

WHAT IS ONLINE VIOLENCE?
WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRIME?

SAFE

A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE
TARGETED BY ONLINE
VIOLENCE



GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION

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This guidebook was originally published in 2020 by Finnish Green Women's association for a Finnish audience. As political conversation and activism has shifted more and more on to different social media platforms, so have the voices of harm. The nonconstructive and human rights violating hate speech creep closer to their targets. These targets are most often women, LGBTQI+ people, people of colour, and people with disabilities.

This translation, adjusted to serve the public from other EU countries, responds to a need occurring within the Feminist Climate Ambassadors training and network. The training is organised as a part of Green European Foundation's project Feminists in the Climate Movement. The Feminist Climate Ambassadors training supports the advocacy of European feminist climate activists and encourages them to speak up for equality. Unfortunately, still in 2021, people who speak about gender inequality and the oppression of minorities, are at a higher risk of being harassed and silenced. We hope that this guide book provides support for people who are exposed to this kind of online violence because of their advocacy.

Because of the original purpose and target group of this guidebook, it includes case examples of Finnish practices, national legislation and organisations working on the issue. You can identify the Finnish case examples from the grey-coloured highlighting. However, the guidebook also includes tips on how and where the residents of other EU countries can look for support if they are targeted by online violence.

This guidebook has been created, because women and different minorities in politics, such as LGTBQ activists, people of colour or with disabilities, are often targeted by silencing and a threat of online violence.



SAFE

A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE TARGETED BY ONLINE VIOLENCE

Political participation is everyone's right.

Harassment and silencing are not parts of a thriving democracy.

Women, LGBTQI+ people, persons of color, and persons with disability who are active in politics are increasingly targeted by silencing and threats of violence.

We want to support and offer guidance to our members and activists who are targeted by online violence.

This guide draws from materials by the police, European Women's Lobby and Women's Line in Finland (Naisten Linja).

This guide will help you to:

- Understand what online violence is about
- Who to contact in case you are targeted
- What constitutes a crime
- Know your options for action

At the end of the guide, you can find a list that gives you tips on how to increase your online safety.

In case of emergency

Do not hesitate to contact the police (112) in case of a serious threat to your safety.



WHAT IS ONLINE VIOLENCE?

59% of people who use social media have been bullied or harassed (Someturva).

Neither technology nor using it in increasing number of ways in our everyday lives is the problem. The problem is those who misuse technology.

Everyone has the right to technology.

Online violence is used for multiple purposes, but the underlying attempt is to humiliate, scare, silence or (physically and psychologically) harm someone. Online violence can make the victim feel haunted, as there is nowhere to escape to and nothing seems private. It is important to remember that often the violence is not actually targeting an individual but rather what they represent.

Online violence has real consequences. Fatigue, anxiousness, desperation, isolation, losing any semblance of control and humiliation limit the sense of freedom of the target.

The impact of online violence is also deeply felt offline.

Equality, non-discrimination and violence

Women are 27 times more likely to experience online harassment than men (UN). Women are targeted due to their identity, status, and inequality. Women in all their diversity includes trans women and cis women, LGBTQIA+ women, women and girls of color, financially vulnerable women, women with disabilities, women coming from small communities, and immigrant women.

Having many of these vulnerabilities or characteristics increases the risk of being targeted by violence. Racist and ableist discrimination exacerbates online violence.

IF YOU ARE TARGETED

Remember: it is not your fault. Trust your judgment. You are the best expert on your boundaries. Prioritize safety.

1. Report and block

You can block users and report them on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms.

2. Identify the type of violence

Describing and naming what is going on assists you to ask and receive help.

3. Decide how you want to proceed

Every incident is unique.

Most commonly one of the following is the chosen course of action:

I don't want to react

I want to react

I don't know what to do, I need support

I DON'T WANT TO REACT

*It's your right to choose what to do when you are targeted by
online violence*

We recommend collecting evidence just in case. Screen shots are an easy way to archive information that you've collected online and that might help your case later. Documenting what had happened is crucial.

- Take a screen shot of the text or image and the profile of the user
- Write down what happened, time and date, and contact details of potential witnesses
- Record any and all evidence even if deleting uncomfortable messages seems like a good option. Save all correspondence, not just individual messages. For instance, you can download a WhatsApp conversation as a separate file.

Screenshots should be taken as soon as possible as some services allow the sender to delete their message after sending it. On social media platforms, a message or a picture should be saved by screenshotting it because it might be impossible to get it back after it has been deleted from the platform.

Documenting incidents can feel burdensome. Ask for help from a trusted friend or a professional in case you need it.

I WANT TO REACT

In case of emergency always call 112.

Report to authorities: Threats and potential crimes can be reported to local authorities via reporting websites in many European countries.

If the violence still continues, you could file a report of an offence.

To report an offence, follow the practices of your country of residence.

Case example from Finland: Offense report is filed to the local police who, if needed, transfers the case to the National Bureau of Investigation (Keskusrikospoliisi). A report of an offence can be filed electronically if the case does not require immediate action from the police.

