

# Synthesis of Symposium

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**Online sexual exploitation  
challenges and responses  
in Europe**

**INTERNATIONAL  
SYMPOSIUM**

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**Strasbourg  
(France)**



**FEBRUARY 14, 2025**

**OSEZ  
LE FÉMINISME** 

  
La Coordination Française  
pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes

# Partners



# FOREWORD

This international symposium held in Strasbourg in February 2025 focused on the fight against gender-based and sexual violence in the digital age. Bringing together MEPs, ambassadors, legal experts, associations and civil society organizations from several European countries, the event took stock of the violence facilitated or aggravated by technology - online sexual exploitation, trafficking for exploitation on platforms, pornocriminality, pedocriminality, harassment and digital violence targeting women.

In a variety of panels and presentations, experts, survivors and practitioners shared their findings, experiences and concrete proposals for building a coherent, feminist European response to the new technological challenges. The discussions highlighted the need to impose stricter obligations on digital platforms, strengthen transnational cooperation and harmonize legal responses to the proliferation of sexist and sexual cyberviolence.

This collective effort has resulted in the **Strasbourg Call**, an ambitious advocacy text by experts, political decision-makers, jurists and committed organizations, calling for concrete legislative reforms to frame the practices of digital players, strengthen victim protection and tackle new forms of online sexual crime.

**Read the acts of symposium**

**Watch all the videos on the Osez le Féminisme' YouTube**

**Find all the information on the website :**

**<https://stopsexualexploitationonline.eu/en/home/>**

# SUMMARY

## OPENING SPEECHES

**PANEL 1 : NEW TECHNOLOGIES, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND MEN : CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES**

**PANEL 2 : PORNOCRIMINALITY AND PEDOCRIMINALITY : A CONCERN FOR EQUALITY, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND CHILD PROTECTION**

## KEYNOTE SPEECHES

**PANEL 3 : ADDRESSING PROSTITUTION : THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT POLICY MODELS IN EUROPE**

**PANEL 4 : CURRENT LEGAL CHALLENGES IN FRANCE AND EUROPE : USING THE LAX TO END IMPUNITY**

**CLOSING REMARKS AND CALL TO ACTION**

# OPENING SPEECHES



**CHRISTELLE WIEDER** ▶

Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg in charge of equality between women and men



**CÉLINE PIQUES** ▶

Writer of the High Council for Equality's report on pornocriminality, representative of Osez le Féminisme



**ROXANA MARACINEANU** ▶

Secretary General of Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Human Trafficking (MIPROF)



**REEM ALSALEM** ▶

United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against girls and women

# CHRISTELLE WIEDER

## Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg in charge of equality between women and men

Christelle Wieder, deputy mayor of Strasbourg, welcomed the participants and underlined the city's strong commitment to equality of the sexes. She pointed out that « **Strasbourg is a feminist city** » through initiatives such as a gynaecological health project, robust support for local associations, and the city's engagement with issues related to pornography. She also underscored the link between pornography consumption and « **the reinforcement of sexism, notably among younger generations** », as well as the glamorisation of violence against women. Speaking as a teacher, she expressed concern about the early exposure of teenagers to this content and the lack of resources to provide guidance on the issue :

**« Who can talk to an 11-year-old who is addicted to pornography ? Who can talk to their parents ? »**

The gap between institutions and the understanding of online violence was noted with concern, highlighting the urgent need for an appropriate and coordinated response beyond France's borders : « **This response must occur at a European level** » to advance legislation and raise awareness. She concluded with a call for hope and collective action :

**« We have many obstacles to overcome together, and I welcome this challenge in the name of protecting children, in the name of protecting women—not only those caught up in human trafficking networks, but also, in a symbolic sense, the protection of all women. »**

# CÉLINE PIQUES

Writer of the High Council for Equality's report on  
pornocriminality, representative of Osez le Féminisme

Céline Piques open the symposium with an analysis of the link between pornography and rape culture :

**« The issue of pornography is absolutely central - it is not a marginal issue. It's not about a few pornographic shoots that go wrong, or a few rotten apples, nor is it simply an industry that is just in need of regulation. No - today, pornography is the main driver of rape culture and the normalisation of sexist and sexual violence. »**

The Mazan case illustrates this point clearly : a man orchestrated the rapes of his drugged wife, reproducing the codes and scenarios commonly found in pornography. This case sheds light on the role of pornography as a tool of « misogynistic radicalisation » - the perpetrator replicated rape scenarios on unconscious women :

**« Pornography was the driving force, the trigger, and perhaps even the motive for Dominique Pelicot's desire to film his own homemade pornography. He simply reproduced what he had seen on porn sites. »**

Céline Piques was the author of the report « PORNOCRIMINALITY : Putting an end to impunity in the pornography industry », submitted to the High Council for Equality in September 2023. This study highlights the recurring use of certain terms in the titles of pornographic videos that reflect elements of rape culture. Numerous websites openly host videos of sexual violence with total impunity, including the rapes of unconscious women, which can easily be found using keywords such as « surprise », « teen », « daddy » or « torture ». This reflects the normalisation of violence and child sexual abuse. A parallel is drawn with the Pelicot case :

**« The appearance of legality in online pornographic content - even when it depicts rape, since sexually penetrating a sleeping woman is rape - has become the primary tool for normalising, trivalising and eroticising sexist and sexual violence. »**

Remaining on the subject of the Pelicot case, Piques questions the perpetrators, the so-called « ordinary men » :

**« The common denominator among all these men was that they were completely influenced by this deeply misogynistic idea at the core of the pornographic system - that women are sexual objects, that women enjoy violence, and that it is sexually exciting to rape and torture women. »**

Platforms facilitate this violence, such as Coco.fr, which was used for years by Dominique Pélicot to recruit rapists and for thousands of men to distribute illegal content or organize the pimping of women and girls, as well as Telegram, where groups share methods for raping women. Pornographic platforms and live streaming services profit from these violent and degrading videos, as does OnlyFans, which Céline Piques refers to as a pimping network.

**« Who are the culprits ? The pimps and rapists, of course, but also the platforms. First and foremost, the pornographic platforms, as this is their core business : Pornhub, Xvideo, Xhamster, OnlyFans, and all the pornographic and live streaming sites that make their money off it. Their business model is to profit from sexist and sexual violence committed against women. »**

It is essential to hold these platforms accountable, just as it is essential to recognise pornography as part of a continuum of sexist and sexual violence :

**« It's a way for men to prolong the suffering of victims. Not only is there the initial act of sexual violence, but also by distributing these videos on pornographic websites, they allow the abuse of these women to continue, to perpetuate their suffering. »**

In the « French Bukkake » and « Jacquie et Michel » cases, in which Osez le Féminisme joined as a civil party, it is crucial to name the acts for what they are - torture and sadism - and to fight against the « newspeak » used to mask the reality of the violence. The terms « cinema », « freedom » and « consent » are questioned, reminding us that freedom cannot justify the violation of the rights of others, and that consent cannot be invoked to legitimise torture or exploitation.

**« You cannot consent to your own torture, your own degradation, your own sexual exploitation. »**

Finally, she calls for strong action and European regulation to end impunity for online violence and to combat sexual exploitation and cyberviolence.



# ROXANA MARACINEANU

## Secretary General of Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Human Trafficking (MIPROF)

Roxana Maracineanu presented the work of MIPROF, the Interdepartmental Unit for Protecting Women Against Violence and for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Its work includes training, publishing data on violence against women and human trafficking, and coordinating public policies to fight all forms of exploitation.

**« MIPROF's missions are grounded in European and international legal frameworks that establish fundamental principles: the protection of women, girls and vulnerable individuals, respect for human dignity, and equal access to rights for all. I want this context to be systematically referenced in the tools we develop. »**

The Istanbul Convention is a key text, as it affirms that violence against women is a persistent expression of structural oppression - including violence committed online.

**« This is a form of terrorism against women. »**

We must fight against this terrorism. The directive 2024/1385 adopted on 14 May 2024 is a major step forward in this respect. This text provides EU Member States with a common framework for combating violence against women, reinforcing their commitment to take action against both offline and online violence. It addresses phenomena such as cybersurveillance, the sharing of non-consensual intimate images, online harassment and deepfakes - all of which exacerbate and prolong the harm suffered by victims.

A second directive, the 2024/1712, adopted in June 2024, focuses on combating human trafficking, placing greater emphasis on the protection and support of victims, especially children. It also broadens the definition of trafficking to include new forms of exploitation such as forced marriage, surrogacy and illegal adoption. Each year on April 13 - the anniversary of the 2016 law - MIPROF will publish a thematic newsletter with the National Observatory on Violence against Women.

