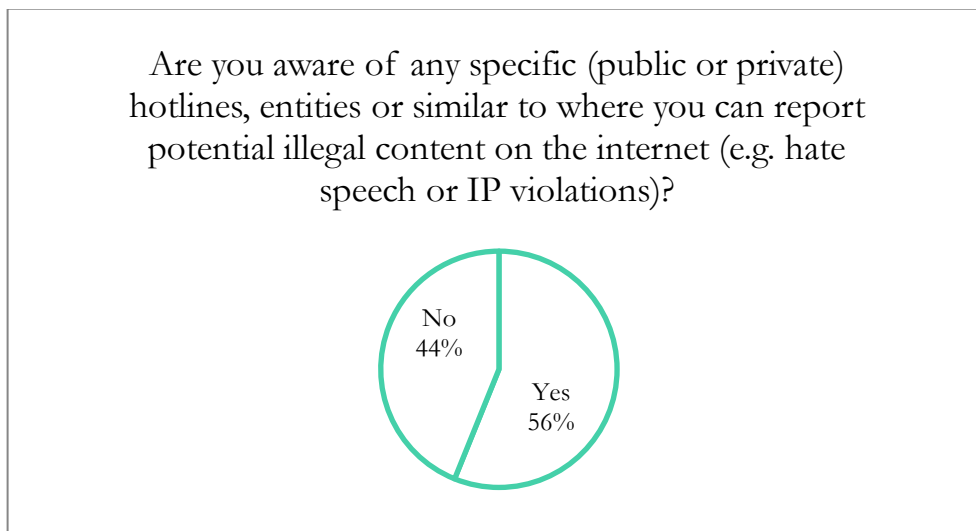
Figure 16

Over half of the respondents (56%) replied in the affirmative.

Commentary: As an example, one of the good hotlines is the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE),[12] which provides an extremely important service by enabling members of the public to anonymously report online content that they suspect to be illegal. INHOPE hotlines "ensure that the matter is investigated and if found to be illegal the information will be passed to the relevant Law Enforcement Agency and in many cases the Internet Service Provider hosting the content".[13]

5th Question: Which of the following areas of freedom of speech on the internet are in your opinion not sufficiently protected by the respective law?

The options were: a) Publications in the internet, b) Access to express (political) opinions, c) Access to unbiased information, d) Access to social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter or YouTube, and e) Restraining you from using some content online due to censorship.

The respondents were able to choose more than one option.

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12 Inhope.org. n.d. *INHOPE*. [online] Available at: <https://www.inhope.org/> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
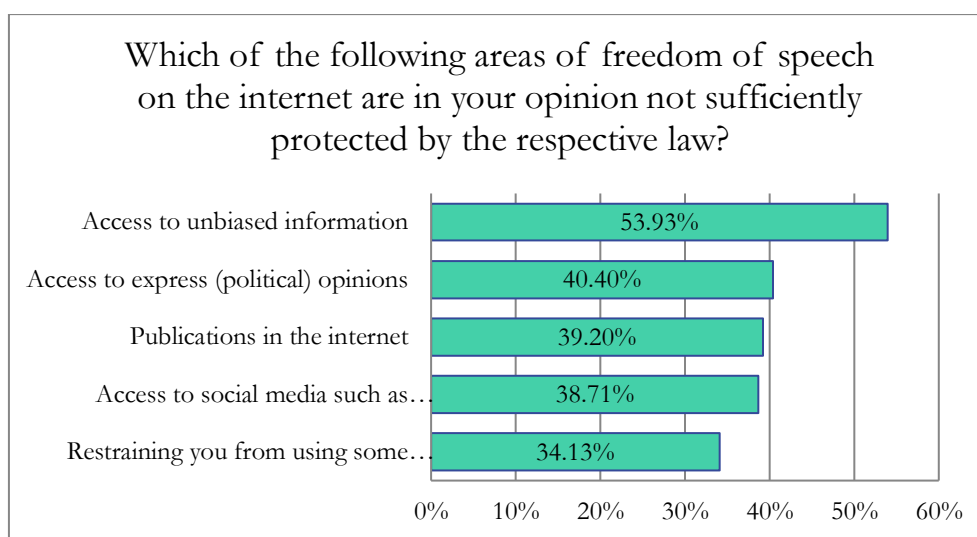13 Ibid.

The Data:

Which of the following areas of freedom of speech on the internet are in your opinion not sufficiently protected by the respective law?

