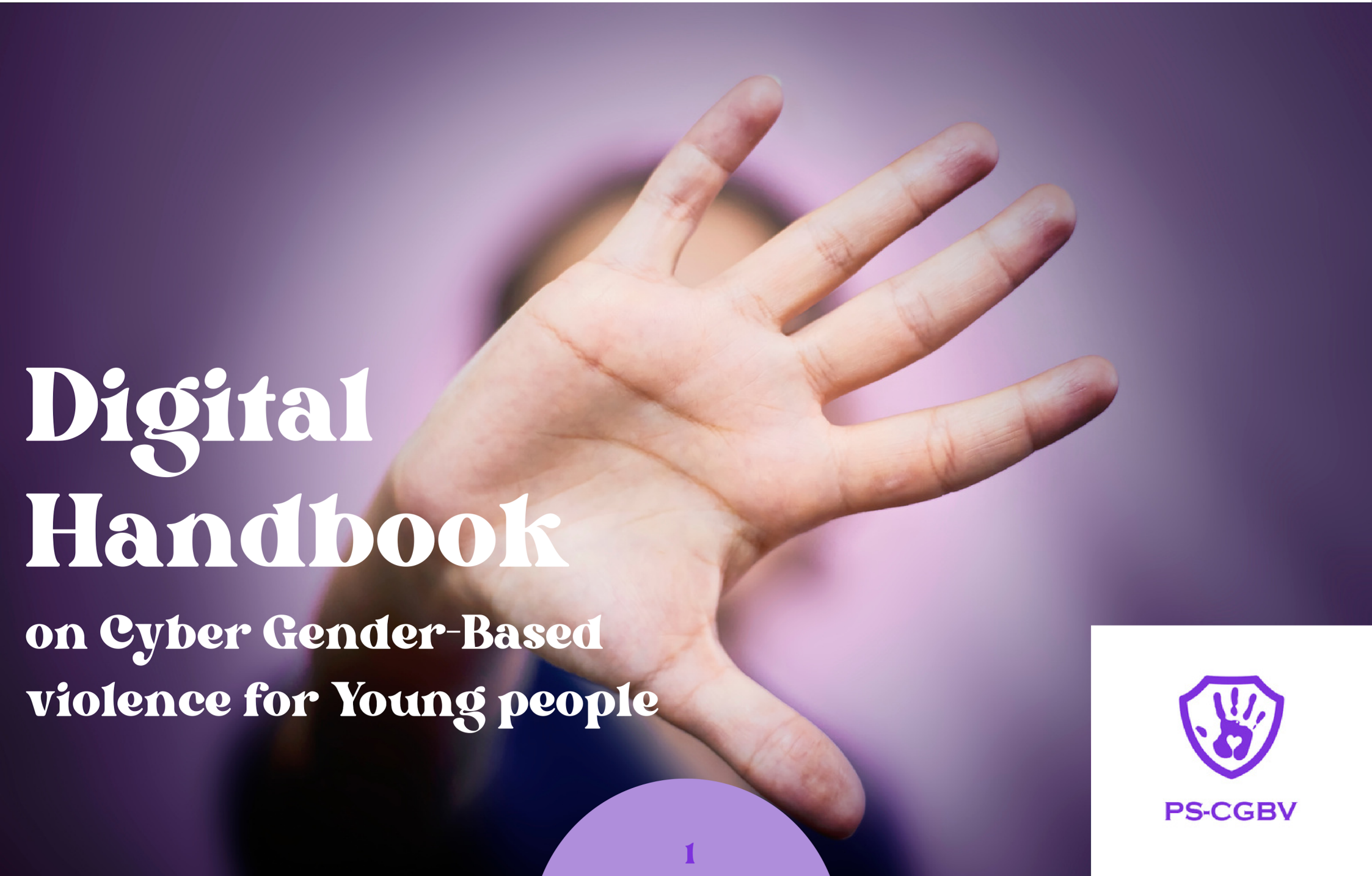
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Digital Handbook

on Cyber Gender-Based violence for Young people

PS-CGBV

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PS-CGBV project with a duration of 24 months, with the 4th of April 2022 as its official starting date, has as its objectives to combat cyber gender-based violence through awareness raising and the empowerment of young people as well as the training of professionals and volunteers of social services that provide support to the victims, and youth workers.

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PS-CGBV

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1. ABOUT THE PROJECT AND THIS PRODUCT



1. About the project and this product

The idea for this project arose from the need of optimizing and further specializing the organizations providing counseling and support services to victims of violence.

Particularly, after the Covid-19 pandemic, this need became even more urgent given the continuous increase in incidents of gender-based violence that occurred during this period.