**« Collecting, analysing and publishing this data is absolutely essential. We can only effectively combat what we measure with precision. »**

Finally, she concluded by reaffirming MIPROF's three priority areas: ensuring access to support for all victims supported by associations, securing residence rights for foreign victims, and guaranteeing all survivors access to justice and reparations.

## REEM ALSALEM

### United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against girls and women

Reem Alsalem began her speech by reaffirming her ongoing commitment, throughout her mandate, to fighting online violence and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, in particular online sexual exploitation :

**« The mandate has said that [...] there's a very clear gendered dimension to exploitation and violence against women and girls, because they are women and girls both offline and online. »**

She discussed her report on prostitution and pornography, which she sees as a form of online sexual exploitation. Pornography is an integral component of the prostitution system - the only difference being that it is filmed.

**« Both [pornography and prostitution] are actually systems of exploitation, forms of violence against women and girls. Also, the actors that are involved are the same. »**

At an international level, there remains significant difficulty in achieving recognition of pornography as a system of violence and exploitation. Dominant discourse tends to distinguish between « harmful pornography » - when it involves children - and « acceptable pornography » - when it involves adults. However, in both cases, it involves exploitation and violence.

**« My view on this following the inquiry I did for the report is that all forms of pornography are harmful because, as I said, they de facto result in egregious violations of human rights, rights that are fundamental, that involve the safety, dignity, humanity and equality of those that are being prostituted in pornography. »**

The impact of pornography extends to society as a whole : its

consumption has harmful consequences on sexual behaviour, contributing to the normalisation of violence in intimate relationships by encouraging the imitation of aggressive acts. It also encourages the commodification and hypersexualisation of women, while reinforcing sexist stereotypes.

**« It is very clear to me that we cannot ever pretend to achieve gender equality if we normalise the consumption of pornography. »**

In her report, she calls on states to recognise pornography for what it is : a system of exploitation and violence. She stresses the need to hold platforms - and all the tools that facilitate access to this content - accountable. States are also urged to relinquish any profit derived from hosting the HQs websites of pornography companies. The ultimate goal is the total prohibition of pornography. A critical first step is the strict regulation of the age of those accessing such content.

She concluded by stressing the importance of awareness campaigns, which must be continued and strengthened :

**« We should really equip young people with real practical skills that allow them to navigate the media and understand the difference between what is real and what is not, so that they can also navigate all the dangers of that world. »**

# ALYSSA AHRABARE

## President of the French Coordination for the European Women's Lobby (CLEF)

Alyssa Ahrabare introduced the speakers on the first panel, stressing that the last decade has seen an upsurge in online violence, which is part of a broader continuum of existing violence against women, girls and children.

**« It is not so much new forms of violence that are emerging, but new tools that are used to facilitate existing forms of violence that find their roots in existing systems of inequality and domination. »**

Until recently, online violence against women and girls - such as the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, online harassment, cybersurveillance and incitement to sexist hate speech - lacked any clear legal framework on a European and an international level. While regulations exist today, they remain insufficient or poorly enforced. For example, the Digital Services Act does not adequately address online violence against women, and the same applies to the AI Act. Sometimes, the issue lies in the interpretation of these texts. For example, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides for a « right to be forgotten. » However, this right is almost exclusively applied in favour of website users including pornographic sites, overlooking girls and women who are the primary victims of online violence. In particular, there is currently no effective recourse to ensure the removal of intimate content posted without consent, or images of sexual violence.

**« It leads to something that has been defined by survivors as a « social death. »**

This mirrors what occurred in the 1980s, when the pornographic magazine Hustler was sued for publishing intimate photos of women without their consent. Today, this form of violence has become a powerful tool for abusers to exert control.

**« Technology can be used in an overall context of coercive control and an existing context of domestic violence or intimate relationship violence. »**

To address this urgent issue, it is necessary to hold not only pornographic sites accountable, but also search engines, Internet service providers and governments :

**« 68% of the access to deepfake pornography goes through Google. And so there is a responsibility also of these search engines, these big platforms, they are not innocent in this system of promoting and profiting from violence against women and girls. »**

This issue can be compared to the fight against terrorism. In this context, there are effective mechanisms at the EU level for removing online content within hours of it being reported. However, such timely responses do not apply to sexual violence content.

Alyssa Ahrabare concluded by introducing the first panelist, Evin Incir, noting that she is the rapporteur for the European Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, adopted in 2024.

## **EVIN INCIR**

**Swedish MEP, rapporteur for Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against girls and women**

Evin Incir began by thanking the associations that played a part in the adoption of the European Directive, in particular the European Women's Lobby, as well as Maria Noichl and Hélène Fritzson. She emphasised that without their commitment, this progress would not have been possible :

**« [It] took thirty years to not only put [this directive] on the table, but also to have it adopted. »**

She then emphasised the importance of addressing online violence, illustrating her point with a personal anecdote : her encounter with a young girl who had been the victim of online violence. When she tried to file a complaint, she was met with indifference from the police, who reportedly told her : **« Maybe you're too opinionated »**. This example shows that society and its institutions remain ill-equipped to respond to online violence. Yet, whether it occurs online or offline, all forms of violence are violations of fundamental rights. Guaranteeing protection for victims must not come at the expense of individual freedoms :

**« We need to be able to do both : as we can do offline, we must also be able to do online. We need to be able to combat crimes as well as find a way of ensuring privacy and integrity. »**

In addition to the issue of freedom of expression, two other topics sparked intense debate: the question of prostitution and the inclusion of consent-based rape legislation. With regard to prostitution, she expressed her disappointment at the opposition of certain political groups, notably the liberals and the Greens, who threatened to reject the entire text if this issue was included.

**« I was shocked, but in 2024 and today, 2025, there are still women who think that prostitution is something that somebody does because they want to. »**

Despite this resistance, a significant breakthrough was achieved : Member States that allow prostitution will now be required to offer exit programs for those involved in prostitution.

In addition, she claimed that the recognition of rape based on the absence of consent, which she sees as a major step forward, supported by a large majority in the European Parliament, was blocked by an alliance between Emmanuel Macron in France, German Justice Minister Buschmann and Viktor Orbán in Hungary. She opposed this outcome, stating : **« They, together with some other countries, constituted what is called a « blocking minority », which means that it cannot be added in. »**

Faced with this situation, she had two options: abandon the entire directive or denounce the obstruction - which she chose to oppose. Some criticised this decision, arguing that the directive should go beyond online violence alone.

**« It's the first [of its kind] on the EU level. As I've previously said : it's not everything we wanted, but it's one step forward. »**

Given the rise of the far right in the European Parliament, which now makes up a third of the chamber, postponing the vote could have jeopardised this progress for good. She concluded by affirming that the fight is not over :

**« We came halfway and the second half is still left, and the struggle continues. »**

# MARIANA BRANCO

## Researcher at the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights

Mariana Branco is writing her thesis on the OnlyFans platform and works for the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights, which is also part of the European Women's Lobby. She spoke about the difficulties she has encountered in accessing the platform's data as part of her research, before presenting OnlyFans. The platform offers new ways of sharing sexual content, made possible by its very permissive terms of use, which allow the buying and selling of this type of content. Although there are some apparent restrictions - such as a ban on the word 'Lolita', often associated with child pornography - this does not guarantee the absence of sexual abuse of minors or other forms of exploitation on the platform.

**« I would like to add that around 98% of content on OnlyFans is sexually explicit and even though this platform tries to make it seem like not all content from it is sexually explicit, that's not the fact. We know that 98% of it really is. »**

OnlyFans CEO Keily Blair presents the platform through a feminist lens, claiming that it empowers women to be free with their bodies. This defense is **« a very manipulative way of explaining what OnlyFans really is »** as it overlooks its direct connection to the pornography industry.

**« OnlyFans keeps 20% of every subscription, and the remaining 80% stay with the content creator. So we can actually debate if this is a pimp's cut or not. Some feminists would argue that it is, and so do I. »**

The platform has implemented numerous promotional offers to attract and retain subscribers, including 50% discounts for six months, and emphasises that interactions on OnlyFans differ from those on pornographic websites based on four main mechanisms :

- Private messages, which create the illusion of intimacy. **« Once you subscribe, you can interact with the person you've subscribed to. And this possibility basically creates the illusion of intimacy. »**
- Pay-per-strip, a form of live streaming where the person gradually undresses as tips are sent to them.

- Pay-per-view, where subscribers must pay an extra fee to access exclusive content, often more explicit and violent : **« I remember there was a girl from OnlyFans that used this pay-per-view way of advertising her content. And her content was her pretending to be raped in a garage. »**
- Personalised requests, which generally constitute the main source of income on OnlyFans.

