



**GENERATION
EQUALITY**



RIGHT TO BE ONLINE

The Generation Equality youth group's manifesto for the technology sector to tackle online gender-based violence



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MANIFEST SUMMARY

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Technology sector stakeholders should:

1. Raise awareness of online gender-based violence among employees
2. Develop a company policy to eradicate online gender-based violence
3. Take online harassment into account in social media guidelines for employees
4. Campaign against online harassment
5. Develop new innovations to tackle online gender-based violence as part of their business
6. Improve moderation on digital platforms
7. Provide support for victims of online gender-based violence and combat harassment on social media platforms
8. Develop fair play servers
9. Influence legislation and practices to eradicate online gender-based violence

**+1 MAKE A GENERATION EQUALITY
COMMITMENT AGAINST ONLINE GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE**

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANIFESTO?

The Generation Equality campaign coordinated by UN Women **aims to promote the rights of women and girls by accelerating the progress of gender equality in areas where progress has been slow.**

One of the six main themes of the campaign is how technology and innovation can help promote gender equality. **To enable all genders to benefit from the opportunities offered by technology, online gender-based violence must be eradicated and safe spaces online must be provided.**

Established in 2021, the **Generation Equality youth group is made up of young people aged 15-29 and is coordinated by UN Women Finland and Plan International Finland.** . Our aim is to make the voices of young people heard in the Generation Equality process and to consult decision-makers about the themes and actions we think are meaningful and essential to promote equality and the campaign commitments.

Finland holds a lead role in the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality and is committed to supporting the Generation Equality campaign with a total of approx. EUR 150 million.

One of Finland's commitments reads as follows: *"Finland commits to raising awareness of online gender-based violence in the technology sector and to engaging the technology sector (including startups, social media platforms, large technology companies, gaming industry) to find solutions to prevent and eliminate gender-based technology-mediated online violence."*



With this manifesto, we want to raise awareness about online gender-based violence and **highlight concrete actions that the technology sector needs to take to develop an online environment that is safe for all.**



*During her first visit to Finland in 2021, UN Women's new Executive Director director **Sima Sami Bahous** met with members of the Generation Equality youth group during a discussion that focused on how online gender-based violence is a noticeable threat particularly to young people. Photo: Linda-Lotta Luhtala*

ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE THAT PRIMARILY AFFECTS **YOUNG PEOPLE**

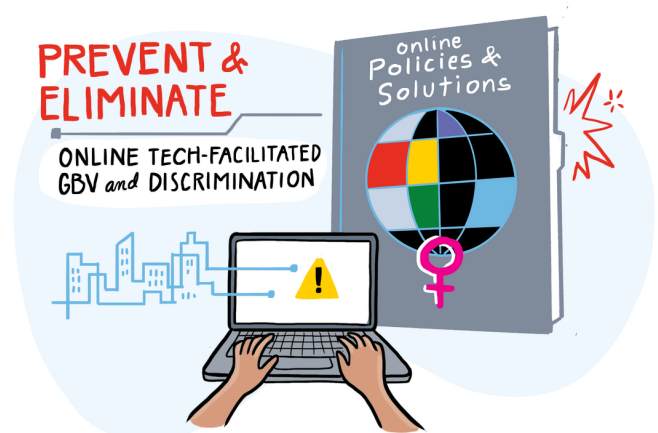
Online gender-based violence is an issue that people of all ages face. However, the problem is amplified among young people. A study conducted by Plan International found that **in Finland 42% of participants, who were girls and young women aged 15–25, have faced harassment on social media platforms.** Girls and young women receive messages and pictures of a sexual nature online without their consent. They also face stalking and other disturbing forms of harassment.¹

The Nontoxic project mapped out the harassment and hate speech that 15–29-year-olds face in online gaming. Most of the participants reported noticing behavior like bullying, racist, homophobic, and transphobic comments, and negative comments on other gamers' age, gender, and looks. Among participants, 70% reported experiencing hate speech or harassment themselves.²

Online gender-based violence is often regarded as isolated cases, leading to the phenomenon not being recognized as a societal issue.

At the heart of the issue are the patriarchal structures that affect online spaces. As a phenomenon, online gender-based violence is a continuance of gender-based violence that exists in real life. **Online violence is often done to shame and silence girls and women. This is amplified when the victim is young and/or part of a minority group.**

In this manifesto, we use the term **online gender-based violence** to refer to online violence and harassment that targets women, girls, and gender minorities. With the term, we are referring to actions within the digital environment. These actions include, but are not limited to, trolling, unwanted sexual messages, threats, stalking, and doxing.



1. Plan International. [Free to be Online?](#) 2020.

2. Helsinki city. [Non-toxic - Selvitys](#) kilpailullisia tietokone- ja konsolipelejä pelaavien nuorten kokemuksista vihapuheesta ja häirinnästä. 2018.

