

# Executive summary

In March 2023, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) met at the United Nations headquarters to discuss an unprecedented theme: women's rights in the digital age. While reaffirming the emancipatory potential of digital tools for women and marginalised groups – particularly in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health services – the CSW also reasserted that online spaces are places of unprecedented violence for women and LGBTI+ people, and defined priority actions.

## **7 WOMEN OUT OF 10 SAY THEY HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF ONLINE VIOLENCE IN THEIR LIFETIME.**

Violence against women and LGBTI+ people is part of a continuum that extends from ordinary sexism to sexual violence, assault, and murder. They operate both offline and online. As elsewhere in the world, the countries of the European Union are affected by the scale of cyberviolence. 7 women out of 10 say they have been victims of online violence in their lifetime. The same statistical analysis has not been carried out for the entire LGBTI+ community in Europe, for which there is a lack of overall figures, but specific data from certain countries shows that LGBTI+ people are particularly affected by this violence. In the United Kingdom, 1 trans person out of 4 declares they have been a victim in the previous month. Yet, the official data are still a long way from reality according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. In fact, several testimonies of feminist and LGBTI+ figures on online harassment have multiplied within the last few years. We need to raise the alarm, especially on a phenomenon that is on the rise with the increasingly widespread use of social networks: masculinism.

## **IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1 TRANS PERSON OUT OF 4 DECLARES THEY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM IN THE PREVIOUS MONTH.**

Masculinism can be defined as an ideology that opposes the emancipation of women and LGBTI+ people and promotes male domination. Alongside offline gatherings, masculinists establish what is known as the “manosphere” online, where a genuine unleashing of hatred takes place. Masculinism, deeply rooted in digital spaces, is a multifaceted movement, that adapts according to the eras and regions of the world, but which has sexist and lgbtphobic speeches at its epicentre. This forms the basis for online harassment and can lead to attacks and murders. The Isla Vista attack in California on 23 May 2014, which killed almost 6 people, is one of the most obvious historical examples of killings motivated by hatred of women.

To regulate this digital space and combat violence, the current measures at the European Union level are far from sufficient. This is all the more crucial as masculinist movements take advantage of the constant expansion and change of the digital sphere.

This report highlights the different players of the manosphere, the influence of masculinist communities and their links with various groups and ultra-conservative political parties within the European Union. It aims to improve the understanding of how this phenomenon works,

between technological, financial and socio-political dynamics, while underlining the scale of the violence that emanates from it and its devastating consequences. Finally, this report puts forward a list of recommendations to the authorities of the European Union and its 27 Member States. To move towards a digital sphere that guarantees the rights, safety and freedom of women and LGBTI+ people, we must vigorously combat masculinist discourses online.

# Recommendations

## Five areas of action

- 1** Strengthening and completing the legal, political and financial arsenal for combatting the continuum of sexual and gender-based violence and hate speeches (based on gender identity and sexual orientation)
- 2** Integrating the fight against sexual and gender-based violence and the fight against masculinist discourses into public digital policies
- 3** Regulating the digital and technology multinationals
- 4** Supporting and protecting the feminist and LGBTI+ associations and activists
- 5** Raising awareness among citizens of masculinist discourses and giving them the means to defend themselves