- Access to unbiased information: 53.93%
- Access to express (political) opinions: 40.40%
- Publications in the internet: 39.20%
- Access to social media such as…: 38.71%
- Restraining you from using some…: 34.13%

Figure 17

Over the half of the respondents (53.93%) consider that access to unbiased information is not sufficiently addressed in law. Access to express (political) opinions and publications on the internet are the other two most insufficiently protected areas, since 40.40% and 39.30% of the participants recognize them as such respectively. Access to social media and censorship were the two least popular options, yet their percentages, namely 38.71% and 34.12% respectively, reveal that a notable number of people expect a better legal framework addressing such issues.

Commentary: Article 10 of the ECHR protects all kinds of expression, not only offline, but also online. More specifically, it provides that everyone has the freedom to express themselves online and to also access information and opinions or expressions of other people, including political statements and religious views. Only in cases which incite discrimination, hatred or violence, restrictions may apply. Such restrictions must be, however, lawful, narrowly tailored and executed with court oversight.

According to the survey, the area of the freedom of speech that needs further regulatory framework is access to unbiased information. However, the facts that the percentages of all options are notably high and that there is no major divergence between them, prove that freedom of speech on the internet in general is not, according to the participants of the survey, sufficiently legally protected.

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6th Question: Which of the following third-party actions have you experienced online?

The options were: a) Receiving fake news on different social media, b) Hate speech (directly or/and indirectly), c) Infringements of your IP rights, d) Limited access to internet in general based on the discriminative grounds, e) Disclosure of your personal data, f) Discrimination resulting in the usage of Artificial Intelligence

The respondents were able to choose more than one option.
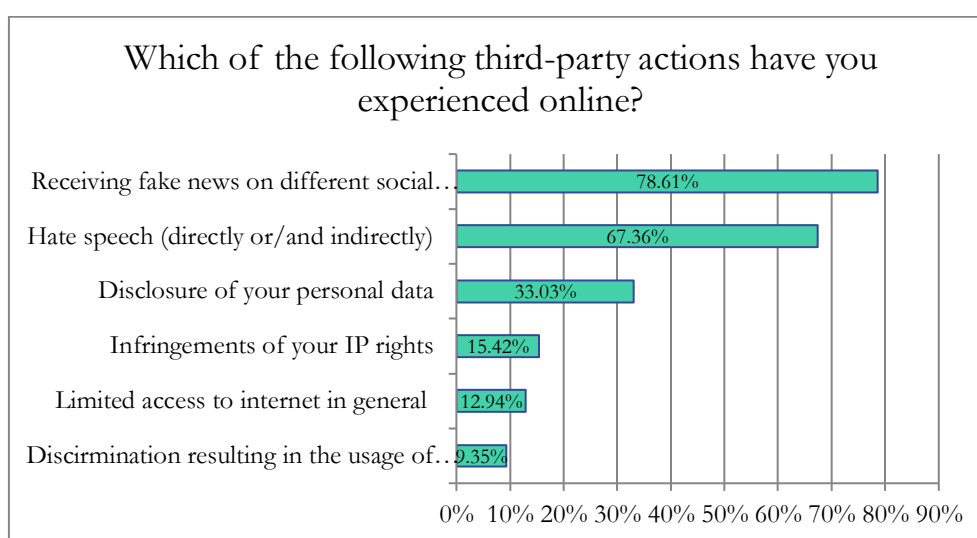
The Data:

Figure 18

Regarding the personal experiences of the respondents, the majority, 78.61% of them stated that they have come across fake news online. A notable number have also experienced hate speech (67.36%) and disclosure of personal data (33.03%) online. Less common experiences seem to be an infringement of IP rights, limited access to the internet and discrimination resulting in the usage of AI, since only 15.42%, 12.94% and 9.35% of the respondents had such an experience respectively.

Commentary: In the past few years, fake news has become more insidious, more plentiful, more subtle and subverted for manipulation of information and public opinion. This is a huge issue, which requires more completion in the future. However, the Council of Europe avoids using the term "fake news", since it does not find it adequate enough to describe the complexity of the phenomenon of information pollution. In its Report on "Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", the Council of Europe describes three types of "information disorders", namely:

a) <u>mis-information</u>, when false information is shared, but no harm is meant,
b) <u>dis-information</u>, when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm, and
c) <u>mal-information</u>, when genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere.[14]

The aforementioned Report of the Council of Europe is a useful tool which explains all aspects of information disorder, the challenges that it may cause, and provides a series of means to address information pollution.

