



MEDUSA

Handbook for Youth Workers on Online Gender-Based Violence



Co-funded by
the European Union

Information about the project result

Contract number	KA220-YOU-000099917
Project acronym	MEDUSA
Project title	Empowering youth and youth workers to recognize and respond to cyber violence by transgressing gender stereotypes
Project duration	1. 4. 2023-30. 9. 2025
Work package	4: Empowering young people and training youth workers in the field of online violence in relation to gender aspects
Result	Handbook for Youth Workers on Online Gender-Based Violence
Status	Final version
Partner responsible for the result	Zavod Mladinska mreža MaMa
Level of dissemination	Public

Project coordinator

Organisation	IPES Maribor
Email	info@ipes-si.org
Address	Glavni trg 17, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia

List of authors

Chapter	Name	Organisation
3. Mentoring techniques for youth workers	Nežka Agnes Vodeb	Zavod Mladinska mreža MaMa
4.2 Use of digital tools, 4.3 Adaptation of activities, 5.	Alenka Drobnjak	Zavod Mladinska mreža MaMa

Integration with MOOC Module		
2. Understanding gender-based online violence	Zala Primorac	IPES Maribor
4. Practical activities	Nina Popović	Mreža mladih Hrvatske
Expert review of content	Matic Munc	

Contents

Handbook for Youth Workers on Online Gender-Based Violence	1
Information about the project result	2
Project coordinator	2
List of authors.....	2
Contents	4
 1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 About the project	6
1.2 Purpose and objectives of the handbook	7
1.3 How to use the handbook.....	8
 2. Understanding online gender-based violence.....	9
2.1 Definitions and forms of online violence	10
2.2 The impact of gender stereotypes and norms	17
2.3 Vulnerable youth groups	21
2.4 Legal framework and protection	24
 3. Mentoring techniques for youth workers.....	25
3.1 The role of youth workers: how can youth workers identify that young people are victims of online violence	25
3.2 Communication Skills: Techniques for effectively communicating with young people about sensitive topics.....	28
3.3 Creating a Safe Space: How to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for discussing experiences of online gender-based violence	32
3.4 Supporting Victims: Approaches to supporting young people who have experienced online gender-based violence.....	35
 4. Practical Activities	39
4.1 Workshops	40
4.1.1 Workshop 1: Introduction to online gender-based violence	40
4.1.2 Workshop 2: Cyber safety and privacy.....	50
4.1.3 Workshop 3: What to do as a victim of OGBV?.....	55
4.1.4 Workshop 4: Reporting online gender-based violence.....	60
4.1.5 Workshop 5: Peer support to victim(s) of OGBV	65

4.1.6 Workshop 6: Rules of (online) dating.....	71
4.2 Use of Digital Tools	76
4.3 Adapting Activities.....	78
5. Integration into the MOOC Module.....	80
5.1 Structure of the MOOC Module.....	80
5.2 Connection Between the Toolkit and the MOOC.....	81
5.3 Self-Evaluation and Further Learning.....	82
6. Annexes 6.1 Relevant national and international laws, reporting mechanisms, and organizations that offer support to victims of OGBV	83
6.1.1 Slovenia	83
6.1.2 Croatia.....	85
6.1.3 Italy	88
6.2 Ground rules	90
6.3 Pre and post test	91
6.4 Workshop 6 SWOT Analysis template.....	100
6.5 List of Resources and References	101

1. Introduction

1.1 About the project

MEDUSA - Empowering youth and youth workers to recognize and respond to cyber violence by transgressing gender stereotypes with its activities aims to contribute to the construction and implementation of an integrated approach for the recognition and prevention of and informed response to online gender-based violence and harassment among young people. Based on the principle of gender equality, MEDUSA inherently aims to promote **inclusivity** and **diversity** among **young people** and **youth workers** through a series of **awareness-raising, education** and other **preventive activities**, which at the same time strengthens the international aspect of awareness about the problem of online violence. From the center of the intersection of the above priorities, a project idea was born that, on one hand, enables a long-term change in the behavior and thinking of young people, and on the other hand, immediately offers youth workers recommendations for effective action in the area of recognizing and preventing online gender-based violence and harassment. Inclusivity and diversity are integrated into the project in the widest possible way, because only a safe life (also in the virtual space), which is not limited by the existing unequal distribution of power between genders, can offer both men and women an equal democratic experience.

The **main goals** of the MEDUSA project are:

- i. development of innovative and customized content for young people and youth workers to empower them with knowledge about and skills to respond in an informed manner to online gender-based violence,
- ii. education and sensitization of young people for recognizing and preventing online gender-based violence,
- iii. education and sensitization of youth workers for a strengthened response for victims of online violence,
- iv. raising public awareness of the connection between online violence and the aspect of gender,
- v. contribute to an increased and more efficient addressing of the issues associated with online gender-based violence on the national and European level,
- vi. enable the exchange and transfer of good practices between partner countries.

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to support youth workers in recognizing, understanding, and effectively responding to online gender-based violence (OGBV). It is designed as a practical and accessible tool for youth workers, whether they want to use it for self-learning, in combination with the [online Medusa MOOC module](#) or to facilitate trainings for youth workers.

The handbook combines both theoretical-conceptual frameworks and experiential knowledge, ensuring a well-rounded and practice-oriented approach. Its primary aim is to strengthen the competencies of youth workers by equipping them with the necessary tools, techniques, and insights to address this pressing issue in their work with young people.

To achieve this, the handbook is structured around three core components:

1. **An overview of online gender-based violence:** This section provides key definitions, explores various forms of online abuse, and examines the influence of gender stereotypes and norms that perpetuate such violence.
2. **Mentoring techniques for youth workers:** Practical guidance is offered on how youth workers can engage both their peers and young people in meaningful dialogue and support. It includes communication strategies, creating safe and inclusive spaces, and responding to sensitive situations with empathy and competence.
3. **A selection of activities and worksheets:** The handbook presents real-life examples of educational activities. These resources are intended to support the facilitation of youth training sessions and awareness-raising workshops, both in-person and online.

Through these components, the handbook aims to empower youth workers not only to intervene effectively when online gender-based violence occurs but also to foster preventative and educational approaches that promote respect, equality, and safety in digital environments.

1.3 How to use the handbook

This handbook is designed as a practical and flexible tool to support youth workers in addressing online gender-based violence (OGBV) among young people. It can be used in a variety of educational and professional contexts, including structured training sessions, individual learning, and in combination with the MEDUSA online learning platform (MOOC). The content allows users to engage with the material in ways that best fit their needs, experiences, and working environments.

Youth workers can use the handbook to structure workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, or in-depth educational programmes. The materials in Chapters 3 and 4 offer step-by-step guidance, ready-made activities, and adaptable tools for:

- Delivering participatory sessions on OGBV.
- Supporting group discussions on digital safety and gender norms.
- Building the capacity of youth workers through practical skill-building exercises (e.g., communication techniques, creating safe spaces).

Youth workers, educators, and volunteers can use the handbook as a self-study resource to deepen their understanding of online violence and strengthen their ability to respond effectively. In this context, users are invited to:

- Read thematic chapters (Chapter 2 on forms and impacts of OGBV) to build foundational knowledge.
- Explore and test practical activities from Chapter 4 to integrate into their own work.

The handbook is designed to complement the MEDUSA Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), which offers an interactive digital learning experience. Together, the MOOC and the handbook form a comprehensive educational package. While the MOOC delivers quizzes the handbook offers:

- Printable and offline resources.
- Additional reading and theory.
- Tools for workshop implementation and real-world facilitation.

Youth workers can use the MOOC to gain initial exposure to core themes and return to the handbook for deeper exploration, planning, and practical application.

This handbook is not intended to be read once and set aside. Rather, it is a resource that youth workers can return to throughout their practice. Whether responding to a disclosure of online violence, planning a workshop, or reflecting on their approach to gender-sensitive facilitation, the handbook is designed to provide structured, credible, and inclusive guidance.

2. Understanding online gender-based violence

Online gender-based violence (hereinafter OGBV) is not a new phenomenon, but its reach and impact have grown dramatically in recent years, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Understanding OGBV in an ever-evolving digital landscape requires more than just a list of harmful behaviors; it includes recognizing how traditional gender roles and stereotypes are reproduced online, how intersecting forms of discrimination (such as racism, homophobia, or ableism) shape young people's experiences of violence, and how technology is used both as a tool for empowerment and a weapon of control (Lomba et al., 2021). It also means being aware of the challenges youth face in speaking up, accessing support, and finding justice, especially when legal frameworks or platform policies fail to protect them. This is why the following chapter aims to help close that gap by offering a clear, nuanced understanding of what OGBV is, how it manifests, and who it affects most (Sala-Torrent & Ianas-Lladó, 2021; Georgieva, 2024).

The chapter is divided into three sub-sections. The first outlines definitions and forms of OGBV, providing a foundational understanding of the different types of abuse that can occur in digital environments, including sexual violence and intimate partner violence mediated by technology. The second explores the role of gender stereotypes and social norms in shaping the dynamics of OGBV, highlighting how these cultural expectations normalize and justify harmful behavior. The final sub-section focuses on vulnerable groups, especially LGBTQI+ youth, youth of colour, and youth with disabilities, whose experiences are often shaped by overlapping forms of oppression and systemic exclusion. Ultimately, this chapter is not just about describing a problem. It's about deepening the understanding of those who work with youth so they can recognize the signs, foster open conversations, and support young people in navigating digital spaces safely, confidently, and with dignity.

2.1 Definitions and forms of online violence

While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of online violence, international organizations and researchers largely converge on its core characteristics. According to UNICEF (n.d.), online violence (also referred to as *cyberbullying*) involves **bullying behaviors carried out through digital technologies**. This includes the intentional and repeated infliction of harm using tools such as mobile phones, social media, messaging platforms, and gaming environments. The behavior is often designed to intimidate, humiliate, anger, or shame the targeted individual or group. Mihaljević and Tukara Komljenović (2018) also emphasize that digital technologies provide perpetrators with a sense of anonymity and power, allowing violence to spread rapidly to broad audiences with significant psychological and social consequences for the victim. In essence, online violence is abuse enacted through digital means. Often, it is **not a one-time occurrence but a sustained campaign of aggression** enabled by the persistence and virality of online media.

What **distinguishes online violence from its offline counterpart** is not only the medium through which it is carried out but the **scope, persistence, and psychological intensity** it can generate. Several features make it particularly harmful and difficult to manage, especially for children and young people, namely:

Availability and exposure:

Unlike physical-world violence, online violence has no temporal or spatial limits. It can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, infiltrating spaces that were once safe, including homes and bedrooms. Abusive messages can be delivered at any hour, and once harmful content is shared online like photos, rumors, threats it remains accessible and replicable indefinitely. Victims may repeatedly encounter violent material, whether by re-reading messages, seeing new comments, or being notified that others have viewed or shared the content. The psychological impact is therefore compounded not just by the repetition, but by the public visibility and endless reach of digital platforms (UNFPA, n.d.).

Anonymity and the abuser's identity:

In traditional offline peer violence, identifying the aggressor is often straightforward, as the interactions are face-to-face and time-bound. In contrast, the online environment allows perpetrators to mask their identity through anonymous accounts or pseudonyms. This anonymity can embolden users who might not engage in such behavior offline, giving

them a false sense of invincibility and impunity (Kim et al., 2023). It also complicates the victim's ability to understand who is behind the attack and to seek justice or support. Although many victims suspect or know their abuser, particularly in peer violence settings, anonymity adds a layer of psychological distress and helplessness. Behind a digital screen, any person can become an aggressor, regardless of physical strength, social status, or proximity. A classmate, a distant peer, or a complete stranger can perpetrate serious harm without ever being physically present. Moreover, perpetrators may easily recruit or be joined by others, increasing the scale and perceived legitimacy of the violence (Smith et al., 2020).

Lack of social feedback and empathy:

Online interactions remove many of the human cues that normally regulate social behavior, such as tone of voice, facial expression, or body language. Without these emotional and contextual indicators, perpetrators may underestimate or ignore the harm they are causing. The screen mediates and distances the aggressor from the victim, reducing empathy and making it easier to rationalize cruelty or diminish its impact (Holdsworth, 2024).

The consequences of online violence are far-reaching and can be just as severe (and in some cases more enduring) than those of offline or physical-world violence. Victims often experience **significant psychological distress**, including anxiety, depression, panic attacks, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts. The persistent nature of digital abuse and the knowledge that harmful content may resurface at any time contribute to a chronic sense of fear, vulnerability, and powerlessness (EIGE, 2022). **For young people in particular, whose identities and relationships are deeply shaped by their online presence, the impact of such violence can affect every aspect of their lives, from mental health and academic performance to social integration and personal development.** The public and permanent visibility of online abuse can intensify humiliation and shame, while the lack of accountability for perpetrators often leads to victims feeling isolated and unsupported. Just like in offline violence, the intent and outcome of online violence is to control, silence, and subordinate; but with digital technologies, the scale, speed, and reach of harm can be vastly magnified (Dennehy et al., 2020; UNFPA, n.d.). Recognizing the gravity of this form of violence is essential in ensuring it is neither trivialized nor treated as secondary to physical forms of abuse.

A significant and increasingly recognized dimension of this phenomenon is **OGBV**, also called *gender-based cyber violence, online violence against women and girls, or technology-facilitated gender-based violence*. This includes a range of harmful behaviors that target individuals, particularly girls and women, based on their gender, perceived gender identity, or failure to conform to socially constructed gender roles. OGBV reflects

and extends the same patterns of power, control, and subordination found in offline gender-based violence. It is not a standalone or digital-only phenomenon, but rather a technologically mediated continuation of systemic gender inequality (EIGE, 2022). According to the FRA (2017), approximately **1 in 10 women** aged 15 or older have experienced online harassment, such as receiving unwanted and offensive sexually explicit messages or threats of violence. However, more recent research conducted by the Council of Europe (2025) suggests that this number is significantly higher – up to **58% of women** report having experienced some form of online violence.

In this subchapter, we explore three main categories of OGBV:

- 1) OGBV: violence motivated by gendered hostility, including harassment, doxxing, and cyberstalking.
- 2) Online sexual violence: abuse of a sexual nature committed or facilitated through digital tools.
- 3) Online intimate partner violence: technology-enabled control, coercion, or abuse within intimate or romantic relationships.

Online-gender based violence

OGBV refers to **acts of aggression, harm, or coercion perpetrated through digital means**, where the motivation, method, or impact is shaped by **gendered power relations**. These acts are not isolated incidents but are embedded within broader social norms and systems that devalue, police, or attempt to silence individuals based on their perceived gender identity or expression. Crucially, online gender-based violence should not be understood merely as »abuse that happens on the internet«. Instead, it reflects the **migration of long-standing gender-based discrimination into digital environments**. The same structures of **patriarchy, sexism, and gendered control** that manifest in physical spaces also consume digital spaces, often with enhanced speed, reach, and persistence. Technology therefore becomes both the tool and the terrain for these harms (Hicks, 2021; EC, n.d.).

Among the most common expressions of OGBV are targeted online harassment, including threats of sexual or physical violence, prolonged campaigns of bullying or stalking, and the use of misogynistic or homophobic slurs to degrade or exclude. Such attacks are often launched in response to women expressing political views, claiming space in male-dominated communities (such as gaming or tech), or simply existing online in a visible way. Harassment can range from the seemingly casual (»you're too ugly to be online«) to the highly organized and invasive (EIGE, 2022). In recent years, **coordinated attacks have become more common**, with perpetrators working together via group chats, forums, or platforms like Discord and Telegram to identify and overwhelm targets. These tactics may

include mass-reporting accounts to get them banned, spamming inboxes with violent messages, or exposing personal information in an effort to incite further harassment (Hicks, 2021; UN Women, 2025; Fitoz, 2025).

Some of the more extreme forms of OGBV include:

- Doxxing: The publication of a target's private information (e.g. address, phone number, school or workplace) with the intent to harass, intimidate, or threaten. Doxxing often escalates harassment and increases the risk of offline consequences, including stalking and violence.
- Cyberstalking: Repeated and intrusive monitoring or contacting of someone through digital channels. This can include the use of GPS tracking, fake profiles, or relentless messaging. It blurs the boundary between online and offline harm and is frequently used to instill fear and reassert control.
- Gendered disinformation: False or manipulated content used to discredit women or feminized public figures, especially activists, journalists, or political candidates. This may involve fabricating images, editing videos, or spreading malicious rumors with sexual or gendered content designed to undermine credibility or incite hate.
- Trolling as gendered aggression: While trolling is sometimes minimized as harmless provocation, it can take on specifically gendered dimensions, particularly when it targets survivors of sexual violence, outspoken feminists, or vulnerable individuals. This includes coordinated abuse disguised as »jokes« or »debate« intended to wear down the target emotionally or socially (ibid.).

Beyond these overt and often coordinated attacks, OGBV also includes more **insidious and socially normalized behaviors** that revolve around controlling or policing bodies and expressions of sexuality. Body shaming, slut-shaming, and commentary on appearance or dress are frequent forms of everyday online abuse that reinforce gendered expectations and hierarchies. Victims may be ridiculed for being »too fat« or »too thin,« for wearing revealing clothing, or simply for posting selfies or expressing confidence in their bodies. What makes these attacks especially damaging is their normalization: such comments are often dismissed as opinion, humor, or constructive criticism, despite their clear intent to degrade or diminish. Slut-shaming in particular is a powerful tool of social control, used to punish individuals for expressing sexuality, asserting agency over their image, or deviating from expectations of modesty and purity. These forms of OGBV may not always be illegal, but their emotional and psychological toll can be profound, reinforcing shame, self-censorship, and feelings of worthlessness in the victim (EIGE, 2020; UN Women, 2025).

Although online platforms differ in culture, audience, and function, the pattern of gender-based targeting remains consistent across spaces. Social media (Instagram, TikTok, X, Facebook), messaging apps (WhatsApp, Snapchat), streaming platforms (Twitch, YouTube), and even educational tools (Zoom, Google Classroom) have all been sites of gendered abuse (EIGE, 2024).

Online sexual violence

Online sexual violence refers to **acts of a sexual nature carried out or facilitated through digital technologies**, where the intent is to degrade, exploit, control, or humiliate the targeted individual. These acts are typically **non-consensual** and often **violate a person's bodily or sexual autonomy**. Online sexual violence may occur between strangers or acquaintances, within peer networks, or as part of romantic or intimate relationships. It is both a standalone phenomenon and a component of broader patterns of online gender-based violence (EIGE, 2022).

Online sexual violence must be understood within the continuum of sexual violence more broadly; it is not simply a digital aberration, but a **direct extension of offline sexual harassment, abuse, and assault**. What distinguishes it is the use of digital tools to commit, escalate, or perpetuate harm. These tools allow perpetrators to bypass traditional boundaries of space and time, enabling continuous abuse, wide dissemination of harmful content, and, often, impunity due to anonymity or a lack of regulation (de Silva de Alwis, 2024).