However, the present project specializes even further in preventing as well as combating gender-based violence in cyberspace. The project "Prevention and Support of Cyber Gender Violence (PS-CGBV)", lasting 24 months, aims as mentioned above to combat cyber gender-based violence through awareness raising and empowerment of young people, as well as training of professionals and volunteers of social services providing support to victims, as well as youth workers. Through the project, we will create:

1. A web hub against gender-based violence in cyberspace
2. Mapping of best practices at EU level
3. This Digital Youth Handbook
4. Training program for victim support services and youth workers
5. Self-assessment method in the form of an interactive quiz
6. Final research paper & a variety of dissemination activities

1. About the project and this product

This project result is created in response to the lack of digital skills and awareness regarding cyber gender-based violence by young people.

We, the PS CGBV partnership, want this Handbook to be a useful tool for any young person, who wants more information, wants to understand this topic or maybe their experiences better, as well as to get some advice on how to act in their own best interest!

The internet can be a scary and overwhelming place, and threats come in many different shapes and sized. Gender-based violence online has grown to be a wide-encompassing phenomenon, which terrorizes young people every day.

Equip yourself with knowledge, skills and practical advice, in order to be better prepared and to meet any threats with confidence, and to remain safe!

On our website, ps-cgbv.eu, you can find even more materials on this topic, and find possible support from organizations near you.

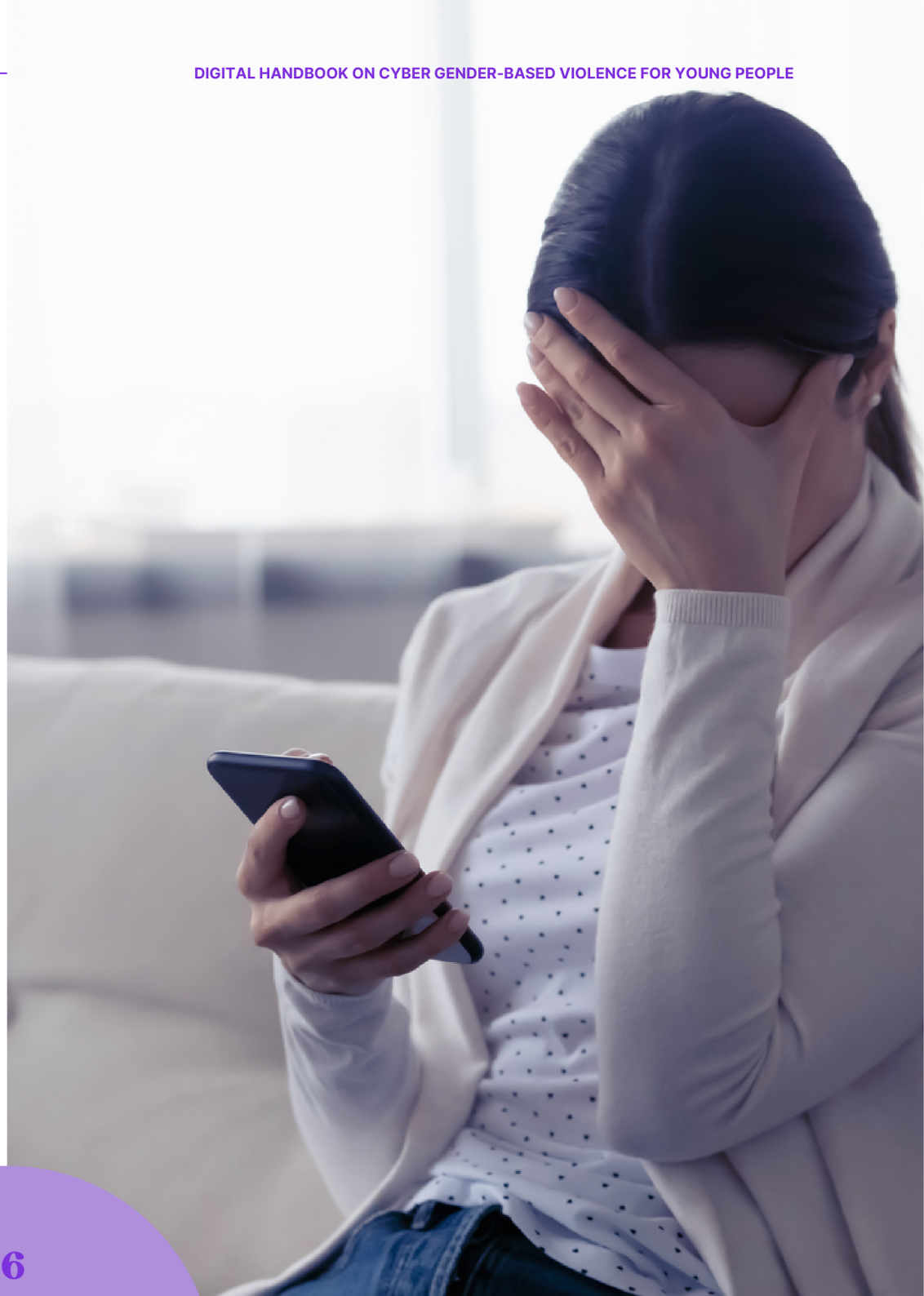


1.2. Introduction

The internet is an essential part of our lives. This applies especially to young people.