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

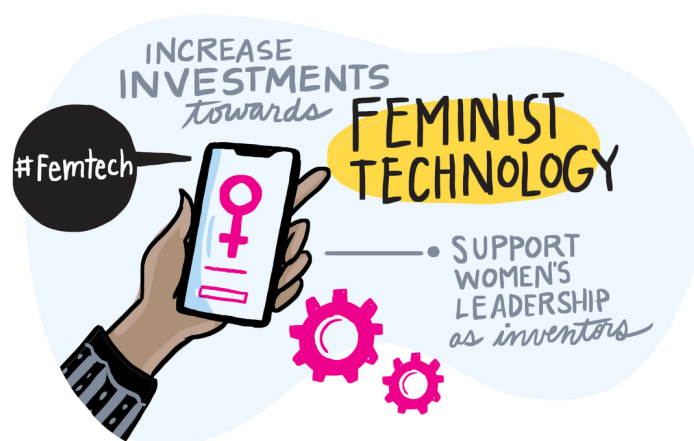
Technology sector stakeholders play a key role in making sure that **everyone's right to be safe online becomes a reality – including young people and minorities**. Gaming and social media use start at an early age, and if young people are not equipped with the knowledge and tools to recognize online harassment and violence, they are likely to just accept it as a negative but inevitable part of digital environments. **The understanding of young people of online harassment will undoubtedly become distorted if platforms don't change their policies and instead blame the users and encourage them to change their behaviour.**

Therefore, it is important that the technology sector supports youth activism and takes responsibility for highlighting the gravity of online gender-based violence. The actors in the technology sector must commit to concrete action to interfere with online violence and develop new and innovative ways to stop the phenomenon. Women and minorities must be involved, for example, in developing social media platforms and planning and testing new innovations.

It is also especially important that the technology sector ensures that their organizations are safe and harassment-free workplaces.

Most people who work in the gaming industry are white cis men and this is automatically reflected in characters, games, and work culture.³

It is necessary to consider that today's gaming community is more diverse than ever before. **To reflect this, games need more diverse characters that represent all gender identities, nationalities, and sexual orientations.** Therefore, it is necessary for the technology sector to commit to inclusivity and diversity.



WHAT CAN TECHNOLOGY SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS DO TO ERADICATE ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

1. Raise awareness of online gender-based violence among employees

Forms of violence are understandably difficult to recognize without proper knowledge and understanding of the topic. Raising awareness about gender-based online violence plays a key role in preventing such behaviour.

Online gender-based violence must be addressed with an intersectional approach. This means recognizing other intersecting forms of harassment and discrimination, such as those based on, for example, age, origin, and ability. Doing this ensures that the diverse needs of internet users are widely met.

Companies should offer their employees training materials and opportunities to discuss the topic. **If a company's own knowledge of online gender-based violence is inadequate, they should turn to experts on the subject and with their guidance prepare training materials for employees.**

2. Develop a policy to eradicate online gender-based violence

Companies should create clear guidelines for preventing and eradicating online violence. With clear guidelines, it is easier for companies to commit to finding solutions and to link the subject closely to other relevant processes and mechanisms, such as corporate social responsibility reporting. **Reporting would also allow for comparison between different companies.**

Open communication about the concrete actions taken by an organization to prevent online gender-based harassment has a positive effect on employer image and would make the company an attractive option for jobseekers.



3. Take online harassment into account in social media guidelines for employees

Many organizations have their own guidelines on how employees should behave on social media platforms. These guidelines could provide information on how every social media user can contribute to making social media platforms safe and inclusive for everyone. Guidelines can include information such as what kind of language should be used and how to identify and report online harassment.

Workplaces should have an anonymous channel for reporting online violence and harassment, especially if the employee is subjected to these either in the internal channel of the workplace or as a representative of the employer on external platforms. It is important to receive feedback from both the company's personnel and the users of the service and to develop operations based on it.

4. Campaign against online harassment

Companies should demonstrate their actions against online harassment by **taking part in campaigns that raise awareness of online gender-based violence and of the role companies play in eradicating online harassment and violence.**

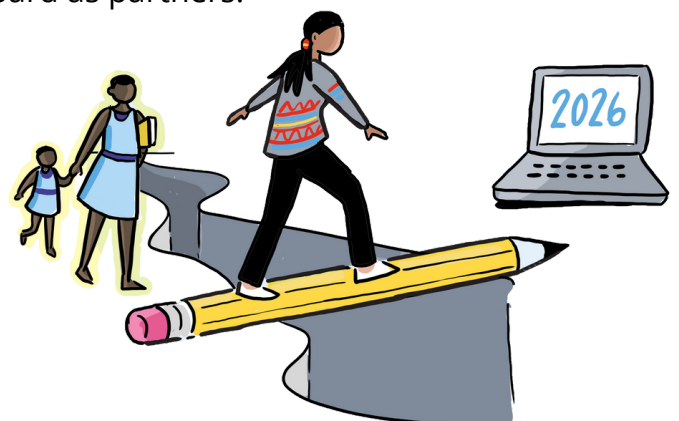
Social media platforms have a pivotal role in raising awareness about social media harassment.

