

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)

 *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum.).*

PROJECT	
Participant:	2 - Asociatia Polylogos (Polylogos)
PIC number:	895397980
Project name and acronym:	Elephant Talk — Elephant Talk

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	5
Event name:	National event: Data presentation against gender-based hate speech (Romania)
Type:	Workshop
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Romania, Cluj-Napoca
Date(s):	24 September 2025
Website(s) (if any):	https://polylogos.eu/youth-dialogue-in-cluj-bringing-the-data-back-to-the-community/

Participants	
Female:	36
Male:	23
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 [Romania]:	60
Total number of participants:	60
	From total number of countries:
	1

Description
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>

The Polylogos team organised a local dialogue event with high school students in Cluj-Napoca to present the Romanian findings from the project's data collection on **online gender-based body shaming** and to facilitate a structured youth-led discussion on the issue.

The event began with the presentation of national-level data collected during the project's youth-led research phase. Key findings included:

- **56%** of respondents reported having witnessed body shaming online.
- **24%** said they had personally experienced body shaming.

- The most commonly reported form of body shaming was "*comparisons of physical appearances to others.*"
- **49%** admitted to having engaged in at least one form of body shaming behaviour themselves.
- **50%** of respondents agreed with the statement: "*If you expose your body on social media, you should accept all kinds of comments.*"
- And yet, **70%** believe that **something should be done** to address the issue.

These numbers sparked a **lively and emotional discussion** among the young participants, generating reactions ranging from surprise and discomfort to deep recognition and a sense of motivation to act. Students explored the contradictions in their own beliefs and the social norms that perpetuate harmful online behaviour.

A particularly impactful moment came when one participant - a young woman who works as a model - shared her personal experience of repeated exposure to body shaming, both online and offline. She described the physical and emotional toll this takes on her, including deliberately not eating or drinking on modelling days out of fear that even a slightly visible belly would attract negative comments. She explained that this occurs while working long, exhausting days of up to 14 hours. Her testimony generated a strong response of **compassion, empathy, and collective reflection** from the group, reinforcing the importance of addressing the issue systemically.

The second part of the session focused on dialogue and reflection, with participants responding to key questions such as:

- Should body shaming be considered "normal" on social media?
- Why do so many young people engage in or ignore it?
- What can be done to create safer digital spaces for all?
- How can we move from **passive bystanders to active allies?**

The discussion revealed that many participants were reflecting critically on this topic for the first time, and re-assessing previously held assumptions about what is "normal" and "acceptable" behaviour online. By the end of the discussion, the group expressed a strong appetite for tools, support, and educational spaces where these issues can be openly addressed.

This event reminded us of the importance of **bringing the data back to the people it represents**. By returning to the school environment, where so many experiences of online harm begin or are processed, the discussion became personal, real, and rooted in lived experience. We were particularly moved by how openly students shared their thoughts and how eager they were to understand **both the impact of body shaming** and their role in **changing online culture** for the better.

The event offered a safe and empowering space for young people to voice their concerns, share personal stories, and propose ideas for change. It also built momentum for youth involvement in the upcoming **Elephant Talk final event at the European Parliament**, scheduled for **14 October 2025**, where young delegates from four countries will present their findings and recommendations to MEPs and EU stakeholders.

Outcomes:

- **Increased awareness** among Romanian youth of how body shaming is perceived and normalized within their online environments, and of its link to wider gender-based violence across the EU.
- **Amplified youth voices** through peer-led dialogue and lived-experience sharing
- **Strengthened capacity for critical thinking and empathy**, with participants actively questioning online behaviours and exploring their role in building safer digital cultures.
- **Cross-sector engagement** within the school environment, connecting students, teachers, youth workers, and civil society actors in a shared effort to address gender-based hate speech.
- **Valuable input gathered** for the final *Elephant Talk* policy recommendations, highlighting the need for education, accountability from platforms, and youth-led solutions, to be presented in Brussels in October 2025.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).