She then addresses the issue of human trafficking on OnlyFans, noting that this phenomenon is **« nothing new »**. In 2021, the BBC had already conducted an investigation on the subject in the UK, but she explains that more recent research reveals an even more alarming picture. She specifically mentions the Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative and Awareness is Prevention, which conducted the largest investigation on the topic by subscribing to OnlyFans accounts :

**« In just two hours, they found numerous cases of potential victims of sex trafficking but also of sexual violence, including non-consensual sexual relationships, or rape. »**

There is a real difficulty in conducting in-depth investigations on the platform due to the high cost of subscriptions and the barriers in place : **« if you're not subscribing to this platform, then you don't have access to the whole of the content »**.

She concluded her remarks by addressing a major issue: the illegal distribution of OnlyFans content. She explained that many videos produced on the platform are reposted on pornographic websites such as Pornhub or circulated in Telegram groups. This dynamic contributes to the normalisation of OnlyFans, which, she noted, **« [has become] prevalent in our culture and our discourse online. »**

Mariana referred to a news article from Portugal highlighting that **« it's easier to take OnlyFans to court when subscribers feel like they are being fooled, as the news article reads, than it is to take to court when a woman has experienced sexual violence on this platform, has been sex trafficked, or has been the victim of any type of sexual violence, rape, etc. »**



# RUTH BRESLIN

## Director of the Institute for Policy Research on Sexual Exploitation at Dublin (SERP)

Before Ruth Breslin's presentation, Alyssa Ahrabare drew a connection between Mariana Branco's analysis of OnlyFans and the broader forms of exploitation : their common thread is pornography, which normalises violent practices. She referenced a UK report revealing a 200% increase in non-consensual content on Instagram - a platform intended for mainstream audiences. She then introduces Ruth Breslin, whose expertise at The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute offers key insights into the workings of this industry, from both a production and marketing strategy perspective.

Ruth began by explaining that the research conducted at the Institute focused on three key areas : prostitution, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and pornography. At the intersection of these issues were not only the women and girls who were exploited, but also the consumers of pornography, the buyers of sexual services, and all those who profited from these systems :

**« It is very clear from all the evidence we've gathered, from everything that we can see that's happening in the world and being discussed here today, that what oils the wheels in all of these aspects of the sex trade is technology. »**

This phenomenon was illustrated by an case : a vulnerable teenage girl is approached on Instagram by a pimp posing as a lover. He gradually lures her onto private message apps like Snapchat or WhatsApp, sending her money via a transfer app to get her to travel to meet him. Within hours, she is being exploited under the label of « independent escort ». As the trap closes in around her, her pimp monitors her phone, threatens to reveal her identity, and sometimes posts videos of his abuse on platforms like Pornhub. Even if she manages to escape, these recordings will remain permanently online.

**« This is a fictionalised case of course but it really reflects the evidence that is emerging from the sex trade and what victims and survivors of sexual exploitation are telling us. »**

She highlighted a clear inequality : victims are publicly exposed, with their identities rarely concealed, while pimps, traffickers, and sex buyers remain hidden behind the anonymity enabled by technology, thereby escaping accountability.

**« It is notable that women are advertised in this very explicit public way, while, of course, the sex buyers and the pimps and the traffickers who drive the trade use the online environment to remain anonymous and therefore protect it. »**

Online sexual exploitation is built on a central principle: explicit imagery of women and girls has come to be treated as « public property » :

**« Women and girl's bodies have become public property in the online world as well as offline. [...] Every minute of every day, such content is being sold, traded and shared, all facilitated and hugely amplified and mainstreamed by the technology itself. »**

This phenomenon fuels a widespread sense of impunity, and technological advances - particularly deepfakes, which now make it possible to create and share intimate images without consent - leave anyone vulnerable to such practices, with little fear of consequences for the perpetrators. She referred to a study conducted by the University of Edinburgh on the behaviour of men who had committed sexual violence against women :

**« One of the things they determined is that these men did not think that women or girls were quite as human as they are. They literally dehumanised them; they did not see them as fully human. »**

Despite this alarming reality, she concluded on a more hopeful note by reflecting on possible solutions. Based on a study she conducted in Ireland on the links between pornography and violence against women and girls, she argued that meaningful change requires a three-pronged approach: engaging in open and challenging dialogue, prioritising education and prevention to protect young girls from being drawn into the system, and dismantling the economic model that sustains the industry.

**« I think [we must really confront] the hold that the sex trade has on all our lives and how it's influencing intimate relationships and I think we can't shy away from these difficult discussions and we can't shy away from the painful reality for women and girls. »**

Later, during the discussion session, Ruth addressed the issue of consent in situations of economic necessity. She explained that, according to her research, everything is designed to create the illusion that women are consenting and are themselves inviting buyers to meet them. In her view, this performance distorts the debate on consent by ignoring the circumstances under which it is « given » :

**« In our study on pornography, we very much concluded that when it comes to girls, pornography has essentially groomed girls to quote unquote 'consent' to acts that they do not want, that they do not enjoy, including acts they find very painful, degrading, and acts that are downright dangerous like strangulation. »**

# SECOND PANEL

## **Pornocriminality and pedocriminality : a concern for equality, public health, and child protection**



**MIÉ KOHIYAMA**

Co-founder of the french branch  
of the Brave Movement



**ALIÉNOR LAURENT** 

Président of Osez le Féminisme



**MARÍA HERNÁNDEZ-MORA** 

PhD in Psychology, Clinical Psychologist,  
and Psychotherapist



**LAURENCE ROSSIGNOL** 

French Senator



## **CÉLINE PIQUES**

Writer of the High Council for Equality's  
report on pornocriminality,  
representative of Osez le Féminisme



## **HÉLÈNE FRITZON**

Swedish MEP,  
Rapporteur of the FEMM Committee

## MIÉ KOHIYAMA

### Co-founder of the french branch of the Brave Movement

Mié Kohiyama presented the Brave Movement, an initiative of the NGO Together for Girls, which has been committed for over ten years to combating sexual violence against women and girls. This movement places particular emphasis on centering the voices of survivors, giving them a leading role in the fight against such violence. She then introduced the documentary Be Brave France, a project written by survivors of online sexual exploitation, which serves to amplify their testimonies and lived experiences.

## ALIÉNOR LAURENT

### Président of Osez le Féminisme

Aliénor Laurent opened the second panel discussion, which focused on the impact of the dissemination and consumption of pornography on the mental and sexual health of both adult and child consumers. She emphasised that one of the most concerning effects is the global influence of this industry on social norms, positioning pornography as a dominant reference point for sexuality - particularly among young people :

**« On average, children are exposed to such content from the age of 10, and half of 12-year-old boys consume it every month. »**

Minors are doubly exposed : first, as consumers, influenced by distorted portrayals of relationships between women and men - particularly given that access to pornographic content, though legally prohibited for minors, remains unchecked in the absence of effective regulation; and second, as victims of the pornography industry and of sexual exploitation.

**« Pornocriminality and child sexual abuse are systemic realities that demand urgent political and societal action. Fighting this industry means first and foremost protecting its victims - especially women and children. Fighting this industry also means directly confronting the inequality of the sexes in our society. »**

Finally, she introduced the various speakers and gave the floor to María Hernández-Mora, a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist specializing in behavioral addictions, who authored the first thesis in France on pornography addiction.

## MARÍA HERNÁNDEZ-MORA

PhD in Psychology, Clinical Psychologist, and Psychotherapist

María Hernández-Mora began her remarks by explaining that, through her work and her involvement with the association Déclic, she meets daily with individuals suffering from severe compulsive pornography use.

**« 90% of the adults who come to see me started watching porn before or during puberty. This means that exposure to pornography in childhood is one of the main risk factors for developing an addiction later on, and also a major risk factor for developing sexually violent behaviour, particularly through processes of desensitisation and learned behavior. »**

She then highlighted several key data points, including the fact that according to ARCOM, one in two 12-year-old boys in France visits pornographic websites at least once a month. In Spain, studies also show that many adolescents aged 12 to 17 have accumulated over 1,000 hours of pornography viewing.