We shouldn't live in fear of internet predators, malicious hackers or toxic algorithms. We just have to build our soft- and digital skills and be able to let them protect us, when we are online.

Our goal is not to scare you off of the internet. We just want to provide you with some **useful advice** and tips on how to develop or improve your **skills against gender-based cyber violence**.



2.GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & CYBER GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



3.1. What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most significant human rights violations but also a global problem that stems from gender inequality and the strong influence of perceived gender norms. Holding a position of power over "weaker" individuals or groups is at the base of GBV. Nonetheless, the majority of victims are women and girls. People of the LGBT+ community are also heavily affected by GBV, because of their sexual orientation or social gender not conforming to the widely accepted societal gender norms. This type of violence is especially embedded in cultural structures and/or societies with heavily religious values.

The exceptionality of online violence is that there is no hiding from it. When we are bullied at school, we can feel safe at home, but when we are bullied on the internet, we feel under attack every minute of our existence. Furthermore, everyone can be anonymous in the cyber environment, so we never know who the aggressor really is. As in the offline world, online violence is perpetrated not only by strangers but also by people close to victims. However, unlike offline forms of violence, the anonymity of cyberspace allows aggressors to impersonate someone else. In a school environment, it often happens that a classmate poses as a stranger on the Internet, manipulating the victim into giving up private information (or photos, videos), which is then distributed around the school. Cyberspace thus becomes a tool of classic school bullying.

"Globally 81,000 women and girls were murdered in 2020, around 47,000 of them (58%) died by the hands of an intimate partner or relative. This is an average of one death every 11 minutes. More research shows that in the past few years, the number of gender-related killings has actually increased, in part due to the global pandemic, lockdowns and the economic impact of these. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of gender-related killings increased in Western Europe by 11%; in Southern Europe the increase was 5%. In North America these killings increased by 8%, and by 5% in South America."

"Less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort… Very few look to formal institutions; less than 10% of those seeking help appealed to the police." [3]

"In 2021-2022 an estimated 22% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous partner and 43% have experienced psychological violence. "[4]

3.2. Types of Gender-Based Violence

Domestic violence

(or domestic abuse)
One of the most known and widely experienced by women around the globe. It manifests as physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and threats to subdue another person. Abusers strive to gain or maintain power over their partner.

Economic or financial

Abusers strive to make their victim financially dependent purely on them by taking and maintaining control over their economic situation.
They usually deny access to money and any opportunity of pursuing an education or career.
Victims are often spouses or elderly parents.

Psychological abuse

Abusers play mind games with their victims by intimidating/ threatening to harm either themselves, their victims, or others, incl. pets and material items.
Isolation is also grouped with this form of psychological violence and it presents itself by restricting their victim's access to the outside world or to specific groups.

Emotional violence

Targets the person's self image. The victim gets criticized on their looks, competences, has insults thrown at them and could be steered away from friends and family by the abuser ruining their relations.

Digital violence

Portrayed by any kind of cyber harassments, be it by phone, internet games etc., based and directed towards a person's sex or gender.

Physical abuse

The most well known form of violence. The abuser inflicts damage or injuries to the victim by physical contact, or forces them to take substances against their will.

Sexual violence

Any assault by forcing an intimate action upon someone, whether they're fully awake and sober or under effect by any substance. If the other person does not give consent, or is a minor, it is considered sexual abuse. The victim could be of any gender but most often it is women.

"Globally, 6 per cent of women report they have been subjected to sexual violence from someone other than their husband or partner. 15 million adolescent girls worldwide, aged 15–19 years, have experienced forced sex. In the Middle East and North Africa, 40–60 per cent of women have experienced street-based sexual harassment."

3.SKILLS TO MASTER AGAINST CYBER GBV



3. About your skills

There are three main skill sets to help you manage gender base cyber violence. To be able to benefit from the positives of the internet, you should:

01	**Build up your digital skills**	→ learn how the internet works
02	**Master your soft-skills**	→ become confident in your ability to handle the online space
03	**Know your rights**	→ learn about legal protection available to you in the most severe cases of cyber GBV



3.1 Passwords

A strong password is essential for online security. It's not enough just to have a long password made up of numbers and letters and special characters... We also need to keep it secure. We highly recommend avoiding using one password for all the accounts we have. In case that any of the applications we use do not have a sufficiently secure password database, they may leak user login credentials. Once our single password is leaked for one platform, all other accounts where we use the same password lose protection.