Online sexual violence can take many forms, some of which may be difficult to identify as abuse due to the **normalization of sexualized content and digital communication among youth**. However, a consistent feature is the absence of consent, either in the act itself or in its dissemination (EIGE, 2022; de Silva de Alwis, 2024). Some of the most prevalent forms are:

- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images (often referred to as "revenge porn"): This involves distributing nude or sexual images or videos of a person without their permission. These images may have been taken consensually in the context of a private relationship or obtained through deceit, coercion, or hacking. The harm is intensified by the loss of control over one's image and the potential for long-term digital traceability.
- Sextortion: A form of blackmail in which someone threatens to release sexual images, videos, or messages unless further sexual content, money, or compliance is provided. Sextortion often begins with grooming and manipulative trust-building, particularly targeting vulnerable youth. It can have devastating consequences, leading to severe anxiety, shame, and, in some tragic cases, suicide.

- Cyberflashing: Sending unsolicited sexually explicit images (typically of genitalia) to someone – lthough often trivialized, cyberflashing constitutes a violation of personal boundaries and can be deeply distressing, especially for younger recipients.
- Sexualized impersonation or deepfakes: Creating or distributing altered digital images or videos (e.g., through AI-generated deepfakes) that depict a person in a sexual context without their consent. This is a growing and particularly insidious form of abuse that merges identity theft with sexual exploitation.
- Online grooming for sexual exploitation: This involves building a relationship with a minor or vulnerable person online in order to manipulate or coerce them into sexual activity or the production of sexual content. Grooming can occur over extended periods, often beginning with flattery, attention, or emotional support, and escalating into demands for explicit photos or live video interaction.
- Invasive sexual commentary: This includes unsolicited sexual messages or comments, which may be directed at a person's body, sexual orientation, or perceived sexual behavior. It is often dismissed as »just flirting« or »harmless banter« but contributes to a culture where sexual aggression is normalized and unchallenged.

Online sexual violence thrives in environments where **consent is poorly understood** and where sexualized content is commodified and sensationalized (NSRVC, 2022). Many youth are socialized into accepting certain forms of digital sexual aggression as routine. For instance, receiving unsolicited explicit messages may be seen as annoying but not abusive or being pressured into sending nudes may be regarded as a normal part of dating. In this context, victims may not immediately recognize that they are being abused, especially when the aggressor is a peer, a romantic partner, or someone they trust. This is compounded by cultural norms that continue to **blame victims for their own victimization**, questioning why someone shared intimate content, wore revealing clothes, or allowed themselves to be photographed (Van Ouytsel & Dhoest, 2022; Amudhan et al., 2024).

Online intimate partner violence

Online intimate partner violence refers to the **use of digital technologies within the context of a romantic or intimate relationship to control, coerce, monitor, threaten, or harm a partner**. While intimate partner violence is often associated with physical or verbal abuse, digital forms of control and manipulation are increasingly common, especially among youth, and can be just as harmful. Online intimate partner violence includes behaviors that may appear subtle or even caring on the surface but are ultimately rooted in power, domination, and control over the partner's autonomy,

privacy, and social life. These digital behaviors do not replace offline abuse but they often coexist with or extend it (Torp Løkkeberg et al., 2023).

Online intimate partner violence is often **hidden in plain sight**. It may be **romanticized by peers** or even **internalized by victims**, especially when certain controlling behaviors are framed as expressions of love, jealousy, or concern (Anderson & Lee, 2017). Some of the most common and recognizable forms of online intimate partner violence include:

- Surveillance and monitoring: Demanding access to a partner's phone, social media accounts, or private messages under the guise of transparency or trust. This may also involve tracking someone's location through apps like Find My Friends, Snapchat or Life360, monitoring their online activity, or insisting on real-time updates throughout the day.
- Digital possessiveness: Enforcing control over a partner's digital interactions, such as requiring them to block or delete friends of a particular gender, demanding to see screenshots of conversations, or dictating what they can post or wear online. This often escalates into emotional blackmail, where the victim is made to feel guilty for setting boundaries.
- Threats to share intimate content: In relationships where nudes or sexual messages have been shared (with or without initial consent), the abuser may threaten to distribute these materials if their partner does not comply with demands. This form of coercion, commonly known as image-based sexual abuse, is used to maintain control and silence.
- Public humiliation or gaslighting: Using social media to publicly shame a partner, spread lies, or undermine their credibility. This can also include sending private messages to the partner's friends or family in an attempt to isolate them or damage their reputation. Gaslighting, the manipulation of someone into doubting their perception of events, can also be performed through selective deletion of messages, staged screenshots, or twisted narratives that paint the victim as unstable or dishonest.
- Post-breakup harassment: The abuse often continues even after the relationship ends. The abuser may repeatedly message, call, or stalk the victim online. They may impersonate the victim, create fake accounts, or leak personal information to provoke additional harassment. In some cases, new partners are also targeted.

Online intimate partner violence is particularly prevalent among **adolescents and young adults**, many of whom are navigating their first romantic relationships without clear models for healthy boundaries. Digital intimacy, including exchanging messages, images, and constant updates, is often perceived as a **normal part of modern dating**. As a result, surveillance and control can be **misinterpreted as affection or commitment**. Statements like »If you loved me, you'd give me your password« or »Why didn't you reply right away?«

are examples of how emotional coercion can become embedded in routine digital interaction. Moreover, social media has become an essential site of identity-building and social validation for young people. Public relationship visibility can therefore be a source of both pride and pressure. The expectation to prove one’s loyalty or devotion through public posts, relationship status updates, and mutual tagging can create environments in which jealousy and possessiveness flourish and are even encouraged. In this context, **the line between digital intimacy and abuse is often crossed long before the victim (or even the perpetrator) recognizes it as violence** (Hellevik, 2019; Torp Løkkeberg et al., 2023).

2.2 The impact of gender stereotypes and norms

OGBV cannot be meaningfully addressed without first addressing the deeply ingrained **gender stereotypes, norms, and roles** that provide the social foundation for such abuse. These social constructs together define what is considered appropriate behavior, appearance, and ambition for individuals based on their perceived gender. While they vary across cultures and communities, they consistently **promote a binary view of gender and prescribe unequal standards of value, power, and legitimacy** (EIGE, 2022).

GLOSSARY		
Gender stereotypes	Gender norms	Gender roles
Oversimplified, generalized beliefs about people based on their gender. These ideas are often internalized from an early age and perpetuate discrimination and inequality in both public and private spheres, as they shape	Unwritten social rules, fueled by gender stereotypes, that guide how people should perform their gender in a given society. These norms influence attitudes, behaviors, and power dynamics, shaping what is seen as acceptable, desirable, or	Enacted expressions of gender stereotypes and norms, therefore both reflecting the tasks and behaviors typically assigned to individuals based on their perceived gender and reinforcing traditional divisions in work, behavior, and social responsibility.

how people are expected to behave.	shameful for individuals of different genders.	
<i>Example: women are more emotional and nurturing and men are naturally aggressive.</i>	<i>Example: because of the stereotype that women are more nurturing, the norm says that women should be caregivers.</i>	<i>Example: woman stays home to care for children while a man works outside the home.</i>

From early childhood, people are socialized into gender roles through a variety of overt and covert mechanisms. Families, schools, peer groups, religious institutions, and media all contribute to shaping how **children learn to »perform« their gender**. Boys are typically rewarded for displays of toughness, independence, and dominance, while girls are encouraged to be nurturing, modest, and agreeable. These expectations are rarely stated explicitly but are deeply woven into everyday interactions and institutional practices – what educators and sociologists often call the »*hidden curriculum*«. For example, girls may be complimented more often on their appearance than their intelligence, while boys may be praised for assertiveness but discouraged from expressing vulnerability. Such subtle cues reinforce the message that **gendered behavior is not a choice, but a standard to be met** (EMPATH, 2023).

As digital technologies have become central to social life, the gender stereotypes and norms learned in offline spaces have not only been carried into online environments; they have been reshaped and intensified there. Social media platforms, messaging apps, and video-sharing sites operate on architectures designed to reward attention, visibility, and conformity. These **platforms do not exist outside culture** but they constantly reflect and reproduce its dominant values (Iñigo, 2024; UCL, 2024). Algorithms prioritize content that aligns with socially accepted standards of beauty, humor, and behavior, which are all standards that are themselves deeply gendered. Femininity that is soft, sexualized, and compliant is promoted, while assertive, opinionated, or non-conforming expressions of womanhood are often punished. Masculinity, on the other hand, is encouraged in its exaggerated forms: dominance, competitiveness, and control. In this way, the digital sphere becomes a stage on which **gender performances are constantly watched, judged, and rewarded**, creating immense pressure on young people to conform to roles they may not have chosen (Schroeder, 2020; EIGE, 2024).

This reinforcement of traditional gender norms in online spaces has direct implications for the dynamics of OGBV. Girls and women are disproportionately targeted, and often not for anything they say or do, but **simply for being visible online**. The expectation that girls should be quiet, passive, and pleasing renders their presence, and especially their expression of autonomy or sexuality, a perceived violation of social norms. This violation is then »corrected« through online abuse, including shaming, harassment, threats, and mockery (EIGE, 2022; UN Women, 2025). Boys and young men, meanwhile, are rarely targeted in this way simply for being online – when they are attacked, it is often within competitive or confrontational contexts, and less frequently related to their physical appearance or personal worth. For girls, however, the violence is frequently personal and sexualized, reinforcing the message that their value lies in how they look, how much they comply, and how well they stay within acceptable boundaries (Chen et al., 2025).

The internalization of gender stereotypes and norms not only affects who is targeted, but also **how victims experience and make sense of the violence**. Research and practice consistently show that girls and boys respond differently to online abuse, largely because they have been **taught to interpret and express harm in gendered ways**. Girls, who are socialized to be emotionally expressive, attuned to relationships, and responsible for maintaining social harmony, are more likely to internalize the violence they experience. Many report feelings of shame, self-blame, and helplessness, believing they brought the abuse on themselves by being »too visible«, »too provocative,« or »too opinionated.« These feelings are not irrational but are the product of a lifetime of implicit messages that a »good girl« avoids attention and that harm, if it happens, reflects a failure to protect oneself. Boys, by contrast, are generally socialized to suppress emotional expression and avoid vulnerability. From an early age, they are taught that being strong means not showing pain, and that seeking help or expressing fear is a sign of weakness. Research shows that boys are, due to learned detachment, more likely to find online violence irrelevant or even amusing, and in some cases respond to it with violence of their own, using aggression as a socially sanctioned way to reassert control, status, or emotional distance (Safe.si, 2024).

These gendered responses also shape how **others perceive and react to victims**. A girl who discloses online harassment may be met with scrutiny, i.e., asked what she posted, what she wore, whether she was »asking for it«. These questions reflect broader **victim-blaming attitudes** rooted in the belief that girls are responsible for managing male attention and aggression. A boy, on the other hand, may not be believed at all. If he reports being targeted, he may be ridiculed, dismissed, or encouraged to »toughen up.« His victimhood contradicts the stereotype of male invulnerability and dominance, and so it is either ignored or reinterpreted as weakness (O'Brien, 2024). In both cases, **gender norms serve to silence victims**: girls out of shame, boys out of fear of emasculation. These

patterns are not natural but are the **result of social conditioning that limits the emotional range and personal agency of all genders**. They create environments where OGBV is not only more likely to occur, but more likely to go unchallenged, unreported, and unhealed (Safe.si, 2024).

Challenging gender stereotypes in practice

Challenging gender stereotypes is an **ongoing process of reflection and (un)learning**. Stereotypes are not simply personal beliefs but are shaped by culture, reinforced by institutions, and reproduced through daily habits, language, and expectations. Because they are often internalized from a young age, they can operate **automatically and unconsciously**, even among those committed to equality and inclusion. For those working directly with youth, becoming aware of these patterns is a critical part of creating safer, more inclusive environments, both online and offline.

One way to begin this process is to **reflect on how gender shows up in day-to-day interactions and decisions**, including those that might seem routine or neutral. To support this reflection, try the following exercise:

Reflective exercise: gender in everyday practice

Choose one day this week (important: a day when you're working with young people) and commit to observing how gender expectations might be shaping your environment. Use the prompts below as quiet mental notes during the day, or jot them down afterward as part of a reflection journal:

- Who speaks most in group discussions? Whose contributions are affirmed, and in what way?
- How do you respond to conflict or emotional expression – does gender play a role in how you interpret or react to it?
- Are compliments or comments about appearance, behavior, or abilities distributed evenly? Are different traits encouraged or discouraged based on gender?
- Do you find yourself interpreting assertiveness, silence, vulnerability, or humour differently depending on the gender of the young person?
- Are digital behaviors, such as selfies, emojis, status updates, or gaming styles, judged differently depending on who's posting?

Afterward, take a few minutes to reflect:

What surprised you? What challenged your expectations? What small change could you make to encourage more equitable space for all gender expressions?

Engaging in this kind of observation and reflection is **not about catching oneself in failure, but about building awareness**. The aim is not perfection, but intention: creating space for different forms of expression, validating diverse experiences, and noticing the invisible rules that often go unchallenged. When one takes the time to reflect critically on how gender shows up in their own attitudes and environments, they begin to model the very transformation they hope to support in young people. And it is from this place of curiosity, humility, and openness that genuine change can take root.

2.3 Vulnerable youth groups

While OGBV can affect anyone, it does not affect everyone equally. Women and girls are statistically the most likely to be targeted, but this risk increases significantly when **gender intersects with other aspects of identity**, such as sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, or disability. These intersections shape not only who is targeted, but how violence is expressed, what forms it takes, how victims are perceived, and what barriers they face in seeking support (Pandea et al., 2019).

Intersectionality highlights that a person is never »just« a woman, »just« Black, or »just« queer. Rather, multiple dimensions of identity coexist and interact in complex ways. This is not simply a matter of »double« or »triple« discrimination; it is a compounding experience that produces unique forms of harm and exclusion (Hicks, 2021). Recognizing these patterns is not about comparing suffering, but about understanding that different young people experience digital spaces in vastly different ways, depending on how their identities are perceived and treated in the wider culture (Collins, 2021; Allen, 2022).

Below, some of the vulnerable youth groups most affected by OGBV are described, with attention to how overlapping forms of discrimination shape their specific experiences.

Women and girls

Women and girls are widely recognized as a vulnerable and marginalized group in international human rights, development, and child protection frameworks, not because they face high rates of (online) gender-based violence, but due to structural and systemic inequalities that affect nearly every domain of life (UN-HABITAT, 2020). Even in societies with legal gender equality, cultural and institutional norms continue to restrict girls' autonomy, value them less than boys, and exclude them from leadership and decision-making (Cookson et al., 2023). As a result, women and girls are also disproportionately targeted in digital environments with harassment, sexualized abuse, and shaming. Such violence reinforces the social message that a girl's presence is conditional and that her

worth depends on compliance with restrictive gender norms. In this way, OGBV does not exist in isolation but deepens the broader marginalization girls already face, making their vulnerability both a cause and a consequence of systemic inequality (EIGE, 2022).

LGBTQI+ youth

LGBTQI+ youth, especially transgender and non-binary young people, face disproportionately high levels of online violence. This includes homophobic and transphobic slurs, threats of outing, deliberate misgendering, and the denial of their identities altogether. For many LGBTQI+ youth, online spaces are a double-edged sword: they can be lifesaving sources of community and self-expression, but also sites of relentless policing and abuse (Fisher et al., 2024).

The violence directed at LGBTQI+ youth often aims to undermine the legitimacy of their identities and push them back into invisibility. It may take the form of mockery, erasure, threats, or deliberate dehumanization, reinforcing the message that their existence is abnormal, offensive, or fraudulent. When such messages are encountered repeatedly during adolescence, which is a critical period of identity formation, they can lead to internalized stigma, shame, and deep social withdrawal. These experiences are often compounded by a lack of affirming support in offline environments. For LGBTQI+ youth who are not out to their families, communities, or schools, the fear of being »outed« without consent becomes a persistent source of anxiety. Harassers may exploit this vulnerability through manipulation or blackmail, threatening to disclose private information, screenshots, or messages. Even when violence does not escalate to this level, the constant need to self-monitor, hide, or perform a more “acceptable” identity online can take a significant emotional toll. The result is often a silencing effect, where LGBTQI+ youth retreat from online spaces or avoid expressing themselves authentically, not because they lack a voice, but because they have learned that visibility invites punishment (Prokopenko & Hango, 2022; FRA, 2024).

Youth of colour

Young people who are racialized, including Black, Roma, Indigenous, Arab, Asian, and other youth of colour, can face OGBV that is shaped by both gender and race. This can include racial slurs, hate speech, the spreading of stereotypes, exclusion from digital communities, and hypersexualization (Rajani, 2022; Chowdury et al., 2023). Girls of colour, in particular, are often subjected to a toxic mix of racism and sexism that manifests as racialized sexual harassment, where their bodies are exoticized, fetishized, or degraded based on harmful cultural tropes:

- Black girls are frequently stereotyped as more »mature« or »promiscuous,« leading to inappropriate sexual comments, image-based abuse, and a lack of empathy when they are targeted.
- Asian girls may be hypersexualized in ways that reflect both misogyny and orientalist fantasies.
- Roma girls are often dehumanized or reduced to caricatures (ibid.).

These narratives are rooted in histories of colonization, slavery, and systemic racism and are reproduced in memes, comment sections, and viral videos. What makes this violence especially harmful is that it often goes unrecognized – the normalization of racist and sexist stereotypes in online culture means that abuse can be passed off as »jokes« or »free speech«, and many young people absorb these messages without realizing their cumulative impact (Tosaya, 2022).

Youth with disabilities

Young people with disabilities, whether physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychosocial, are often left out of conversations about OGBV, despite facing unique and serious risks. They are more likely to experience social exclusion and isolation, which can make them more dependent on online spaces for connection, communication, and visibility. Unfortunately, these same spaces can expose them to targeted harassment, ridicule, or manipulation (UN Women, 2025).

Ableist abuse online often takes the form of mockery, infantilization, or erasure. Disabled girls may be viewed as either asexual or incapable of agency, while also being fetishized or objectified (Malinowska, 2017; UNFPA, 2024). Moreover, youth with intellectual disabilities may be tricked, coerced, or exploited in ways that are not immediately visible to others. They may not always have access to the digital literacy support needed to recognize abuse or report it effectively. Additionally, platform designs often fail to accommodate users with disabilities, creating further barriers to protection and participation (ibid.).

Because ableism is rarely addressed in mainstream discussions of online harm, young people with disabilities frequently feel invisible or excluded from prevention strategies and safety initiatives. Their needs are often overlooked in educational settings, social campaigns, and platform policies, leaving them to navigate unique vulnerabilities without adequate support. Ensuring their inclusion requires not only better accessibility, but a cultural shift in how disability is understood: not as a deficit, but as a dimension of human diversity that deserves recognition, respect, and protection (UNFPA, 2024).