**« What happens between the ages of 12 and 18 - and I would even say up to 25, because the brain only fully matures at 25 - lays the foundation, the backbone, of our future psychological, emotional, and relational life. [...] So you can imagine that if a teenager is exposed to 1,000 hours of pornography, we are creating a future adult with serious psychopathological and relational risks. »**

Regarding pornography consumption among children and adolescents - though she notes there would be much to say about adults too, as one in four French people consumes pornographic content - she emphasizes that the first exposure to pornography typically occurs at the age of 9, and it has a profound impact on psychological development :

**« That first exposure is a traumatic one. That's inevitable. A brain that hasn't been sexualised - because it hasn't reached puberty - cannot process the content it's seeing. [...] That initial shock leads to what we call « psychic freezing ». The child, the young teenager, is stunned, overwhelmed by images they cannot make sense of. But at the same time as this psychic paralysis, they experience intense pleasure and fascination - because pornography is designed and produced specifically to directly and instantly stimulate our brain's pleasure system, the dopamine-driven reward system. »**

Since the brain reaches maturity at 25, everything to which it is exposed during this period influences its development. Pornography consumption thus alters the brain circuits related to control, willpower, and impulsivity, promoting aggressive behaviour. To scientifically demonstrate this point, she summarises the findings of the 55 most rigorous studies on the link between pornography and violence, with the most recent studies dating from 2022-2023. These studies show that consuming pornography increases the risk of sexual assault and coercion : young boys who consume pornography are 2.5 times more likely to develop aggressive behaviours. For girls, the risk of becoming a victim is quadrupled, due to the eroticisation of violence. Furthermore, some girls, especially those who have already been exposed to sexual violence, consume pornography to relive their trauma and plunge themselves back into a dissociative state, thus reinforcing the mechanisms of psychic vulnerability :

**« This leads to girls as young as 12 or 13 agreeing to sex acts like anal sex, for instance. This creates genuine sexual trauma that can later result in psychopathological symptoms and severe mental health impairments, which you can imagine are extremely serious. »**

The second point concerns cyberviolence : young girls partly build their self-esteem and femininity through the virtual lens, where pornography shapes sexuality according to masculine norms dictated by the pornography industry. Finally, pornography encourages the internalisation of rape myths and desensitises individuals to pain - both their own and others':

**« Not every consumer is an aggressor, fortunately ! The risk factors for becoming an aggressor include impulsivity, emotional dysregulation, insecure attachment, difficulties with inhibition, intolerance to frustration, and sometimes a history of trauma. »**



These studies thus demonstrate that the objectification of women, the dissociation between sexuality and affectivity, and the adoption of violent patterns significantly increase the risks of engaging in violent behaviour. She concludes :

**« As long as pornography remains a widely consumed cultural product (shaping our perceptions), as long as human beings are seen as objects rather than subjects, and as long as sex is treated as a commodity rather than a relational experience, we will see the prevalence of sexual violence grow unchecked, both online and offline. »**

During the Q&A session, she responded to Laurence Rossignol's intervention, which advocated for a focus on public health rather than regulation. She highlighted an alarming statistic from the Direction de la Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse (Directorate of Judicial Protection of Youth) : 1 in 2 cases of child rape is committed by another minor. This rising trend since the proliferation of smartphones suggests a direct link to the exposure of young people to pornography. She also answered a question about the recognition of « pornographic actresses » in the street by men, explaining that this didn't surprise her. People addicted to pornography develop a psychopathological mechanism that regulates the traumatic deterrence, embedding numerous images and details in their memory.

She specifies : **« Pornographic images are so powerful, and pornographic violence is so well filmed, that it leaves traces in the memory circuit. So, in fact, these images remain vivid and lasting in people's memories »** and adds **« It's the same as with trauma : when we experience a very intense physical trauma, our body remains frozen in that sensation because it's so intense that it can't process it. With pornography, there is something similar to that ».**

# LAURENCE ROSSIGNOL

## French Senator

Before speaking, Aliénor Laurent presented the report *Porn : Hell Behind the Scenes*, co-written by Laurence Rossignol and submitted to the Senate. This report, produced by the delegation for women's rights, reveals pornography as a global cultural phenomenon that promotes the commodification of bodies and the normalisation of sexist and racist violence. It also highlights its impact on the imagination and behaviours of young people, an issue that has been largely overlooked in public policies.

Laurence Rossignol opened her speech by expressing that she was pleased to present the report, its context, and provide an overview. She highlighted the challenges encountered during its drafting in a Senate that was predominantly right-wing, where some reactions had been hostile. Nevertheless, she emphasised the importance of its publication, as it marked the first time a public institution had recognised pornography as an issue to be addressed by public policies. Since then, further progress had been made, such as the report by the High Council for Equality *PORNOCRIMINALITY : Putting an end to impunity in the pornography industry*, and the law of 21 May 2024, aimed at Securing and Regulating the Digital Space (SREN).

She then discussed the shortcomings of this law : child protection had been downplayed in favour of consumer data protection. Prior to this regulation, a law had already prohibited minors from accessing pornography, but it had been ineffective, as no concrete measures had been imposed on platforms to enforce it. According to her, the solution chosen was flawed because it operated under the belief that the digital space was an area of absolute freedom, to the detriment of child protection.

One example concerned videos depicting relationships between adults and minors. She explained that, at that time, according to Europol and French services, in a very restrictive manner, a scene was only considered child pornography if the « actor » was truly a minor, often under the age of 15 or 18. She and her team had attempted to introduce a measure that would classify any scene where an adult, even of legal age, was portrayed in a manner that evoked a child as an endorsement of child sexual exploitation. However, this proposal had not been

adopted.

In light of these findings, a new strategy had to be adopted: abandoning the regulatory approach for a more radical stance, aiming for a total ban on pornography in order to treat this issue as a public health matter. She reminded the audience that there was no fundamental right to consume pornography. Given its proven toxicity, the battle had to be fought at the European level so that this issue was genuinely recognised as a public health concern :

**« I searched the 1946 preamble, The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and the 1958 Constitution, and I could not find where the right to consume pornography is granted to human beings. Given that there is no right and that there is proven toxicity, the situation is clear. In relation to the European Union, there is a battle to be fought to ensure that the issue of the porn industry is seen not as a matter of entrepreneurial freedom, but as a public health concern. »**

She also stressed the importance of fighting within the national education system by limiting the digitalisation of communication tools in schools and returning to paper-based resources. According to her, the early exposure of children to digital tools encourages their access to pornographic images.

**« Regarding child protection, we need to be much clearer about the criminal offence that should apply to the exposure of children to pornographic images. »**

Finally, she concluded by emphasising that this battle is made more difficult by the infiltration of conspiracy theorists and fascist movements in the fight against child sexual abuse. She therefore called for a rigorous and feminist approach to avoid any ideological hijacking.

During the Q&A session, she revisited the topic of raising public awareness about pornography, stressing that any regulation requires political will, which is currently lacking both in France and at the European level. According to her, focusing on regulation is illusory, as even if laws were passed, their implementation would remain impossible due to a lack of resources. **« The issue of regulation is an illusion »** she asserted, instead calling for a shift in the debate towards public health. She also addressed the question of the distinction between minors and adults, which is often used to prohibit certain content or products for

minors. In her view, this approach is ineffective, citing the examples of alcohol and tobacco, which remain easily accessible to minors despite legal prohibitions.

## CÉLINE PIQUES

Writer of the High Council for Equality's report on  
pornocriminality, representative of Osez le Féminisme

Céline Piques began by recalling that she often works with Laurence Rossignol, who co-authored the first report on pornocriminality in the Senate, and that she herself wrote the second for the High Council on Equality, making their analyses complementary. She then emphasised the importance of distinguishing between child pornography and child sexual abuse, a confusion that remains too common, even within Pharos, the platform responsible for regulating online content :

**« Child pornography is defined by European Directive 93-2011, which specifies that child pornography is « any material that visually represents a person who appears to be a child, engaged in sexually explicit behaviour, whether real or simulated. » »**

It is therefore not necessary to prove a person's minority for content to be classified as **« child pornography »** as highlighted by Article 227-23 of the Penal Code, which prohibits the recording, filming, or transmission of images involving a minor in a sexual context. However, Pharos does not apply this provision. This approach is shocking, especially given that the terms « teen » and « daddy » collectively account for 297,000 and 138,750 videos on French pornographic platforms, depicting minors or incestuous situations.

**« Pharos, looking us straight in the eyes, told us : « From the moment puberty hits, which is around 10 years old today, we're not really sure if it's truly child pornography, so we don't block it. » »**

She goes on to discuss the more restrictive definition of child sexual abuse, which involves sexual violence against a child, filmed and distributed, rather than just a representation, before addressing the issue of the « pornification » of young people - where they start to imitate pornographic acts. Although regulations regarding minors'

access to pornography were implemented in France in 2020 and again in 2024, these measures remain ineffective.

**« We're promised that it will work, but it never does, so there really needs to be criminal responsibility for the platform leaders. We need to move to the next level. »**

If children as young as 10 or 11 are exposed to pornography, it constitutes a real form of violence, a « psychic rape » :

**« Once we label this act as « psychic rape », we must consider this exposure as something that is criminally reprehensible, a form of violence in itself. »**

She also highlights a difference in exposure between boys and girls : while for boys, pornography serves as a « manual » for the culture of rape, girls are often forced into these situations, which she considers an act of violence in itself.