Furthermore, over the half of the respondents have experienced hate speech on the Internet, either direct or indirect. Although there is lack of a universally accepted definition, the term "hate speech" can be understood, according to the Council of Europe, "*as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin*"[15]. In 2013, the Council of Europe Youth Department launched the No Hate Speech Movement, a youth campaign aiming at combating hate speech and promoting human rights online among young people.[16] More information about hate speech and a comprehensive overview of the concepts of online hate speech in European countries can be found in the Final Report on Online Hate Speech, the output document of the International Legal Research Group on Online Hate Speech organised by ELSA International in cooperation with the Council of Europe as a part of the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign, published in February 2014.[17]

Last but not least, 33.03% of the respondents have experienced disclosure of their personal data online. It is undeniable that privacy is constantly challenged in the digital era, since searching, processing and storing personal data has now become easier than ever, mainly due to developments, such as the extensive use of social media. According to the Convention No. 108 of the Council of Europe, the first binding legal instrument addressing data protection, personal data can be defined as "*any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual*".[18] The need to deal with challenges resulting from the use of new ICTs soon established a comprehensive dialogue on the need of the modernisation of the Convention. The 128th Ministerial Session of the Council of

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[14] Council of Europe. n.d. *Information Disorder.* [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/information-disorder> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
[15] *Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on "Hate Speech".*
[16] Council of Europe. n.d. *No Hate Speech Youth Campaign.* [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
[17] 2014. *Final Report on Online Hate Speech.* [ebook] ELSA International in cooperation with the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://files.elsa.org/AA/Final_Report_OHS_Final.pdf> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
[18] Council of Europe. n.d. Convention 108 And Protocols. [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/convention108-and-protocol> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted the Modernised Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data.[19]

7th Question: Which one of the following third-party actions do you think that is the biggest threat to society in general nowadays?

The options were: a) Censorship Online, b) Fake News on Different Social Media, c) Hate Speech (Direct or Indirect), d) Infringements of IP Rights, e) Limited Access to Internet in General Based on Discriminative Grounds, f) Disclosure of Personal Data, and g) Implications of Artificial Intelligence.

The respondents were able to choose more than one option.

The Data:
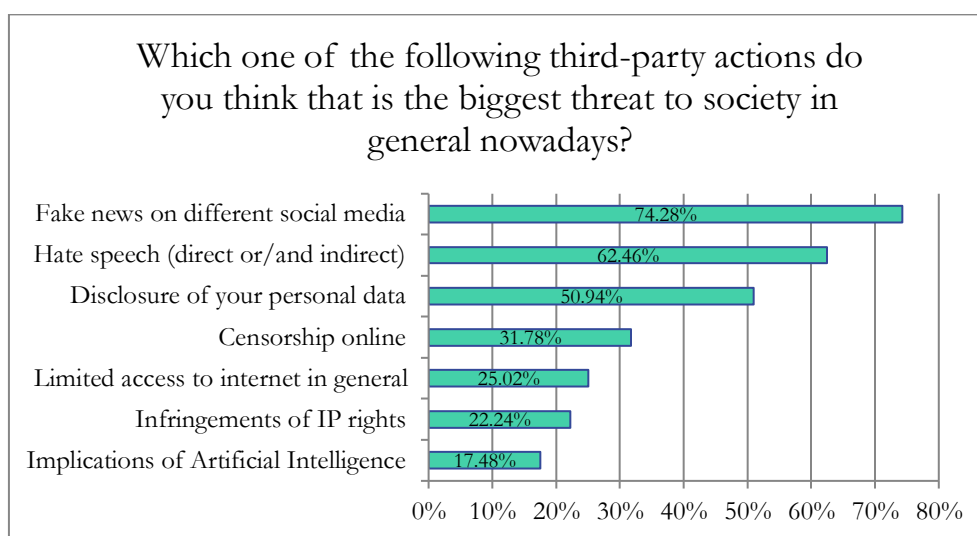
Figure 19

As seen in the table above, fake news, hate speech and disclosure of personal data constitute the biggest threats to society. These three third-party actions seem to concern over 50% of the respondents, namely 74.28%, 62.46% and 50.94% of them respectively. However, fake news seems to be by far the area of the highest concern for Internet users, in contrast with IP rights and Artificial Intelligence, which concern them evidently less.

[19] Search.coe.int. n.d. [online] Available at:
<https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807c65bf> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

Commentary: It seems that the participants in the survey pointed out as the biggest threats to society the challenges that they have faced themselves online to a greater extent: fake news, hate speech and disclosure of personal information.