TIP: You don't have to make up completely new passwords, just change part of the password each time.
You also need to change your passwords from time to time; then even if one of your passwords is leaked and you didn't know about it, you don't need to worry about it. Last but not least, it's a good rule of thumb not to tell anyone your passwords, not even your family, your partner or friends. At the same time, never ask anyone to tell you their password. A password is a very personal piece of information and no one has the right to entice it out of anyone.

TIP: You don't know how to remember that? Tell yourself that passwords are like underwear - you have multiple pieces, you change them regularly and you don't lend them to anyone.



3.2 To share or not to share (privacy settings on social media)

The first requirement for safe sharing is to know **how to set up the sharing mode on each social network**.

For example, Facebook allows you to post publicly (anyone can see it), for friends (only people you have as friends can see it) or individually (you can set which specific people can (not) see the post.
On Instagram, we can set our account as private so that not everyone can see it, but only those we approve the request, or we can have a public account.

For both types of accounts, it is also possible to share stories only to a specially compiled list of so-called close friends.

3.3 Consider what to share and with whom

It turns out that a bigger problem than technical settings is knowing how to decide who should share what content.

Perhaps everyone who has been using social networks for a long time has at some point come across an older post and felt embarrassed about sharing it in the first place. The way social networks work, encourages us to share as much content as possible quickly. After all, the more content we produce, the more others can view it, the more time we all spend on social media, and the more ads we manage to see. This chain logically serves to increase the profits of the companies running the social networks.

Take some time to consider what you need to and what you want to share publicly. Is this information you maybe want to share with just some close friends in a chat? Is the information you are sharing too personal? Of course, keep sharing what matches these criteria, but most important of all is to have this critical eye on the situation and know that there are risks involved in sharing!





3.4 Phishing

The first and most important rule - if something seems too good to be true, it probably isn't. So when they write to you that your second-great-uncle just died and they're looking for the heirs to his diamond mine, click straight to the "delete spam" button.

How to recognize a fraudulent message? You can notice some technical mistakes, e.g. bad formatting of text, bad translation, typos. Always check the email address from which the email was sent - if someone claiming to be Google writes to you from the address "info@goooogle.con", you can be sure it is a scam. Before you click on a link, check that it actually leads to where you think it does - for example, you can right-click on the link, select 'copy link address' and paste the address into a text file first to check that it is not suspicious before opening it in a web browser. For example, if your bank asks you to click on a link from an email and enter all your login details there, never do this without first checking that it really is your bank and not a scammer.

- If you're not sure whether it's a scam or not, you can usually just copy a piece of text from a suspicious message and look it up online - various web platforms that focus on cyber security often warn about scams.
- Your emotions could help you: something wrong with the message? Trust yourself! This is exactly the time when we should take the time to check the message.
- It is good to know that phishing often targets people on parental leave (presuming they have lower concentration) or young people (they are less experienced).



3.5 Algorithms (aka how the internet works)

The Internet is not a neutral communication platform. The Internet is a network of companies that run their services there for profit. These companies need to mine data about our online behaviour, interests and habits in order to communicate our perception of their advertising messages to other companies.

Behind every social network or game that we can't tear ourselves away from are dozens or hundreds of developers and analysts whose job it is to create an environment that we can't tear ourselves away from. Of course they're succeeding when our only defense is our soft skills.

TIP: Spending more time online than you'd like? Try making a list of activities you do online. Which ones do you think are meaningful? Which ones improve your mood? Which ones do you learn something from? Which ones give you a good chance to relax? Which ones add to your stress? Which ones make you angry easily?

Try to set your technology so that the activities that improve your wellbeing predominate. For example, stop following that influencer you don't agree with or ditch the constant stream of political news from the world and only watch the news when you're really in the mood, have the time and energy. Or if you're annoyed that Counter-Strike players just yell at each other, find another game instead that has what you enjoy about CS but doesn't have such a toxic community.



3.6 Fakes & HOAXes

"Tweets containing falsehoods were 70% more likely to be retweeted than truthful tweets."

It is a natural human trait to want to be the first to bring some new breaking news to our social bubble. Therefore, when we see something shocking somewhere, we naturally become more intrigued and tend to share it quickly. Often faster than we can even check if it's true. Guides against disinformation tell us to verify all information that comes to us. But that often feels impossible in an age of information overload.

Still, it helps a lot if we at least verify all the news we share! Check the source of the news you're sharing: is it reliable? Is there an author, and if so - are they reputable? Check if other news outlets have shared the same news, or if not - ask yourself why. Surround your online space with journalists and reporters, who you trust and rely on, so you need to do less checks yourself!



