

BE_SAFE PORTUGAL: EUROPEAN EVENT

Sexual cyberviolence is a growing social problem, with impacts at individual, social and economic level, **affecting young people and children, at increasingly younger ages, and with a particular impact on girls and women**. It is a problem that cuts across all European countries and is **part of the *continuum* of violence against girls and women**, resulting from structural inequality between women and men, girls and boys, which is why it demands our full attention.

Violence in its digital dimension encompasses what occurs in the virtual space and/or is facilitated by technological means. **The different forms of violence that occur online and those that occur in the physical world are not mutually exclusive and often overlap, exacerbating the traumatizing impact of violence, sometimes even threatening the physical safety of the victim.**

As part of the study by Faustino, Ventura, Alves and Matos (2022), published by the Youth Network for Equality (REDE)*, 517 young women interviewed aged between 18 and 25 reveal that:



- 67% of young women have been victims of image-based sexual violence and 48% of these young women have suffered more than one form of image-based sexual violence
- 84% of young women have been victims of *cyberflashing*
- 39% received threats to share intimate content
- 20% of young women were victims of non-consensual sharing of images and 18.8% reported having intimate photos taken without consent
- 5% were victims of upskirting
- 3% saw their photos used to produce deepfake pornography
- 39% of the aggressors were unknown to the young women, but the majority (60%) were young people or men close to the victims: 15% were previous boyfriends or partners, 13% acquaintances, 13% were partners in a sporadic sexual and/or emotional relationship, 9, 5% friends and 9.5% boyfriends or partners.

We cannot turn a blind eye!

On February 14th, Valentine's Day, the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (PpDM), in partnership with the School Cluster Prof. Reynaldo dos Santos*, is promoting the European event bE_SAFE Portugal, as part of the activities of the bE_SAFE project - Raising awareness about CYBERVIOLENCE and defending a SAFER online environment for girls and women, co-financed by the European Union (EU) within the scope of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program (CERV).

A dynamic and interactive event, with the participation of children and youngsters, members of the project's partner institutions, from Croatia and Spain*, members of the school and educational community of Vila Franca de Xira, namely the Prof. Reynaldo dos Santos and the City Council, representatives of entities that work for women's human rights and specifically on the relationship between girls and ITs, as well as the PSP's Safe School Program and META.

*Faustino, M. J. (Coord.), Ventura, Isabel, Alves, Catarina e Matos, Sílvia Lazary (2022) Faz Delete! Contributos para o Conhecimento sobre a Violência Sexual Baseada em Imagens (VSBi) em Portugal. Lisboa: Rede de Jovens para a Igualdade.

*Address: Rua 28 de março, Bom Retiro, 2600-053 Vila Franca de Xira.

*Coordinated by the Croatian Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, in partnership with the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, CESI – Center for Education Counseling of Research and Domine (Croatia) and Lobby Europeo de Mujeres de España.

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There will be two panels focused on:

- **Growing up with the Internet: between freedom and cyberviolence**

Growing up with the Internet has been a defining experience for the most recent generations, providing a vast field of possibilities between digital freedom and the challenges of cyberviolence. Freedom of expression and immediate access to information are pillars that shape the digital identity of children and young people. The Internet provides a space where creativity flourishes, allowing users to explore and share ideas in unimaginable ways. However, this freedom also brings with it the responsibility to discern between beneficial and harmful content and cultivate a healthy online presence.

On the other hand, cyberviolence emerges as a shadow that hangs over their online experiences. Anonymity on the internet often encourages hostile behavior, cyberviolence and the spread of hate. As we grow with the Internet, it is imperative that we cultivate a digital culture that fosters responsible freedom, encouraging healthy expression and cooperation online, while actively combating cyberviolence to build a safer and more inclusive digital environment.

What is the balance between online freedom and the prevention of cyberviolence? How can digital education, peer-to-peer awareness and the promotion of safe online communities play a vital role in this entire process? How can we prevent victim blaming, revictimization and traumatization?

- **Valentine's Day with safe social media**

Valentine's Day takes a new dimension in the age of social media. As we celebrate love and connection, it's critical to recognize the importance of building relationships online on platforms that prioritize security and privacy. Thus, choosing social media platforms that implement robust data protection measures becomes essential. Mutual trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship and online security plays a crucial role in this process.

Celebrating Valentine's Day with safe social media contributes to a more protected digital environment. By sharing special moments, expressing feelings and connecting virtually, children and youngsters can enjoy meaningful moments, knowing they are browsing a safe and trustworthy online space.

This Valentine's Day, how can we promote responsible digital practices and encourage the conscious use of social media? How can digital tools avoid being instrumentalized in abusive relationships? How can we ensure that intimate relationships flourish in safe and secure online environments?

The event will be **on** with the welcoming session and **off** with the closing session, both with institutional interventions.

Ending all forms of violence, online and offline, which disproportionately affect girls and women is an imperative of democratic societies, such as in Portugal, Croatia, Spain, the European Union and the world. This is, therefore, a European event that is associated with V-DAY, a global activist movement to end violence against all women and girls.

