

led to the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The fundamental EU policy document in this respect is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), which defines and protects various fundamental rights enjoyed by EU citizens and residents. It is an obligatory document for EU and national policy makers. According to the Charter, the ground principles followed in the EU are, for example, the right to human dignity (Article 1), the right to education (Article 14), non-discrimination (Article 21), cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Article 22), the freedom to choose an occupation and the right to engage in work (Article 15), fair and just working conditions (Article 31), social security and social assistance (Article 34), health care (Article 35), and the right to good administration (Article 41).

In the Internet era, advocates of human rights are increasingly using new media, especially social media like Twitter, YouTube, etc. to defend them. This form of political engagement is also known as **digital activism**, an expression which describes the use of digital media for various forms of activism. Sandor Vegh (2003) classified online or digital activism into three categories: awareness/advocacy (e.g. informing people), organization/mobilization (e.g. of demonstrations or online actions), and action/reaction (e.g. hacktivism). Digital media or electronic communication technologies encompass different Internet based tools (social media, podcasts, email, online petitions etc.), which are used by activists, social movements and NGO's to reach broader publics, for networking, organization, fundraising etc. Digital activism has numerous forms, e.g. organization and signing of online petitions, the use of hashtags for campaigning, exchange of information and discussions on Facebook or Twitter, organization of protests, hacktivism, e-mail bombing, etc.

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In recent years, digital activism has steadily evolved and has played an important role in many protest events globally. Critics are most concerned with the question of how online activism affects political engagement, since the percentage of people who vote at elections and trust party politics is steadily decreasing. The phenomena of "clicktivism" is often exemplified in this respect, i.e. the belief that a click with a computer mouse will change the world. It would be however too simple to conclude that people are getting less political, it seems that they are being political in a different way. What we observe is a shift in the understanding and doing politics especially among young people, where old party loyalties and representative democracy are being replaced with horizontal communication and deliberative democratic processes (Norris 2002).

The Internet offers many free communication channels and has become an important tool especially for those who fall out of the mainstream media reporting. But it is not just progressive voices which are being spread this way, digital activism very much concerns also the empowerment of ideologies which are based on hatred.

References

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- Vegh, S. (2003). *Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The Case of Cyberprotests against the World Bank*. In M. McCaughey, & M. Ayers (Eds.), *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (pp. 71-95). New York: Routledge.

Participants

Target group: Secondary school students (aged 15-18)

Ideal number of students: About 25