This leads to a second reflection rarely discussed: the psychotraumatology mechanism. When a woman has been a victim of child sexual abuse, post-traumatic symptoms can include traumatic amnesia but also a need to enter a state of emotional numbness, produced by dissociative states. This mechanism makes her more vulnerable to sexist and sexual violence in adulthood. Moreover, it can also result in traumatic arousal, a phenomenon in which the victim feels aroused in response to violent situations, such as sexuality marked by violence or the consumption of pornography.

**« It's not sexuality, it's a reactivation of trauma. [...] We need to understand these psychotraumatology mechanisms, which make it possible for women to feel - because it's not really sexual pleasure - that they derive pleasure from reliving sexual violence through pornography. »**

Additionally, the pornification of women's bodies is pervasive and influences how women and young girls perceive their bodies, resulting in an increase in cosmetic surgery, such as labiaplasty.

**« Today, children and teenagers are having their labia reduced to meet the visual codes of pornography. »**

Finally, she highlights the link between pedocriminality and the exposure of young people to pornography: incestuous fathers often make their children watch these images to shock them, in order to then abuse them. In some cases, they even go so far as to film these scenes. According to the Office for the Prevention of Violence Against Minors (OFMIN) : **« Not all live streaming sponsors or consumers of child pornography videos and photos act on it, but everyone who has acted on it has watched these images at least once. In about 15% of cases, they become producers, abusers, or accomplices. »** This explains why **« there is a very clear continuum between the content that dominates the imaginations of young people and the rise of child sexual abuse. »**

## HÉLÈNE FRITZON

Swedish MEP, rapporteur of the FEMM Committee

Hélène Fritzson highlighted the privilege she has of working in politics at multiple levels : locally as a mayor, nationally as a minister, and now internationally as a member of the European Parliament. She emphasised the importance of effective cooperation across these different levels to build a strong society. She then spoke about her role as a rapporteur on legislation aimed at protecting children online. She acknowledged the difficulties in addressing these issues within the European Parliament, particularly due to the strong presence of the right-wing in the chamber, but remained committed to the cause. Her goal is to secure an opinion from the Gender Equality and Women's Rights Committee in Sweden on this text.

**« As a mother and grandmother, I always say that when my son plays football, I will be there. I can watch the match, and I can talk about it when we get home. But when they're in the digital world, are we there ? No, it's harder for us to be present. I think we're not all there. »**

She then moved on to discuss sexual violence against children, which she considers a form of male violence, whether it occurs online or offline. Referring to numerous reports, she affirmed :

**« We have many reports - and as you've said many times, 9 out of 10 victims are young girls, while the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men. »**

To combat the perpetuation of these crimes, it is essential to adopt a gender-sensitive approach within the European Parliament. Hélène Fritzon highlighted the key areas she prioritises in her work: prevention, health, sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion, and the issue of consent - **« because only « yes » means « yes ».**

»Therefore, there is a need to implement strict laws on online content, criminalise AI-generated content, and increase prevention campaigns. She gave an example of a prevention program in Sweden where children are taught « Stop means Kropp! » which means « Stop, it's my body! » : **« So children are always able to say it. They know that when you want to hug them, they're used to saying « Stop, it's my body » if they don't want it. This is very good because you're teaching them from the start to be proud and make their own decisions. »**

A real setback has occurred in recent years regarding equality. According to a report from the European Union, it would take at least another 60 years to achieve equality between the sexes in Europe, an unacceptable wait that requires swift action. She stressed the urgency of recognising male violence against women as a crime at the European level and reminded everyone that her daily fight aims to make Europe **« a place where equality, justice, and human rights are protected, especially for children and the youngest. »**

# KEYNOTE SPEECHES



**ALYSSA AHRABARE**



President of the French Coordination  
for the European Women's Lobby (CLEF)



**AURORE BERGE**



Minister Delegate for Equality between  
Women and Men and  
the Fight against Discrimination



**ALEXANDRA LOUIS**



Interministerial Delegate for Victim Support



**DELPHINE O**



Ambassador, Secretary General of the  
Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25)



**MARIA JOÃO FAUSTINO**



Member of the executive committee  
of the European Women's Lobby



# ALYSSA AHRABARE

President of the French Coordination for the European Women's Lobby (CLEF)

Alyssa Ahrabare began by inviting the audience to recall the worst humiliation they had ever experienced, and then to imagine that moment being filmed and permanently accessible online. In doing so, she illustrated the reality faced by victims of online sexual exploitation. The impossibility of removing such videos, she explained, constituted **« a silencing tool, a coercive tool, a form of social death, humiliation and constant retraumatisation, which repeats itself and gives rise to further forms of violence. »** This reality, she argued, was unfortunately not addressed by national or transnational legal frameworks. Pornographic platforms, functioning as zones where the law was not enforced, perpetuated **« a confusion between sexuality and violence »**.

She then linked this to the inadequacy of the concept of consent in describing sexual violence, drawing a parallel with debates in French law on the introduction of consent into the legal definition of rape - a move she considered counterproductive : **« Violence does not stop being violence simply because one consents to it. »**

It is therefore a mistake to talk about consent in the context of sexual violence. What is considered 'consent' in a context of structural inequality, in a context of systemic domination by men over women, in a context of coercion, violence or dependence (economic, administrative), is very often surrendered rather than a free and informed choice. Moreover, she stressed that under no circumstances should it be possible to consent to violations of one's bodily integrity or human dignity. She cited law professor Muriel Fabre-Magnan : **« In law, consent does not liberate - it binds »** and highlighted how this principle, which appears straightforward in contractual relationships, becomes deeply problematic when applied to sexuality :

**« Often, the invocation of consent is ultimately an act of surrender - an acceptance of inevitability - rather than a full and autonomous decision that could erase the traumatic nature and lasting negative consequences of acts such as torture, rape, humiliation, or even misogynistic or racist insults, as are frequently seen in pornographic videos. »**

She then addressed the limitations of current legislation tackling violence against women, focusing in particular on Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. This Directive required EU Member States to criminalise the public sharing of images without consent - but only in cases where the content was accessible without human intervention, in so-called « public » spaces. As a result, so-called « private » spaces, such as Facebook groups, WhatsApp chats, or subscription-based platforms like OnlyFans, were excluded from its scope. Yet, it is precisely in these private spaces that such violence is proliferating. For this reason, she stressed the need for a joint advocacy effort to ensure the Directive is implemented in a way that is more protective than the text itself, in order to overcome these excessive limitations. She also criticised the Directive's overcautious framing, particularly its insistence on the concept of « **serious harm** », which narrowed the scope of its application. This excessive caution, she argued, reflected a continued reluctance to acknowledge the real and serious nature of online violence and its consequences for victims.

On the matter of freedom of expression, Alyssa Ahrabare pointed out that it is not absolute, citing the European Convention on Human Rights, which explicitly allows for restrictions on free expression to protect the rights and reputations of others. Therefore, she argued, it is entirely legitimate to restrict freedom of expression - proportionately - when it serves to protect women, girls, and children.

Regarding the regulation of platforms that profit directly from the sexual exploitation of others - such as OnlyFans - she stated that regulation alone was insufficient, since this amounted to a form of pimping.

Finally, Alyssa called for concrete and ambitious action at both the national and European levels, underlining that transnational cooperation was essential in the fight against online violence against women. In light of the urgency, she concluded : « **Inaction is no longer an option.** »

## AURORE BERGÉ

### Minister Delegate for Equality between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination

Aurore Bergé opened her speech by expressing her gratitude to the associations without whom many battles would never have been fought - let alone won :

**« Online sexual exploitation, pornocriminality, and child sexual abuse are scourges. Scourges that are eating away at our society and threatening the safety of millions - millions of women and children - around the world. »**

She emphasised that pornography promotes a vision of sexuality based on stereotypes of submission and violence towards women, and that this demands a firm response to protect victims. The internet, she argued, must not be a lawless space : children must be safeguarded not only from exposure to pornography, but also from the risks of sexual exploitation.

She also underlined that freedom of expression has limits and cannot be used as a justification for the dissemination of hate speech or violent content.

In conclusion, she declared : **« It is therefore our duty to fight them relentlessly. Our government, our governments, the European Union, and the platforms all share a collective responsibility - and we must ensure proper age verification for access to pornographic websites and take immediate action to remove violent content. The protection of consumers of such content must no longer serve - as it currently does - as an excuse for inaction. »**

## ALEXANDRA LOUIS

### Interministerial Delegate for Victim Support

Alexandra Louis began by quoting a few phrases that downplayed the seriousness of online violence compared to that committed offline. Yet, today, it was impossible to separate our « real life » from our « virtual life », and we all too often underestimated the dangers. She believed that adapting our society to this digital world and protecting ourselves

from it represented « **the challenge of the century** » and called for a collective fight, both nationally and internationally.