Save all the messages and present them to the police. In addition, make a list of the consequences suffered by the offence (e.g. physical, psychological, economic, social).

Noting things down helps to clarify and analyze the incident and its consequences. If you need to see a doctor due to the damage caused to your health (e.g. for anxiety or insomnia), a medical certificate will be useful in the criminal procedures. When you report the crime, mention that you have documented evidence.

If you suspect spyware on your phone, send your device to the police. Do not attempt to delete the malware yourself and do not close your phone.

If you suspect that you have been hacked, check if any log in data shows unfamiliar IP addresses and take a screen shot of them.

I NEED SUPPORT

You are not alone.

Being targeted by violence is rough and can make you feel vulnerable.

After every incident it is important to talk to someone you trust, call a hotline or seek out a support service.

A non-exhaustive list of European organisations combating hate speech and online violence

FINLAND (FI)

Nollalinja 080 005 005

Open 24hrs every day, including public holidays

Women's Line in Finland / naistenlinja.fi

0800 02400 Monday to Friday 16-20

Chat specialized on online violence on Wednesdays at 12-14

(naistenlinja.fi/turvaverkko)

Hotline focused on online violence 0800 02400, Thursdays at 12-14

Victim Support Finland www.riku.fi/en/

Finnish Police Academy - <https://www.poliisi.fi/>

AUSTRIA (AT)

Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (ZARA) - <https://zara.or.at/de>

I NEED SUPPORT

You are not alone.

BELGIUM (BE)

CEJI - A Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe - <https://ceji.org/>
Centre interfédéral pour l'égalité des chances (UNIA) - <https://www.unia.be/>

BULGARIA (BG)

Integro association - <https://integrobg.org/>

CZECH REPUBLIC (CZ)

In Iustitia - <https://en.in-ius.cz/>
Romea - <http://www.romea.cz/>

CROATIA (HR)

Centre for Peace Studies - <https://www.cms.hr/>

CYPRUS (CY)

Aequitas - <https://www.aequitas-humanrights.org/>

ESTONIA (EE)

Estonian Human Rights Centre - <https://humanrights.ee/en/>

FRANCE (FR)

Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme (LICRA) -
<https://www.licra.org/>
Plateforme PHAROS - <https://www.internet-signalement.gouv.fr/>

I NEED SUPPORT

You are not alone.

GERMANY (DE)

Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedia-Diensteanbieter e.V. (FSM e.V.)- <https://fsf.de/>
Jugendschutz.net - <http://www.jugendschutz.net/>

GREECE (EL)

SafeLine / Forth - <https://projects.ics.forth.gr/>

HUNGARY (HU)

Háttér Society - <http://en.hatter.hu/>

ITALY (IT)

Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (UNAR) - <http://www.unar.it/>
CESIE - <https://cesie.org/>
Centro Studi Regis - <http://serenoregis.org/>

IRELAND (IE)

ENAR Ireland - <https://www.enar-eu.org/ireland>

LATVIA (LV)

Mozaika - <http://mozaika.lv/>
Latvian Centre for Human Rights - <http://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/en/>

LITHUANIA (LT)

National LGBT Rights Organisation (LGL) - <https://www.lgl.lt/en/>

I NEED SUPPORT

You are not alone.

MALTA (MT)

Malta LGBTIQ Right Movement (MGRM) - <http://maltagayrights.org/>

NETHERLANDS (NL)

Meldpunt Internet Discriminatie (MiND) - <https://www.mindnederland.nl/>

INACH / Magenta Foundation - <https://www.inach.net/netherlands-magenta/>

POLAND (PL)

HejtStop / Projekt: Polska - <https://projektpolska.pl/>

PORTUGAL (PT)

Associação ILGA Portugal - <https://ilga-portugal.pt/>

ROMANIA (RO)

Active Watch - <http://blog.activewatch.ro/>

SLOVENIA (SI)

Spletno oko - <https://www.spletno-oko.si/>

SLOVAKIA (SK)

digiQ - <https://digiq.sk/>

I NEED SUPPORT

You are not alone.

SPAIN (ES)

Fundación Secretariado Gitano - <https://www.gitanos.org/>

Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGTB) -
<https://www.felgtb.com/nueva/>

Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE) -
<http://www.inclusion.gob.es/>

SWEDEN (SE)

Institutet för Juridik och Internet - <http://www.juridikinstitutet.se/>

UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

True Vision - <https://www.report-it.org.uk/>

Galop - <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

Community Security Trust - <https://cst.org.uk/>

Tell Mama - <https://tellmamauk.org/>

Faith Matters - <https://www.faith-matters.org/>

I NEED SUPPORT

Mental and legal support in Finland:

If you want to discuss your experiences anonymously, you can always contact

Mental Health Finland's crisis helpline 09 2525 0113
on Mon, Tue at 11-15, Wed at 13-16 and 17-21. Thu at 10-15

Women's Line in Finland / naistenlinja.fi

0800 02400 Monday to Friday 16-20

Chat specialized on online violence on Wednesdays at 12-14
(naistenlinja.fi/turvaverkko)

Hotline focused on online violence 0800 02400, Thursdays at 12-14

Nollalinja 080 005 005

Open 24hrs every day, including public holidays

Legal support

Someturva / someturva.fi (in English somebuddy.com):

Someturva is a digital legal service specialized in online crime.