2.4 Legal framework and protection

Legal recognition of OGBV remains limited and uneven across jurisdictions. In most countries, OGBV is not defined as a distinct legal category, which poses serious challenges for both prevention and enforcement. While certain forms of digital abuse, namely harassment, stalking, threats, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, are increasingly addressed through existing laws on online conduct or gender-based violence, these frameworks often fail to reflect the specific dynamics and structural nature of OGBV. Legislation tends to treat online abuse as an extension of traditional criminal offences like defamation, intimidation, or invasion of privacy, without acknowledging its gendered dimensions or disproportionate impact on women, girls, and marginalized groups. Some countries have introduced targeted measures, particularly in relation to image-based sexual abuse or cyberstalking, yet few legal systems incorporate an explicit gender perspective. This gap reflects a broader reluctance to view online abuse as a systemic issue rooted in power and inequality, rather than as a series of isolated acts (Mijatović, 2022). In parallel, victims of OGBV often face significant barriers in accessing justice. These include lack of awareness of their rights, limited digital literacy, inconsistent police responses, and poorly trained judicial systems (Bansal et al., 2022). Moreover, many online platforms operate across borders, while national laws remain fragmented, making enforcement and accountability difficult. Even where laws are in place, reporting mechanisms can be inaccessible, retraumatizing, or ineffective, particularly for young people or members of marginalized groups. In light of these challenges, prevention and protection require more than legal tools; they demand coordinated responses involving education, platform accountability, and victim support services (Social Development Direct, 2022).

A list of relevant national and international laws, reporting mechanisms, and organizations that offer support to victims of OGBV in Slovenia, Croatia, and Italy can be found as an **appendix** to this Handbook.

3. Mentoring

techniques for youth workers

3.1 The role of youth workers: how can youth workers identify that young people are victims of online violence

‘Youth work’ is a broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, **with and for young people**. Youth work belongs to the area of ‘out-of-school’ education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. Youth work is organised in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities). It is delivered in different forms and settings (e.g. open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach and detached) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level.

Youth work focuses on the **personal and social development of young people** and has an extended reach which **accesses and engages young people based on their needs and interests** and takes account of their environment.

Young people comprise a diverse and dynamic population with different realities, needs, demands and aspirations. Demography, biography, diversity, transitions and opportunities are issues which impact directly on, and occasionally define, young people

Council of Europe, 2013

Youth work involves the general population of young people. These are youth with diverse interests, needs, and backgrounds. Research on online violence in Slovenia shows that *“as many as 54.5% of surveyed young people have already experienced online harassment, with high school girls being the most frequent victims (63.9% have already been harassed), followed by primary school girls (55.3%), high school boys (54.1%), and primary school boys (48.6%)”* (Brečko, 2019). Studies also indicate an increase and intensification of online violence during and after the COVID-19 pandemic – *“the prevalence of online violence among primary school students has significantly increased over the past six years [since 2018], by 18% among girls and 12% among boys”* (safe.si, 2024).

Similar patterns are found in Italy, where the national statistics agency ISTAT reported in 2023 that 34% of adolescents had experienced at least one episode of online harassment in the previous year, with 7.8% facing repeated incidents. Girls remain more vulnerable, with cyberbullying rates higher among female students. Studies by *Telefono Azzurro* also highlight that one in three Italian adolescents is concerned about cyberbullying, and nearly 40% of those aged 12–18 fear the reputational risks of manipulated content, such as deepfakes (ISTAT, 2023; Telefono Azzurro & Doxa, 2024; ANSA, 2025).

Youth work involves the general population of young people. These are young people with different interests, needs and backgrounds. According to available research and reports in Croatia, online violence among young people is a serious and growing problem. Data indicate a high prevalence of various forms of online violence, including sexual harassment, accepting and sharing inappropriate content without consent. Data from a 2023 survey conducted in primary and secondary schools in the City of Zagreb in cooperation with the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation show that online violence among children and young people is least noticeable, but its presence increases significantly after the 5th grade of primary school. According to data from the Centre for a Safer Internet (www.csi.hr), almost 40% of young people stated that they had received sexually-themed content from known and unknown people, and 30% of high school students confirmed that their peers secretly took photos of other people in inappropriate situations, after which these photos were shared on the Internet. Despite the high prevalence of online violence, its reporting is very low. The same Centre’s survey “deSHAME Hrvatska” from 2021 showed that more than half of high school students react to online sexual harassment by ignoring it, almost half block the people involved, and only 3.7% report such incidents to the police.

Given the alarming prevalence of online violence, including gender-based online violence, among the general youth population, we can infer that youth work also includes young people who are (or have been) victims of gender-based online violence. In this context, youth workers are often those who have built a trusting relationship with young people and are therefore among the first to notice if something is wrong. Similar to other

forms of violence, they may detect changes in a young person's behavior, emotions, or thinking – for example, a young volunteer who leads creative workshops once a week has missed two sessions in the past month without prior notice and appears irritable when she does attend. It is important to stress that there is no formula or universal checklist of "symptoms." While there are some warning signs, what matters most is that the youth worker takes a holistic approach to working with the young person and is thus able to notice potential changes.

Possible warning signs in young people who are (or have been) victims of gender-based online violence:

- More frequent use of electronic devices
- Heightened emotional reactions after using electronic devices

Deletion of social media accounts and other online profiles

- Avoidance of social events
- Mood swings
- Lack of motivation to attend school
- Sleep difficulties
- Talking about or visible signs of self-harm
- Loss of interest in hobbies

Another possibility is that the young person discloses to the youth worker that they are a victim of gender-based online violence. This typically happens due to a trusting relationship that has been built over past interactions. Two types of "door-opener" moments can be expected: a more indirect one – *"There's something I want to tell you, but I don't know if I can... promise you won't tell anyone."*¹ – and a more direct one – *"Some guy sent me a dick pic."*

We have highlighted two, in our opinion, most common triggers that may lead a youth worker to recognize that a young person is experiencing gender-based online violence. After such a "disclosure," it is important that the youth worker (as noted by Mreža mladih Hrvatske):

¹ With the words *"...but promise you won't tell anyone"*, the issue of confidentiality is raised, and it is essential to address it. More on confidentiality is discussed in Chapter 3.3. **Creating a Safe Space.**

- Emphasize that the person is strong for surviving the experience and for disclosing the violence
- Show and express that you believe to the victim - emphasize that the responsibility for experienced violence lies solely with the perpetrator, never the victim
- Pay attention to what the person needs and expects (protection to stop the violence, information on where to seek professional help, support in reporting the violence, help contacting a crisis centre/shelter, legal advice, etc.)

It is therefore important that the youth worker **responds, engages, initiates the conversation, and offers support**. Recognizing that so-called “difficult topics” can be hard to address, youth workers should be guided by courage and honesty — it is better to ask and hear “No, I’m just having a bad day” than to miss the opportunity to support someone who is a victim of gender-based online violence.

In the following sections, we explore how to conduct such conversations and what kind of support youth workers can offer to victims.

3.2 Communication Skills: Techniques for effectively communicating with young people about sensitive topics

In their work with young people, youth workers use specific communication techniques. These techniques are not limited to working with youth who have experienced gender-based online violence, but are general communication tools and methods commonly applied in youth work practice.

As defined by Vec (2002), the purpose of specific communication techniques is twofold. On the one hand, they enable the youth worker to better understand the young person and the situation at hand. On the other, they support the young person in gaining insight into their own functioning — including emotions, thoughts, and behaviors — and potentially making positive changes.

The communication techniques commonly used in youth work include (ibid.): signs of active listening and encouraging remarks, clarifying through questions, exploratory and open-ended questions, mirroring or repeating the young person's statements, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

In the following section, we highlight the key features of each technique (based on Vec, 2002).

Techniques and Approaches	Goals and Benefits	Risks and Limitations	Examples
Signs of Attention and Encouraging Remarks: <i>Verbal and non-verbal signs of attention and comments, encouraging remarks, door openers</i>	+ Building a trusting relationship + Showing interest in the young person and the topic of conversation + Actively encouraging young people to continue the conversation	- May come across as overly rehearsed or technical - May feel intrusive if the young person is not ready to talk	Non-verbal: nodding Verbal: "Yes", "Uh-huh", "Can you tell me more?", "Are you ready to talk about it?", "Thank you for trusting me"
Clarifying with Questions, Exploratory and Open Questions: <i>Specific, open, elaborative, investigative, and solution-oriented questions</i>	+ Discovering the meaning of messages—for both the youth worker and the young person + Shedding light on specific areas	- The young person may perceive the conversation as an interrogation - Open questions don't allow for fast, selective information gathering	Examples: "Can you tell me more about...?", "What did it look like?", "How did you feel?", "How else could you describe it?", "What has happened since our last conversation?"
Reflecting or Repeating Statements: <i>Mirroring parts or the entirety of the message</i>	+ Directing attention to the content the youth worker finds important	- May seem overly technical or forced - Can lead to resistance, self-pity, etc.	"You're saying that..."

Paraphrasing: <i>Mirroring the content in your own words and checking understanding</i>	+ Focusing the conversation + Helping the young person understand their own feelings and/or thoughts + Verifying one's own understanding	- Paraphrasing may become too subjective or include personal interpretations	"If I understand you correctly...", "So you think that...", "It sounds to me like..." Note: The youth worker asks themselves: <i>What is the young person trying to tell me? What is the essence of the message? What fundamental emotions are present?</i>—and importantly, checks if their interpretation is accurate.
Summarizing: <i>Synthesizing a set of messages</i>	+ Connecting seemingly unrelated content + Helping the young person understand their own feelings and/or thoughts + Verifying understanding + Focusing on the essence, narrowing down the narrative	- Can limit the young person's space for reflection and interpretation - May redirect attention and interpretation based on what the youth worker considers important	"You talked about...", "This time you're mentioning ... a lot", "If I understood your story correctly so far, you're saying that..."

	+ Wrapping up the content		
--	---------------------------------	--	--

When reviewing literature on communication techniques, one frequently encounters the concept of **active listening**. Vec (ibid.) understands it as a combination of several techniques, primarily mirroring and paraphrasing. Additionally, various manuals (e.g., Mira, NIJZ, *Nisi okej? Povej naprej.*) include signs of attention and encouraging statements, clarification through questions (especially the use of open-ended questions), and summarizing as part of active listening. The idea behind active listening is to understand the full meaning of the young person's message, recognize and respond to their emotions, and check one's own understanding. It is crucial to focus on the conversation, remove distractions (e.g., phones, move to a quiet room in the youth center), and appropriately use the specific communication techniques mentioned above.

Besides these techniques, **silence** is also an important tool. Research by Lesar (2019) on the use of silence in a support group shows that the purposeful use of silence in counseling allows participants—in this case, young people—time for reflection, i.e., becoming aware of, making sense of, and understanding their own thoughts and emotions. It facilitates clarification and “aha” moments. The author highlights that relationships were also built in the silence and that trust increased.

It is important to note that the techniques described above **serve only as support**. Excessive reliance on techniques can make interactions feel too formal or rehearsed. Therefore, it is essential that youth workers observe the dynamics and reactions of the young person and adapt the work process accordingly. It is also at least acceptable, if not desirable, to address the dynamics of the process itself, thereby placing the young person at the center and empowering them—for example: *“Am I right in sensing that the energy has dropped a bit, so we should wrap up our conversation for today?”* and similar.

3.3 Creating a Safe Space: How to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for discussing experiences of online gender-based violence

Below we highlight key elements that youth workers should pursue in their practices when working with young people. The presented guidelines are the result of collective knowledge generated with experts during three trainings on gender-based online violence held between October 2024 and March 2025.

SAFE SPACE:

- Zero tolerance for violence and discrimination. In cases of violent or discriminatory behavior, youth workers address the situation. It is crucial that youth workers protect the victim and offer necessary support (e.g., a relieving conversation).
- Creating an inclusive space for all young people, including those belonging to vulnerable groups (e.g., displaying a rainbow flag signaling an LGBTQ+ safe space, using gender-sensitive language, using pronouns in the introductory circle and email signatures, multilingual signs in the space).
- Clear rules and boundaries contribute importantly to safety. Youth workers clearly communicate, co-create, and revisit rules with the young people. It is important that rules and boundaries are the same for everyone and that youth workers consistently enforce them — across different young people and all youth workers within the team
- It is important for youth workers to reflect on how their own gender influences the young person's sense of safety. Therefore, it is important to ask the young person if they feel comfortable and safe continuing the conversation or if they would prefer to talk to another colleague.

PHYSICAL SPACE:

- Attention should also be paid to the physical aspect of the space. If an individual conversation is taking place, the space should be free from interruptions — the youth worker ensures they are not disturbed by colleagues, does not answer phone calls, etc. The conversation can take place indoors or outdoors (e.g., during a walk).

- The seating arrangement should not be frontal but diagonal or side-by-side. Similarly, maintaining constant eye contact is mostly inappropriate and can come across as too aggressive or intimidating. A diagonal or side-by-side arrangement allows the youth worker and the young person to look at a shared point.

PRINCIPLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

- In interactions between young people and youth workers, especially when addressing “difficult” or more sensitive topics, the issue of confidentiality arises. This should not be taken lightly. It is important that youth workers are empowered to communicate clearly with young people about the principle of confidentiality
- Youth workers are aware of the limitations of confidentiality — this applies in cases where the young person endangers themselves or others, or when a criminal offense is involved, requiring the worker to report information to the relevant authorities. The organization where the youth worker operates may also have procedures for internal reporting (e.g., during case consultations). In both cases, it is necessary to inform the young person to whom the information will be passed on and for what purpose.

A young person might say something like:

“... I want to tell you something, but I’m not sure if I can, so please promise you won’t tell anyone.”

An empowered youth worker will be aware of the principle of confidentiality and its limits. This means they would respond to the young person by saying:

“Our conversation is confidential, except if you are endangering yourself, others, or if a crime is being committed, in which case I have to protect you... We can talk about this, but it’s important for me...”

ATTITUDE AND RELATIONSHIP OF YOUTH WORKERS TOWARDS YOUNG PEOPLE:

- Youth workers treat young people with respect and regard them as capable individuals, as experts of their own lives. Youth workers are those who support them on their journey.
- Youth workers accept young people as they are and do not judge or criticize them (non-judgmental attitude!). They continuously question and reflect on their own stereotypes and prejudices (e.g., “boys are more technical, girls more creative”).
- Youth workers are authentic, honest, and genuine. It is important that their actions align with their words — what they say, they also do.
- Youth workers are compassionate and empathetic. This does not mean they fully understand young people — even if they have had similar experiences

themselves, the young person may experience things very differently. Therefore, they avoid phrases like “I understand you” and instead say “I can only imagine how you feel.”

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS:

- Youth work is centered around the young person. This means that the young person sets the pace and method of work and has the opportunity to (co-)decide.
- The principle of voluntariness in youth work should also be reflected in the youth worker informing the young person about the purpose of the process and how it will proceed. They should also check whether the young person agrees with the process and explore how they can support them – for example, “How can I support you?” or “This is what we have on the table, how do we proceed?”

SELF-CARE:

- Youth workers are aware that they are human (not superheroes), understand their own limits, and recognize that young people’s stories can affect them on a personal level.
- In the moment (e.g., after a disclosure), youth workers can take a few moments to gather their thoughts and prepare to continue the process.
- In the long term, youth workers recognize the importance of self-care, maintaining their mental well-being, and relief. When addressing difficult cases, this is extremely important and serves as an important prevention against professional burnout.
- It is important that mental well-being and relief are supported at an organizational level and are not left solely to each individual.

Mechanisms at the Organizational Level:	Mechanisms at the Individual Level:
• Connectedness and team climate where colleagues can (daily) share cases and professional dilemmas and provide mutual support; • Regular intervision within the team of colleagues; • Regular supervision led by an external professional; • Understanding and support from leadership regarding the working methods, especially in difficult cases (e.g., when a formal report is necessary).	• Healthy private relationships and understanding from close ones that youth work can be demanding and stressful; • Care for one’s own physical health, including enough sleep, exercise, and healthy nutrition; • Engagement in activities that allow disconnection from work (e.g., culture, creative activities, sports, spending time in nature); • Time for individual reflection, contemplation, and self-talk.

Partners from the Mreža mladih Hrvatske have summarised what a youth worker “**should not to do/say**” when working with young people with experience of gender-based online violence:

1. Do not ask:
“What did you do to provoke the violence / abuser?”
“Why didn’t you report the violence?”
“Why didn’t you leave the abuser / turn off the comments / delete your online content?”
“How could you let someone treat you that way?”
2. Never demand that the victim confront the abuser.
3. The person committing violence holds more power than the victim; their relationship/relation is unequal.
4. Do not patronize victims of violence.
5. Treat them as capable individuals.
6. Do not moralize, judge, or criticize people’s thoughts, feelings, or actions.
7. Don’t have unrealistic expectations of victims. Do not pressure them into acting or to take actions.
8. Don’t try to "rescue" the person. Maintain appropriate boundaries.

3.4 Supporting Victims: Approaches to supporting young people who have experienced online gender-based violence

As we have learned so far, youth workers also have contact with young people who have experienced gender-based online violence. The first step is identifying the victim, which we discussed above, followed by providing support. It is important to clearly define the

boundary between the role of the youth worker and other services. We can agree that youth workers do not provide therapy or (psychosocial) counseling. Likewise, youth workers are not police officers or judges, meaning they do not investigate what happened or search for the perpetrator. It is essential that the youth worker clearly communicates this to the young person and does not promise things beyond their role or capacity to fulfill.

In providing support, the key role of the youth worker is to believe the young person's experience as their truth and support them in a way that aligns with the young person's needs. The main goal is to **empower** the young person who has experienced gender-based online violence. For example, the youth worker does not focus solely on reporting to the police but also (among other things) on preparing the young person for reporting, their overall well-being, how the situation affects their life, how they cope with it, and what support they need before/during/after reporting.

We can agree that a key tool youth workers use in their work with young people is **conversation**. This also applies to working with young people who have experienced gender-based online violence. The conversation should be structured following the dramatic triangle model: introduction, core, and conclusion.

1. In the introduction, it is important to address the young person's current mood and well-being, their expectations for the meeting, and, if necessary, agree on some ground rules.

Examples of questions and statements typical for the introduction:

How are you today? What brings you to today's meeting?

What would you like to talk about today? What is most pressing? At the last meeting, you mentioned ... would you like to talk about that?

What do you want from today's meeting?

Do you agree that we take 30 minutes for this conversation today?

2. The core of the conversation focuses on what has happened since the last meeting, clarifying the situation and assessing any danger, searching for coping strategies, possibilities, and solutions, evaluating these and making decisions, adopting new techniques, and planning the next steps ...

Examples of questions and statements typical for the core:

When we last spoke about ... you talked about ... Have you thought more about it? Last time, you set a goal to ... – how did it go?

Can you tell me more about ...? How do you experience it?

What would help you in this situation? How can I support you with this?

3. The conversation concludes with a summary and agreements about the next steps and meeting.

Examples of questions and statements typical for the conclusion:

Today, we talked about ...

How would you summarize today's conversation? What are your key insights?

What are the next steps?

I suggest we meet again next week and continue the conversation – what do you think?

If you agree, next time you come to the youth center, I will ask you about ...

If the young person wishes, the youth worker can become a **confidential person**. This means accompanying the young person through official procedures – for example, during the reporting of a criminal offense. Here, it is important that the youth worker is familiar with the legislation and the young person's rights.

Example from Slovenia:

A confidential person can accompany the victim throughout the entire procedure and provide support as stipulated in the fourth paragraph of Article 65 of the Criminal Procedure Act. However, the confidential person is not a legal representative who advocates interests in the criminal proceedings or acts as a lawyer. A confidential person can accompany the victim if it is necessary due to the type and seriousness of the offense, the victim's personal circumstances, or the degree of the victim's vulnerability. The presence of the confidential person can be denied if it conflicts with the interests of the proceedings or the victim's benefits. Therefore, the confidential person cannot be someone who might harm the victim or who is a party or participant in the proceedings.

