

Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 March 2026
at the 1552nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

PREAMBLE

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1),

Recalling that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity among its member States, particularly through common action to promote and safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Underlining the obligation of member States to secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, the "Convention") and its protocols, as applicable, and, where relevant, their obligations arising from the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35) or the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163) and other European and international human rights instruments;

Emphasising that gender equality is fundamental to protecting human rights, ensuring the proper functioning of democracy and good governance, upholding the rule of law and promoting sustainable development and well-being for all;

Concerned that technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is increasingly prevalent because of the rapid development of technology, including artificial intelligence, its widespread use and business models that contribute to its proliferation;

Recalling the Reykjavík Declaration, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which affirms the Council of Europe's commitment to mitigating risks of negative consequences of the use of technology on human rights, including in relation to new forms of violence against women and vulnerable groups generated and amplified by modern technologies;

Recalling the obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, Istanbul Convention) and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, Lanzarote Convention), and taking into account General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, alongside other international human rights standards related to the protection of women and girls from technology-facilitated violence, and the evolving jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights;

Having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its optional protocol, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, as well as the work of the corresponding treaty bodies;

Recalling the obligations under the Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185, Budapest Convention) and its additional protocols concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (ETS No. 189) and on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence (CETS No. 224), and the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225);

Recognising that technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is inherently gendered and is part of a continuum of gender-based violence that women and girls experience in all spheres of life, as a distinct dimension committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified by or through technology;

Acknowledging the widespread, enduring and evolving nature of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and the profound harm it causes to victims, including, but not limited to, their physical and psychological health, livelihoods and economic security, reputation, public and political participation, leadership, safety and security, dignity and engagement online;

Recognising the societal harms caused by technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including its strain on support systems and on families and friends, its reinforcement of gender stereotypes and, especially when this violence results in the silencing, exclusion or intimidation of women and girls, its threat to democratic processes;

Recognising the importance of individual and systemic accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls as essential for upholding justice for victims of such violence and enabling their recovery, ending impunity and holding those responsible to account, deterring future harm, reinforcing trust in the safeguarding role of State institutions and fostering an environment free of violence;

Acknowledging the essential role of prevention initiatives in fostering an environment of accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls where harmful actions are neither facilitated, condoned, accepted nor ignored;

Acknowledging the essential role of technology companies and internet intermediaries in preventing and responding to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, and their responsibilities to respect human rights in line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and business and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

Recalling the importance of an approach that addresses the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities which exacerbate technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, and underscoring the need for accountability measures which are designed and implemented in line with such an approach;

Recognising the specific risks and barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities in the context of technology-facilitated violence;

Recognising the importance of ensuring that child-friendly and age-appropriate frameworks and measures are in place to address technology-facilitated violence, taking into account children's and young persons' evolving capacities and diverse circumstances, with particular attention to the distinct experiences and specific needs of girls and young women;

Acknowledging that, while technology-facilitated violence disproportionately affects women and girls, anyone can be a victim;

Underlining the need for a comprehensive, trauma-informed, whole-of-society approach that ensures co-ordinated policies and fosters effective collaboration across and within all State institutions and with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, the media and the private sector, to strengthen accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;

Recognising the importance and potential of technology as a vital resource for preventing and combating violence, and recovering from violence, as well as for gender equality and empowerment, community building and meaningful participation of women and girls in public life;

Acknowledging the right of women and girls to full, equal and meaningful participation in a safe and empowering digital environment,

Recommends that the governments of member States:

1. take all necessary measures to ensure the prompt, full and effective implementation of the principles appended to this recommendation;
2. promote and facilitate active collaboration among relevant stakeholders, including with civil society organisations, in particular women's, youth and children's rights organisations, victims of technology-facilitated violence, relevant experts, international organisations, educational and research institutions, the media and the private sector, to effectively implement the principles appended to this recommendation;
3. ensure that this recommendation is translated into the official languages of their respective countries and disseminated widely in various accessible formats, including child-friendly formats, among competent authorities and stakeholders;
4. review the implementation of this recommendation at regular intervals and inform the Committee of Ministers of action taken, progress made and plans to address remaining shortcomings.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls

I. Aim, scope, basic principles and definitions

Aim and scope

1. This recommendation aims to assist member States in ensuring accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, in all their diversity, including through preventing and combating such violence. Member States are encouraged to apply this recommendation to all victims of technology-facilitated violence, while paying particular attention to women and girl victims when implementing the recommendation.
2. The recommendation applies in times of peace as well as in armed conflict, post-conflict and emergency situations and other crises.

