



CSW70 – SIDE-EVENT Policing the Pixel: Gender, Tech, and Justice

A side-event to the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) organised by the Council of Europe within the framework of the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

Co-organised with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Moldova, and co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Monaco and Romania to the United Nations and UN Women.

11 March 2026, 4:45 PM – 6:00 PM

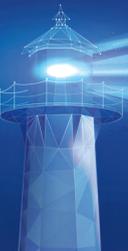
Conference room 2 - General Assembly Building, United Nations, New York

Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG) is increasing in scale and severity. It remains largely underreported and under-prosecuted, perpetuating impunity, and is likely to further intensify as technologies evolve. There is therefore an urgent need for responses that are rights-based, effective and proportionate to the scope and impact of this type of violence against women and girls

At the heart of an effective response to TFVAWG are law enforcement officers as first responders who are trained on gender-responsive approaches to identifying, investigating, and handling technology-facilitated violence. Their primary intervention is to help put in place a coherent, victim-centred, gender-responsive policing response that prevents secondary victimisation, strengthens cross-agency collaboration, improves the safeguarding and preservation of electronic evidence, and disrupts TFVAWG offences.

The disconnect between expertise on cybercrime and on violence against women hampers effective responses to TFVAWG. Units specialising in violence against women often lack the technical capacity to investigate digital abuse and secure electronic evidence, while cybercrime units may lack a gender-responsive approach, limiting their ability to identify and address the specific dynamics and harms involved. Bridging this gap is essential to ensuring effective law enforcement and prosecution. The establishment of specialised investigative and prosecutorial units providing expertise on TFVAWG, as well as first-responder systems which designate trained law enforcement officers to coordinate evidence management in line with investigative and prosecutorial requirements, are promising practices.

This side-event will focus on gender-responsive policing practices, cooperation between law enforcement and technology companies, and the pathways from reporting to investigation, prosecution and disruption of online abuse. The event will also strive to identify key gaps and highlight promising practices for effective and coordinated responses. Bringing together political leaders, specialised police officers, international partners, tech industry representatives and civil society, it will examine the role of law enforcement agencies as first responders in ensuring access to justice for women and girls subjected to technology-facilitated violence. It will also explore how effective, victim-centred reporting mechanisms to law enforcement and online platforms can enhance protection and accountability.



This initiative is a contribution towards the
New Democratic Pact for Europe



Background

■ The use of digital technologies, communication tools and social media are intrinsic to our everyday life. But while they can drive inclusivity and empower women, technology can also be used to muzzle them. The online abuse of women reflects how systemic gender inequality is reproduced within social media platforms. It causes serious and lasting harm and silences women in online spaces, impacting their public, social and political participation. As such, it is a threat to democracy.

■ While TFVAWG exacerbates existing crimes or offences, it remains largely unreported and unpunished in practice. Challenges in reporting include complex and unclear mechanisms as well as the risk of secondary victimisation, which can further discourage victims from seeking help. This root cause for underreporting must be addressed as it leads to the impunity of perpetrators, to increased TFVAWG and ultimately to its normalisation.

■ Electronic evidence is crucial for law enforcement agencies to investigate reports of TFVAWG. Shortcomings in the handling of electronic evidence in cases of TFVAWG, including inadequate preservation and management of such evidence, have been identified. They are worsened by cross-jurisdictional challenges, as data is often stored abroad and subject to different national laws, privacy rules, and company policies. To address these challenges, streamlined mechanisms for international cooperation and clear legal frameworks for cross-border data access are needed.

The Council of Europe response

■ As Europe's foremost human rights organisation, bringing together 46 member States, the Council of Europe has been actively promoting gender equality, combating violence against women and girls, and preventing and combating sexism, including in the field of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, as outlined in its [Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#).

■ Amid accelerating democratic backsliding, the Council of Europe's work towards a [New Democratic Pact for Europe](#) is a collective response to defend and renew democratic foundations, affirming that gender equality is a non-negotiable condition of democracy and that technology-facilitated violence against women and girls constitutes a direct and systemic assault on democracy by silencing women, restricting their civic and political participation, and eroding the integrity of democratic values, institutions, and processes.

■ The Council of Europe has a leading role in addressing digital forms of violence through its [General Recommendation No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women](#) (2021) and comparative study [Protecting Women and Girls from Violence in the Digital Age](#) (2024) highlighting how the [Istanbul Convention](#) and the [Budapest Convention](#) can jointly mobilise to combat TFVAWG. The General Recommendation No 1 lays the foundations to tackling the urgent need to strengthen law enforcement responses and ensuring effective police identification, investigation and prevention of TFVAWG, while protecting the victims from fear of retaliation or secondary victimisation. The Council of Europe [Electronic Evidence Guide](#) also provides guidance on how to collect electronic evidence for its analysis and presentation.

■ Building on this work, in 2026 the Council of Europe is expected to strengthen its standard-setting with the scheduled adoption of the [Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls](#). The Recommendation would provide guidance for member States on enhancing legal, institutional and regulatory responses to strengthen accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including prevention measures to foster an environment of accountability where such violence is neither facilitated, condoned, accepted nor ignored. It underscores the critical role of gender-responsive policing, digital evidence handling, survivor-centred reporting mechanisms and multi-agency collaboration, while highlighting that all evidence management should acknowledge and address the unique gendered aspects of TFVAWG and its position in the broader continuum of violence against women and girls.



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