3.7 Digital footprint

Digital footprint is all you leave on the internet when using it. It constitutes your online identity.

It can include websites you visit, information you provide online, or emails you send. There is a private digital footprint (emails, photos etc.) and public digital footprint (for example content shared on social media etc.- depending on the level of privacy settings).

Once your content has been made public, it is impossible to remove it completely. Your digital footprint can be used to track your online activities. Typically, when you apply for a job, your potential employer can check your profile on social media. It can have a good - or bad effect on your reputation, depending on how you wield your social media presence!

Like we mentioned before, it's important to be mindful of what we share publicly. Online archives keep content even after attempts to delete it - maybe whatever you try to delete wouldn't be found by a potential employer, but it might be by malicious actors. Prevention is always the better option!

TIP: Instead of trying to erase your digital footprint, focus on positively building your personal brand on social media and only share posts that are consistent with how you want to appear on that network. Don't share if you're emotional - if you're extremely excited or angry or sad about something, emotion may trump rational judgment. So feel free to prepare your post, but give yourself some time to calm down and think before sharing it with others.

4. SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills help us avoid challenging or dangerous situations in both the online and offline world. They support our digital wellbeing which in turn enables us to profit from the benefits of the Internet and feel good and safe online. Below you will find the most essential soft skills for supporting digital well-being, with examples of why they are important and tips on how to train them in yourself.





4.1 Resilience

We need to be in touch with the cyber environment to be able to overcome its challenges, abstinence is usually not a realistic option.

We need the support of people around us to be more resilient.

Resilience is a shield against attacks online.

Aggressors, just like predators, exploit the vulnerabilities of their victims. It is good to build resilience against peer pressure, that is especially in young age very strong (the feeling that one needs to do the same things as people in their age group and social bubble to be respected and valued.)

How do we build resilience? The next few pages will pay attention to some factors that matter strongly to how we perceive ourselves and the world around us:

- mindfulness and concentration
- assertiveness, authenticity, integrity
- empathy and emotional intelligence

We become more resilient when we are confident in ourselves and our skills, when we feel control over our lives and when we find safety in our relationships. Resilience is built over time and is based on conscious efforts.

4.2 Mindfulness and concentration

Cyberspace, especially social media, is a very fragmented environment, with lots of attractive content that circulates, appears and disappears very quickly. It is very demanding to our brains. Similar to offline life, concentration and focus on what we are doing online helps reduce our mind load and helps the brain work effectively.

1 TIP

Set your task (goals, timespan, etc.) before you open the Internet. Be aware that there is a difference between mindless scrolling through Tiktok and looking up information on a specific topic of interest. Concentration needs time and training: it is ok if you get distracted from your tasks and work in the beginning, just be mindful in what you are doing and feeling and keep returning back to your work. The distraction slowly fades out. Another option is to close all apps and notifications on the device you are working on and leave your phone in another room for the planned work session(s).

2 TIP

Be aware of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). It is a phenomenon - an anxiety that something exciting or interesting may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media. In fact, that something or someone really worth seeing or meeting will wait until you check it out :)

3 TIP

Be in touch with our body (do I drink enough water when I'm online? is my body stiff and in pain?) and your emotions (do I get angry/sad/frustrated all the time when I'm online?).



4.3 Assertiveness-Authenticity-Integrity

- In the evening before going to bed, think of 5 successful or positive things of the day you had.
- Ask these questions anytime anyplace if you are not sure about what is happening and if it is potentially harmful to you: Do I feel like a victim in this situation? How do I feel? Do I feel safe to be authentically me? What can help me out of this situation? (What do I need at this moment?)

In cyberspace, good self-esteem is essential to be able to resist body shaming, beauty myths, hate speech etc. not only gender-specific issues.



4.4 Empathy and emotional intelligence

In online communication, we tend to be less respectful than in face to face communication - it is easier to be rude when we don't see the human being in front of us, their reactions, facial expressions, etc. We can end up being toxic.

It is also difficult to imagine all the people you can possibly hurt.

Try to empathize with other people on the other side of the screen. Don´t do to them what you don't want to be done to you. Learn to work with your emotions and manage potentially dangerous situations in an online environment.

TIP: How to recognize a safe and supportive online community/group from a toxic one? There is some moderation process/set of rules in place that are upheld by a trustworthy admin. It works as a safe space for marginalized people. It supports and strengthens its participants

4.5 Know your rights:

For example, on the EU level there is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to protect personal data of individuals. GDPR ensures that companies can no longer arbitrarily collect any data about their clients, but can only store data that is directly related to the transaction (e.g. if you buy something on eshop, the eshop is entitled to keep information about the address to which it sent the goods to you for the duration of the purchase, delivery and guarantee period). For all other purposes it must obtain your explicit consent (e.g. if it wants to send you advertising messages or keep information about your behaviour on a given website in the form of cookies).