Source: <https://www.gov.si teme/pravice-zrtev-kaznivih-dejanj/>

Example from Croatia:

In the Croatian criminal justice system, a person of trust is a legally competent individual chosen by the victim of a criminal offence to accompany them throughout the criminal proceedings. This may be a family member, friend, or representative of a victim support organization. The person of trust provides emotional support and a sense of security to the victim but does not offer legal representation or advice. Their presence helps reduce stress and feelings of isolation during the process. It is important to note that a person of trust cannot be a witness in the same criminal case.

Source: <https://mpudt.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=24854&url=print>

Example from Italy:

According to Article 90 of the Italian Code of Criminal Procedure and Law no. 69/2019 (also known as 'Codice Rosso'), victims of gender-based violence have the right to be accompanied by a trusted person at all stages of the criminal proceedings. This person can be a family member, a friend or a representative of a victim support organisation and their role is to provide emotional and psychological support, but not legal representation. Victims also have access to a national network of support services such as anti-violence centres and the Rete Dafne network, which provide help before, during and after the court proceedings - even in cases where the crime has not yet been reported.

Source: <https://www.infovictims.it/en/right-to-victim-support-services>;
<https://victim-support.eu/infovictims-italy/>

Besides direct work with the young person who has experienced gender-based online violence, youth workers can also work with peers and parents. When **working with peers**, it is crucial to raise awareness that young people are not responsible for solving their peers' problems; they are friends, supporters, and allies. It is also important to maintain trust and not talk about others who are not present. Peers can also take on the role of a "mini" confidential person, for example, by accompanying a friend to the youth center or being present during a conversation for support. When **working with parents**, education and information are key – parents are often out of touch with modern trends, unaware of online risks, negative consequences, or feel powerless in upbringing. Youth workers can

support them by providing information, materials, or referring them to organizations specializing in working with parents, online violence, or related topics.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, maintaining the boundary and scope of youth work is important. Therefore, it is crucial that the organization and individual youth worker have an established **network of organizations and experts** who can offer specialized support to young people. These include public institutions, NGOs, or individual specialists who support the young person. It is important to emphasize that this does not mean simply sharing general contacts but involves connecting the young person with people the youth workers trust. When involving external organizations or specialists, the principle is that the young person trusts the youth worker who trusts the external specialist, which increases the young person's trust in the external specialist. Involving external support can mean accompanying the young person to a meeting or organizing a meeting in a place where the young person already feels safe, for example, a psychosocial counselor coming to the youth center to meet with the young person.

4. Practical Activities

This chapter provides practical workshops to support youth workers in addressing online gender-based violence (OGBV) with young people. It builds on the theoretical knowledge and mentoring approaches discussed in previous chapters, translating them into concrete, engaging formats for direct educational use. Developed within the framework of the MEDUSA project, the materials include four standalone workshops tailored for young people aged 15 to 29. Each workshop is structured to suit different levels of content complexity, based on the age and maturity of the participants. While workshops are recommended for specific age groups, they can be flexibly adapted for younger or older participants with minor content and method adjustments.

The workshops aim to empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recognize, prevent, and respond to OGBV. They are rooted in non-formal education methods, fostering active participation, critical thinking, and peer learning. The duration of the sessions may vary, depending on the setting and available time, and can be delivered in schools, youth centers or community environments.

This chapter includes guidance for planning workshops, the use of digital tools and strategies for adapting activities to the specific needs of diverse youth groups. Through this approach, youth workers are equipped to create safe, inclusive, and empowering learning spaces that encourage meaningful dialogue and action against online gender-based violence.

4.1 Workshops

4.1.1 Workshop 1: Introduction to online gender-based violence

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Analyze media and societal representations of OGBV and understand how they impact victims and public perception.
- Discuss the prevalence and consequences of victim-blaming attitudes and how they affect responses to OGBV.
- Understand the influence of gender stereotypes and biases in shaping narratives around OGBV.
- Empower participants to challenge and change harmful representations and attitudes towards OGBV.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. How social attitudes shape the understanding and response to OGBV
4. Evaluation and closing

Target population (suggested): 15 to 19 years

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below helps plan activity durations. Youth workers may adjust timings to suit youth needs and context of the workshop, though Sections 1 and 4 should remain unchanged—Section 1 sets the workshop's purpose, and Section 4 gathers feedback. Activities in Sections 2 and 3 can be adapted as needed.

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Activity 1: Welcoming the participants, introduction of the MEDUSA project, and outlining ground rules

This part of the session provides an overview of the workshop, its objectives, and its relevance to addressing OGBV. It also highlights broader objectives of the MEDUSA project in promoting gender equality, internet safety, violence-free interactions, inclusivity, and well-being. It sets the context for the workshop and explains why it is essential for youth. Participants are also provided with a MEDUSA leaflet (or multiple copies if requested).

Consider starting with a short interactive activity or energizer to set the tone for the workshop. You can find ideas here: <https://www.sessionlab.com/library/energiser>.

Participants are introduced to the participant agreement, which outlines ground rules everyone should adhere to during the workshop (the ground rules can be found in the appendix). This can be done by presenting and explaining ground rules, answering questions if there are some etc. As a gesture of commitment to these rules they are asked to sign agreement (e.g. flipchart poster with rules written).

Activity 2: Pre-test solving

Participants receive the link/QR code for the pre-test. They receive guidelines for solving the questionnaire, namely: respond honestly, complete independently, manage your time, and clarify doubts. You can find pre-test questions in the appendix.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: If using the 1.5-hour version, prioritize Activity 2. Briefly cover key concepts from Activity 1 at the start through a presentation, demo, or discussion.

Activity 1: Introduction to OGBV and key terminologies

This session aims to introduce participants to the fundamental concepts of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV). The presentation can be delivered using a variety of methods, tailored to the needs and dynamics of the group. Regardless of the method chosen, it is essential to engage participants through open discussion and/or by inviting them to share real-life examples where appropriate.

Suggested presentation methods:

1. Digital quiz: The youth worker divides participants into small groups. Each group works together to answer quiz questions related to OGBV. It is important to allocate enough time for discussion within each team before finalizing their answers. After each question, the youth worker reveals the correct answer(s) and provides relevant commentary, explanations, or examples to deepen understanding. Sample quiz questions are available below.
2. Group work: The youth worker organizes participants into teams and assigns each team a task to research and define key concepts and terminology related to OGBV. Teams may use Medusa project resources or conduct their own online searches. After completing their research, each group presents their findings. The youth worker facilitates a discussion, encouraging feedback from other groups and offering clarification or additional insight when needed.
3. Interactive presentation: In this approach, the youth worker presents key terms and concepts using a flipchart or whiteboard. During the presentation, they should ask open-ended questions (e.g., *How do gender stereotypes contribute to OGBV?*) to encourage reflection and discussion.
4. Frontal methods: The youth worker delivers a structured presentation using tools such as PowerPoint, Canva, or other visual aids. While this method is more traditional, it is important to include interactive elements—such as brief discussion points, reflection questions, or personal examples—to maintain participant engagement and foster dialogue.

Presentation will cover the definition of OGBV, how it differs from traditional GBV, and why it is a growing concern in today's digital age. Besides this, the presentation should also include information about how OGBV intersects with gender stereotypes and impacts LGBTQ+ communities. It should also cover the identification of the three main categories/groups of OGBV (OGBV, online sexual violence, online intimate-partner violence) and different types/forms of OGBV that exist within each. To draw a suitable presentation, youth worker can consider key questions that can guide the structure and content:

- What is OGBV?
 - Definition of GBV, online violence, and OGBV.
 - How does OGBV manifest in digital spaces (e.g., social media, messaging apps, online forums)? – Youth worker can ask participants to list some real life examples.
- What are the similarities and differences between OGBV and offline GBV?
 - How does the online environment influence the nature, impact, and perpetuation of gender-based violence?
 - What unique challenges does OGBV present (e.g., anonymity, widespread reach, permanence of digital content)?
- What are the main categories of OGBV?
 - What are the three primary groups of OGBV?
 - How do these categories differ from one another?
- What are the key characteristics of each group of OGBV (OGBV, online sexual violence, and online intimate-partner violence)?
 - What specific forms of OGBV fall under each main category (e.g., cyberbullying, slut-shaming, body-shaming, doxxing, revenge porn, online stalking, trolling, online grooming, etc.) and how is each form defined?
- How do gender stereotypes contribute to OGBV?
 - What are gender stereotypes?
 - What role do gender stereotypes play in the perpetuation of OGBV?
- How does OGBV affect LGBTQ+ communities?
 - How do homophobia, transphobia, and other biases intersect with OGBV to increase vulnerability for LGBTQ+ individuals?

Activity 2: Mapping risk factors

Participants are broken down into smaller groups, and each group receives a handout with possible risk factors that contribute to the prevalence of OGBV. The handout can include the following risk factors and more:

Lack of digital literacy	Anonymity and lack of accountability	Gender norms	Inadequate online safety measures	Social and cultural norms that normalize violence	Insufficient legal protections
Lack of understanding about the consequences of OGBV	Lack of consent education	Pervasive sexual objectification in media	Pressure to share intimate content	Victim-blaming attitudes	Lack of trust and privacy in relationships
Discrimination on personal grounds	Lack of clear boundaries and mutual respect in relationship	Isolation from support networks	Previous experiences of violence or abuse	Ineffective responses from online platforms	Unrealistic expectations regarding one's appearance

Each group is assigned one main category of OGBV, namely online-gender based violence, online sexual violence, and online intimate-partner violence. Participants of each group must mark on the handout the risk factors that most commonly contribute to the occurrence of sub-types of violence in their category. They can also add other risk factors that are not included in the handout. Each group presents their choices to the wider group with its reasoning behind it.

Activity 3: Exploring consequences of OGBV

The youth worker begins the activity by posing an open-ended question to activate participants' prior knowledge and encourage free responses. Participants' answers can be noted on a flipchart or whiteboard to visualize the range of ideas.

Example question: *“If someone experiences harassment or abuse online, how might it affect them—not just right away, but in the long term?”*

Next, participants are divided into small groups of 3–5 people for a group activity. Categories of consequences are written in advance on flipchart sheets or large cards and displayed in the room. Each group is assigned one category (e.g., Psychological, Emotional, Social, Physical, Career/Education, Financial, Reproductive Health, Online Safety) with the task to:

1. Brainstorm 3–5 specific consequences in their category.
2. Write each consequence on a separate sticky note.
3. Choose one member to explain their category briefly when presenting.

Once the groups are ready, each will present their findings and place their sticky notes under the relevant category on a shared wall or flipchart. As groups present, the youth worker provides brief context, adds real-life examples, or shares relevant statistics to deepen understanding.

The following signs and more can be identified and discussed with participants:

- Psychological impact: anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other mental health issues.
- Physical impact: physical symptoms like sleep disturbances, headaches, or stress-related illnesses.
- Emotional distress: feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and emotional turmoil.
- Social isolation: withdrawal from social interactions, relationships, and community.
- Career and educational consequences: effects on job performance, academic performance, and future opportunities.
- Financial impact: costs associated with medical care, legal fees, and loss of income.
- Reproductive health concerns: potential impacts on sexual health and reproductive well-being.
- Online safety concerns: increased vulnerability to further harassment or security risks, fear of online presence.

Present statistics for different categories of consequences wherever relevant.

SECTION 3: HOW SOCIAL ATTITUDES SHAPE THE UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: For the 1.5-hour version, skip Activity 1 and focus on Activities 2 and 3. Key points from Activity 1 can be briefly introduced at the beginning, either through a quick presentation or a concise discussion, to provide necessary context.

Activity 1: How is OGBV represented in media?

Participants are divided into four groups, with each group assigned a different media form to focus on: news outlets, movies, TV shows, or social media. Each group searches for real-life examples online that illustrate how OGBV is portrayed in their assigned media form. After gathering their examples and analyzing the portrayals, each group presents their findings to the rest of the participants, highlighting key observations about how OGBV is represented and the potential impact of these portrayals.

Based on the presentation of findings, the youth worker leads a discussion on both positive and negative representations of OGBV, highlighting issues like victim-blaming, sensationalism, and stereotypes.

Some stereotypes about OGBV, to help you lead the discussion

Stereotype 1: "No one can be protected from online gender-based violence because comments are anonymous."

Answer: There is always something we can do. There are laws, reporting mechanisms in the digital and real world, and support networks for reporting and addressing violence.

Stereotype 2: "Men and boys don't suffer the consequences of online gender-based violence because they are 'stronger'."

Answer: Gender stereotypes about “strong and unemotional men” make it harder to express feelings and seek help. Anyone can be affected by violence, and everyone deserves support.

Stereotype 3: Only women and girls experience online gender based violence.

Answer: Violence does not discriminate, anyone can be a victim. Victims are not only women and girls, but also boys, men, non-binary people and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Stereotype 4: Bullies are only adult men.

Answer: Perpetrators of online gender-based violence are mostly men, but that doesn't mean they are the only perpetrators. Anyone can be a perpetrator. Violence is not tied to the gender identity or age of the perpetrators.

Stereotype 5: The perpetrators are always unknown persons.

Answer: Abusers can be strangers or known to the victim. Abusers can be friends, colleagues, or acquaintances. The most common abusers from close surroundings are intimate partners who try to control the victim through online gender-based violence.

Stereotype 6: Victims are “looking for it” because they are online.

Answer: No one deserves violence. The victim is not to blame or responsible for the actions of the abuser.

Participants will be guided through the following key questions:

- How is OGBV typically represented in news media?
 - Discussion on news coverage of OGBV cases and how they often emphasize victim behavior, appearance, or past, rather than focusing on the perpetrator's actions.
- What role does sensationalism play in media coverage of OGBV?
 - Discussion on clickbait headlines, graphic descriptions, and the impact on public perception and victim stigma.

- How do popular TV shows, movies, or online content depict victims of OGBV?
 - Analysis of portrayals that reinforce stereotypes or diminish the severity of OGBV (e.g., making harassment seem "romantic" or "harmless").

The public discourse regarding the concepts of victim-blaming and consent is thoroughly deconstructed through discussion with participants.

Activity 2: The impact of gender stereotypes and public perception on OGBV

Youth worker can continue discussion that focuses on the relationship between gender stereotypes, societal attitudes, and OGBV. The youth worker will provide examples of stereotypes, such as "boys will be boys", "women are too sensitive", and discuss how these contribute to normalizing OGBV and shifting the blame onto victims. Key discussion questions include:

- How do gender stereotypes and norms perpetuate OGBV?
 - Discussion on societal expectations around masculinity, femininity, and LGBTQ+ identities.
- How does public perception influence the willingness of victims to report OGBV?
 - Exploring the fear of judgment, ridicule, or disbelief that many victims face.
- What role does social media play in shaping public attitudes towards OGBV?
 - Discuss the potential for both harmful and positive discourse on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Activity 3: Identifying and challenging victim-blaming attitudes

Participants are divided into small groups and each group is given a set of statements or scenarios that reflect common victim-blaming attitudes. Examples could include:

Scenario 1:

Sarah, a teenager, has had her private photos leaked online after they were shared without her consent by someone she trusted. When discussing the incident with her family, her aunt comments, "Well, if she hadn't posted those photos in the first place, this wouldn't have happened. She needs to be more careful."

Scenario 2:

Alex, a non-binary person, has been receiving abusive comments and threats on social media after posting about LGBTQ+ rights. When discussing this with a co-worker, the co-worker responds, "Well, some people are really sensitive about these topics. You must have said something to provoke them."

Scenario 3:

Maria, a young woman in her early 20s, has been receiving harassing messages from an ex-boyfriend on multiple social media platforms. Despite blocking him several times, he creates new accounts and continues to send threatening and demeaning messages. Maria decides to share her experience with a close friend, hoping for support. Instead, her friend responds, "Why didn't you just block him in the first place? You're giving him attention by responding."

Each group will analyze their assigned statements to identify the underlying assumptions and biases, discuss the impact of these attitudes on victims and society, and brainstorm ways to challenge and reframe these narratives. Afterward, each group will present their analysis and proposed alternatives to the larger group. The activity aims to raise awareness of how victim-blaming can appear subtly in everyday conversations and to empower participants to challenge these harmful perspectives.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Activity 1: Post-test solving

Participants receive the link/QR code for the post-test. They receive guidelines for solving the questionnaire, namely: respond honestly, complete independently, manage your time, and clarify doubts. You can find the post-test questions in the appendix.

Activity 2: Closing remarks

To close the workshop, offer brief remarks highlighting key concepts. Youth workers can also ask participants to list five key takeaways.

Afterward, lead a brief reflection circle using methods like Dixit cards or the 3-finger reflection. Encourage participants to share their main takeaway from the workshop.

Close the workshop with expressing gratitude for participants' active involvement and feedback.

4. 1.2 Workshop 2: Cyber safety and privacy

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Provide practical online safety tips and strategies.
- Enhance participants' ability to recognize safe versus risky online behaviours.
- Develop skills in managing digital interactions to prevent OGBV.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. Cyber safety and privacy
4. Evaluation and closing

Target population (suggested): 15 to 19 years and 20 to 29 years

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below aids planning but can be adjusted to fit participants' needs. Sections 2 and 3 are flexible, while Sections 1 and 4 should stay unchanged, as they cover the workshop's goals and feedback.

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 3: CYBER SAFETY AND PRIVACY (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: If facilitator(s) choose the shorter 1,5-hour version of the workshop, where this section is reduced to 30 minutes instead of 60, it is recommended to prioritize Activities 3 and 4. Key concepts from Activities 1 and 2 can still be briefly covered in this section, especially through a short guided discussion with participants.

Activity 1: Online safety tips and tricks

A presentation, demonstration or facilitated discussion that covers essential online safety practices, including managing privacy settings, recognizing phishing attempts, avoiding sharing personal information, and using strong passwords. The youth worker will provide specific examples and resources that can help them navigate the digital world safely. To draw a suitable presentation, youth worker can consider key questions that can guide the structure and content:

- How can one effectively manage their privacy settings on social media platforms?
 - What steps can be taken to adjust privacy settings on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok?
 - How often should privacy settings be reviewed and updated?
 - What are some lesser-known privacy features that youth should be aware of?
- What are the signs of a phishing attempt, and how can one recognize and avoid them?
 - What does a typical phishing email or message look like?
 - How can one verify the legitimacy of emails, links, or requests for information?
 - What steps should be taken if a phishing attempt is suspected or encountered?
- Why is it important to use strong, unique passwords, and what are some effective strategies for creating and managing them?
 - What are the characteristics of a strong password?
 - How can one remember multiple strong passwords without writing them down?
 - Are password managers reliable, and how do they work?
- What personal information should never be shared online, and why is it critical to maintain this boundary?
 - What are the risks associated with sharing location information on social media?

- How can one identify and avoid “social engineering” tactics used to extract personal information?
- What are the consequences of sharing sensitive personal information with strangers or acquaintances online?

