

# menABLE study on gender-based violence online

## Introduction

The menABLE study on gender-based violence (GBV) online serves as both a theoretical and empirical foundation, contributing to the project's educational and awareness-raising initiatives by providing valuable insights into combating GBV online.

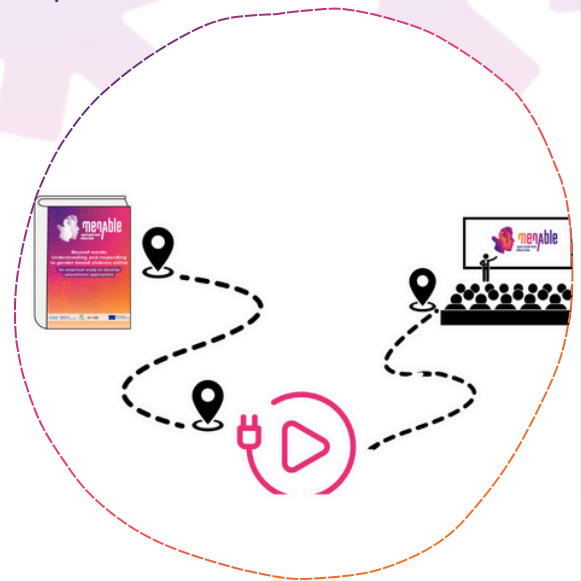
The study was presented to the public in February 2024, during the [menABLE European Policy Roundtable](#). It is the first major milestone of the menABLE project, having been produced over the course of the first year of the project, following a review of national and European academic and policy research and the organisation of focus groups and interviews.

## Research structure: desktop and qualitative research

The menABLE study is structured into two principal sections: the **desktop research** and the **qualitative research**.

### The desktop research

The literature review and desktop research constituted the foundation of the study. A comprehensive investigation has been undertaken to gain insight into the manifestations, **underlying causes and consequences of GBV in the digital sphere**, with a particular focus on those who bear the brunt of its impact. The literature review was strengthened by an **examination of existing policies at the European and national levels**. By mapping the current landscape, it pinpoints specific areas for intervention and conducts a comparative analysis across partner countries (**Belgium, Denmark, and Greece**)





## The qualitative analysis



A review of the literature and a desktop review revealed key findings on trends and features of GBV online. The findings provided a basis for subsequent qualitative research, which involved the use of **focus groups with early and late adolescents, formal and non-formal educators**, and **semi-structured interviews** with a diverse range of stakeholders and experts in the field of GBV online. A total of 18 rounds of focus groups were conducted in Belgium, Denmark and Greece, in which young people and formal and non-formal educators were consulted on the topic of GBV online, and their respective perspectives and experiences were elicited.

Furthermore, 21 experts were consulted, representing a range of backgrounds, including policy, industry, education, civil society, and young people as well.

“The only way you can understand how devastating GBV online is, is when you become a victim yourself.” Boy  
(Greece)

“When I am gaming, I keep away from the voice chat, because I don't want to listen to that. Either if it's about how I play or my gender I don't have to deal with it.” Girl  
(Denmark)

“It is about fear of social exclusion. Young people do not hold these opinions at heart. They are just participating in order not to be targeted themselves.” Boy  
(Denmark)



## key findings of the menABLE study



The menABLE study presents a comprehensive synthesis of the key findings that emerged from the literature review and the qualitative research.

- GBV online, as with its offline manifestation, is **rooted in the normalisation of certain behaviours within social and cultural contexts**. Despite sharing common roots and causes, it was identified that **GBV online can manifest in numerous forms and shapes**, and its consequences can also affect the physical wellbeing of its victims. Furthermore, the use of harsh language appears to be a defining characteristic of GBV online, potentially due to the **anonymity** afforded by online platforms and social media.
- A subset of the younger generation appears to have **internalised certain characteristics of GBV online**. This subset presents difficulty in recognising the diverse forms and causes of such phenomena, suggesting a **lack of perception regarding the impact of their actions**. An understanding of intersectionality is crucial for the comprehension of GBV online. Young people also observed that the most vulnerable individuals are not solely female, but also encompass the **LGBTQI+ and non-binary communities**. In particular, girls have been observed to express **a lack of trust in boys and men**, citing their typical online and offline behaviour as a cause for concern.
- Formal and non-formal educators and researchers agreed that **additional funding should be allocated to prevention and protection programmes**, and that a consensus should be reached on the definition and understanding of GBV online. It is imperative that **research and data collection be increased** in order to facilitate the formulation of policies and funding programmes that are based on empirical data. Furthermore, **education must be tailored based on intersectional factors** and in a peer-to-peer and youth-centred manner to empower young people to educate and raise awareness among their peers. Furthermore, it is imperative that **all stakeholders and sectors undergo training on GBV online**, as it is a pervasive issue.



**menAble**  
Against gender-based  
violence online



**download the study!**



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