SOME MANIFESTATIONS OF ONLINE AGGRESSION CROSS NOT ONLY ETHICAL BOUNDARIES, BUT ALSO LEGISLATIVE ONES.



4.5 Know your rights:

Even more important in the context of gender-based cyber-violence is the legislation that describes hate speech and hate crime.

The definition by the United Nation states that hate speech is "**any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.**"

Hate crime is then based on this definition and means crime directed against the aforementioned minorities. Hate crime is judged much more strictly because its victims are among the particularly vulnerable victims and also because the victim here is not only a specific person, a specific survivor, but also, indirectly, an entire minority group. For example, if someone attacks a gay couple with homophobic motives, this crime attacks the sense of safety of all other gay people and LGBTQ+ people in general.



The aggressor* is often unable to reflect that what he/she is doing is wrong and hurting someone, or is unwilling to work through it and correct his/her behaviour. The victim is then often unable to stand up for themselves and ask for help due to challenging circumstances. That is why the role of witnesses* who have the agency to turn the situation around if they are not indifferent is absolutely crucial. If you notice any aggression or cyberbullying, you can bring a little cultivation or kindness to that online space.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO AS A WITNESS?

YOU CAN FOR EXAMPLE

REPORT

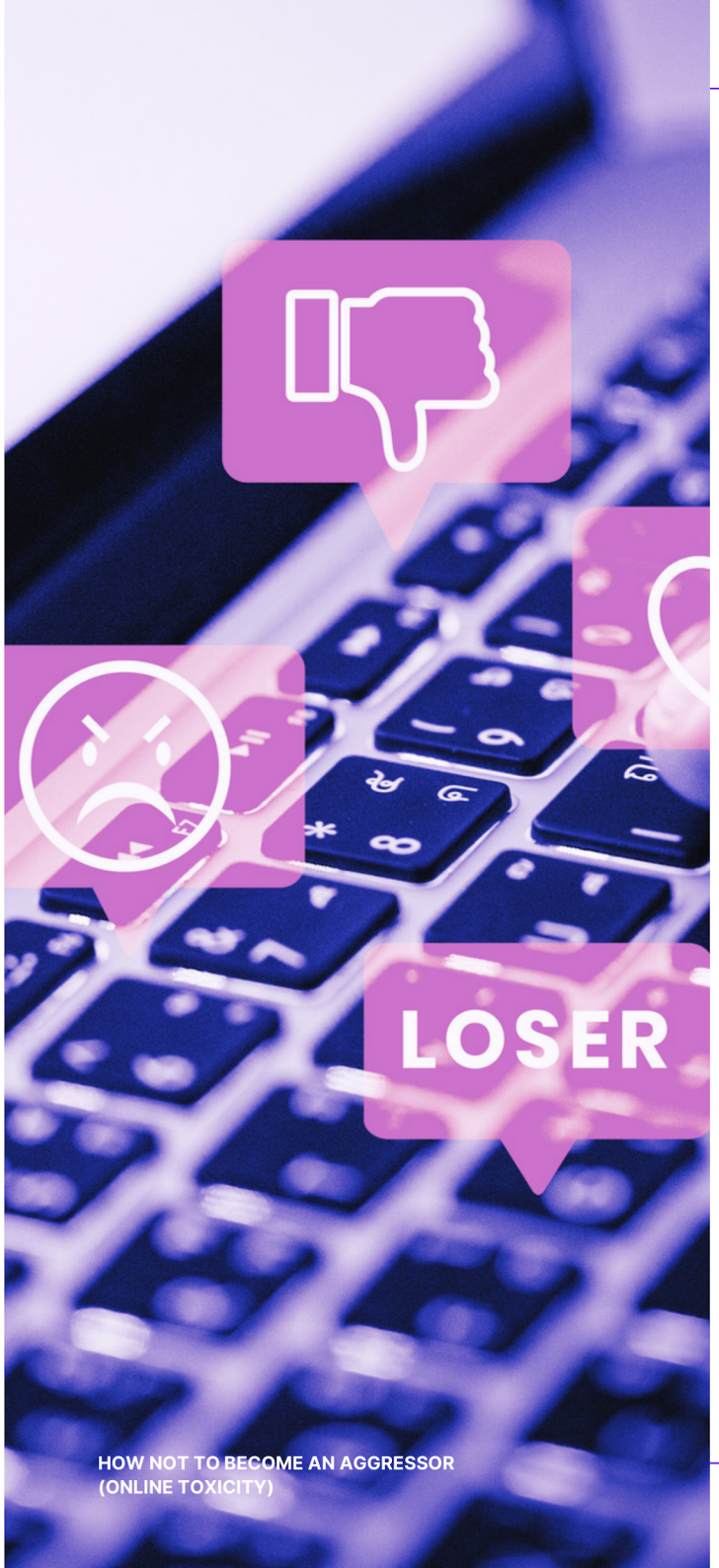
an aggressive/bad comment on respective online platform