Here are some sources, that will help you when preparing your presentation and provide you with content on online safety:

- [Be internet Awesome](#)
- [How to spot and protect yourself from a phishing attack](#)
- [Safe.si: nasveti](#)
- [The Complete Guide to Social Media Privacy: Protecting Your Digital Life in 2025](#)
- [Create and use strong passwords](#)

Activity 2: Green flag, red flag

An interactive game where participants categorize various online scenarios, provided by the facilitator, as "green flags" (safe) or "red flags" (unsafe) and explain their reasoning for categorization. This activity will enhance their ability to identify risky situations, such as when someone asks for photos or requests to meet in private too quickly, and how to advise youth on handling such scenarios. Possible scenarios are:

- a person online asks for photos right away;
- a person online asks to meet at his place right away;
- a person online, after some talking, asks for money;
- a person online asks for intimate photos.

Activity 3: Safe bystander intervention

A short presentation that introduces participants to the [concept of safe bystander intervention in online settings](#). It covers practical strategies (5D strategy) for intervening when witnessing harmful or inappropriate behavior online, such as cyberbullying, harassment, or sharing inappropriate content. The youth worker will provide specific examples and guidelines on how to respond effectively without escalating the situation or putting themselves at risk. The presentation can be made using flipchart, written statements and raising questions about the statements, facilitating discussion, graphic facilitation etc. The presentation can be guided by key questions such as:

- What is bystander intervention, and why is it important in online environments?

- What are some examples of harmful behavior online that might require intervention?
- What steps can one take to intervene safely without becoming a target?
- How can one report harmful content or behavior on various platforms?
- What resources are available for bystanders who need support after intervening?

Right to be 5D: “Distract,” “Delegate,” “Document,” “Delay,” “Direct.”

1. DISTRACT (DIVERTING ATTENTION)

Divert attention to help de-escalate the situation. The internet is a place that distracts easily!

Idea 1: Amplify the original post that triggered the harassment, BUT without addressing the perpetrator. Retweet, like, upvote, share. Online abuse aims to silence the person – make the person (once again) visible and important, and show the abuser that their attempts are being ignored.

Idea 2: Divert attention from the abuse by posting cute images (baby animals, a gif of a goat jumping, etc.) Let’s make the internet funny again!

2. DELEGATE

Finding someone else to help. One person's intervention is good, but more is better (e.g., reporting a fake profile, reporting abusive content). The first thought might be to contact the police – always check with the person before reporting on their behalf (unless immediate medical assistance is required). Many communities (e.g., trans communities) may not feel safer with police involvement.

3. DOCUMENT

Documenting can deepen the trauma for the person experiencing abuse – observer support is necessary. Have screenshots and hyperlinks as evidence of harassment (in case the abuse escalates or is reported to the police) → the observer does this. Forward the evidence to the person and offer your support.

4. DELAY (CHECKING IN WITH THE PERSON WHO EXPERIENCED HARASSMENT)

Even a single meaningful look can reduce the trauma associated with harassment. Online, this “look” (SUPPORT!) can be replaced with a direct message (like, care reaction, etc.). The victim is not to blame and is not alone – a message of support is too often a missed step. Public shaming combined with public silence and lack of support can be worse than the original incident/abuse.

5. DIRECT (SETTING BOUNDARIES)

The ONLY direct form of interaction. It's usually the first type of intervention we think of – but it should be the last! It carries the highest safety risk – harassment can be redirected toward the observer. Set boundaries with the perpetrator – then refocus attention on the victim. IF you do choose this approach – remember: your goal is to SUPPORT the person experiencing abuse! Naming, shaming, or cyberbullying the abuser is NOT a solution. We do not respond to violence with more violence.

For more information on the 5D approach visit the following [website](#).

Activity 4: Efficiently addressing online dangers

An interactive group exercise where participants are presented with real-life scenarios that involve various online dangers, such as cyberbullying, phishing, or exposure to inappropriate content. Participants work in small groups to discuss the best course of action for each scenario, considering safety, effectiveness, and appropriate escalation methods. This activity encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and application of online safety knowledge. After group discussions, participants will share their responses and reasoning with the larger group, guided by the facilitator. Possible scenarios might include:

Scenario 1:

Lola's best friend shares a screenshot of their private conversation with other people in a group chat. The conversation contains sensitive personal information, and it was shared without Lola's consent.

Discussion points:

- What immediate steps should participants take to address this privacy violation?
- How can they communicate to the person who shared the screenshot that this action is inappropriate?
- What platform features can be used to report or remove the content?
- How can they support the person whose privacy was violated?

Scenario 2:

After chatting online for a few weeks, a person the participant met in an online game starts requesting intimate photos of Julia. They use flattery and emotional manipulation, suggesting it is a sign of trust and affection.

Discussion points:

- How can one recognize manipulation tactics in this scenario?
- What are the potential consequences of sharing intimate content online?
- What steps should be taken to block, report, and protect oneself in such situations?
- How can Julia seek support if she feels pressured or threatened?

Scenario 3:

In a class group chat, a student named Marie is being targeted with mean and derogatory comments about her body by another group member. Other participants in the group either ignore the situation or join in, making fun of Marie.

Discussion points:

- What can a participant do to support Marie without becoming a target themselves?
- How can bystanders effectively intervene in the situation to de-escalate it?
- What are the options for reporting bullying behavior to group admins or platform moderators?
- How can one promote a supportive online environment in group settings?

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

4.1.3 Workshop 3: What to do as a victim of OGBV?

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Empower victims and bystanders to take appropriate actions to protect themselves and others.
- Encourage a supportive community approach for victims to disclose and report OGBV.

- Promote the importance of self-care and resisting self-blame in dealing with OGBV.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. I am a victim of OGBV – what can I do?
4. Evaluation and closing

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below is a guide. Youth worker may adjust it as needed, but Sections 1 and 4 should remain unchanged, as they cover the workshop's goals and feedback.

Target population (suggested): 15 to 19 years and 20 to 29 years

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 3: I AM A VICTIM OF OGBV – WHAT CAN I DO? (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: For the 1.5-hour version, prioritize Activities 1 and 4. Briefly cover key points from Activities 2 and 3 through a short discussion.

Activity 1: Recognizing signs of OGBV

A presentation that helps participants identify the various signs and forms of online gender-based violence, including those that may occur in intimate partnerships, from anonymous individuals, or even from friends. The youth worker will discuss different manifestations of OGBV, such as unsolicited attention, inappropriate comments,

overbearing behavior, threats or intimidation, excessive monitoring, unwanted sharing of personal content, repeated contact, and the overall feeling of discomfort. The presentation can include different scenarios to help participants recognize early warning signs and understand the potential risks associated with OGBV. Some examples of the scenarios are:

Scenario 1:

Maria's boyfriend insists on knowing her social media passwords and frequently checks her messages. He becomes angry when she talks to male friends online and often demands that she unfriends them. Maria starts to feel anxious and afraid to use her phone around him.

Scenario 2:

Alex receives threatening messages from an anonymous account on Instagram. The messages include personal information about Alex's location and routines. Alex feels scared and unsure of how to respond without escalating the situation.

Scenario 3:

Sara, a high school student, discovers that a classmate has shared a private photo of her in a group chat without her consent. The photo quickly spreads, and Sara starts receiving unwanted messages from strangers.

Activity 2: Why and where to seek help if experiencing OGBV?

A guided discussion complemented by a brief demonstration that highlights the importance of seeking help when experiencing OGBV. The youth worker will provide an overview of the resources available for victims, including hotlines, online reporting tools, support groups, and legal options (country specific information in the chapter 6.2.: Relevant national and international laws, reporting mechanisms, and organizations that offers support to victims of OGBV). The discussion will cover key questions such as:

- Why is it crucial to seek help when facing OGBV? You can find this content on the Medusa platform - Medusa tools for young people: [Reporting OGBV](#).

- What are the trusted platforms and organizations where victims can report OGBV safely?
- How can one report OGBV in schools, to the police or on online platforms?
- How can one document incidents of OGBV for reporting purposes?

Participants will also be encouraged to share their thoughts, ask questions, and discuss potential barriers to seeking help, fostering a supportive and open environment.

Activity 3: Importance of self-care

An interactive discussion that focuses on the importance of self-care for victims of OGBV. The youth worker will guide participants through strategies to avoid self-blaming and discuss how to act if they encounter victim-blaming behavior from others. This discussion will provide practical tips for self-care, such as setting digital boundaries, seeking emotional support, practicing mindfulness, and engaging in activities that promote mental well-being. The aim is to help participants understand that prioritizing self-care is a critical step in the recovery process and in maintaining a healthy sense of self-worth.

Steps to avoid self-blaming

1. We recognize that we are not to blame: Violence is never our fault. Perpetrators are responsible for their actions and we deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. We challenge negative thoughts: When feelings of self-blame arise, we challenge them with positive affirmations and reminders of our worth. We replace self-blame thoughts with compassionate and empowering self-talk.
3. Focus on the perpetrator's behavior: Shift your focus from blaming yourself to holding the perpetrator accountable for their actions. Remind yourself that their behavior is unacceptable and that we deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.
4. Seek support and validation: Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or support organizations who can provide validation and reassurance. Talking about your experiences with others who understand you can help you overcome feelings of self-blame.

5. Practice self-compassion: We treat ourselves with the same kindness and compassion we would treat a friend in a similar situation. We acknowledge our pain and suffering with tenderness and understanding.
6. Focus on recovery: Invest time and energy in activities and practices that promote healing and self-care. Whether it's journaling, creative expression, or seeking professional counseling, prioritize activities that nurture your emotional and mental health.
7. We recognize our strength: We acknowledge our resilience and courage in the face of challenges. We are stronger than we realize, and our experiences do not define our worth or identity.

Activity 4: Journey map for disclosing and reporting OGBV

A group activity where participants are broken down into smaller groups to create a journey map outlining the steps to disclose and report an OGBV incident. Working in small groups, participants will receive different case studies and discuss the potential stages of reporting OGBV, from recognizing the need for help, to documenting evidence, to reaching out to support networks, and finally to formal reporting to authorities or organizations. The activity will focus on understanding the emotional journey involved, potential obstacles victims might face, and the support needed at each step. After group discussions, each group will present their journey map to the larger group, facilitating a comprehensive overview and fostering discussion. Possible case studies are:

Case study 1:

Ali, a teenager, receives sexually explicit messages from an unknown person online. He wants to disclose it to a trusted teacher but is afraid of judgment and not being taken seriously.

Case study 2:

Nina experiences repeated online harassment from a former acquaintance. She decides to report the harassment to the police but feels overwhelmed by the process, as she did not tell anyone else about it.

Case study 3:

Ben receives repeated, unwanted comments and messages on a social media platform from an anonymous user. He decides to use the platform's reporting tool but is unsure about the process.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

4.1.4 Workshop 4: Reporting online gender-based violence

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Demonstrate the legal options available for reporting OGBV across different jurisdictions and platforms.
- Identify the challenges and benefits associated with reporting OGBV, considering factors like privacy, retaliation, and legal outcomes.
- Deconstruct the principles of restorative justice and how it can be applied in the context of OGBV.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. Legal aspects of reporting OGBV
4. Evaluation and closing

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below is a guide. Youth worker can adjust it, but Sections 1 and 4 should stay as they cover the workshop's purpose and feedback.

Target population (suggested): 15 to 19 years

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 3: CYBER SAFETY AND PRIVACY (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: For the 1.5-hour version, prioritize Activities 2 and 4. Briefly cover key concepts from Activities 1 and 3 through a short discussion.

Activity 1: Reporting OGBV

This demonstration will provide a step-by-step walkthrough of the process for reporting OGBV on various online platforms and to legal authorities. It includes practical guidance on how to document evidence, navigate platform-specific reporting mechanisms, and understand the legal implications of filing a report. Participants should also become acquainted with relevant legislative measures that protect victims of OGBV. You can find relevant national and international laws, reporting mechanisms, and organizations that offer support to victims of OGBV for Slovenia, Croatia and Italy in the appendix 6.1. You can also find information about the reporting process on the Medusa platform, under the [Medusa tools for young people](#).

Suggested thematical areas are:

- Reporting on social media platforms:
 - How to report abusive content on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok.
 - Discussion on the specific options available for blocking, reporting, and protecting privacy.
 - Importance of preserving evidence (screenshots, URLs, and other digital trails).

- Reporting to law enforcement:
 - Steps for filing a police report (what information is needed, who to contact, and what to expect).
 - Differences between jurisdictions if relevant (how local laws affect the reporting process).
- Reporting in schools:
 - The role of school counselors, teachers, and administrators in handling reports of OGBV.
 - Confidentiality and privacy considerations when reporting and handling OGBV cases in a school setting.
 - What information should be provided when reporting: details of the incident, evidence (e.g., screenshots, messages), and witnesses.
- Legal support and advocacy:
 - The role of legal aid organizations, hotlines, and NGOs in providing guidance and support.

Activity 2: Pros and cons of reporting OGBV

This discussion will engage participants in critically evaluating the benefits and potential drawbacks of reporting OGBV incidents. It helps participants understand the complexities and challenges victims might face when considering reporting. Participants suggest possible pros and cons of reporting OGBV together with the rationale for their selection. Possible pros/cons that can be added to the discussion by the youth worker are:

Pros:

- Legal protection and holding perpetrators accountable.
- Access to justice and potential compensation.
- Deterrent effect on future perpetrators.
- Raising public awareness.

Cons:

- Risk of retaliation or further harassment by the perpetrator.
- The emotional toll and potential for re-traumatization through the legal process.

- Concerns about privacy, the stigma attached to reporting, and potential victim-blaming.
- Lengthy legal procedures and uncertain outcomes.

Activity 3: Survivor-centered restorative justice process

This presentation introduces the concept of [restorative justice](#) as an alternative or supplement to traditional legal proceedings in cases of OGBV. The focus is on centering the needs and agency of the survivor rather than solely on punishment. Suggested content is:

- What is restorative justice?
 - Definition and principles: healing, accountability, and empowerment.
 - Differences between restorative justice and the criminal justice system.
- Application in OGBV cases:
 - How restorative justice can provide a safe space for survivors to express their needs and confront perpetrators.
 - Examples of restorative practices: mediated dialogues, victim-offender mediation, community service, or restorative circles.
- Benefits for survivors:
 - Survivors have more control over the process and outcome.
 - Potential for more meaningful accountability and personal growth for perpetrators.
 - Reduced risk of re-traumatization compared to the adversarial legal system.
- Challenges and limitations:
 - Not suitable for all cases; needs to be voluntary and safe.
 - Concerns about power dynamics and ensuring genuine remorse and accountability from perpetrators.

Possible discussion points to be utilized by the facilitator:

- What are the key differences between punitive justice and restorative justice?
- How can restorative justice be tailored to meet the needs of OGBV survivors?

Activity 4: A journey map to reporting OGBV

This activity is designed to help participants understand the complex, often challenging process that victims of OGBV face when deciding whether to report their experiences. The activity encourages participants to think critically about the emotional, social, and legal obstacles that victims may encounter and to explore possible support systems and pathways that could be offered to them.

Participants are divided into smaller group, with each group being assigned one of the case studies (e.g., cyberstalking, online hate speech, revenge porn threats). Each group maps out the journey of their assigned case study victim, starting from the initial experience of OGBV to the decision to report and seek support. This includes:

- Initial experience: How the victim becomes aware of the OGBV and their immediate emotional response.
- Challenges and barriers: Identifying the emotional, social, and practical challenges the victim faces at each stage (e.g., fear of retaliation, lack of knowledge about reporting mechanisms).
- Decision points: Key moments where the victim must make critical decisions (e.g., whether to tell a friend, report to a school authority, or contact the police).
- Support systems: Possible sources of support, such as friends, family, NGOs, school counselors, and law enforcement.
- Reporting mechanisms: Steps for reporting the OGBV on social media platforms, within educational institutions, and to law enforcement, including necessary documentation and evidence.
- Outcomes: Possible outcomes of reporting (e.g., legal action, removal of harmful content, emotional support) and the impact on the victim's well-being.

Each group presents their journey map to the larger group, explaining the different stages and decisions their victim went through. Facilitators guide a discussion on the common challenges and barriers identified, as well as any differences between the cases. These are examples of case studies that can be used for this activity:

Case study 1:

Sarah is a 17-year-old high school student who has been a victim of cyberstalking by a former classmate. The classmate repeatedly sends Sarah unwanted and threatening messages via social media and even creates fake profiles to harass her. The messages include derogatory comments, threats of physical harm, and attempts to manipulate her into meeting him in person. Sarah is scared, overwhelmed, and unsure how to proceed.

Case study 2:

Ahmed, a 21-year-old LGBTQ+ university student, is an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ rights on social media. Recently, he has been targeted by a group of online trolls who continuously post homophobic comments and hateful slurs on his social media posts. The harassment has escalated to direct messages threatening violence if he doesn't stop posting about LGBTQ+ issues. Ahmed is worried about his safety but fears that reporting the harassment will only increase the attacks or lead to further exposure and retaliation.

Case study 3:

Maria is a 24-year-old college student who broke up with her partner a few months ago. Recently, her ex-partner threatened to share intimate photos of her that were taken during their relationship. The ex-partner is demanding that she reconcile with him or face the release of the photos on social media and adult sites. Maria is terrified of the consequences, including the potential damage to her reputation and her future career prospects, as she is about to graduate.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

4.1.5 Workshop 5: Peer support to victim(s) of OGBV

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Identify behavioral and emotional signs that someone may be experiencing OGBV.
- Empower participants on how to respond supportively and empathetically to disclosures of OGBV.
- Eliminate victim-blaming attitudes and promote a culture of support and understanding.

- Provide practical guidance on offering psychosocial support, including emotional and practical assistance.
- Demonstrate how to refer peers affected by OGBV to appropriate support channels and authorities.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. Peer support to victim(s) of OGBV
4. Evaluation and closing

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below is a guide. Youth workers can adjust it, but Sections 1 and 4 should stay as they cover the workshop's purpose and feedback.

Target population (suggested): 20 to 29 years

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 3: PEER SUPPORT TO VICTIM(S) OF OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: For the 1,5-hour version prioritize Activities 1, 2, and 3. Key concepts from Activity 4 can still be briefly covered in this section through a short guided discussion with participants as part of Activity 3.

Activity 1: Signs that someone is experiencing OGBV

Following the “Activity 3: Exploring consequences of OGBV”, “Section 2: Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV”, “Workshop 1: Introduction to online gender-based violence” further discussion on what are signs that someone is experiencing OGBV.

A short fictional scenario or case study of a young person experiencing OGBV (adapted to age and cultural context) is read. Afterwards the youth worker will open a discussion circle with open end question, e.g. *“What kind of consequences might this person face? Let’s trace it together.* Answers can be written on flipchart or post-its.

The following signs and more can be identified and discussed with participants:

- Using their device significantly more;
- Acting overly emotional after using a device;
- Deleting their social media accounts;
- Not wanting to attend social events;
- Showing drastic changes in their mood;
- Complaining to get out of going to school;
- Becoming nervous when receiving a text;
- Having difficulty sleeping;
- Talking about self-harm;
- Losing interest in hobbies.

