



## CSW 65 Side Event

### Digital Gender Gaps and Opportunities

Fostering equal participation and ending violence against women in a connected age

**Date/time:** 17/03/2021 9:00 am EST, 2:00 pm CET  
**Organizers:** Germany, Council of Europe, National Council of German Women's Organisations  
**Registration via:** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/side-event-csw-65-2021>  
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#### Introduction:

In many parts of the world, the digital transformation is generating new opportunities for women's empowerment through access to knowledge and resources. But at the same time, the digital gender divide and discrimination against women are exacerbating. Discriminatory factors range from unequal access to digital technologies, lack of training or education to barriers for women in digital technology industries. Especially, online and technology-facilitated violence constitute a systematic threat, which has spread during Covid-19 and the "shadow pandemic" of violence against women and girls. Bringing together representatives from governments, international organizations and civil society, this side event presents strategies to achieve women's equal digital participation and to end online violence against women. It draws upon promising research and policies across Europe and explores the added value of the Council of Europe's legal instruments: the Istanbul Convention and the Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism. Protecting women's rights, including in the digital sphere, is also an important issue for Germany's current Presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

#### Event description and objectives:

The spread of information and communications technologies (ICTs) generates major opportunities to promote gender equality and women's empowerment by granting increased access to knowledge, income, employment or support services. At the same time, digital tools have created new spaces for perpetuating and amplifying existing forms of discrimination against women. Indeed, the digital gender divide is widening and women who are active in the digital sphere continue to face negative stereotypes and gender-based violence, which in turn prevents them from fully taking advantage of ICTs and participating as digital users and innovators. This holds especially true for women and girls who suffer from intersecting forms of discrimination, e.g. regarding their migration status, sexuality or disabilities. Encouraged by anonymity and automation, online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and sexist hate speech against women are pervasive and reduce their online participation. In addition, many forms of violence against women occurring offline, including intimate-partner violence, are replicated and even intensified through digital means, such as spyware or other digital surveillance applications. Besides, women and girls at risk of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including women belonging to national minorities, women identifying as LGBTI or women with disabilities, appear to be particularly targeted and exposed to such violence in the digital sphere. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the world has become more reliant on ICTs, the amplification of gender inequalities has been reported in Europe and worldwide, including the rise of online and technology-

facilitated violence against women. The digitalisation process in the context of the health crisis has put a spotlight on specific challenges for women and girls, including gender gaps in access and usage but also the reconciliation of remote work with care responsibilities. The marginalisation of women's and girls' voices and participation in online political debates has become more apparent, too. Thus, while ICTs and digital literacy offer innovative ways to respond to entrenched gender inequalities, there is no doubt that sound policies are needed to ensure that the benefits of digitalisation are equitably shared by all

This side event looks at the CSW 65 priority theme through a digital lens and highlights the latest developments on promoting women's full and effective participation in the digital age. Speakers, including State and European officials, will also explore the implementation of the Council of Europe's legal instruments: The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) which requires to prevent, protect and prosecute violence against women in the digital sphere, as well as the Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism which focuses on the promotion of digital media literacy and awareness-raising about threats in the digital environment. Civil society representatives will present recommendations on closing the digital gender gap as well as new initiatives to promote women's empowerment via digital technologies.

Words of Welcome: Juliane Seifert,  
State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

Mona Küppers,  
President of the [National Council of German Women's Organizations](#)

Key note: Seyi Akiwowo,  
Women's Rights Advocate and Founder of [GLITCH](#), a non-profit campaigning to end online abuse, United Kingdom/Nigeria

High-level segment: Helena Dalli,  
Commissioner for Equality, European Union

Emily Yiolitis ,  
Minister of Justice and Public Order, Cyprus

Panel: Dr. Marceline Naudi,  
President of the Council of Europe's Group of experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

Dr. Aysel Yollu-Tok,  
Chair Expert of the Commission of the [Third Gender Equality Report](#), Germany

Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen,  
Chief Executive Officer at Plan International, United Kingdom

Rayan Al Zahab  
Founder, CEO BambooGeeks and Google Developer Expert

Moderator: Abby Kuhathasan  
Correspondent and Anchor for CTV News and Deutsche Welle News