Basic principles

3. For the purpose of the recommendation, ensuring accountability is understood as the duty of States to ensure that those responsible for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including by enabling, facilitating or inciting such violence, are answerable for their actions or omissions. It entails the existence of effective applicable processes, frameworks and mechanisms, including under criminal, civil or administrative law, pursuant to which a complaint can be asserted to establish the responsibility or liability of a natural or legal person. Ensuring accountability includes prevention measures that promote responsible conduct, challenge root causes of violence against women and girls and help create an environment where harmful actions are neither facilitated, condoned, accepted nor ignored.
4. The recommendation calls for a human rights-based, intersectional, inclusive, gender-transformative, victim-centred, trauma-informed, age-appropriate and child-friendly approach, to ensure accountability for all forms of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. It situates technology-facilitated violence against women and girls within the broader continuum of violence, encompassing both technology-facilitated acts and violence perpetrated without the use of technology, and addresses its impact on individuals and society more broadly.

5. The recommendation stresses the need for all legal, policy and regulatory frameworks aimed at ensuring accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls to be proportionate and anchored in respect for all human rights, particularly Articles 2, 3, 8, 10 and 14 of the Convention, as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights.

6. All legal, policy and regulatory measures should ensure the protection of freedom of expression for all, in line with Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention and the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and without prejudice to fundamental constitutional principles as applied in the national context. This entails both refraining from unjustified interferences with the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, as well as taking proactive measures to prevent and address the silencing effect of technology-facilitated violence on women and girls.

Definitions

7. For the purpose of the recommendation, the following definitions apply:

7.1 “technology-facilitated violence against women and girls” is understood as any act of gender-based violence that is committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified through or by technology and that impacts women or girls;

7.2 “technology companies” encompass a broad range of businesses and other entities engaged in the development or provision of technological products and services, including software, hardware and connectivity solutions;

7.3 “internet intermediaries” refer to entities that facilitate interactions on the internet between natural and legal persons by offering and performing a variety of functions and services, including internet service providers and online platforms;

7.4 “online platforms” refer to providers of digital services that connect users and set the rules for interactions, including by using algorithmic systems to collect and analyse data or personalise their services. Such platforms include, but are not limited to, search engines, news aggregators, video-sharing services, communication platforms and social networks.

II. Fostering an environment of accountability

8. Member States should strengthen accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes, including sexism, gender stereotypes, historical and structural inequalities, systemic discrimination, entrenched patriarchal or misogynistic norms and practices, and the persistence of a culture that disregards the need for consent in sexual interactions. This includes fostering conditions in which victims can effectively access assistance and assert their rights and promoting an environment where violence against women and girls is neither facilitated, condoned, accepted nor ignored.

9. Member States should conduct and promote comprehensive, accessible, evidence-based and inclusive prevention initiatives, notably through education, capacity building, including digital literacy training, and awareness raising. Prevention initiatives should:

9.1 involve relevant stakeholders, in particular civil society organisations, including women’s, youth and children’s rights organisations, victims of technology-facilitated violence, the private sector, educational and research institutions and the media, as well as men and boys as allies in prevention efforts;

9.2 integrate primary prevention strategies targeting the general population, secondary prevention strategies focusing on groups at risk of experiencing or perpetrating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and tertiary prevention strategies aimed at individual perpetrators.

10. Member States should promote responsible policies and practices by media organisations to ensure that content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is not unduly disseminated, while safeguarding freedom of expression and the independence of the media.

11. Member States should take measures to ensure that accessible, effective and co-ordinated support structures, including cross-sectoral efforts, for victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls are available and effectively resourced, prioritising inclusive, gender-responsive, victim-centred, trauma-informed, age-appropriate and child-friendly care.