Activity 2: Disclosure of OGBV – peer support

The youth worker invites participants to reflect on the role of peers when someone shares that they’ve experienced OGBV (if needed, a scenario can be presented, e. g. your friend reveals she has discovered that a classmate has shared a private photo of her in a group chat without her consent. The photo quickly spreads, and she starts receiving unwanted messages from strangers).

A guiding question is written on a flipchart or whiteboard (split in two columns):

- What is the role of peers in responding to a disclosure of OGBV?
- What *is not* the role of peers in this situation?

The youth worker encourages participants to share their ideas freely and writes their responses under the relevant column. To spark or deepen the discussion, the youth worker can ask additional questions such as:

- Should peers give advice to someone who experienced OGBV?
- What kind of help can a friend offer without becoming overwhelmed or over-involved?
- Have you ever felt unsure about how to support someone going through a hard time online?
- What would you want from a peer if you were in that situation?

After the brainstorm, the youth worker leads the group in summarizing the role of peers in supporting survivors of OGBV. Together, they form a short, clear definition or description. Key points to include and highlight:

- Peers are not professionals and should not take on the role of a psychologist, social worker, or police.
- Peer support means being there for someone—listening, believing, and helping them feel less alone.
- Peers can accompany someone to seek professional help, help them make the first phone call or message, or just be present.
- The goal is to relieve the emotional burden, not take responsibility for solving the whole situation.

Activity 3: Handling the disclosure of OGBV and offering peer support

Participants are invited to practice offering peer support in response to a disclosure of OGBV. Before the role-play begins, the youth worker presents and discusses key peer support strategies with the group. These include:

- “Offer support, not solutions” is the guiding principle. The goal is to support the person in making their own choices rather than giving direct advice or trying to “fix” the situation.
- Avoid using common victim-blaming statements such as “*Why didn’t you block them?*” or “*You should be more careful online.*” These kinds of remarks can cause

further harm and discourage future disclosures. Instead, use responses that prioritize empathy, support, and validation, such as *“that must have been really upsetting—I’m here for you”*, *“you didn’t deserve to be treated that way”* or *“I believe you”*. Such responses help build trust and create a safe, non-judgmental space for someone to open up.

- It's also important to emphasize that language and body language play a vital role in communication. Maintain an open and non-threatening posture, use affirming nods, and avoid facial expressions or gestures that may seem dismissive or judgmental.
- Active listening is key. This includes being fully present, listening without interrupting, and showing genuine interest in what the person is saying (more can be read in chapter “3.2 Communication Skills”).
- Respecting confidentiality is crucial. Always protect the privacy of the person sharing their experience—unless their safety is at risk. In such cases, involve professionals while being transparent with the person about the next steps.
- Practical help can be offered – assisting with small, manageable steps like accompanying them to seek help or making the first call together.
- Finally—and very (!) importantly—**recognize the limits of peer support**. Peers are not professionals. They can offer emotional support and help create a bridge to further assistance, but they should never try to take on the role of a therapist or crisis counselor. It is essential to know when and how to refer someone to professional help, and to do so with care and sensitivity.

Participants are divided into pairs and given different scenarios involving OGBV disclosure. Participants role-play the scenarios as either the person disclosing OGBV or the supportive peer. The remaining participants observe and take notes. After each role-play, participants discuss what went well and what could be improved. Observers provide constructive feedback, focusing on empathy, active listening, and avoiding victim-blaming. These are examples of scenarios that can be used for this activity:

Scenario 1:

Emily, a 15-year-old high school student, has been receiving anonymous messages on social media for the past few weeks. The messages include hurtful comments and threats. Emily has become anxious and withdrawn, avoiding school and social activities she once enjoyed. She decides to confide in her friend, Sarah, about the bullying but is reluctant to tell any adults due to fear of being judged or not believed.

Scenario 2:

Jordan, an 18-year-old LGBTQ+ individual, has been receiving a series of hateful comments on their social media profile. The comments include derogatory remarks about their sexuality and identity. Jordan feels targeted and unsafe but is concerned that reporting the comments may escalate the situation or attract more negative attention. Jordan reaches out to their friend, Alex, for emotional support.

Scenario 3:

Avery, a 21-year-old college student, has been threatened by a former partner who has threatened to share intimate photos of Avery online. Avery feels humiliated and fearful but is unsure about how to handle the situation and seeks advice from their close friend, Taylor. Avery is also worried about the legal and social repercussions of reporting the threat.

Activity 4: Referring peers affected by OGBV

The youth worker provides a step-by-step demonstration on how to:

- Report OGBV on various online platforms: Demonstrate the reporting features on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
- Refer to school counselors or trusted adults: Discuss how to approach school staff or trusted adults for help, including what information to share and how to maintain confidentiality.
- Engage with local authorities: explain when it might be necessary to contact the police and how to provide evidence (e.g., screenshots, message logs).
- Access specialized services: Provide information on local or national helplines, NGOs, and support organizations that specialize in supporting victims of OGBV.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

4.1.6 Workshop 6: Rules of (online) dating

Key objectives:

- Present basic definitions related to OGBV, including what qualifies as OGBV, its characteristics, and its distinctions from offline GBV.
- Understand how gender stereotypes and biases contribute to OGBV, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Identify and distinguish between different types of OGBV.
- Identify the pros and cons of online dating, including its accessibility and convenience, as well as its potential risks.
- Recognize the most common types of OGBV that occur in online dating environments and understand their definitions.
- Understand the concept of consent and its critical role in online interactions.
- Develop awareness of appropriate online dating etiquette, identifying behaviours that are respectful and safe versus those that are harmful or dangerous.

STRUCTURE

1. Welcoming and introduction
2. Basic definitions: a guide to OGBV
3. Do's and don'ts of online dating
4. Evaluation and closing

Duration: 1,5 hours with 5 minutes break between section 2. and 3. / 2,5 hours with 15 minutes break between sections 2. and 3.

Note: The timeline below is a guide. Youth workers can adjust it, but Sections 1 and 4 should stay as they cover the workshop's purpose and feedback.

Target population (suggested): 20 to 29 years

SECTION 1: WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 2: BASIC DEFINITIONS: A GUIDE TO OGBV (30 / 60 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

SECTION 3: DO'S AND DON'TS OF ONLINE DATING (30 / 60 minutes)

Note: For the 1,5-hour version of the workshop prioritize Activities 1, 2, and 4. Key concepts from Activity 3 can still be briefly covered in this section through a short guided discussion with participants as part of Activity 4.

Activity 1: Pros and cons of online dating

A warm-up activity can be used to engage participants, such as a barometer (continuum line) or “Stand up and switch seats if this is true for you...” style game. The statements should be light, engaging, and connected to the topic of online dating—helping participants reflect on their own experiences or opinions in a relaxed way. Examples of statements:

- “I’ve used a dating app before.”
- “I think online dating is more stressful than fun.”
- “I’ve had a good experience meeting someone online.”
- “I’ve seen or experienced inappropriate messages online.”

This discussion will begin with an open forum where participants are invited to share their thoughts and experiences regarding online dating. The youth worker will guide the discussion by highlighting both the benefits (pros) and potential risks (cons) of online dating, such as:

Pros: Accessibility to potential partners, convenience of connecting from anywhere, exposure to a diverse range of people, and shifting social norms that make online dating more acceptable.

Cons/Risks: Privacy and safety concerns, scams (e.g., catfishing), potential exposure to inappropriate or harmful behaviours, and the prevalence of OGBV.

The goal is to encourage participants to reflect on the realities of online dating, understand its potential, and recognize its challenges. This helps set the stage for understanding safe practices and avoiding risky situations.

Activity 2: Most common types of OGBV in online dating

This presentation offers an overview of the most common types of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) encountered in online dating environments. The youth worker can list these types on a flipchart or whiteboard. While presenting each type, they should encourage participants to share real-life examples they may have seen, heard about, or encountered—either personally or in the media.

- Harassment: Persistent unwanted messages or attention.
- Unwanted sexual advances: Repeated and unsolicited requests for sexual favors or sending of explicit content.
- Body shaming and slut shaming: Negative or derogatory comments about someone's appearance or sexual behavior.
- Stalking: Repeatedly monitoring or following someone online or offline.
- Threats and intimidation: Sending threatening messages or coercive language.
- Non-consensual sharing of personal information: Sharing someone's private information or intimate photos without consent.
- Emotional manipulation: Using guilt, threats, or emotional pressure to control or manipulate someone.

After the presentation, the youth worker opens a discussion on the concept of consent in the context of online interactions and dating. To initiate the conversation, two statements are presented: “No means no” and “Only yes means yes”. The youth worker asks participants to reflect on and discuss the difference between these two statements. This comparison helps highlight how our understanding of consent has evolved—from focusing only on refusal to actively seeking and respecting enthusiastic, affirmative agreement. It is important to emphasize that consent must be clear, informed, and freely

given in all interactions—offline and online—including in dating apps, messaging, image sharing, and digital communication.

To ground the discussion in a national context, the youth worker can present relevant national legislation and share the example of Slovenia's legal reform on consent, led by civil society through the campaign "Only Yes Means Yes" – samojapomenija.si. This real-life example shows how public pressure and activism can lead to meaningful change and reinforce the importance of consent in both legal and cultural terms.

Activity 3: Do's and don'ts

Participants will engage in a Red flag, green flag game, where they are given various scenarios or behaviors related to online dating and must categorize them as "green flags" (safe and appropriate behavior) or "red flags" (unsafe or inappropriate behavior). Examples of scenarios might include:

- A person respects your decision to take things slowly.
- A person repeatedly asks for personal information despite being told no.
- A person asks for your address or insists on meeting in a secluded place for the first date.
- A person asks for consent before initiating any intimate conversation or sharing sensitive content.

Activity 4: SWOT analysis

Participants are divided into smaller groups and given different case studies involving online dating scenarios. Each group conducts a SWOT analysis (you can find the template for the SWOT analysis in the appendix) for their assigned scenario. They then present their findings to the larger group, discussing the potential advantages and risks in each case. The aim is to foster critical thinking about online dating situations and to help participants learn how to assess and manage risks effectively.

In case the participants are not familiar with the term and work on SWOT analysis, it is necessary to prepare a visible *Scenario 3* in the presentation with a visible solution using SWOT analysis as an example for group work.

Examples of scenarios are:

Scenario 1:

Jane, who recently went through a tough breakup, is ready to start dating again. Her friends encourage her to try online dating. Jane is naturally trusting and has a lower level of digital literacy.

Example of SWOT analysis points:

- Strengths: Jane is open to new experiences and has supportive friends who encourage her.
- Weaknesses: Jane's trusting nature and limited digital literacy may make her vulnerable to scams or inappropriate behavior.
- Opportunities: Online dating offers Jane a chance to meet new people and rebuild her social life.
- Threats: Potential risks of encountering catfishing, harassment, or manipulation due to her lack of experience and awareness.

Scenario 2:

Alex, a non-binary person, has decided to explore online dating but is very cautious due to previous experiences with online harassment. They meticulously screen profiles and prefer to keep conversations on the dating app before moving to other communication platforms.

Example of SWOT analysis points:

- Strengths: Alex's cautious and careful approach minimizes the risks of encountering harmful behavior.
- Weaknesses: High caution may limit potential connections or lead to missed opportunities.
- Opportunities: Online dating could provide a safe way for Alex to meet like-minded individuals within the LGBTQ+ community.

- Threats: Despite being cautious, Alex could still encounter subtle forms of harassment or discrimination, and there is a risk of over-reliance on screening, which might not capture all potential dangers.

Scenario 3:

Sam, a young professional, enjoys the fast-paced nature of online dating and often engages with multiple people at once. However, he tends to overshare personal information early in conversations and frequently meets dates without thoroughly vetting them.

Example of SWOT analysis points:

- Strengths: Sam is confident and proactive in his approach to dating, enjoying the process.
- Weaknesses: Oversharing personal information and lack of vetting increases vulnerability to scams, stalking, or other harmful behaviors.
- Opportunities: The variety of interactions may lead to meaningful connections if managed carefully.
- Threats: Potential risks include encountering catfishers, scammers, or individuals with harmful intentions, as well as potential threats to personal safety.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION AND CLOSING (15 minutes)

Same as for Workshop 1.

4.2 Use of Digital Tools

Digital tools can enhance the reach, interactivity, and effectiveness of educational activities related to online gender-based violence. When used thoughtfully, they not only engage young people in familiar formats but also model positive and safe online behaviors. Youth workers are encouraged to integrate digital platforms and tools into both the preparation and delivery of workshops.

Suggested Digital Tools and Their Use:

- Collaborative platforms (e.g., Padlet, Miro): Great for brainstorming, mind-mapping, or capturing anonymous reflections during workshops.

- Polls and quizzes (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot!, Slido): Useful for assessing baseline knowledge or gauging participant attitudes before and after sessions.
- Video content (e.g., YouTube, TikTok clips, Instagram reels): Can be used to illustrate real-life scenarios, showcase campaign messages, or spark discussion.
- Storytelling tools (e.g., Canva, Genially, Wisemapping, Thinglink, StoryMap JS, Timeline JS): Support youth in creating counter-narratives, awareness posters, or short campaign materials.
- Virtual whiteboards and presentation tools (e.g., Prezi, Canva, PowerPoint): Make sessions more dynamic and adaptable, especially in hybrid or online formats.

Connection to the MEDUSA Platform

Youth workers are encouraged to make use of the MEDUSA online platform (<https://project-medusa.eu/medusa-oredja/>), which offers a curated selection of interactive activities, educational games, and tools specifically designed for use with young people. These resources complement the workshops and content in this handbook and can be used to:

- Facilitate online or blended sessions with youth.
- Introduce interactive methods into face-to-face programming.
- Provide accessible, digital-friendly activities on topics such as OGBV, digital safety, and gender norms.

The platform aligns with the educational goals of the MEDUSA project. By incorporating its resources, youth workers can extend the impact of their work and ensure continuity between offline and online engagement.

Tips for Responsible Use

Always check the privacy policies and age-appropriateness of platforms used.

Avoid requiring logins for anonymous participation, especially when discussing sensitive topics.

Provide digital literacy support when needed, especially with younger participants or those less familiar with the tools.

Ensure accessibility for participants with disabilities by selecting inclusive tools (e.g., captioning, text-to-speech options).

Use digital safety practices yourself—model respectful behavior, avoid data collection without consent, and emphasize boundaries when online.

Use low-tech methods when needed. Do not assume all youth have smartphones or reliable internet. Provide smartphones to those participants that need them or form groups where they can work on one device.

Test the digital tool before using it in an activity for the first time.

4.3 Adapting Activities

Youth are not a homogenous group, and the success of any activity depends on its relevance to the participants' age, gender, cultural background, lived experiences, needs and interests. Adapting activities ensures they are not only accessible but also meaningful and impactful.

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) affects young people in distinct and unequal ways depending on their identities and social positions. A 15-year-old girl just beginning to navigate social media has different needs than a 22-year-old nonbinary student who has already experienced online harassment. Adapting content ensures that youth:

- Feel safe and respected.
- Can meaningfully engage in activities.
- Receive support appropriate to their needs and interests.

Adaptation is also about equity: it's how we ensure that marginalized youth—such as LGBTQI+ youth, or those with disabilities—aren't excluded or retraumatized by generic, one-size-fits-all activities.

Gender-Aware Adaptation

- Be explicitly inclusive in your language (e.g., use "all genders," not just "boys and girls").
- Allow single-gender or gender affinity groups when appropriate, especially when discussing trauma or sexuality.
- Use examples that challenge traditional roles, avoid reinforcing binary or stereotypical gender roles in examples and groupings.
- Normalize and affirm transgender and nonbinary identities through pronoun use, image choices, and facilitator introductions.

Adapting by Cultural Background:

- Use locally relevant examples and media when possible.
- If working with migrant or minority youth, ensure activities are translated where needed and that facilitators are culturally competent.

Additional Adaptation Considerations

- Neurodiversity and disability: Provide multiple formats (text, images, spoken word)
 - always important, not just with neurodiverse participants, to cater to different

learning styles. Make physical spaces and materials accessible (captioning, font size, color contrast).

- Trauma-awareness: Always give content warnings and opt-out options. Never require youth to share personal experiences.
- Socioeconomic status: Use low-tech methods when needed. Do not assume all youth have smartphones or reliable internet.

Reflection and Participatory Co-Creation

In youth work, reflection is a central tool for personal growth and learning. It allows young people to gain deeper insight into their experiences, identify what they have learned, and consider how this learning might be transferred to other areas of life. Unlike evaluation, which focuses on assessing the quality or outcomes of a process, reflection is inward-facing and developmental, helping youth understand themselves and their roles in shared activities.

In parallel, meaningful participation—especially in the form of co-creation—is a core value of youth work. According to Hart’s Ladder of Participation (1992), the highest forms of youth participation occur when young people are actively involved in decision-making and content development. Co-creation is not about adapting content for young people, but rather with them, in ways that respect their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.

Facilitators can support this process by creating space for youth to shape the learning environment and contribute to the design or direction of activities. This includes asking questions such as:

- What helps you feel safe and included in this space?
- How can we make this topic more relevant to your daily life?
- Are there examples or methods that would work better for you?
- What themes or questions do you want to explore further?

These prompts invite not only reflection, but shared ownership of the learning process, building trust, engagement, and empowerment.

When young people are recognized as co-creators—not just recipients—of educational processes, they develop a stronger sense of agency and are more likely to take initiative, express themselves authentically, and critically engage with sensitive topics like online gender-based violence.

This approach also aligns with the principles of empowerment-based youth work, where learning is situated in the lived experiences of young people and oriented toward their active role in shaping both the process and outcomes.

5. Integration into the MOOC Module

The Medusa MOOC Module provides youth workers with essential guidance on navigating the complex terrain of online gender-based violence to better support young people in their care. Through a comprehensive exploration of OGBV dynamics, risk factors, and preventive strategies, youth workers will gain the knowledge and skills to recognize, respond to, and prevent OGBV. This module equips youth workers with practical tools and resources to address and prevent OGBV effectively.

5.1 Structure of the MOOC Module

The mooc module for youth workers can be found [here](#). There are three ways to go through the course:

- 1) Host a live course for an audience, for example other youth workers in the youth center. You can pause it and resume it anytime.
- 2) Assign the course to learners, for example other youth workers in the youth center, so they can complete it at their own pace.
- 3) Study the course on your own. You can pause it and resume it at any time.

To complete the course, you will need a Kahoot account. You can sign-up for free [here](#).

The course is a mixture of short definitions, tips, information along with quiz questions and short exercises, to check and expand the learner's knowledge with explanations on correct answers. It follows the following structure:

- 1) Introduction to online gender-based violence
- 2) Central forms of online gender-based violence
- 3) Consequences of online gender-based violence
- 4) Gender stereotypes and online gender-based violence
- 5) Overcoming online gender-based violence and helping victims
- 6) Factors of online gender-based violence
- 7) The process of disclosure
- 8) Art therapy as a component of psychosocial support
- 9) Why is online safety important?

5.2 Connection Between the Toolkit and the MOOC

The MEDUSA handbook and the MOOC module are complementary tools designed to mutually enhance the learning experience of youth workers tackling online gender-based violence (OGBV). While the handbook provides in-depth guidance, theoretical background, and practical workshop materials, the MOOC offers an interactive, self-paced digital learning environment to reinforce and expand on these topics.

