

STRASBOURG CALL

FIGHTING CYBERVIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE EU

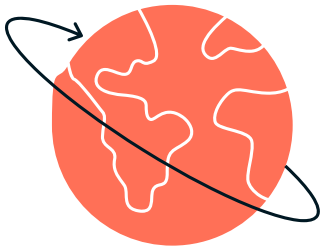
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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY
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CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: AN EMERGENCY IN THE EU

The proliferation of online sexism and sexual violence poses a growing threat to fundamental rights, human dignity, and the safety of girls, women, and children in Europe and beyond. The rise of technologies that facilitate sexual exploitation—including sexually explicit deepfakes, the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, filmed sexual violence, pornocriminality, and online pimping—highlights the urgent need for coordinated action among states, European institutions, tech companies, and civil society.



The **Strasbourg Call** is an initiative born from international dialogue, bringing together experts, policymakers, lawyers, and representatives of European institutions and organisations involved in the fight against sexist and sexual violence. Its goal is to propose **concrete action and legislative reforms** to strengthen victim protection, regulate the practices of digital platforms, and harmonise legal responses to new forms of Internet sex crimes.



This document builds on existing legal instruments such as **Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence**, the **Digital Services Act** (DSA), the **Istanbul Convention**, and th**e draft European regulation on combating online child abuse**. It is part of a broader effort to strengthen cooperation, adapt the legislative framework to the challenges of digitalisation, and ensure an effective response to online sexist and sexual violence.

1. ESTABLISH A HARMONISED EUROPEAN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

To enhance and strengthen cooperation between States in the fight against online sexism and sexual violence.

This framework should include:

- **A legal definition of online sexism and sexual violence**, and a recognition of its harmful impact on victims.
- Creation of a **European Sexism and Sexual Online Violence Observatory** to collect data and assess the effectiveness of public policies.
- Enhanced cooperation between **Member States and Europol** to improve information sharing on online sexual exploitation networks.
- **Harmonised** regulation of digital platforms, with increased funding for the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) and the creation of a unit dedicated to online violence.
- **Obligation for tech companies to cooperate** with the authorities to detect and remove harmful content at the request of those concerned, including sexually explicit deepfakes at the request of victims.
- **Regular monitoring and evaluation** of regulatory implementation via public reports and independent audits.

2. ENHANCE THE MECHANISMS FOR REMOVING NON-CONSENSUAL INTIMATE CONTENT

drawing on the approach used to combat terrorist material and on best practices for CSAM takedown, to guarantee a swift and effective response to its dissemination.

This should include **the removal of illegal content involving sexual violence and/or sexist hate**, while fully upholding the principles of proportionality, necessity, and fundamental rights.

Establish a binding injunction procedure requiring hosting service providers to remove or block access to NCII within 24–48 hours of notification by the relevant authority. To ensure effectiveness, the EU should:

- **Empower trusted flaggers** (under the DSA) to issue legally binding takedown notices for NCII.
- **Accelerate removal of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)** by using databases such as Interpol's ICSE and hashing techniques to eliminate duplicates and prevent the re-victimisation of children.
- **Label or otherwise identify AI-generated content**, ensuring rapid removal of fabricated, non-consensual material.

- **Increase platform transparency** on takedown policies, processing times, and cooperation with specialist NGOs.
- **Sanction non-compliant platforms** and reinforce their legal liability when they fail to remove content shared without consent.

Reinforce the EU legal framework by:

- Designating platforms hosting high-risk content - such as pornographic sites and social networks frequently used to disseminate NCII - as **"exposed to sexual content"**, and imposing targeted preventive measures based on objective criteria (e.g. repeated takedown orders over a set period).
- Classifying NCII dissemination as a **systemic risk under Article 35 of the DSA**, recognising its severe impact on fundamental rights.
- Integrating NCII into **EU gender-equality and anti-violence policies**, with guaranteed victim support (legal aid, psychosocial services) and mandatory training for law-enforcement and judicial authorities.

Promote proactive detection and prevention:

- Require platforms to deploy **proactive detection tools**, enabling at least the automatic removal of content already confirmed as illegal.
- Establish an **EU-level database of hashed illegal content** and encourage platforms to integrate and share hashing databases to prevent viral re-circulation.
- Set up a **monitoring and automatic de-listing system** to block the reappearance of previously deleted material.
- Provide **EU funding and visibility for good-practice tools** such as Disrupt, which uses digital fingerprinting to prevent the re-upload of intimate images.

