

Why Do WE matter?

Gergana Tzvetkova

Research Fellow, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Why am I passionate about the topic?

Reason 1: I am currently working on it:)

- Study violence against women and girls (including online)
- Explore which false or harmful stories are being spread online (especially those targeting women)
- Analyze exactly what such hurtful messages say and where they are shared (apps, websites, social media)
- Propose ideas how:
 - This kind of violence can be stopped
 - Protect and promote the rights of girls and women
 - Make the digital world a safer and inclusive space

Why am I passionate about the topic?

Reason 2: The numerous related topics and the situation in my home country (Bulgaria)

- Crisis of democracy and lack of trust in institutions and media
- The rise of the anti-gender movement: attacks against women's rights, feminism, and LGBTI+ rights
 - Istanbul Convention (2018)
 - Strategy for the Child (2019)
 - "Anti-LGBTI propaganda" amendment to Law on School and Pre-school Education (2024) - implications for youth

Why am I passionate about the topic?

Reason 3: Online and technology-facilitated violence is a very serious problem

- It appears to be widespread
- No one is safe or immune
- It is here to stay
- Technology (and advanced technology) is definitely a part of our lives

Why am I passionate about the topic?

Reason 4: Personal belief

Technology should:

- be created and used for the public good
- follow established ethical standards
- comply with human rights standards

What is online GBV?

Digital dimension of VAW includes both:

- 1) online aspects (activities performed through the Internet) - *online hate speech, cyber bullying*
- 2) technology-facilitated violence (activities carried out with the use of technology and communication equipment) - *sharing intimate images without consent, using various devices to follow and control a woman, AI-created images (?)*

[GREVIO](#), an independent experts committee, CoE

Why should we stop it?

- Online GBV is not “normal” only because it happens outside the “physical” world
- In fact, it causes real pain, suffering, and harm to those who experience it
- Often it leads to “offline” violence - sometimes, the two take place at the same time and are connected
- Everyone should benefit from the Internet and digital technologies - we cannot “hide” or stop using technology to avoid being abused

Why should we stop it?

Particularly vulnerable groups

- Children and young people (especially girls)
- LGBTI+ community
- Girls and women from certain ethnical/religious groups
- Women politicians
- Journalists (esp. women)
- Human rights defenders

Why is Co-creation Important?

- Co-creation - an evolving concept with many forms in different disciplines
- Key words that often accompany or explain Co-creation: *inclusive, participatory, collaborative, sustainable*

Some values of the co-creation process (education):

- Increases in individual competence
- Strengthened social networks
- Inclusion and sense of belonging
- Ownership, empowerment, and agency
- Information exchange and transparency
- Skill sharing
- Validating ideas - ensuring the generated solutions are valid for the users it impacts

[Full list and article](#)

Why is Co-creation Important?

[Text by Rosie Petersen](#) (an animator involved in co-design under a project about GBV involving young people). She shared:

- Young people had a deep comprehension of the subject and were able to clearly articulate their thoughts and opinions.
- Had honest and diverse takes on GBV and pointed out topics and ideas that the adults in the room hadn't considered.
- Very articulate when discussing mental health and the effects that GBV have on victims, and approached the topic with deep empathy, maturity, and sensitivity

CO-DESIGN:

Creates spaces where power is shared

Prioritizes people's stories and life experiences

Why is Co-creation Important?

- “Nothing for us, without us” - should be applied not only to government’s policies but also to the practices of companies that design products
- It is the process itself that matters the most
- Co-creation builds trust
- Every perspective matters! “Diversity matters” should not be an empty phrase
- (Online) GBV affects mostly women, girls, non-binary people BUT men and boys should not be shamed and excluded - they are an essential part of the solution-seeking process

Technology is not inherently bad – what matters is how we use it. It is up to us to find the solutions!

Thank
You

Gergana Tzvetkova is currently working on the project *Stereotyping, Disinformation, and Politicisation: links between attacks against the Istanbul Convention and increased online gender-based violence* (RESIST). The project examines how disinformation-driven false and harmful narratives could result in discrimination, violation of human rights and hamper efforts to counter gender-based violence against women. Thus, it explores topics such as violence in the digital dimension, gendered disinformation and intersectional vulnerabilities. It seeks to identify and specific harmful stereotypes and false narratives, as well as to propose counter-measures, strategies, and policies. RESIST is a two-year project implemented at the CA' Foscari University of Venice and funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under a Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 945361.

The project *Stereotyping, Disinformation, and Politicisation: links between attacks against the Istanbul Convention and increased online gender-based violence* (RESIST) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 945361. This presentation reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Email: Gergana.Tzvetkova@unive.it