Here's how the two resources are connected and can be used together effectively:

- **Reinforcement of Key Topics:** Each section of the MOOC (e.g., gender stereotypes, the process of disclosure, art therapy, and digital safety) aligns with themes and workshop objectives in the handbook. Youth workers can use the MOOC to revisit or deepen their understanding of specific issues before facilitating related workshops.
- **Flexible Learning Paths:** The handbook includes standalone activities and worksheets that can be adapted to fit different learning formats, including those covered in the MOOC—whether the course is delivered live, assigned for individual study, or used for personal development. Facilitators can combine segments of the handbook with MOOC quizzes and discussion prompts for group reflection.
- **Support for Self-Directed and Group Learning:** For youth workers unable to attend live trainings, the MOOC offers a structured yet flexible learning journey. The handbook then serves as a follow-up resource to continue learning offline, design new interventions, or plan future workshops.
- **Blended Learning Approach:** Youth workers can first engage with the MOOC to build foundational knowledge on OGBV concepts, then use the handbook to apply this knowledge through in-person workshops, activities, and mentoring sessions with young people. This sequence ensures both conceptual understanding and practical application.
- **Shared Goals and Language:** Both the handbook and the MOOC aim to empower youth workers with the skills to recognize, prevent, and respond to OGBV. By using the same terminology, themes, and pedagogical values (e.g., empathy, inclusivity, critical thinking), they create a coherent and unified training pathway.

In practice, youth organizations and centers are encouraged to integrate both tools into their capacity-building efforts: using the MOOC for accessible, scalable knowledge transfer, and the handbook for more in-depth explanations of definitions, hands-on implementation in real-world youth engagement settings.

5.3 Self-Evaluation and Further Learning

To support ongoing development, this section provides tools for self-evaluation and guidance for further learning. Recognizing that addressing online gender-based violence (OGBV) requires continuous reflection and growth, youth workers are encouraged to assess their knowledge, skills, and confidence at various stages of their learning journey.

- **Pre- and Post-Training Questionnaires:** Designed to measure changes in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes regarding OGBV - you can find it in the appendix.
- **Reflective Journaling Prompts:** Short questions that encourage self-reflection on key learning moments, challenges, and areas for further improvement (e.g., “How confident do I feel discussing OGBV with youth?”, “What biases or assumptions did I notice in myself?”).
- **Facilitator Feedback Forms:** Forms to be used after workshops to gather feedback on what worked well, what was challenging, and how future sessions could be improved.
- **Peer Review Checklists:** For trainers working in pairs or groups, these help assess each other’s facilitation skills and approaches.

Further Learning Recommendations

Online gender-based violence is a fast-evolving issue, and staying informed is essential. The following strategies and resources are recommended for continued education:

- **Participate in Ongoing Webinars and Online Trainings:** Follow local and international organizations working on gender equality, digital rights, or youth work to stay up-to-date with new tools and research.
- **Join Professional Networks and Communities of Practice:** Engage in peer learning by joining forums, youth worker associations, or online communities focused on gender-based violence and digital safety.
- **Explore Advanced Training on Related Topics:** Consider further study in trauma-informed approaches, intersectionality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, media literacy, or legal rights related to digital violence.
- **Use the Resource List in Chapter 6:** The handbook includes curated references to additional literature, toolkits, and educational platforms for deeper exploration.

Self-assessment and further learning are not only beneficial for individual growth, but also for creating safer, more inclusive, and more supportive environments for the young people youth workers serve.

6. Annexes

6.1 Relevant national and international laws, reporting mechanisms, and organizations that offer support to victims of OGBV

6.1.1 Slovenia

1) Legal protections

Slovenia has a good institutional framework that ensures the protection of human rights for all individuals, and equal opportunities and responsibilities for both men and women. Slovenian legal regulations also provide full protection for victims of any form of violence, including online violence and harassment.

First, equality is fundamentally ensured in the **Slovenian Constitution** (1991) that in its 14. Article guarantees the same human rights and fundamental freedoms to all citizens, regardless of personal circumstances. The **Protection against Discrimination Act** (ZVarD) as the main anti-discrimination law additionally prohibits any form of discrimination based on personal circumstances, including gender (2016). Additionally, the **Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act** (2002) foresees special measures as a basis for realizing the principle of gender equality.

Second, the Constitution prohibits any kind of **inhumane treatment** (Article 18) and **enticement of violence** (Article 63). **Slovenian Criminal Code** is the main legislative document in the field of protecting victims of violence, as it defines both different forms of violence as well as appropriate penalties. **Article 131** prohibits **any form of violence on the basis of personal circumstances**, including gender. **Article 297** furthermore enforces that whoever **publicly incites hatred, violence or intolerance based on personal**

circumstances will face imprisonment for up to 2 years. This also includes **incitement of hatred, violence or intolerance in the virtual space** (paragraph 3). Articles that are most significant for defining specific forms of online violence are:

- **Article 137 & 138:** Prohibit unauthorized audio and image recordings.
- **Article 143:** Penalizes misuse of personal data.
- **Article 158–161:** Cover public insult, defamation, and gossiping.
- **Article 173a:** Criminalizes grooming of minors online.
- **Article 176:** Addresses distribution of pornographic material to minors.

Third, Slovenia also adopted several other legislative documents that ensure protection of victims of violence. Most notable ones are:

- Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Official Gazette, 16/08, 68/16, 54/17 – ZSV- H in 196/21 – ZDOsk),
- Police Tasks and Powers Act (Official Gazette, 15/13, 23/15 – popr., 10/17, 46/19 – odl. US, 47/19 in 153/21 – odl. US),
- Family Code (Official Gazette, 15/17, 21/18 – ZNOrg, 22/19, 67/19 – ZMatR-C, 200/20 – ZOOMTVI, 94/22 – odl. US, 94/22 – odl. US in 5/23),
- Act on the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and on Combating Them (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia – International Treaties, No.1/15)
- Criminal Procedure Act (Official Gazette, 176/21 – uradno prečiščeno besedilo, 96/22 – odl. US in 2/23 – odl. US),
- Minor Offences Act (Official Gazette, 29/11 – uradno prečiščeno besedilo, 21/13, 111/13, 74/14 – odl. US, 92/14 – odl. US, 32/16, 15/17 – odl. US, 73/19– odl. US, 175/20 – ZIUOPDVE in 5/21 – odl. US),
- Crime Victim Compensation Act (Official Gazette, 101/05, 114/06 – ZUE in 86/10)

2) Support organizations in Slovenia

1. TOM telefon (free phone counseling for children and youth)

Contact: 116 111; tom@zpms.si

Information: Working time everyday between 12.00 and 20.00; also online counseling service.

Website: <https://www.e-tom.si>

2. SOS Telefon (free phone and in-person counseling for women and children)

Contact: 080 11 55

Address: Zaloška 57, 1000 Ljubljana

Information: Working time for the helpline everyday 24/7; also online counseling service, available every Tuesday between 8.00 and 16.00; also in-person free counseling.

Website: <https://drustvo-sos.si>

3. Samarijan (free phone counseling)

Contact: 116 123

Information: Working time for the helpline everyday 24/7.

Website: <http://www.telefon-samarijan.si>

4. Spletno oko (anonymous reporting platform for child sexual abuse images)

Website: <https://www.spletno-ok.si>

5. Safe.si (awareness hub on the safe use of the Internet and new technologies)

Information: Offers educational and awareness-raising materials and activities for children, youth, parents/caregivers and educators.

Website: <https://safe.si>

6.1.2 Croatia

1) Legal protections

The regulations of the Republic of Croatia, based on a number of national and other international documents in the field of human rights protection, ensure equality and a life without discrimination for women and men, and legal protection for victims of criminal and misdemeanor acts of violence. The rights and freedoms of the child are protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which also protects against abuse on the Internet.

Some of the forms of online violence that are subject to the Croatian Criminal Code (125/11) are:

- **Insult** (according to the Criminal Code) - devaluing another person or disrespecting their dignity. The insult is more serious if it is uttered through newspapers, radio, TV or the Internet, because then a larger number of people are familiar with it.
- **Defamation** (according to the Penal Code) - when someone says or conveys something untrue about another that can harm the honor or reputation of that person, and defamation is more serious when it is available to a large number of people.
- **Disclosure of information** about a person or his family that may harm his honor or reputation. It is the right of every individual to be respected and not devalue his dignity.
- When children (under the age of 14) commit a punishable act, the police must inform the Center for Social Welfare, which will carry out the procedure and possibly impose some measure.

Protection against violence against women in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by a large number of legal acts of constitutional, international and legal rank. Here is the basic legislative framework:

- Domestic Violence Law (Official Gazette 70/17)
- Law of Misdemeanour (Official Gazette 107/07, 39/13, 157/13, 110/15, 70/17, 118/18)
- Code of Conduct in the Case of Domestic Violence
- Law on Criminal Procedure (Official Gazette 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17)
- Family Law (Official Gazette 103/15)
- Law of Temporary Maintenance (Official Gazette 92/14)
- Law of Social Welfare (Official Gazette 157/13, 152/14, 99/15, 52/16, 16/17, 130/17)
- Law of Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic violence (Official Gazette 3/18)
- Law on Free Legal Aid (Official Gazette 143/13)

A novelty in the Republic of Croatia is the introduction of the criminal part **"Abuse of recorded sexually explicit content"** from 2021 in Criminal Code (Article 144a). In this case, the perpetrator faces a sentence of up to 1 year in prison if he/she makes a video of sexually explicit content, which, even though it was recorded with the consent of another person, made it available to another person without consent of the person(s) in the video. If he/she makes a video available to a larger number of people without consent of the person(s) in the video, he/she faces a sentence of up to 3 years in prison. This crime is essentially revenge porn, the most common form of online violence that affects women and is directed at women.

Other relevant articles from the Criminal Code include:

- Exploitation of children for pornography (Article 163)
- Exploitation of children for pornographic performances (Article 164)
- Introducing children to pornography (Article 165)
- Violation of a child's privacy (Article 178)
- Public incitement to violence and hatred (Article 325)
- Intrusive behavior (Article 140)

2) Support organizations in Croatia

1. Centar za krizna stanja i prevenciju suicida pri Kliničkom bolničkom centru Rebro u Zagrebu (free counseling for 18+ persons)

Contact: +385 (0)1 2376 470

Address: Ulica Mije Kišpatića 12, 10000 Zagreb

Information: Working time for helpline 0-24; person can come without prior announcement of without an official doctor's prescription between 8.00 and 20.00.

2. Savjetovalište za promicanje metalnog zdravlja pri Hrvatskom zavodu za javno zdravstvo u Zagrebu (free counseling)

Contact: +385 (0)1 4863 363; savjetovalista@hzjz.hr

Address: Rockefellerova 12, 10000 Zagreb

Information: Working time is only on Wednesday between 15.00 and 19.00; counselling premises are in the building Služba za promicanje zdravlja, Odjel za mentalno zdravlje i prevenciju ovisnosti.

Website: <https://www.hzjz.hr/savjetovaliste-za-mentalno-zdravlje/>

3. Centar za sigurniji internet (free counseling and reporting violent content)

Contact: 0800 606 606

Information: Working time for helpline is between 8.00 and 16.00; counselling premises are in Zagreb, Osijek and Split with prior reservation; website offer possibility to report unwanted content.

Website: <https://csi.hr/>

4. Hrabri telefon (free counseling for children)

Contact: 116 111; savjet@hrabritelefon.hr and hrabrisa@hrabritelefon.hr

Information: Providing phone counselling and email counselling; also help available through online forum.

Website: <https://hrabritelefon.hr/>

5. Psihološki centar TESA (free counseling for youth)

Contact: 01 48 28 888; psiho.centar@tesa.hr or psiho.pomoc@tesa.hr

Information: Working days (Mon-Fri) from 10.00 to 22.00.

6.1.3 Italy

1) Legal protections

The Italian Constitution (1946) is the first document which affirms the rights to freedom in **Article 13** and it recognises and guarantees the inviolable rights of (interesting choice of words) man in **Article 2**.

In terms of gender-based violence, with the 17th Legislature, the Italian Parliament has **ratified the Istanbul Convention**, with the introduction of **amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code** to toughen the penalties for certain crimes, most often committed against women, the enactment of the Extraordinary Action Plan against gender-based violence and the provision of appropriations to support victims. The legal framework is based in **crime prevention and victim protection**, while tightening penalties for the commission of so-called **gender crimes**. The measure that has most affected the fight against gender-based violence is **Law No. 69 of 2019** (the so-called **Code Red**), which strengthened the procedural protections of victims of violent crimes, with particular reference to crimes of sexual and domestic violence. It introduces the offence of **unlawful dissemination of sexually explicit images or videos** without the consent of the persons represented persons represented (so-called Revenge porn, included in **Article 612-ter** of the Criminal Code after the crime of stalking), punished with imprisonment from 1 to 6 years and a fine ranging from EUR 5,000 to EUR 15,000; the punishment also applies to whoever having received or otherwise acquired the images or videos, disseminates them in order to cause harm to the persons concerned. The offence is aggravated if the acts are committed in the context of a affective relationship, even if it has ceased, or with the use of computerised means. Moreover, it is worth to mention also article **612-quarter**, that concerns the solicitation of minors through the use of telematics.

An extension of protections for victims of domestic and gender-based violence was also provided for by **Law No. 134 of 2021**, reforming the criminal trial, while **Act No. 53 of 2022** enhanced the collection of statistical data on violence gender-based violence. Moreover, a single-chamber enquiry commission on femicide was set up at the Senate. Italy also counts with **Legislative Decree 196/2003** (known as "Privacy Code"), which regulates the protection of personal data and privacy. It may be applied in cases where online violence involves the unauthorized disclosure of personal information or the dissemination of compromising material. In 2017 the **Law 71/2017** governs **cyberbullying** against minors meaning any form of pressure, aggression, harassment, blackmail, insult, denigration, defamation, identity theft, alteration, unlawful acquisition, manipulation, unlawful processing of personal data to the detriment of minors, carried out electronically, as well as the dissemination of online content also targeting one or more members of the minor's family whose purpose the intentional and predominant purpose of which is to isolate a minor or a group of minors by carrying out a serious abuse, harmful attack or ridiculing them. In terms of legal persons, **Legislative Decree 231/2007** governs the administrative responsibility of legal persons (such as companies) for crimes committed by their representatives or employees. Lastly, the right to compensation to crime victims was fully recognised in the 17th legislature with the **Law No. 122 of 2016** (European Law, 2015-2016), fully implementing Directive 2004/80/EC, on compensation to crime victims, which binds EU Member States to provide for a system of compensation to victims of violent intentional crimes committed in their respective territories, which ensures fair and fair and adequate compensation of victims.

In conclusion, cyberviolence in Italy is formally regulated by the legal framework but through **soft tools** which focus on women and children and GBV in a broad sense which little if no support to the LGBTIQ+ community. For instance, in 2022, after much heated debate, **Decree-Law Zan** which included severe measures against hate crimes and discrimination against this community, was not approved shedding light on the right-wing political strength and general political divide of the Italian scenario around fundamental rights.

2) Support organizations in Italy

1. Telefono Azzuro (free counseling for children and adolescents)

Contact: 196 96

Information: Available everyday, 24/7; also offers counseling online and via Whatsapp.

Website: <https://azzurro.it>

2. The National Anti-Violence Network (free counseling)

Contact: 1522

Information: Operators provide victims, ensuring their anonymity, with psychological and legal support, as well as indications of public and private facilities in the area to which they can turn

Website: <https://help.unhcr.org/italy/services/violence/#:~:text=If%20you%20experienced%2C%20you%20are,%2C%20anonymous%2C%20and%20active%2024H>.

3. Chayn Italia (awareness hub)

Contact: info@chaynitalia.org

Information: A feminist platform that provides training and consultancy for organisations and anti-violence centres on the topics of digital safety, diversity and inclusion, and combating stereotypes.

Website: <https://chaynitalia.org>

6.2 Ground rules

As a participant in this workshop, I acknowledge the importance of creating a respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environment for all attendees. By signing this agreement, I commit to upholding the following principles throughout the duration of the workshop:

1. Respectful communication

- I will engage with fellow participants, organizers, and facilitators with respect and empathy.
- I will listen actively and consider different perspectives without judgment or interruption.
- I will refrain from using language or behavior that is discriminatory, offensive, or harmful.

2. Inclusivity and equal participation

- I will promote an inclusive environment by welcoming diverse voices and experiences.
- I will actively encourage and support equal participation from all participants, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.
- I will avoid dominating conversations and will be mindful of giving space to quieter voices.

3. Active engagement

- I will participate actively in discussions, activities, and exercises, contributing my ideas, knowledge, and experiences.
- I will approach learning with an open mind, remaining curious and receptive to new perspectives and concepts.
- I will provide constructive feedback and share insights that enhance collective learning.

4. Collaboration and support

- I will work collaboratively with others, valuing teamwork, and recognizing the strengths and contributions of each individual.
- I will support a positive and safe learning environment by addressing any concerns or conflicts respectfully and seeking help from facilitators when needed.
- I will maintain confidentiality regarding any personal information or sensitive topics shared by participants during the workshop.

5. Commitment to growth

- I acknowledge that growth and learning may involve discomfort and challenge, and I commit to approaching these moments with patience, reflection, and a willingness to grow.
- I will hold myself accountable for my actions and be open to receiving and giving feedback in a constructive and non-defensive manner.

6. Adherence to workshop guidelines

- I agree to follow all workshop guidelines, including but not limited to, attendance, punctuality, and participation in assigned activities.

6.3 Pre and post test

Pre-test

Part 1

Online violence is abuse using digital technologies. *

True

False

The term gender-based violence is used to describe any form of violence - physical, sexual, psychological, economic or socio-cultural - that has a negative effect on a person's physical or mental health, development and identity, and that is a consequence of gender inequality, meaning it exploits the differences between men and women. *

True

False

Cyber violence is like offline violence, just not that serious, because it cannot have physical consequences. (Choose the correct answer) *

True

False

Act of gender-based violence is rooted in the inequality between women and men that persists in our society.*

True

False

Gender cyber violence (choose the correct answer): *

Could have serious consequences.

Is perpetrated only on social media platforms.

Has one single form of appearance.

Almost always is anonymous.

What is not common to both cyber gender-based violence and offline gender-based violence? (Choose the correct answer) *

Cyber gender-based violence can't occur in a form of stalking. That is specific only for offline gender-based violence

Sexual harassment can only be committed in offline gender-based violence.

Cyber gender-based violence is often happening 24/7 because it is harder for the victim to move away from the perpetrator than when a violence is happening offline.

Intimate partner (boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse) cannot be the perpetrator in cyber gender-based violence. It is more specific to offline gender-based violence.

One of the tools that allow cyber gender-based violence are smartwatches. (*Choose the correct answer*) *

True

False

Non-consensual intimate image abuse is (*choose the correct answer*): *

Not a type of cyber violence.

Targeting women and girls almost exclusively.

Partially the fault of a person who gave another person to take photos of him/her.

Not so harmful to its victims as offline violence.

All acts of cyber violence (*choose the correct answer*): *

Can start online and continue offline such as in the workplace, at school or at home.