As the Interministerial Delegate for Victim Support, she explained that her mission was to improve victim support systems across the country. However, this objective could only be achieved through « **collective and individual awareness** », as the severity of online sexual violence was still underestimated. She then referred to the law for which she had been rapporteur in 2021, which made it easier to prosecute certain forms of sexual violence against minors - particularly by criminalising the solicitation of pornographic images from a minor or inciting a minor to engage in sexual acts electronically. She reflected on the challenges encountered in getting these advances passed, illustrating her point with a disturbing case: a schoolgirl was trapped on social media by a predator posing as a teenage girl who shared her interest in fashion. After weeks of conversation, he asked her for topless photos, then drew her into a spiral of blackmail and extreme violence. The investigation revealed that this individual had already targeted around fifty others, but the absence of a specific offence led to him being treated as an offender rather than a criminal, which allowed for his release after six months in pre-trial detention - before he immediately reoffended. This case highlighted the urgent need to strengthen enforcement tools to better protect victims and punish these crimes according to their gravity.

**« It is essential that the repressive response adapts, but also that our society fully recognises the seriousness of the issue. And, of course, we must hold platforms accountable. »**

To that end, several measures were proposed : strengthening the training and awareness of police officers, magistrates and lawyers; developing a proactive « outreach » approach to identify victims before they came forward; and improving support beyond the legal framework by including social and psychological care, as well as assistance with employment or parenting difficulties. She went on to highlight a crucial statistic : nearly 1 in 2 women did not know where to turn in the event of an assault. This situation required an urgent response :

**« I believe we need a genuine public victim support service to allow victims - even before they become victims - to know who to contact and where to go to receive comprehensive support that addresses all the dimensions I've mentioned. »**

She emphasised the importance of increasing public awareness of psychotrauma in order to improve victim support : understanding its effects would not only make it easier for survivors to speak out - often hindered by trauma - but also help people recognise that one cannot simply « go back to normal life » through sheer will.

She concluded : **« There is still much work to be done, but I am convinced that in any democratic society, support for victims and respect for human dignity must always come first. »**

## **DELPHINE O**

### **Ambassador, Secretary General of the Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25)**

Delphine O addressed the issue of combating sexist and sexual violence in an international context with a detailed and technical approach. From the outset, she clarified her choice of the term « cyberviolence » which implicitly referred to online sexist and sexual violence, and explained that at the international legal level, the expression used is « technology-facilitated sexual and gender-based violence ». This term encompasses many forms of violence suffered by women and girls, such as doxing, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and sextortion. She also pointed out that technology facilitates offline violence, citing Apple's AirTags - originally designed to locate objects - as tools hijacked by violent partners or ex-partners for surveillance and intimidation.

At the multilateral level, she highlighted that foundational treaties on women's rights, such as CEDAW (1979) and the Beijing Declaration (1995), made no mention of cyberviolence, as it did not exist at the time of their adoption. This legal gap makes it challenging to address such violence at the international level.

However, since 2022 there have been major breakthroughs :

- In 2022, the UN Commission on the Status of Women enabled, for the first time, negotiations among 193 states on the question of surrounding cyberviolence.
- In 2024, the Global Digital Compact included recognition of « technology-facilitated sexual and gender-based violence » though this recognition was non-binding.

- A UN resolution introduced by France and the Netherlands and adopted by 170 countries stressed the need to combat impunity and to require platforms to remove violent content.

**« In international law, particularly when it comes to the rights of women and girls, progress is made step by step, beginning with non-binding resolutions. »**

At the European level, she explained that in 2023 she spearheaded the creation of the Laboratory for Women's Rights Online, designed as a platform for exchange and an incubator for projects, launched within the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. **« I was absolutely committed to using the term « Women's Rights' and not just « Women's Protection ». »** This programme funds feminist initiatives in countries of the Global South (such as Nigeria, Palestine, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic) to develop innovative technological solutions to combat cyber-violence.

She then addressed a growing threat: the emergence of AI as a **« new frontier »** of cyberviolence, particularly through the proliferation of pornographic deepfakes : **« 96% of deepfakes are pornographic in nature, and 99% of these target women and girls. »**

She quoted Claire McGlynn, a global expert on the subject : **« These images are just as real to the victims » who « describe the dissemination of these deepfakes as sexual assault, even rape »**. She noted that only the UK and South Korea had proposed legislation to criminalise deepfakes, and warned that some states **« themselves use cyberviolence to silence feminist voices »**. She concluded by affirming France's commitment to continuing the fight **« at the intersection of gender and digital issues. »**

## MARIA JOÃO FAUSTINO

Member of the executive committee of the European Women's Lobby

Maria João Faustino questioned the terminology used to describe sexually explicit deepfakes, emphasising the importance of using language that accurately conveys the seriousness of these acts. She pointed out that the term « deepfake » was originally coined by a

perpetrator of abuse, and advocated instead for more appropriate expressions such as « sexual digital forgeries » (Mary Anne Franks) or « deepfake sexual abuse » (Claire McGlynn), both of which clearly situate these practices within the realm of sexual violence.

She rejected the association with the word « pornography », arguing that it diminishes the gravity of the acts and ties them to an industry already steeped in violence. As an alternative, she proposed terms such as « pornified abuse » or « pornified violence », stressing that these are not just violations, but pornographic manifestations of attacks on sexual integrity. Likewise, she criticised the expression « revenge porn », saying it fails to reflect the true extent of the violence - a view shared by many survivors themselves.

She also warned of the global scale of the deepfakes phenomenon : **« It's happening everywhere. In schools, teenagers receive nudified images of themselves, by their colleagues, and it's very understandable why. »** She explained this proliferation by pointing to the easy access to technology : **« The democratisation of technology brought at the same time the democratisation of abuse. »**

In response, she called for a comprehensive, victim-centred approach, insisting on the need to criminalise not only the distribution of deepfakes, but also their production : **« If we allow the production of deepfakes to continue, we know that they will be found through Google, they will be promoted on Facebook and Instagram. »** Strict prohibition of such violence is the key to combating it. Strict prohibition of such violence is the key to combating it.

# THIRD PANEL

## Addressing prostitution : the impact of different policy models in europe



**HÉMA SIBI**   
Director of CAP International




**MARIA NOICHL**   
German MEP, rapporteur of the  
European Parliament's September 2023  
resolution on prostitution



**ADAMA-SIRA LE BLAY**   
President of the European Network  
of Migrant Women



**FRANÇOISE BRIÉ**   
Representative of Amicale du Nid,  
Vice-President of CLEF,  
and former GREVIO member





**STÉPHANIE CARADEC**



Director of Mouvement du Nid

Héma Sibi, Director of the Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, introduced her organisation, which brings together 35 grassroots associations from 28 countries - most of them founded by survivors of prostitution. Together, they support nearly 19,000 prostituted persons and victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation across the globe. The coalition advocates for the adoption of the abolitionist model, which recognises prostitution as a form of violence.

**« Prostitution is a form of violence that fits into the continuum of violence against women and it is fully part of online sexist and sexual violence. »**

She then presented the three legislative models for prostitution :

- The prohibitionist model, which criminalises all parties involved in prostitution, including prostituted persons, treating them as offenders : **« This model has proven to be widely ineffective and represents a real setback in terms of women's rights - particularly the rights of prostituted women, since it considers them as criminals. »**
- The regulationist model, which views prostitution as work, decriminalising not only prostituted persons but also pimps and sex buyers : **« This model has had absolutely disastrous consequences on the human rights of prostituted individuals. »**
- The abolitionist model, which recognises prostitution as a form of violence, is based on four pillars : decriminalising prostituted persons, providing exit strategies and appropriate support, fighting demand by banning the purchase of sexual acts, and criminalising pimping in all its forms, including brothel owners.

**« So we have this path - a kind of path for the future - but in the digital age, it raises many questions and many challenges »** including the emergence of new platforms like OnlyFans or Mym which, **« under the guise of glamorising prostitution, actually facilitate the exploitation of the most vulnerable. »**

She concluded by introducing Maria Noichl, German MEP from the Social Democratic Party, and rapporteur of the European Parliament's resolution on prostitution in the EU and its cross-border impact on equality.

## MARIA NOICHL

### German MEP, rapporteur of the European Parliament's September 2023 resolution on prostitution

Maria Noichl presented the conclusions of the European Parliament's resolution on prostitution, drawing on the German context and the challenges related to online prostitution. She explained that her commitment, before being taken to the European Parliament, began with a fight within her own political party. The first step was to make prostitution a political priority. She recalled that a 2014 document had already set out the state of play in the Member States and established the European Parliament's position on the matter.