SUPPORT

stand up for the victim - either publicly or in a private message

ASK FOR HELP

tell someone else who will be able to deal with the situation (parents, teachers, police - depending on the severity of the situation)



HOW NOT TO BECOME AN AGGRESSOR (ONLINE TOXICITY)

4.6 How not to become an aggressor (online toxicity)

It is important to be able to recognize the limits of what is still harmless fun and what is crossing the boundaries of violation, i.e. humiliating pranks, trolling, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or otherwise hurtful/dehumanizing “humor”.

The online environment is specific in its anonymity, which makes it difficult to feel empathy with other people in cyberspace. Online toxicity is such a common phenomenon that we tend to normalize it. At the same time, in a toxic environment, people are less guarded and more likely to behave in a toxic way as well, daring to write things to others that they wouldn't say to anyone "offline" face to face.

But we need to remember that there is a living being sitting on the other end of the computer or mobile phone, with their own emotions, who is being specifically impacted by our inappropriate behaviour.

It is important to try to cultivate the online space gradually and not be blind to the toxicity.



4.7 How can teachers help you?

Teachers can:

- support information literacy
- talk about technology (including social media) at school and integrate it into educational plans
- support the digital competence of children and youth
- spread awareness about how violence can be solved and/or reported
- build an open environment at school and in the classroom
- nurture and teach about accountability, safe and open communication techniques, anonymity (in reporting)
- foster cooperation with parents...

And if they currently aren't, you can ask them for this support!



4.8 What can the public do for online safety?

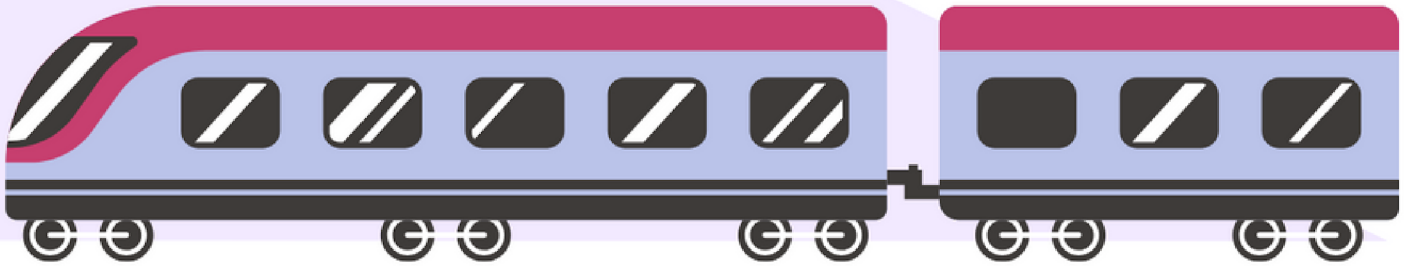
The legislation concerning violence (including sexualized and domestic violence) should be updated everywhere to include CGBV.
You can contact your politicians and legislators and push them to do so.

The media must change their approach to medialized cases of CGBV. They should make it their priority to inform about it ethically, with credibility and without sensationalism and respect and protect the victims and survivors of CGBV.
You can help it by calling out their unethical behaviour if you come across it and feel safe to do so. Most media have an online presence: social media, websites etc. where you can address it.

5. EXAMPLES OF CGBV



Cyberflashing





a dick pic?!?



is my airdrop on?! ew, ew, ew!

i need to stop it asap

what kind of weirdo sends that to people on the subway!?!

What do I do in this situation?



DETECTION

- What happened to me?
- How do I feel about it?

SKILLS

- How to block receiving messages
- How to turn off AirDrop
- Recognize your emotions and your need for further reaction

RESPONCE

- What do I need right now?
- How to react?
- Delete/ Report?
- Who to turn to?

PREVENTION

- Turn off airdrop by default
- ...

Tinder



hey there, gorgeous :)
what you up to this fine day?

well hello!
nuthin' much, just hanging out with my cat

you're a cat person?
so am i lol
what's yours' name?

we spent a lot of time texting
i really enjoyed his company



but he kept pushing for more
and one day it escalated

how about we continue these good vibes?

@ my place today? you can finally meet my cat and we can watch smth

seen 1 hour ago



seriously? ghosting? good thing i have so many pics of your body.
if i can't even meet you irl then what's the point? guess i'll just show the whole internet what a sl*t you are.