12. Member States should ensure the holistic and inclusive design of support and social services, including legal and psychological counselling as well as, as appropriate, technological support tailored to the specific individual needs of victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. They should acknowledge recovery as an integral part of the overall efforts to eliminate violence and widely disseminate information about these services.

III. Strengthening legal and policy frameworks

13. Member States should ensure accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls through comprehensive legal and policy responses, ensuring that relevant provisions are effective in preventing and responding to such violence, and that legal definitions are clear, precise and technology neutral. In particular, member States should:

- 13.1 review and enforce existing legislation and policies on preventing and combating violence against women and girls as well as on assisting and supporting victims, ensuring in particular that they apply in principle and in practice to technology-facilitated forms of such violence;
- 13.2 periodically evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of such legislation and policies to apply both in principle and in practice to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- 13.3 if appropriate and in particular where legal and policy frameworks are absent, incomplete or ineffectively implemented, amend existing or develop new legislative and policy provisions to prevent and combat such violence and to assist and support victims.

14. Member States should ensure that technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is covered and addressed by criminal law.

15. Member States should take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that legal responses to acts of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls that constitute offences encompass, when appropriate, acts of inciting, aiding and abetting, as well as attempting to commit such criminal offences.

16. Member States should take the necessary legislative measures to ensure that offences of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls are punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions which take into account the seriousness of the offence and the harm caused to victims. In full respect of judicial independence and to the extent appropriate in the national context, the relevant authority determining the sentence should be able to consider the presence of a technology-related dimension as an aggravating circumstance in appropriate situations, such as if it resulted in particularly severe harm to the victim, provided that such a technology-related dimension is not a constituent element of the offence.

17. Member States should ensure that, where appropriate and in accordance with national law, instrumentalities used for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls constituting an offence can be confiscated, and that content constituting, or resulting from, such acts can be removed and deleted.

18. Member States should ensure that, alongside criminal law measures, effective legal protection against technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and avenues of redress are also provided under civil and administrative law provisions, as appropriate in the national context. Such legal protections should not be dependent on the opening of criminal justice processes or securing convictions from a criminal court.

19. When preparing, adopting or implementing laws and policies relevant to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, member States should hold timely, regular and meaningful public consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, in particular civil society organisations, including women's, youth and children's rights organisations, victims of technology-facilitated violence, the private sector, educational and research institutions and the media. Member States should publicly and transparently report the outcomes of such consultations to inform the development of comprehensive and evidence-based legal and policy frameworks that address the needs of affected individuals.

20. Member States should encourage media organisations, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to implement self- and co-regulatory frameworks to prevent and effectively respond to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

21. As appropriate and where feasible in the national context, member States should systematically collect and analyse data, disaggregated by relevant factors such as sex, age or the relationship between victim and perpetrator, on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, and encourage research on such violence to effectively and regularly inform the development, monitoring, evaluation and review of laws and policies that address the complexities of such violence. Such efforts should be guided by principles of comparability and transparency, adopt a whole-of-government approach and draw on diverse and complementary evidence sources.

IV. Reinforcing effective and accessible justice systems

22. To strengthen accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls through effective justice responses, including under criminal, civil and administrative law, member States should:

- 22.1 take effective measures to prevent secondary victimisation of victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- 22.2 take effective measures, aligned with the principles of procedural justice, to ensure that victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls are informed, engaged and treated with dignity and respect by the entire judicial system, and to facilitate their meaningful participation and support their recovery;
- 22.3 safeguard the privacy and dignity of victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and provide for their protection, as well as that of their families and of witnesses, from intimidation, retaliation and repeat victimisation at all stages of investigations and judicial proceedings.