Broader dissemination of information, opinions and ideas has become remarkably easier in cyberspace, yet the uncontrollable speech has given rise to phenomena such as hate speech and information pollution, as described above. In fact, massive use of social media platforms has exacerbated the situation even more. At the same time, users keep sharing personal information, pictures and videos of private moments more often than ever, neglecting that their data are used by the platforms, mainly for advertising purposes. In this way, the aforementioned challenges have now become common phenomena, which continue to constitute threats to democracy and human rights.

8th Question: Which one of the following require in your opinion a better legal framework in the environment you operate in?

The options were: a) Presence of Fake News, b) Personal Data, c) Hate Speech, d) Blocking and Filtering Content Online, e) Infringements of IP rights, f) Artificial Intelligence and g) Limited Access to Internet in General.

The respondents were able to choose more than one option.

The Data:

Which one of these require in your opinion better legal framework in the environment you operate in?

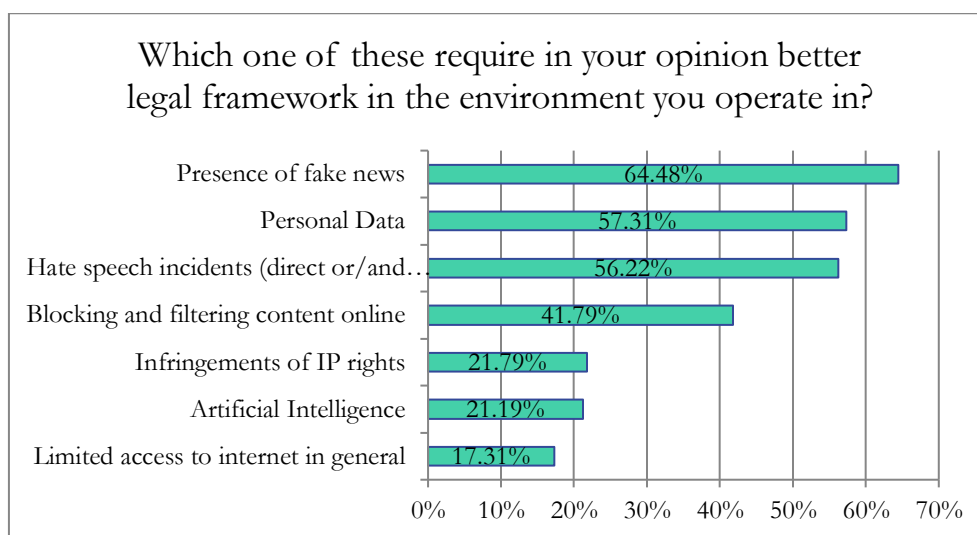|	
Presence of fake news	64.48%
Personal Data	57.31%
Hate speech incidents (direct or/and…	56.22%
Blocking and filtering content online	41.79%
Infringements of IP rights	21.79%
Artificial Intelligence	21.19%
Limited access to internet in general	17.31%

Figure 20

Over half of the participants consider that fake news (64.48%), personal data (57.31%) and hate speech (56.22%) require a better legal framework. Over 40% of them hold that there is the same

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need when it comes to blocking and filtering content online. Lastly, it is important to recognise that a better legal framework for Artificial Intelligence is supported by many respondents, namely 21.19% of them.

Commentary: When it comes to legal framework, States have adopted different policies and balanced approaches between regulation and self-regulation when it comes to legislative issues around freedom of expression online.

At the same time, international cooperation supports such efforts. For example, the Council of Europe tries to achieve greater unity in its Member States legislation through Recommendations, which give the Committee of Ministers the ability to define guidelines for Member States.

So far, a series of important legal instruments that deal with aspects of human rights online have been mentioned in this Report, such the Convention No. 108 of the Council of Europe. It is of utmost importance to highlight that, since there are tools that regulate freedom of expression and human rights in general online, there is a major need for States to learn how to implement and take advantage of such instruments, so that their efficiency is tested and the need for further regulatory development is examined.

3. Freedom of Expression Online Webinar[20]

To contribute to the discussion around freedom of expression online, but also offline, ELSA and the Council of Europe organised a webinar discussing the survey conducted on freedom of expression online and held a panel discussion about the current issues regarding the survey topic. This webinar was the fourth annual webinar hosted by ELSA and the Council of Europe and it was broadcasted live from Ljubljana, Slovenia on 27 November 2019.