Could have this situation been avoided?
What are the possible steps she can take now?

Intimate Partner Violence

my partner has access to my email and bank account

prevention = never share access data with anyone

i lack privacy, my partner made me think i do not have the right to privacy

→ everyone has the right to privacy, this is a major red flag in any relationship



he is shouting at me because i bought something for myself



→ he does not have the right to do that
→ turn to help
→ helplines

i don't like my situation but i don't know what to do and where i can seek help

→ recognize it as violence
→ ask for help
→ confront the aggressor and ask him to change his behavior towards me (in more violent cases there are solutions how to get out of the violent situation by physically relocating the aggressor etc.)


wow, my 1 month on T pic has gotten some attention
nvm then, guess i should delete it didn't expect such negative backlash... is it me?
she has such a pretty body
&$#!%
&$#!%
HAH LOOK AT THIS F*G
lol gae
&$#!%

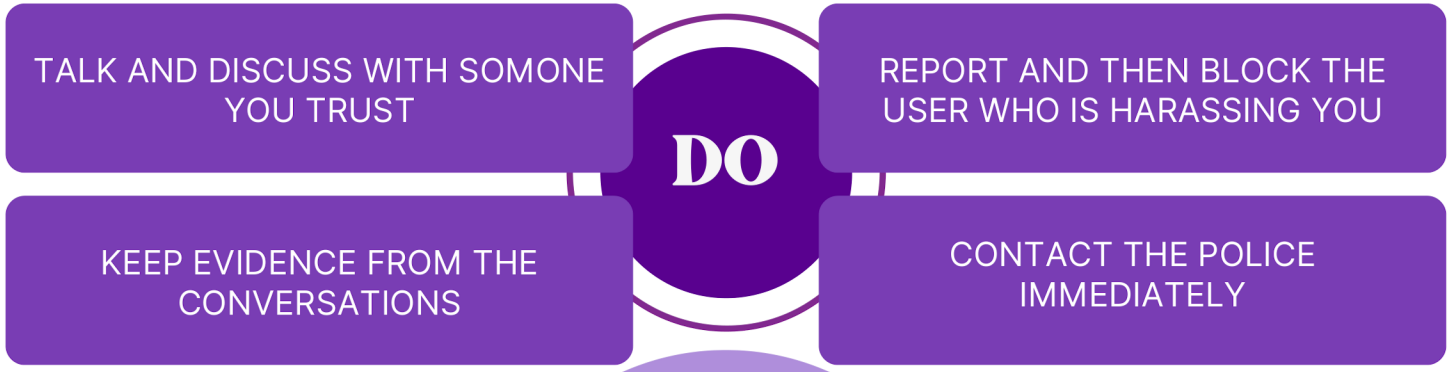
6. CONCLUSION





Response to cyber GBV

- Remember first of all that it is not your fault that you are in this situation, that you are not alone and that you can ask for help.
- The most important - and the hardest - thing to do is not respond to any of the bullying messages and leave the conversation on hold.
- Discuss your fears with adults you trust. Parents, teachers, health professionals, etc. are there to listen and support you.
- Keep all evidence (printed or digital copies) of the bullying. This may include emails, posts, social media messages and text messages.
- Depending on the platform, there are many ways in which you can report bullying. If necessary, you can contact the telecoms provider to block the phone numbers that are bothering you.
- If you are threatened with criminal behaviour or threats, do not hesitate to contact the police directly. If you don't know how to do this, you can ask someone you trust to help you get in touch.



European Child Support Line

"The Smile of the Child" operates the European Child Support Line 116111, which provides free psychological support to children and adults.

A team of specialised Psychologists is available to every child and adult to provide support on issues of concern to them.

The 116111 hotline plays a key role in the prevention of violence that children may face (Physical, Sexual & Psychological Abuse, Neglect, Bullying, Trafficking & Trafficking) as well as in cases of Abandonment.

The 116111 Hotline is staffed exclusively by qualified Psychologists and is available nationwide, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Calls to the 116111 Line are free from landlines and mobiles, from a payphone NO telecard is required, and calling from a payphone does not require available credits.

Logistically, the 116111 Line is equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and software and operates in 7 interconnected call centres as 1. This ensures a maximum waiting time of 12sec for each call!





Conclusion

Do not overlook any signs of gender based cyber violence. Toxic behaviour is not normal and we should avoid it in ourselves and challenge it in others.

If you are a victim or witness of gender based cyber violence, remember: you are not alone and there are people who can support you. It is important to get some support from people, who can help you to change the situation and find a solution.

Do not hesitate to ask your parents or educators you trust. You can also call some crisis hotline in your region or contact organisations focused on this topic. They have experience dealing with situations similar to yours.

You can find the ones operating in your country in our *digital map*.

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