23. Member States should put in place appropriate conditions for the justice system as a whole, in particular the institutions and the individuals operating within it, to effectively address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including by:

- 23.1 taking effective measures to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement, prosecutors and the judiciary to handle cases of such violence;
- 23.2 allocating financial, technical and human resources to effectively address such violence and to ensure effective and timely responses;
- 23.3 ensuring that risk assessments conducted in the context of such violence consider the specific dynamics of technology-facilitated violence and the unique risks it poses, with the aim of protecting victims;

- 23.4 adopting proactive measures to advance gender equality and, in full respect of judicial independence and as appropriate in the national context, women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in law enforcement, investigation, prosecution and the judiciary.
24. Where technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is committed by a child, member States should apply Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures, Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning restorative justice in criminal matters and the Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice, and have regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Parties to the Lanzarote Convention on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children.
25. Member States should ensure that systems for reporting technology-facilitated violence against women and girls to relevant authorities and support services are available, accessible, appropriate and secure, and that information about these channels is widely known.
26. Member States should, under the conditions provided for by national law, take the necessary measures to ensure that effective investigations and judicial proceedings in relation to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls are conducted without undue delay.
27. Member States should facilitate co-ordinated efforts within and between investigation and prosecution services and integrate multi-agency collaboration to ensure unified and effective responses to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
28. Member States should promote co-operation between the media and law-enforcement authorities, in full respect of the independence of the media and as appropriate in the national context, to support effective responses to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
29. Member States should ensure the secure handling and management of evidence in cases of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including by:
- 29.1 ensuring, in full respect of judicial independence, that the collection, analysis and presentation of evidence of such violence take into account its gendered nature and impact;
 - 29.2 implementing stringent protocols for the secure access to, and sharing, storing and archiving of, this evidence;
 - 29.3 implementing their procedural powers in line with Articles 14 to 21 of the Budapest Convention.
30. To take into account the cross-border nature of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, member States should, as appropriate, enhance international co-operation in line with international standards, in particular by:
- 30.1 ensuring that international co-operation frameworks are used to expedite access to evidence related to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including by applying Articles 23 to 35 of the Budapest Convention and in particular through the 24/7 contact network established under Article 35 to ensure immediate assistance in investigations and criminal proceedings;
 - 30.2 developing standardised protocols for the safe and secure cross-border exchange of evidence related to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including access to evidence held by technology companies and internet intermediaries in other member States.
31. Member States should ensure that offences of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls can, as appropriate in the national context, be prosecuted *ex officio*.

32. Member States should ensure that victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls have effective and meaningful access to justice, including by providing for the right to free legal aid under the conditions provided by their national law, and implement frameworks that address the specific needs of girl victims.

33. Member States should ensure the availability of swift, accessible and effective orders against natural and legal persons to achieve the timely removal and deletion of content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls that is inherently unlawful or rendered unlawful by its use, including under criminal, civil or administrative law, while taking effective measures to ensure that relevant evidence is preserved for investigative and judicial purposes for a limited time. Securing orders should not be dependent on the opening of criminal justice processes or securing convictions from a criminal court.

34. Member States should ensure the availability of appropriate restraining and protection orders that are responsive to the specific dynamics of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, as well as effective mechanisms to ensure compliance.

35. Member States should, as appropriate in the national context, ensure that victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls have access to appropriate, adequate, effective and timely remedies as well as compensation, including from those perpetrating or facilitating such violence. They should, as appropriate in the national context, consider establishing State compensation schemes to provide financial compensation to victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls who have sustained serious bodily injury or impairment of health, to the extent that the damage is not covered by other sources such as the perpetrator, insurance or State-funded health and social provisions.

V. Regulating technology companies and internet intermediaries

36. Member States should, as appropriate and relevant, adopt and implement measures to ensure accountability of technology companies and internet intermediaries for any responsibility they bear for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. These measures should follow a graduated approach, ensuring that the obligations of technology companies and internet intermediaries are proportionate to the level of risk and the potential severity of the impact on human rights of their products and services.

37. Member States should require technology companies and internet intermediaries to integrate inclusive safety-by-design standards during product development in order to proactively prevent technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. This should include conducting regular human rights risk assessments recognising the full diversity of women's and girls' experiences, with specific consideration for the risks of violence against women and girls, prior to deployment of their products and on an iterative basis, and implementing proactive measures to effectively mitigate any risks identified. The results of such assessments, as well as the measures taken to address identified risks, should be made publicly available.