This can be done, for example, by supporting activists and taking part in a variety of social media challenges.

Social media platforms play a central role as partners and funders in collecting data on online violence. The algorithms that control what we see and consume on social media are regulated by people in power. This regulation could be used to share awareness of online harassment and support the campaigns against it.

Furthermore, there is a need for companies in the gaming industry to visibly and loudly take a stance against online harassment within the gaming community, which could be done, for example through advocacy and substantial campaigning. In addition to causing human suffering, unsafe and non-inclusive spaces will push consumers away. **Creating a safe online environment is not only the right thing to do but it is also economically profitable.**

To maximize the effectiveness of the campaign, social media influencers and public figures in the gaming industry should be engaged and streaming and social media platforms could be brought on board as partners.



5. Develop new innovations to tackle online gender-based violence as part of their business

We encourage start-ups and companies that recognize online harassment as a relevant challenge to take concrete action to eradicate it. For example, **businesses who work with marketing automation or social media data could identify abusive, harassing, and violent behaviour from their data sets and implement campaigns to raise awareness of this issue.**

It might be difficult to encourage start-ups to act independently against online harassment. One option could be to create a petition against online harassment that brings together the whole industry and encourages start-ups to take part. This would attract attention to the theme, although concrete actions would remain minimal.



6. Improve moderation on digital platforms

Moderation of digital platforms needs to be developed and should be subject to stricter requirements. **Companies should invest in social media moderation, hire skilled professionals, and look for innovative solutions to moderate a large number of users.**

Moderation can be facilitated by informing users about the consequences and sanctions for online harassment.

When registering and signing into platforms, users should be reminded of how to behave in a respectful manner on the platform and of the sanctions for failing to act according to the etiquette. To ensure that these guidelines and rules are not forgotten after login, platforms could introduce a type of note in chat fields reminding users to behave respectfully towards one another, even when acting under a username.

7. Provide support for those who are the victims of online gender-based violence and combat harassment on social media platforms

People who are the victims of online gender-based violence must be offered better support. At the very least, platforms can offer the possibility of a 24-hour chat service with a low threshold for contact in the event of online harassment. In addition, the guidelines for dealing with harassment situations should be clear and easily available.

All platforms should also have settings to block private messages, pictures, or comments from strangers. As on Facebook, other platforms could also make use of the possibility to set your profile to be hidden so that only your friends' friends can find it through a search.

8. Develop fair play servers

For gaming companies, one concrete solution to prevent online gender-based harassment is fair play servers, where players commit to zero tolerance of discrimination, bullying, and hate speech. These servers would be moderated, all violations could be reported anonymously, and communications would be stored. Online harassment would result in the removal of perpetrators from the servers.

To create safe spaces, gaming companies need to take their responsibility for supervising and moderating their games more seriously.



The moderation of the different language areas must be used to create safe spaces. **To decrease online harassment, it is also important to make stronger use of artificial intelligence in moderation. For example, software that detects hate speech could be used more frequently.**

9. Influence legislation and practices to eradicate online gender-based violence

Improving national and international legislation should be central in fighting this issue. Legislation could commit the technology sector to finding and implementing solutions. Improving legislation can also be used to guide the actions and behaviours of game users on the platforms.

National and international legislation should have the right criminal titles for different forms of online harassment (e.g., image or video-based sexual harassment or abuse)

Technology sector stakeholders must actively push for measures and changes related to legislation, such as employees implementing and updating their guidelines for combating gender-based online violence and harassment.



COMMIT TO AND INVEST IN PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Authentic and visible commitment to inclusivity and judgment of online gender-based violence by technology sector stakeholders are significant steps towards change. The change starts when the sector's stakeholders understand online gender-based violence as a phenomenon. In addition, they need to involve subject matter experts and apply research knowledge to educate their employees, develop new solutions and create safer digital spaces.

Online spaces need to be safe for everyone. To create safe spaces, companies need to step up and take responsibility for moderating and monitoring digital spaces. **This responsibility should not be placed on those who experience violence.** Companies need to take reports of online violence seriously and block users who harass others.

Stakeholders in the technology industry also need to participate in campaigning against online violence and show their support for actors who work in preventing online violence.

To make their commitment to preventing and defeating online gender-based violence more concrete, we encourage the actors in the technology sector to make their own Generation Equality commitment. [Read from the Generation Equality campaign's website how to make a commitment.](#)

We cannot view the online environment as a space separate from society, where hate speech and online violence are "a part of the deal".

By taking action against online violence and encouraging others to do the same, stakeholders in the technology sector can send a clear message to young people that online violence is not acceptable and digital spaces belong to everyone.



