

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)****4 December 2025***English only***16 days of activism against gender-based violence  
November 2025**

The annual campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence takes place between 25 November and 10 December. This year's theme, "There is #NoExcuse for Online Abuse", underlines the urgent need to address the dangers of digital spaces, which have become a minefield of harassment, abuse, and threats to the safety of women.

The statistics are daunting: 16-58% of women and girls face digital violence, 90-95% of deepfake videos are sexual images of women, yet fewer than 40% of countries have laws protecting women from cyber harassment or cyber stalking<sup>1</sup>. We shouldn't forget that behind these numbers stand the lives and experiences of real women. Especially for young women with online realities deeply integrated into their everyday life, technology-facilitated violence can be not only psychologically and physically harmful, but also an obstacle to their full participation in society. The digital world has become yet another patriarchal tool of control over women's autonomy.

A concerning trend is the growing anti-feminist backlash and harassment directed at young women who speak out against misogyny. Europe-wide surveys show that a majority of young men believe that "advancing women's and girls' rights has gone too far because it threatens men's and boys' opportunities." Such narratives attempt to convince society that women's safety depends on their subordination to men.

Unfortunately, we are not seeing an adequate response from European states. In fact, the opposite is happening. Instead of investing in the implementation of gender equality frameworks, many governments are dismantling the structures and mechanisms that protect women's rights.

The consequences are severe. Women's and youth-led organizations face increasing political hostility that questions the need for gender equality policies and undermines civil society's ability to mobilize, advocate, or access decision-making spaces, as highlighted by recent GREVIO report<sup>2</sup>. Defunding threatens essential services for young women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health education and gender-based violence prevention programs. Protections for young women - especially those facing intersectional discrimination - are becoming harder to access. Meanwhile, the risks of violence grow more pervasive in our daily lives.

This regression is happening at a moment when a member state's parliament has voted to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention - the most comprehensive tool we have for preventing and combating gender-based violence. Suddenly, the human rights of women appear negotiable. All of this is taking place at a time when new forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence emerge every day, at a time when femicides occur in broad daylight without even making headlines, because they are just another case.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/11/digital-violence-is-intensifying-yet-nearly-half-of-the-worlds-women-and-girls-lack-legal-protection-from-digital-abuse>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/6th-general-report-on-grevio-s-activities/1680b5cbe8>

As the Human Rights Commissioner recently warned, *we find ourselves confronted by the frightening challenge of AI-enabled toxic masculinity. If we fail to engage with this issue, we will not only fail to improve the situation, but we will hurtle backwards in terms of protecting the human rights of women*<sup>3</sup>.

The Advisory Council on Youth calls upon the Council of Europe and its member States to:

- Ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention;
- Ratify the AI Framework Convention;
- Take actions for the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029;
- Invest in enabling environments for women's and youth-led NGOs, in structural gender equality mechanisms and in awareness raising on technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

The Advisory Council on Youth reaffirms its commitment to act as a reliable partner in making Europe a safer place for young women and girls.

*The statements of the Advisory Council are published for the purpose of informing the public about the activities of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. The statements reflect the opinions and positions of the Advisory Council and its members. The views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/fighting-violence-against-women-must-be-a-top-priority-in-europe>