The main difficulties she encountered while drafting the resolution were linked to lobbying by « sex workers », which, she said, prevented the recognition of prostitution as a form of violence. This discourse sought to distinguish between « good » and « bad » prostitution rather than denounce a global system of exploitation. She also regretted being unable to include the issue of migration in the report, as doing so would have jeopardised its adoption :

**« We put the issue of migration out of the report, if we had put it in, then we [...] would lose. »**

Another major obstacle lay in the discourse of free choice, where the slogan « my body, my choice », historically linked to abortion rights, was being reappropriated to justify prostitution :

**« They've put this sentence from abortion issue to the prostitution issue and say « It is my body, and it is my right to sell my body » and if you're against that, you're not a feminist. »**

Finally, she outlined the content of the report, which was based on several key principles :

- Never criminalise prostituted persons, and combat stigma and discrimination.

- Guarantee access to healthcare services and socio-economic support.
- Reduce demand by penalising buyers of sex acts.
- Place women's safety at the centre of policy concerns.

Maria Noichl concluded by denouncing the inefficiency of the current system, which claims to offer women an alternative but fails to help them exit prostitution. She underlined that it is always men who benefit, and that the normalisation of prostitution is influencing younger generations.

## ADAMA-SIRA LE BLAY

### President of the European Network of Migrant Women

Adama-Sira Le Blay highlighted the close link between migration and prostitution, pointing out that migrant women made up the majority of prostitutes : 80% in Germany, 70% in the EU, and over 80% in France. She questioned this disproportionality, as migrant women remained a minority in the overall population, and identified several factors that explained this situation: poverty, gender discrimination, and climate disruptions that forced people into exile both within and outside their countries of origin. These vulnerabilities were exploited by trafficking networks and exacerbated by restrictive European migration policies. She particularly criticised the difficulty in obtaining visas :

**« Today, getting a VISA is a huge challenge and one has to jump through hoops. »**

Exploitive networks targeted vulnerable women with the promise of a better life or stable employment. Demand and supply play a central role in this phenomenon: the massive consumption of pornography contributes to trivializing the commodification of sexuality, presenting it as a form of leisure or service, dissociated from the realities of violence and exploitation it often conceals. In this context, women from precarious countries become an ideal « workforce », exploitable at low cost to meet growing demand. The extreme difficulty in accessing visas made these women even more vulnerable, exposing them to human traffickers who took advantage of their precarious situation. Moreover, their complete lack of protection reinforced their exploitation. She also mentioned the colonial prejudices that persisted in our representations, fuelling these dynamics of oppression.

**« That's why it's so dramatic to think today, at the European level, that we talk about « sex work » when we think that 80%, I'd even say 90%, of the victims are people who are already victims of violence and vulnerability. »**

Finally, she pointed out the perpetrators of this violence, reminding us that **« it's men who make laws for women »**, and concluded by quoting Nelson Mandela : **« Those who speak for us without us are against us »**, before emphasising that it is essential to fight these injustices and give a voice to those who are most impacted.

## **FRANÇOISE BRIÉ**

**Representative of Amicale du Nid, Vice-President of CLEF, and former GREVIO member**

Before speaking, Héma Sibi introduced Françoise Brié and the Amicale du Nid association, inviting her to reflect on the progress made by the 2016 abolitionist law on prostitution. Françoise Brié recalled that Amicale du Nid had supported around 10 000 people each year and highlighted that online violence was part of a continuum of sexist and sexual violence. Regarding prostitution, she stated :

**« Prostitution is paid rape and should therefore be criminalised. »**

She called for stronger criminalisation of prostitution, particularly of minors aged 15 to 18, and emphasised that legislative changes were still necessary. The association, a civil party in several trials, had observed a legal gap that urgently needed to be addressed. However, she welcomed the progress made by the 2016 law, which had allowed the voices of those affected to be better heard and 53 pimping networks to be dismantled.

The « Pathway out of Prostitution » (PSP) provided a 24-month temporary residence permit and financial assistance for social integration. The number of beneficiaries had increased sharply, from 446 in 2021 to 845 in 2023, representing an increase of 400 over two years, but it was still insufficient to address the estimated 40 000 victims in France. Since 2021, the association has called for the number of PSPs to be increased tenfold. However, the results demonstrated the effectiveness of the scheme : when beneficiaries had access to all available measures, 89% found a job and 100% secured stable

accommodation. Before entering the PSP, 81% had been destitute or dependent on income from prostitution.

Despite these results, the scheme had several limitations : financial assistance remained far below the level of the Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA), and access to temporary residence permits had become increasingly restricted, in a political context marked by the rise of the far-right and populist rhetoric. Some women even found themselves under an Obligation to Leave French Territory (OQTF), keeping them in extreme vulnerability. Furthermore, the application of the PSP varied from one department to another due to disparate prefectural practices. The violence suffered was not recognised as a criterion for obtaining a temporary residence permit, which contradicted the spirit of the 2016 law and the protection of victims.

She then established a link between prostitution and digital technology, highlighting the rise of the « uberisation » of prostitution and the proliferation of platforms facilitating sexual exploitation. In response to this phenomenon, Amicale du Nid had developed a digital « go-to » approach, allowing victims to be identified and contacted online.

**« In 2023, 12 283 people were contacted through 1 100 outreach missions, which was four times more than in public spaces, through street outreach. We can see the evolution, which is obviously linked to the increase; it's also a rise of more than 75% in one year. »**

The aim of this approach was twofold : to create a digital space to identify platforms hijacked for sexual exploitation purposes (advertisement sites, chat rooms, forums, social networks) and to identify victims via their published profiles; secondly, to establish initial direct contact via a personalised message, with the goal of continuing exchanges up to and including a physical meeting at one of the association's services. This approach was also accompanied by awareness-raising activities, particularly aimed at young people, to better inform them about the prostitution system.

Finally, the fundamental principles of « outreach » were confidentiality, anonymity, adapting to the needs and pace of victims, taking into account their language and means of communication. She emphasised the importance of building a relationship of trust with victims and highlighted the key points to watch out for. To deepen these elements,

he encouraged consulting the results of a survey conducted by Amicale du Nid, available on the association's website.

## STÉPHANIE CARADEC

Director of Mouvement du Nid

Stéphanie Caradec began by presenting Mouvement du Nid, a feminist association committed both on the ground and in the public sphere to building a society free from prostitution. The association was present in 27 territories across France, including Bas-Rhin, and carried out several actions : approximately 5 000 to 6 000 contacts were made each year as part of the « outreach » initiatives, 13 000 visits took place at its premises, and 1 800 people were supported individually. Mouvement du Nid's analysis was based on the testimonies of people in prostitution, which formed the empirical foundation of its work.

Regarding the digitalisation of pimping, she explained that all stages of the prostitution system now took place online : recruiting victims, posting advertisements, connecting with clients via telephone platforms, renting apartments on well-known sites, arranging transport via private vehicle hire companies, booking train tickets, as well as controlling victims and reinforcing psychological control using digital tools. Financial transactions were now conducted online, including via cryptocurrencies. According to the Central Office for the Suppression of Human Trafficking, street prostitution now represented only 8% of prostitution in France. The vast majority now took place through online advertisements, making it even more invisible.

This phenomenon had a particularly worrying impact on the younger generation, especially minors and young adults. Pimps' methods had not changed : they still targeted young people in vulnerable situations, and the vast majority of prostitution victims had already suffered sexual violence in childhood. In the past, pimps would spot their prey near train stations or child protection homes. Today, thanks to social networks, they have access to a much larger number of potential victims : **« Today, they work in the same way, they continue to do so, but they have access to the vulnerabilities of young people who communicate a great deal through their social networks. »**

These young people unwittingly exposed their vulnerabilities online,

making it easier for pimps to spot them. Pimps exploited these weaknesses by implementing similar manipulation and approach strategies to those used in the past : they formed false friendships, approached young people already victims of cyberstalking, convincing them they could protect them, and gradually established a psychological control and domination bond. This is how the process of prostitution began, with methods that adapted to digital tools but still relied on the same mechanisms of exploitation and manipulation.

**« So, we have all the factors needed for an exponential increase in the number of victims in prostitution. We also have a multiplicity of potential pimps, since digitisation makes it much easier for them to act. »**

Faced with this reality, she emphasised the need to adapt ground actions with a digital « go-to » approach and demanded that the state effectively implement existing tools, while going beyond the provisions of the 2016 law. She stressed the importance of occupying digital space with a feminist and emancipatory vision of sexuality to counter the dominance of pornographic discourse : **« If we are not on digital platforms, occupying the space with an emancipatory and feminist view of sexuality, no one else will. »**

With this in mind, the « Dans ma banane » (which means « In my bag ») programme was introduced, aimed at strengthening young people's psychosocial skills to identify toxic relationships, understand the strategies of abusers, and develop healthy expectations regarding friendships, emotional, and sexual relationships. She also called for a mass-penalisation of clients, accompanied by concrete measures to enforce it. Finally, she highlighted the urgency of blocking prostitution websites, which could be achieved through the application of current legislation, provided there was a genuine political will to do so.