A commercial service. Fees apply.

Victim Support Finland www.riku.fi/en/

The aim of Victim Support Finland (RIKU) is to improve the position of victims of crime, their loved ones and witnesses in criminal cases e.g. by producing low threshold support and guidance services. You can reach them via phone, chat or a contact form.

IDENTIFY AND NAME WHAT IS HAPPENING

Words can create safety.

Naming what is going on assists you to ask for help and to detach yourself from the situation.

Hate speech is defined by the Council of Europe as all expressions which spread, incite, promote, or justify hatred in a threatening or offensive way. Hate speech can target for instance gender, complexion, national or ethnic origin, religion or conviction, sexual orientation or disability status.

Cyberbullying consists of repeated behavior such as sending mean texts, starting rumors, or posting images with the objective of frightening or undermining someone's self-esteem or reputation.

Cyber harassment is the use of digital means to communicate or interact with a non-consenting person. Online harassment can take the form of comments, videos, photos and graphic images to create conditions of humiliation. Offensive and hurtful words can be used or comments on physical appearance.

NAME AND IDENTIFY WHAT IS HAPPENING

Words can create safety.

Cyberstalking is the act of spying, fixating or compiling information about somebody online and communicating with them against their will.

Doxing refers to the online researching and publishing of private information on the internet to publicly expose or shame the person targeted.

Hacking i.e. intercepting private communications or data, can take the form for example of web-cam hacking.

Mob attacks: hostile mobs include hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, systematically harassing a target.

Sexting without consent: sexting is the consensual electronic sharing of naked or sexual photographs or texts. Sexting without consent however refers to unwanted sharing of graphic materials or texts.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN EU

Do not hesitate to ask for help when you want to secure your rights.

The laws around online violence and hate speech vary between the EU member states. The common basis is the European Convention on Human Rights, which recognises the right for freedom of speech, but rules that no act performed under the freedom of speech may destruct any rights or freedoms. These principles have been adopted by all member states in their national legislation relating to hate speech.

Violations of privacy in online space is regulated by General Data Protection Regulation, 'GDPR'. GDPR regulates the collection and processing of personal data from individuals in EU, by an individual, a company or an organisation. Any information or collection of data that can be linked to an identifiable individual, is considered personal data.

Read more [here](#).

EXAMPLE FROM FINNISH NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Do not hesitate to ask for help when you want to secure your rights.

Defamation

Target receives a message or messages which contain ridicule, lies about the them, racist remarks or obscene remarks about their appearance. Target may also be the subject of photos or images that are modified to bully them, causing distress and suffering.

Aggravated defamation

If the above-mentioned messages cause serious or long-term harm or grave damage to the target, you might be guilty of aggravated defamation. It is enough if either cause is serious.

Violating freedom of communications

Recurring and disturbing acts of contact in a way that cause the target serious disturbance or harm.

Stalking

To constitute a crime following and monitoring someone needs to be recurring and needs to cause the target fear and anxiety.

Distributing information that violates privacy

Uploading sensitive insinuations, information or photos about someone's private life. Even if it is not false, disclosing it publicly may cause harm and suffering to the

TO DO LIST

What can you do to protect yourself?

Set up a Google Alert for your name. Alert helps you stay informed about who is talking about you and what. A simple Google search tells you exactly how much information anyone can collect about you. This helps us understand how vulnerable we are.

Encrypt your devices and files: trolls are looking for compromising information that they can use against individuals online. It is not difficult and it doesn't cost anything to ensure that no one has access to your private computer or electronic devices.

Your location can be found via your smart phone or computer. Learn how to not share your location.

Lock your phone! Choose a pin code of 4-6 digits that no one can guess and only you know. Use options for finger print or facial recognition if your phone has them. Be careful who you allow to have facial or finger print access to your phone. If you temporarily need to grant access to your phone, remember to change your pin code later.

TO DO LIST

What can you do to protect yourself?

Check who has access to your cloud service. Your smart phone is either connected to iCloud (iPhone) or a Google Account (Android). Check regularly who has access to your cloud service also with other devices. Think carefully what you wish the cloud service to archive.

Use two-step verification in all applications and services that offer it as an option. Be aware that if you record your phone number or other information in a service this information will be released to a hacker in case your account is hacked.

Pay attention to your apps. We recommend you to regularly check what the apps on your phone have access to. Check application settings one by one and delete the ones that you are not using. Don't give rights to your data in case you don't need the app. If you use Google Play, you can utilize Google Play Protect that checks apps before you download them.

Regularly update software on your devices!

Contact us:



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