Cannot start offline and continue online.

Must be happening exclusively online all the time.

Cannot be perpetrated by a person or group of people who are known to the victim such as an (ex) intimate partner, a school mate or a co-worker.

Cyber stalking (*choose the correct answer*): *

Most often happens from someone who is anonymous to the victim.

Is a key tactic of coercive control used in intimate partner violence.

Almost never starts with a first encounter in the physical world, but the first encounter happens exclusively online.

Victims do not report depression and suicidal ideation as consequences of cyber violence.

Girls and women who have experienced cyber violence are more careful, and therefore they are experiencing less violence offline.

(Choose the correct answer) *

True

False

An important characteristic of cyber bullying against girls is (choose the correct answer):
*

That it is happening repeatedly.

That it is happening exclusively online.

That it is happening exclusively by boys towards girls.

That it is happening more often towards young boys than towards young girls.

Part 2

How much do you agree with following statements: * (Not at all, I do not agree, I somewhat agree, I agree, I completely agree)

- Everyone is welcome into cyberspace.
- Cyber violence is gender neutral.
- The digital arena has become a ground for a range of violent discourses and beliefs.
- Offline bullying is worse than online bullying.
- Digital (online) and physical (offline) spaces are experienced as a single reality (one comprehensive reality).
- Cyber violence is less impactful and harmful to its victims than offline violence.

- If I were a victim of cyber violence, I believe that my case would be taken seriously by law enforcement (police, judges, etc.).
- I react to hate speech towards girls and women that I find online (report, comment in defence ...).
- Information-communication technology means can contribute to make online forms of gender-based hate speech more harmful.
- If you know how to use digital media, you won't be a victim of cyber violence.

- Targets of cyberbullying are at an increased risk for traditional bullying victimisation, substance use, and school problems.
- Most victims of cyberbullying tell an adult (parent or teacher) about their experience.

- Teens are less likely to cyberbully others if they know that their friends don't do it.
 - Those who engage in traditional schoolyard bullying are also likely to engage in cyberbullying.
 - Most who cyberbully others are outcasts or just mean kids.
 - Everyone is welcome into cyberspace.
 - Cyber violence is gender neutral.
 - The digital arena has become a ground for a range of violent discourses and beliefs.
 - Offline bullying is worse than online bullying.
 - Digital (online) and physical (offline) spaces are experienced as a single reality (one comprehensive reality).
 - Cyber violence is less impactful and harmful to its victims than offline violence.
-
- If I were a victim of cyber violence, I believe that my case would be taken seriously by law enforcement (police, judges, etc.).
 - I react to hate speech towards girls and women that I find online (report, comment in defence ...).
 - Information-communication technology means can contribute to make online forms of gender-based hate speech more harmful.
 - If you know how to use digital media, you won't be a victim of cyber violence.
 - Targets of cyberbullying are at an increased risk for traditional bullying victimisation, substance use, and school problems.
 - Most victims of cyberbullying tell an adult (parent or teacher) about their experience.
 - Teens are less likely to cyberbully others if they know that their friends don't do it.
-
- Those who engage in traditional schoolyard bullying are also likely to engage in cyberbullying.
 - Most who cyberbully others are outcasts or just mean kids.

Part 3

Please answer the following questions in form of a short answer. (Answers to the questions are mandatory)

There is under-reporting of cyber violence. What do you believe is the reason for people not reporting an act of cyber-violence? *

Non-consensual intimate image abuse is something that has many consequences on the life of the victim. If the victim was your friend, what would you say to him/her? *

Do you believe there are some situations when a girl or a woman, a victim of a cyber-bullying act/s is partially responsible for what was or still is happening to her? If yes, shortly name those situations.

Post test

Part 1

Online violence is abuse using digital technologies. *

True

False

The term gender-based violence is used to describe any form of violence - physical, sexual, psychological, economic or socio-cultural - that has a negative effect on a person's physical or mental health, development and identity, and that is a consequence of gender inequality, meaning it exploits the differences between men and women. *

True

False

Cyber violence is like offline violence, just not that serious, because it cannot have physical consequences. (Choose the correct answer) *

True

False

Act of gender-based violence is rooted in the inequality between women and men that persists in our society.*

True

False

Gender cyber violence (choose the correct answer): *

Could have serious consequences.

Is perpetrated only on social media platforms.

Has one single form of appearance.

Almost always is anonymous.

What is not common to both cyber gender-based violence and offline gender-based violence? (Choose the correct answer) *

Cyber gender-based violence can't occur in a form of stalking. That is specific only for offline gender-based violence

Sexual harassment can only be committed in offline gender-based violence.

Cyber gender-based violence is often happening 24/7 because it is harder for the victim to move away from the perpetrator than when a violence is happening offline.

Intimate partner (boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse) cannot be the perpetrator in cyber gender-based violence. It is more specific to offline gender-based violence.

One of the tools that allow cyber gender-based violence are smartwatches. (Choose the correct answer) *

True

False

Non-consensual intimate image abuse is (choose the correct answer): *

Not a type of cyber violence.

Targeting women and girls almost exclusively.

Partially the fault of a person who gave another person to take photos of him/her.

Not so harmful to its victims as offline violence.

All acts of cyber violence (choose the correct answer): *

Can start online and continue offline such as in the workplace, at school or at home.

Cannot start offline and continue online.

Must be happening exclusively online all the time.

Cannot be perpetrated by a person or group of people who are known to the victim such as an (ex) intimate partner, a school mate or a co-worker.

Cyber stalking (choose the correct answer): *

Most often happens from someone who is anonymous to the victim.

Is a key tactic of coercive control used in intimate partner violence.

Almost never starts with a first encounter in the physical world, but the first encounter happens exclusively online.

Victims do not report depression and suicidal ideation as consequences of cyber violence.

Girls and women who have experienced cyber violence are more careful, and therefore they are experiencing less violence offline. (Choose the correct answer) *

True

False

An important characteristic of cyber bullying against girls is (choose the correct answer): *

That it is happening repeatedly.

That it is happening exclusively online.

That it is happening exclusively by boys towards girls.

That it is happening more often towards young boys than towards young girls.

Part 2

How much do you agree with following statements: * (Not at all, I do not agree, I somewhat agree, I agree, I completely agree)

- Everyone is welcome into cyberspace.
- Cyber violence is gender neutral.
- The digital arena has become a ground for a range of violent discourses and beliefs.
- Offline bullying is worse than online bullying.
- Digital (online) and physical (offline) spaces are experienced as a single reality (one comprehensive reality).
- Cyber violence is less impactful and harmful to its victims than offline violence.

- If I were a victim of cyber violence, I believe that my case would be taken seriously by law enforcement (police, judges, etc.).
 - I react to hate speech towards girls and women that I find online (report, comment in defence ...).
 - Information-communication technology means can contribute to make online forms of gender-based hate speech more harmful.
 - If you know how to use digital media, you won't be a victim of cyber violence.
-
- Targets of cyberbullying are at an increased risk for traditional bullying victimisation, substance use, and school problems.
 - Most victims of cyberbullying tell an adult (parent or teacher) about their experience.
 - Teens are less likely to cyberbully others if they know that their friends don't do it.
 - Those who engage in traditional schoolyard bullying are also likely to engage in cyberbullying.
 - Most who cyberbully others are outcasts or just mean kids.
 - Everyone is welcome into cyberspace.
 - Cyber violence is gender neutral.
 - The digital arena has become a ground for a range of violent discourses and beliefs.
 - Offline bullying is worse than online bullying.
 - Digital (online) and physical (offline) spaces are experienced as a single reality (one comprehensive reality).
 - Cyber violence is less impactful and harmful to its victims than offline violence.
 - If I were a victim of cyber violence, I believe that my case would be taken seriously by law enforcement (police, judges, etc.).
 - I react to hate speech towards girls and women that I find online (report, comment in defence ...).
 - Information-communication technology means can contribute to make online forms of gender-based hate speech more harmful.
 - If you know how to use digital media, you won't be a victim of cyber violence.
 - Targets of cyberbullying are at an increased risk for traditional bullying victimisation, substance use, and school problems.
 - Most victims of cyberbullying tell an adult (parent or teacher) about their experience.
 - Teens are less likely to cyberbully others if they know that their friends don't do it.
 - Those who engage in traditional schoolyard bullying are also likely to engage in cyberbullying.
 - Most who cyberbully others are outcasts or just mean kids.

Part 3

Please answer the following questions in form of a short answer. (Answers to the questions are mandatory)

There is under-reporting of cyber violence. What do you believe is the reason for people not reporting an act of cyber-violence? *

Non-consensual intimate image abuse is something that has many consequences on the life of the victim. If the victim was your friend, what would you say to him/her? *

Do you believe there are some situations when a girl or a woman, a victim of a cyber-bullying act/s is partially responsible for what was or still is happening to her? If yes, shortly name those situations.

6.4 Workshop 6 SWOT Analysis template

Scenario 1:

Jane, who recently went through a difficult breakup, is ready to start dating again. Her friends encourage her to try online dating. Jasna is naturally trusting and has a lower level of digital literacy.

TASK:

According to the principles of a **SWOT ANALYSIS**, identify: **strengths + weaknesses + opportunities + threats**, i.e., important elements/factors your character might encounter when trying online dating.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

6.5 List of Resources and References

Allen, A. (2022). An Intersectional Lens on Online Gender Based Violence and the Digital Services Act. <https://verfassungsblog.de/dsa-intersectional/>

Amudhan, S., Kumar Sharma, M., Anand, N. & Johnson, J. (2024). “Snapping, sharing and receiving blame”: A systematic review on psychosocial factors of victim blaming in non-consensual pornography. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 33(1), 3–12.

Anderson, J. & Lee, K. (2017). The Internet & Intimate Partner Violence: Technology Changes, Abuse Doesn't. AEQUITAS – The Prosecutor's Newsletter on Violence against Women (16). <https://aequitasresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/The-Internet-and-Intimate-Partner-Violence-Technology-Changes-Abuse-Does-Not-Issue16.pdf>

Bansal, V., Leasure, E., Roth, C., Rezwan, M., Iyer, M., Pal, P., & Hinson, L. (2023). Help-seeking behaviours of those experiencing technology-facilitated GBV in Asia: implications for policy and programming. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 7(2), 352–363.

Brečko, B. N. (2019). *Odklikni! Spletno nadlegovanje deklet: Raziskovalno poročilo*. Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Center za družboslovno informatiko. https://odklikni.enakostspolov.si/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Odklikni_POROCILO_A4_12_2020web.pdf

Chen, Y., Wang, L., Guo, S. & Gu, Q. (2025). Violent or competitive? Unpacking adolescent cyber-aggressive behavior in text, video, and game context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, (16).

Chowdhury, N., Erman, D., Raihan, M. M. H., Marshall, Z., Datta, R., Aghajafari, F., Shankar, J., Sehgal, K., Rashid, R. & Turin, T. C. (2023). Intersecting Effects of Sexism, Racism, and Xenophobia on Gender-Based Violence Against Visible Minority Women: An Evidence

Synthesis. Department of Family Medicine, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary.

Collins, P. H., da Silva, E. C. G., Ergun, E., Furseth, I., Bond, K. D. & Martínez-Palacios. J. (2021). Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory: Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20(3), 690–725.

Cookson, T. P., Fuentes, L., Kuss, M. K. & Bitterly, J. (2023). Social norms, gender and development: A Review of Research and Practice. UN-Women Discussion Paper Series No. 42. United States, New York: UN-Women.

Council of the European Union. (2013). *Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee* (2013/C 120/01). EUR-Lex. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52013XG0614\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52013XG0614(02))

De Silva de Alwis, R. (2024). A Rapidly Shifting Landscape : Why Digitized Violence is the Newest Category of Gender-Based Violence. *A Revue des Juristes de Sciences*, 25.

Dennehy, R., Meaney, S., Cronin, M. & Arensman, E. (2020). The psychosocial impacts of cybervictimisation and barriers to seeking social support: Young people's perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 112.

EC. (n.d.). What is gender-based violence? https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en

EIGE. (2020). Gender Equality Index 2020: Digitalisation and the future of work. https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/toolkits-guides/gender-equality-index-2020-report/when-gender-based-violence-goes-digital?language_content_entity=en

EIGE. (2022). Gender-based violence: Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/combating_cyber_violence_against_women_and_girls.pdf

EIGE. (2024). Tackling cyber violence against women and girls: The role of digital platforms. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/tackling-cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls-role-digital-platforms?language_content_entity=en

EIGE. (n.d.). Glossary & Thesaurus. <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/the-saurus/overview>

Fisher, C. B., Tao, X. & Ford, M. (2024). Social media: A double-edged sword for LGBTQ+ youth. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 156.

Fitoz, C. (2025). From Incels to Mercenaries: When Online Hate Becomes Real-World Violence. <https://www.techpolicy.press/from-incels-to-mercenaries-when-online-hate-becomes-realworld-violence/>

FRA. (2024). Harassment and violence against LGBTIQ people on the rise. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/harassment-and-violence-against-lgbtqi-people-rise>

Georgieva, M., Sabeva, P., Mahmud, S. & Sabeva, V. (2024). Handbook for youth workers working in the field of digital safety. Dobrich, Bulgaria: Follow me Association. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382276511_Handbook_for_youth_workers_working_in_the_field_of_digital_safety#pf29

Hellevik, P. M. (2019). Teenagers' personal accounts of experiences with digital intimate partner violence and abuse. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 92, 178–187.

Hicks, J. (2021). Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence (OGBV). K4D Helpdesk Report – Institute of Development Studies.

Holdsworth, A. (2024). The role of moral disengagement and lack of empathy in cyberbullying: How school nurses can respond. <https://www.familyandchildhealth.com/content/professional/the-role-of-moral-disengagement-and-lack-of-empathy-in-cyberbullying-how-school-nurses-can-respond/>

Iñigo, A. G. (2024). Portrayal and perception of gender norms in social media: Analysis of the “I’m just a girl” TikTok trend. Master thesis, School of Arts & Communication, Malmö University. <https://mau.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1884560/FULLTEXT02.pdf>

Kim, M., Ellithorpe, M. & Burt, S. A. (2023). Anonymity and its role in digital aggression: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 72.

Lesar, G. (2020). Načrtna in reflektirana uporaba tišine v socialnem delu. *Socialno delo*, 59(4), 275–291. https://www.revija-socialnodelo.si/mma/4_lesar.pdf/2020092413202402/

Lomba, N., Navarra, C. & Fernandes, M. (2021). Combating gender-based violence: Cyber violence. European Added Value Unit, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662621/EPRS_STU\(2021\)662621_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662621/EPRS_STU(2021)662621_EN.pdf)

Malinowska, A. (2017). Lost in representation: Disabled sex and the aesthetics of the 'norm. *Sexualities* 21(3).

Mijatović, D. (2022). No space for violence against women and girls in the digital world. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/no-space-for-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-digital-world>

NSRVC. (2022). Practicing Digital Consent. <https://www.nsvrc.org/saam/2022/learn/practicingdigitalconsent#:~:text=Just%20like%20in%2Dperson%20sexual,if%20you%20don't%20know>

O'Brien, M. (2024). Online violence: real life impacts on women and girls in humanitarian settings. <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2024/01/04/online-violence-real-life-impacts-women-girls-humanitarian-settings/>

Pandea, A. R., Grzemny, D. & Keen, E. (2019). Gender matters: A manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/gender-matters-a-manual-on-addressing-gender-based-violence-affecting-/16809e1c34>

Pravice žrtev in prijava kaznivih dejanj (2024). Portal GOV.SI. <https://www.gov.si/teme/pravice-zrtev-kaznivih-dejanj/>

Prokopenko, E. & Hango, D. (2022). Bullying victimization among sexually and gender diverse youth in Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm>

Rajani, N. (2022). "I Bet You Don't Get What We Get": An Intersectional Analysis of Technology-Facilitated Violence Experienced by Racialized Women Anti-Violence Online Activists in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Law and Technology*, 19(2), 217–247.

Safe.si. (2024, avgust 23). *Safe.si raziskava: Vse več spletnega nasilja med osnovnošolci*. <https://safe.si/novice/safesi-raziskava-vse-vec-spletnega-nasilja-med-osnovnosolci>

Safe.si. (n.d.). Safe.si raziskava SID 2024: Spletno vrstniško nasilje med najstniki. <https://safe.si/raziskave-in-trendi/safesi-raziskava-sid-2024-spletno-vrstnisko-nasilje-med-najstniki>

Sala-Torrent, M. & Planas-Lladó, A. (2024). Enhancing youth voices: Exploring community participation through youth workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 160. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740924001725?via%3Dihub>

Schroeder, J. (2020). Reinscribing gender: social media, algorithms, bias. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(3-4).

Smith, J., Jones, E. & Judson, E. (2020). What's in a name? A forward view of anonymity online. London, England: Demos. <https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Anonymity-FINAL-1.pdf>

Social Development Direct. (2022). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Preliminary Landscape Analysis. <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-07/Global%20Partnership%20TFGBV%20Preliminary%20Landscape%20Analysis.pdf>

Torp Løkkeberg, S., Ihlebæk, C., Brottveit, G., & Del Busso, L. (2023). Digital Violence and Abuse: A Scoping Review of Adverse Experiences Within Adolescent Intimate Partner Relationships. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(3), 1954-1965.

Tosaya, L. C. (2022). The Rise of Digital Misogynoir-Face: Exploitation of Stereotypes for Entertainment and Profit. Master thesis, University of Washington. <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/047b48ce-0c1c-4131-a27f-5c7cbdab1898/content>

UCL. (2024). Social media algorithms amplify misogynistic content to teens. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/feb/social-media-algorithms-amplify-misogynistic-content-teens>

UN Women. (2025). FAQs: Digital abuse, trolling, stalking, and other forms of technology-facilitated violence against women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/digital-abuse-trolling-stalking-and-other-forms-of-technology-facilitate-d-violence-against-women>

UNFPA. (2024). Invisible threats: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TfGBV) Against Persons with Disabilities. <https://northmacedonia.unfpa.org/en/publications/invisible-threats-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-tfgbv-against-persons>

UNFPA. (n.d.). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: A Growing Threat. <https://www.unfpa.org/TFGBV>

UN-HABITAT. (2020). Harsh Realities: Marginalized Women in Cities of the Developing World. <https://unhabitat.org/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world>

Van Ouytsel, J. & Dhoest, A. (2021). The prevalence, context and perceptions of sexting among non-heterosexual men from various generations in Belgium. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 126.

Vec, Tomaž (2002). Specifične komunikacijske tehnike v svetovalno-terapevtski praksi. *Socialna pedagogika (Ljubljana)*, letnik 6, številka 4, str. 405-429. URN:NBN:SI:DOC-YAQS2JXJ from <http://www.dlib.si>



MEDUSA

PARTNERS

COORDINATOR

Inštitut za proučevanje enakosti spolov (IPES)
Slovenia
ipes-si.org

CESIE
Italy
cesie.org

MREZA MLADIH HRVATSKE (MMH)
Croatia
www.mmh.hr

ZAVOD MLADINSKA MREZA MAMA (MaMa)
Slovenia
www.mreza-mama.si



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Union or the National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the National Agency can be held responsible for them.

2022-2-SI02-KA220-YOU-000099917