**« We manage to find funds to support them, which is great, it's important, it needs to be done. On the other hand, we do almost nothing to combat the impunity of their abusers. »**

She denounced the slow pace of legal proceedings and the inaction of public authorities, which hindered any significant progress in the fight against pimping.



# FOURTH PANEL

## Current legal challenges in France and Europe : using the law to end impunity



**FLORIANE VOLT**



Director of Public and Legal Affairs  
at Fondation des Femmes



**MIREIA CRESPO**



Director for isala asbl. field association



**NATASHA MALVIYA**



Volunteer jurist for isala asbl. field association



**MURIEL FABRE-MAGNAN**

Professor of Law at Sorbonne University,  
author of L'Institution de la liberté

# FLORIANE VOLT

Director of Public and Legal Affairs at Fondation des Femmes

Floriane Volt, the moderator of this panel, introduces the discussion on the legal issues related to online sexual exploitation, highlighting the financial vulnerability of the victims and its link to extreme violence. She emphasizes the importance of supporting actions against the pornography industry, particularly the lawsuits led by Osez le Féminisme and other associations.

# MIREIA CRESPO

## Director for isala asbl. field association

Mireia Crespo began her speech by expressing her appreciation for the opportunity to be present and to exchange views, particularly regarding the situation in Belgium, where pimping was decriminalised in 2022 as part of a reform of the penal code. She presented the organisation isala, which had been supporting people in prostitution with comprehensive assistance for around ten years. The organisation's findings largely echoed those shared by the representatives of Mouvement du Nid and Amicale du Nid.

Since 2022, Belgium had legalised what it now referred to as « the organisation of prostitution » and « sex work », thereby granting pimps the status of employers. As of December 2024, they had even been permitted to set up official companies to hire people in prostitution. To justify this transformation into « a job like any other », the law attempted to soften the hierarchical relationship between pimp and prostituted person by, for example, granting the prostituted person the right to refuse any act at any time without penalty or reduction in pay : ten acts could be refused over a six-month period. However, as she pointed out, these safeguards were extremely fragile and inadequate. Nothing was specified about what would happen if a person refused more than ten acts.

**« It was clearly completely out of touch with the reality of prostitution. »**

She recalled having been deeply involved in opposing this law and now found herself at an impasse, calling for support not only at national level but, above all, internationally. A major step forward had been achieved : with eight other Belgian and international organisations, and with the backing of prostitution survivors, isala had lodged an appeal with the Belgian Constitutional Court to request the annulment of the law. This was a first, particularly because women supported by the organisation had been able to give testimony alongside Pascale Rouges, a survivor of prostitution.

She emphasised the importance of international support, as the implications of this reform extended far beyond Belgium's borders. The reform could serve as a model for other non-abolitionist countries in

Europe, thereby influencing future legislative developments. To counter this influence, isala planned to publish an open letter about the introduction of the appeal and called for as many signatures as possible to gain greater media visibility in Belgium – a space from which they had largely been excluded.

## NATASHA MALVIYA

Volunteer jurist for isala asbl. field association

Natasha Malviya's contribution complemented Mireia's by emphasising that the climate in Belgium was not favourable to their struggle. She explained : **« There's a whole second part of this appeal that we would be working on over the next 30 days. It would be our second opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of the law. »**

She then outlined the three legal arguments they had begun to develop for this challenge :

1. Violation of the protection of human dignity and the right to respect for physical integrity and individual autonomy :  
→ **« Given that the Belgian Constitution protects the right to live a life in accordance with human dignity, and respect for private and family life - which includes physical and moral integrity »** they demonstrated how prostitution and pimping undermined that integrity.

2. Violation of the right to work and to fair working conditions  
→ **« So, we looked at how labour law, conceptually, is at odds with the idea of prostitution as paid employment. »** They showed, in particular, that people in prostitution were not protected from harassment, and that employers were obliged to guarantee the safety and integrity of their employees - a requirement fundamentally incompatible with the realities of prostitution.

3. Violation of the right to equality between women and men  
→ Since the overwhelming majority of people in prostitution were women, the reform constituted de facto discrimination against them. The inherent relationship of subordination in prostitution made any notion of genuine consent impossible, thereby reinforcing structural inequality.

# MURIEL FABRE-MAGNAN

Professor of Law at Sorbonne University, author of  
L’Institution de la liberté

Muriel Fabre-Magnan opened her speech by expressing her delight at being among those who knew how to see, emphasising that in order to see, one must first know how to look. She explained that her contribution would focus on a critique of the European Court of Human Rights, a central legal instrument, and would offer ways to **« begin deconstructing the narratives that constantly glorify what in fact leads to women’s servitude. »** She focused on the terms « consent » and « freedom » **« to stop getting oneself caught in traps. »**

She revisited the 2002 case *Pretty v. the United Kingdom*, which she described as the « starting point », as it was the first time the Court had derived from Article 8 of the Convention on the Protection of Private and Family Life a right to self-determination. In contrast, she described the *K.A. and A.D.* case as « catastrophic », since it reframed a situation of torture and barbarity as one of personal autonomy, suggesting that the Convention enshrined « the ability for everyone to live as they see fit ». It was therefore crucial, she argued, to deconstruct the concepts of freedom, personal autonomy, and consent, which she explored through three theses set out in her book *L’Institution de la liberté*.

Her first thesis addressed the confusions surrounding the concept of consent. The Court, she noted, struggled as soon as a person claimed to have consented : in such cases, the law was limited, since once someone had declared consent, it became almost impossible to challenge. Yet consent could be coerced, manipulated, or manufactured. Judges tended to interpret such claims through their own personal biases, and the law lacked the tools to go beyond the initial declaration. This is why, she argued, consent should be a necessary condition for freedom, but not **« a sufficient condition to characterise freedom or free choice. »**

She then described how a reversal had taken place, whereby human rights, instead of being used to uphold the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, were now being used to justify violations of those very rights. This inversion allowed for the continued availability of people willing to consent to anything, which made rights

violations more socially acceptable :

**« The law cannot both guarantee freedom and validate consent to its loss. If we call « freedom » the consent to lose freedom, everything collapses and anything becomes justifiable. »**

She went on to explain how labour law had historically demonstrated that consent alone was never sufficient. Her third thesis focused on the need to establish objective limits. According to the Civil Code, an employment contract was based on the provision of services, granting a right of use over a thing without implying ownership. In the case of prostitution, however, there was no obligation to perform a task - what was at stake was at least the granting of a right of use over the body.

**« The right conferred over women's bodies through these contracts is a right of use and enjoyment (usus et fructus), which traditionally could only be granted over objects. The resulting objectification of women is an objective analysis. »**

Historically, she argued, the law existed to provide a framework in which consent could be protected. Today, that framework was itself subject to consent, which distorted the nature of law. She concluded with a quotation from Jaurès : **« Is man condemned to understand freedom only as the ability to exploit other men ? »** adding : **« Are we condemned to understand women's freedom only as the authorisation given to men to exploit them ? »**

During the Q&A session, one person raised the point that employment contracts also involved an obligation of use, and asked her to elaborate. Muriel Fabre-Magnan replied that she had written an article on this very question, titled *Les nouvelles formes d'esclavage* (« The New Forms of Slavery »), in which she referred to an international convention defining as « slavery » any situation in which a real right over a person's body existed.

# CLOSING REMARKS AND CALL TO ACTION ▶



**CÉLINE PIQUES**

Writer of the High Council for Equality's report  
on pornocriminality,  
representative of Osez le Féminisme



**ALIÉNOR LAURENT**

Président of Osez le Féminisme



**MAÏNA CERNIAWSKY**

Spokeswoman of Osez le Féminisme



**ALEXANDRA DETHYRE**

Project Manager of the RAJA Foundation

# ALEXANDRA DETHYRE

## Project Manager of the RAJA Foundation

Alexandra congratulated Osez le Féminisme and the French Coordination for the European Women's Lobby for organising the conference, and briefly introduced the Raja-Marcovici Foundation, established in 2006 to support women's rights. Although feminist philanthropy has grown, she points out that women's rights were still often overlooked, with conservative funding increasing significantly - reaching \$800 million between 2018 and 2022. She emphasised the importance of working collaboratively to defend women's rights and expressed her enthusiasm for taking part in the event and supporting the Strasbourg Call.



Céline Piques, rapporteur of the High Council for Equality's report on pornocriminality, Maïna Cerniawsky and Aliénor Laurent, all spokeswomen for Osez le Féminisme, are calling for action and collective mobilization, based on the concrete recommendations of the **Strasbourg Call**, co-constructed by the partner organizations.

**We extend our sincere thanks to all the teams who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of this event.**



**OSEZ  
LE FÉMINISME**



La Coordination Française