38. Member States should, as appropriate in the national context:

- 38.1 ensure that the policies and terms of service of technology companies and internet intermediaries are gender-responsive, non-discriminatory and sensitive to the specific forms and impact of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- 38.2 require technology companies and internet intermediaries to:
 - establish user-friendly reporting systems, which are inclusive, age appropriate, accessible, *inter alia* for persons with disabilities, time sensitive and effective;
 - prioritise reports from verified trusted flaggers with expertise in addressing technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
 - ensure that content believed to be unlawful, including under criminal, civil or administrative law, can be reported without requiring the specification of the exact legal provisions that may have been breached;

- 38.3 ensure that technology companies and internet intermediaries co-operate in a timely manner with law-enforcement agencies, prosecutors and the judiciary, upon their request, by providing necessary data, without prejudice to the rule of law and data protection safeguards;
- 38.4 require technology companies and internet intermediaries to report to the authorities as soon as they become aware of any information giving rise to reasonable grounds to believe that a criminal offence of technology-facilitated violence involving a threat to the life or safety of a woman or girl has taken place, is taking place or is likely to take place;
- 38.5 require technology companies and internet intermediaries to provide effective, easily accessible and age-appropriate safeguards and user control tools, including age assurance tools, that contribute to enabling women and girls to use technology safely and mitigate the risk of harm;
- 38.6 require technology companies and internet intermediaries to regularly publish transparency reports on their policies and practices regarding technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including quantified outcomes of these policies and practices, disaggregated by relevant identifiers.

39. Member States should, as appropriate in the national context, develop and enforce transparent and clear regulatory measures that require online platforms to take responsibility for preventing and combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. To this effect, member States should:

- 39.1 develop comprehensive guidelines for online platforms on addressing such violence in content moderation and other policies and practices;
- 39.2 require online platforms to appoint a sufficient number of human content moderators, ensuring impartiality, relevant expertise, language competency, regular training and access to appropriate psychological support;
- 39.3 ensure that a comprehensive set of measures is in place to prevent and mitigate bias and discrimination in artificial intelligence systems and to promote their responsible, gender-sensitive, ethical and transparent use in order to enhance effective content moderation in the context of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- 39.4 require online platforms to regularly review and, where necessary, revise their content moderation policies and practices to ensure that they are effective in preventing and combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls;
- 39.5 take effective measures to ensure that:
 - online platforms that fail to act expeditiously, upon becoming aware of it, to remove content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls that is inherently unlawful or rendered unlawful by its use, as established under criminal, civil or administrative law, may be held liable for such content;
 - online platforms preserve relevant evidence of such content for investigative and judicial purposes for a limited period of time;
 - online platforms mitigate any systemic risks of resurfacing of removed content;
- 39.6 encourage online platforms to use appropriate and effective technologies to prevent the creation, publication and further dissemination of content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls that is inherently unlawful or rendered unlawful by its use, including under criminal, civil or administrative law;

- 39.7 encourage online platforms to apply clear, transparent and effective mechanisms to identify and label content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including, but not limited to, content that is misogynistic or promotes or incites violence against women and girls, and which does not meet the criteria for removal;
 - 39.8 require online platforms to provide clear and transparent information regarding action taken on reported content, including data that are disaggregated by relevant identifiers, and to offer swift, easily accessible and effective redress mechanisms;
 - 39.9 require online platforms to identify, assess and mitigate the ways in which their algorithmic systems may contribute to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including by amplifying misogynistic content.
40. Member States should incorporate safeguards against technology-facilitated violence against women and girls in relevant policies and frameworks related to technology development and innovation.
41. Member States should consider encouraging payment service providers to adopt risk-based and proportionate measures to address the use of these services in facilitating offences of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
42. Member States should encourage technology companies and internet intermediaries to develop and promote positive counternarratives in response to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
43. Member States should encourage technology companies and internet intermediaries to implement robust self-regulatory and co-regulatory frameworks and mechanisms to prevent and combat technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.
44. Member States should facilitate collaboration mechanisms among technology companies and internet intermediaries to align strategies and practices in addressing content amounting to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and foster rights-based and harmonised responses.
45. Member States should encourage technology companies and internet intermediaries to engage regularly and effectively with civil society organisations, including women's, youth and children's rights organisations, and victims of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls to ensure that their perspectives and experiences inform the development, implementation and review of company and industry standards aimed at preventing and addressing such violence.