The expert panel discussion was led by ELSA International's Vice President in charge of Academic Activities, Sarah Ikast Kristoffersen, and included three experts on the field of freedom of expression, Patrick Penninckx, the Head of Information Society Department at the Council of Europe, Leila Dervisagic, the Head of the Corporation Unit in the Media and Internet Division at the Council of Europe and Helle Tiikmaa, the President of the Estonian Association of Journalists.

To start the discussion, the panel explained the current legal framework, which regulates the freedom of expression online and how this fundamental right can be restricted within this very challenging environment. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) ensures the freedom of expression as a fundamental right and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)

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[20] The Freedom of Expression Online Webinar is available online on the Facebook Page of ELSA: https://www.facebook.com/elsa.org/videos/496630751197138/

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monitors with its case law that the Convention is interpreted in the present day context. The panel noted that the only way to restrict the right to freedom of expression both online and offline is through the ECtHR's test of proportionately. Interference in the freedom of expression must be therefore based on the law, have a legitimate aim and it should be necessary in a democratic society.

Next, the panel discussed the question who should decide what actually goes online and who should decide where and when we can publish content. The panel expressed that the answer depends on the environment where content is published. When it happens in the Internet media environment, for example newspapers, it is important that the editors follow self-regulation rules, as well as laws enforced in their country. However, when it comes to social media, it is more difficult and questionable as to what should or should not be limited with laws or is it more in the decisions of the owner of the platform and their responsibility. The legislation covering traditional media does not regulate social media, since it is not actually a media and the difference between these should be kept in mind.

According to the panel, it is also important to educate the public on what are the differences between the actors and their responsibility in the field of freedom of expression online. States in the European Union have very different policies and may pursue many different objectives. Some have generic regulations, which also apply to the offline world and will not create any specific regulations for the online. Others may want to regulate specifically the spreading of information through the internet. Also, the line between traditional media and other different media has been blurred. Nowadays, everyone who has a smartphone in their pocket can publish information as they like. Since private internet intermediaries have very different policies as to what they allow and not allow, they have an important role to play as to whether they take down content. Digital media really makes a difference for the freedom of expression online.

In the panel discussion, the panel also addressed the subject of fake news and disinformation. According to the freedom of expression online survey, almost 80% of the respondents have experienced fake news and 65% of the respondents asked for a better legal framework for combating fake news, especially in social media. To make sure this happens, the panel discussed multiple options. According to the Council of Europe, there are three types of fake news: misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. To combat the issue of fake news online, States and Internet intermediaries have different approaches. There are already legal frameworks, which regulate for example cybercrime. Internet intermediaries also have an important role to ensure that with Internet searches, good quality sources come first, and this can be done with different algorithms. Since the internet needs algorithms, the panel also discussed the need to regulate the use of artificial intelligence.

4. Conclusion

The survey regarding freedom of expression online generated a large amount of responses and achieved its goal to promote the knowledge and awareness of the society on human rights and freedom of expression online. Most of the responses for the survey came inside the European Union and the average responder was a law student between ages of 18-23.

The results of the survey may be characterised as quite positive, since it revealed that the majority of the students and the young professionals are aware of human rights, the scope and content of the European Convention of Human Rights as well as the function of the European Court of Human Rights. This correlates to the fact that the majority of the respondents answered that they have had human right education at school and access to information about human rights and human rights violations is generally at a good level.

When it comes to more specific questions regarding freedom of expression online, more dispersion was noticed. A large number of the respondents feel like their freedom of expression online is rather well protected and exercised. However, only half of the respondents are aware of specific legal provisions on the right to access the Internet in their respective countries and almost the same amount is aware of general legal provision, which could restrict their access online.

The survey also shows that when it comes to the respondents' personal experience online, the respondents have encountered fake news to a high degree, experienced direct or indirect hate speech and violations of personal data online. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the majority of the respondents picked these three topics as the most important aspects to improve when it comes to a better legal framework.

To conclude, the survey shows that the general human rights awareness amongst the ELSA members is very high, yet there is still a need for raising awareness on more specific human rights issues, such as the one of freedom of expression online. Therefore, campaigns, such as the Freedom of Expression Online Campaign, which aims to provide specific information and raise awareness on topical human rights issues within the law student's society, are proven fundamental for promoting human rights among the legal community at local, national and European level. It should not be forgotten that in great contrast to the professional need to learn about human rights, as well as to the human rights violations committed all over the world every day, many law faculties do not pay the necessary attention to this basic field of law. Thus, it remains a natural task of ELSA to compensate for this gap through the activities of its entire Network.