How to read the surveillance discourse and fight it!

Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24.04.2017 – 30.04.2017

1. Who are we?

Cooperation and Development Network Eastern Europe (CDN) is a network of Young Greens in Eastern Europe. We gather **18 Member Organisations** in Eastern Europe and **6 Partner Organisations** in Central and Western Europe. Since 2003, we are organising **educational activities** with Green activists on various topics such as political ecology, gender equality, social justice, democracy, human rights, peace building, Green economy and more. We also **develop skills** in the fields of organisational management, strategic development, technology and the internet, campaigning and more.

In this project CDN is supported by its member organisation Revolt from Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the **local partner Revolt** will ensure that practical matters concerning for example venues and accommodation are taken care of.

2. What is this project about?

In the past few years legislators have advanced and implemented numerous laws that threaten our digital rights - such laws span the gamut from national legislation on data retention and online surveillance to trade agreements that affect intellectual property legislation and whose enforcement often entails surveillance. The **extension of surveillance and censorship online** is something felt in Europe as a whole, making the fact that those policy decisions are often only discussed in expert circles all the more disquieting.

Currently the major argument for mass surveillance stems from data's alleged usefulness in combating terrorism. Many countries, from France to Russia, have recently legalised surveillance of their citizens. However, it is far from clear whether increased online surveillance helps fight terrorism, and a **false sense of security** might actually increase the real danger and move our attention away from terrorism's root causes such as war and poverty. Moreover, **mass surveillance restricts our human rights** in crucial ways, endangering individual freedom as well as our common institutions such as democracy and media.

The effects of surveillance do not know borders: data streams, even between neighbours, often cross multiple countries, online communities are often transnational, and surveillance technology produced in the West is used by authoritarian regimes the world over.

There are a number of activists and small organisations working on advocacy of digital rights and freedoms in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans. However there are not that many opportunities for collaboration and networking, in particular when it comes to connecting digital rights and hacker activists with activists form other spheres, for example the Green movement. CDN's digital rights working group, digital [x], believes that by joining forces and working together we can achieve much more.

Greens are well-established in this region and can serve as an entry platform to political debates for the individuals and organisations working in the sphere of digital rights advocacy. Moreover, collaborating with other organisations from Eastern Europe fosters exchange of good practices and can be of help in online campaigning.

This project can furthermore be a step towards collaboration between the EU and Eastern European/Balkan region. Establishing a more solid and sustainable cooperation is important as the Balkans and Eastern Europe are affected by EU legislation, both in the course of formal accession negotiations as well as simply by the fact that the EU is a standard setter in digital rights legislation for Europe as a whole. It is crucial that voices from the Balkans and Eastern Europe are heard in the EU: firstly because they bring a new perspective stemming from a different socio-economic and political background and secondly because digital rights advocacy at the EU-level needs all the support possible to influence legislation in a positive way.

2.1. What will we do and why?

We will organise a **6-day long seminar** in Bosnia and Herzegovina **that will gather 40 young people from all Europe** to discuss this topic. The topic is highly relevant to youth across all of Europe. Youth activists are often the first to experience restrictions of rights even when they are not the professed targets of the laws. Second, the internet is used by a majority of young people in daily interactions and are essential in modern collaborative work.

The debates surrounding online freedoms often focus on diffuse fears, which are instrumentalised to push for restrictions of civic and human rights. Therefore we want to gather young people from all over Europe **to analyse the discourse with which restrictions of our human rights are justified**. We want to look at the arguments used, gain an understanding of the underlying facts and learn how youth can actively engage themselves in public discussions and defend their interests. To this end we want to work on participants' advocacy and campaigning skills in the field of digital rights.

Additionally, we want **to give youth the ability to independently protect their rights online**. We will therefore develop participants' skills and encourage them to use software that protects from surveillance and overcomes censorship. We will develop a toolkit on both the theoretical and practical aspects of this seminar, which will help with the achievement of the aims after the seminar.

We hope that this seminar will strengthen the potential of the internet as a real driver of democracy and human rights.

2.2.   Project summary

Project name: Digitised security - How to read the surveillance discourse and fight it!

Duration: 6 working days

Date: 24th – 30th April 2017

Location: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Topic: Digital rights, internet policy, security, surveillance, data protection, digitalisation

Organiser: Cooperation and Development Network Eastern Europe, Youth movement Revolt, European Youth Foundation

Target age: 18-30

Number of participants: 40