3. STRENGTHEN RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION ON ONLINE SEXISM AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- **Promote in-depth research** to better understand the mechanisms of online sexism and sexual violence and their impact on victims and society.
- **Improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data at the European level**, assessing the prevalence and adverse effects of online sexism and sexual violence.
- **Ensure transparency and access to data** for organisations, professionals and the general public to raise awareness, develop appropriate responses, and evaluate policies to counter online sexist and sexual violence.



4. STRENGTHEN REGULATION OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND APPLICATION OF THE DIGITAL SERVICES ACT (DSA)

- Include all platforms enabling the distribution of sexual content among the **Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs)** in order to impose greater obligations on them in terms of content control.
- **Clearly define the notion of "serious and repeated violations" in the DSA**, to ensure effective enforcement of sanctions against platforms that fail to meet their obligations.
- **Accelerate the establishment of digital services coordinators in each Member State**, guaranteeing their independence to ensure rigorous application of the DSA.

5. STRENGTHENING THE REGULATION OF AI USES TO COMBAT ONLINE SEXUAL AND SEXIST VIOLENCE :

- Explicitly include sexual deepfakes among the **unacceptable uses of AI** in the AI Act.
- Impose minimum safety standards for all AI applications enabling image modification, including a ban on **"deepnudes"** features that artificially remove clothing from photos.
- Require AI developers **to clearly indicate artificially generated content**, to prevent any confusion or manipulation.

6. REINFORCE AGE CONTROL TO PROTECT MINORS FROM EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY

- Legally recognise **the exposure of minors to pornography** as a form of online violence.
- **Implement strong identification systems** to prevent minors from accessing pornographic platforms.



7. ADOPT A VERSION OF THE EUROPEAN REGULATION ON COMBATING ONLINE CHILD ABUSE CONTENT THAT TRULY PROTECTS VICTIMS

This framework must include strong provisions to:

- Impose a legal obligation on online platforms **to rapidly detect, report and remove child abuse content**, with reinforced control mechanisms.
- Require digital companies **to systematically report** cases and suspicions of crimes against children to the relevant authorities, to facilitate investigations and protect victims.
- **Block platforms** that fail to comply with these obligations, to ensure swift and systematic action.
- Ensure **independent monitoring** of the application of the rules by a dedicated European body, guaranteeing their effective and consistent implementation.

8. AS PART OF THE REVISION OF DIRECTIVE 2011/93/EU, ADOPT CLEAR, EFFECTIVE AND PROTECTIVE PROVISIONS, INCLUDING :

- **Comprehensive definition of online child sexual abuse content**: cover any image showing the appearance of a minor, without age limits, including all intimate images (not only sexual organs or acts), whether real, simulated or AI-generated, and without requiring proof of intent to produce or share the image.
- **Stronger penalties and platform accountability** for grooming, online solicitation of minors and exposing children to pornography.
- **Explicit inclusion of pornographic platforms** in the Directive and in EU digital regulation, given their role in spreading and normalising child sexual abuse material and content sexualising minors (e.g. “teen”, “school girl” tags).
- **Child-friendly reporting channels** to make it easier to report grooming and other forms of online abuse.
- **Accurate terminology** that removes any reference to a child’s “consent” or “active participation” in sexual abuse.
- **Recognition of the gendered dimension** of child sexual abuse: acknowledge that most victims are girls and most perpetrators are men, so that prevention and protection policies can be tailored accordingly.



Online sexism and sexual violence represents a major challenge for democratic societies, requiring firm, coordinated responses at national, European and international levels. The **Strasbourg Call puts forward concrete recommendations for effective regulation** of digital platforms, improved victim protection, increased accountability of technology companies and enhanced legal cooperation between states.

We therefore urge the European Union to make the fight against cyberviolence an absolute priority. Strict regulation, accompanied by prevention mechanisms and support for victims, is essential to counter the impunity that currently reigns over these crimes and ensure effective access to justice for those concerned.

The Strasbourg Call provides a working basis for ambitious legislative and regulatory advances. We urge all decision-makers and stakeholders to commit themselves fully to this approach, and to implement these recommendations without delay, **in order to build a digital environment that is safer, fairer and more respectful of everyone's rights.**



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