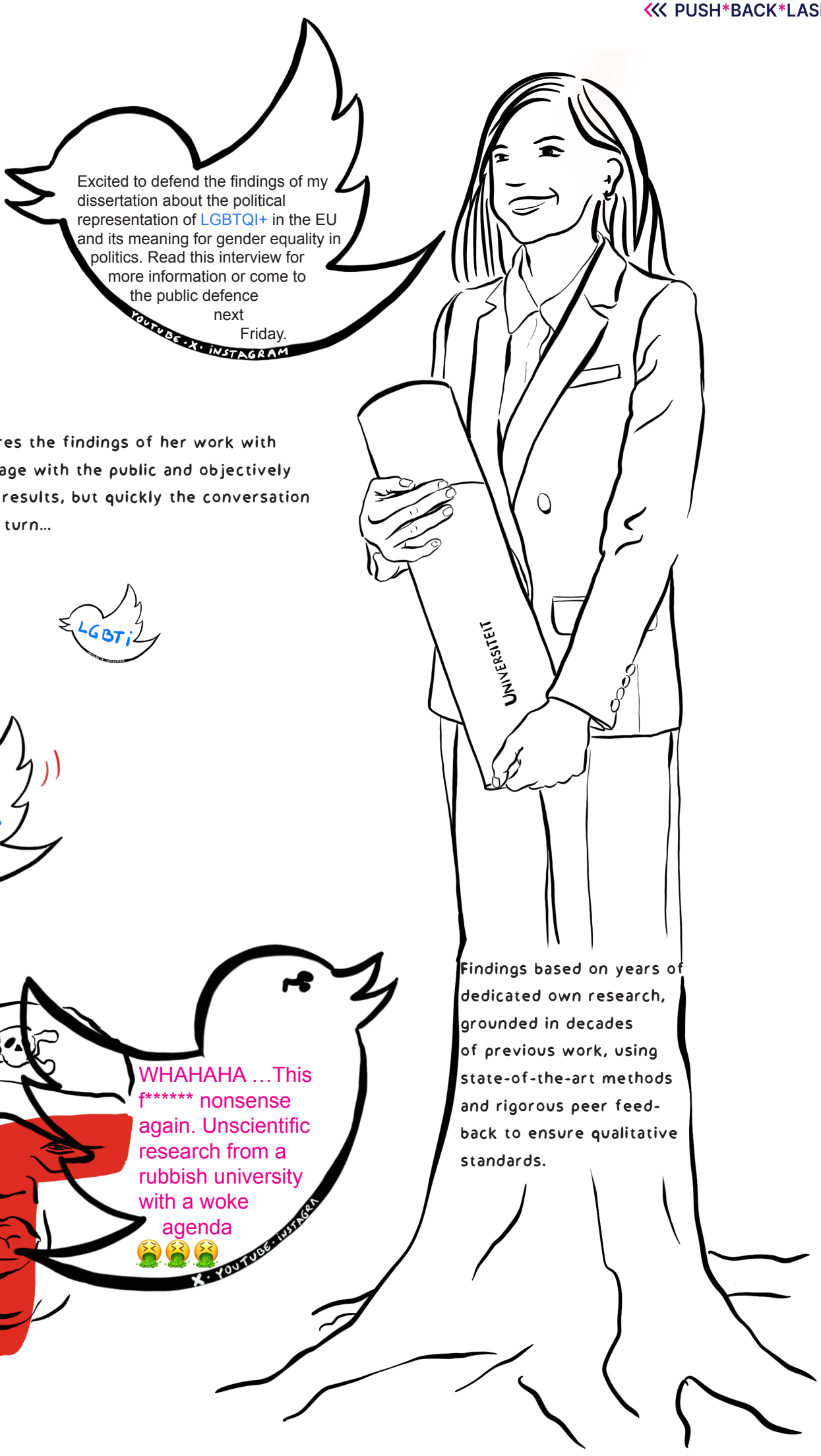
Let's Design Equality Together
The Push*Back*Lash Cartoon Series

Digital Violence

Funded by the European Union

PUSH*BACK*LASH

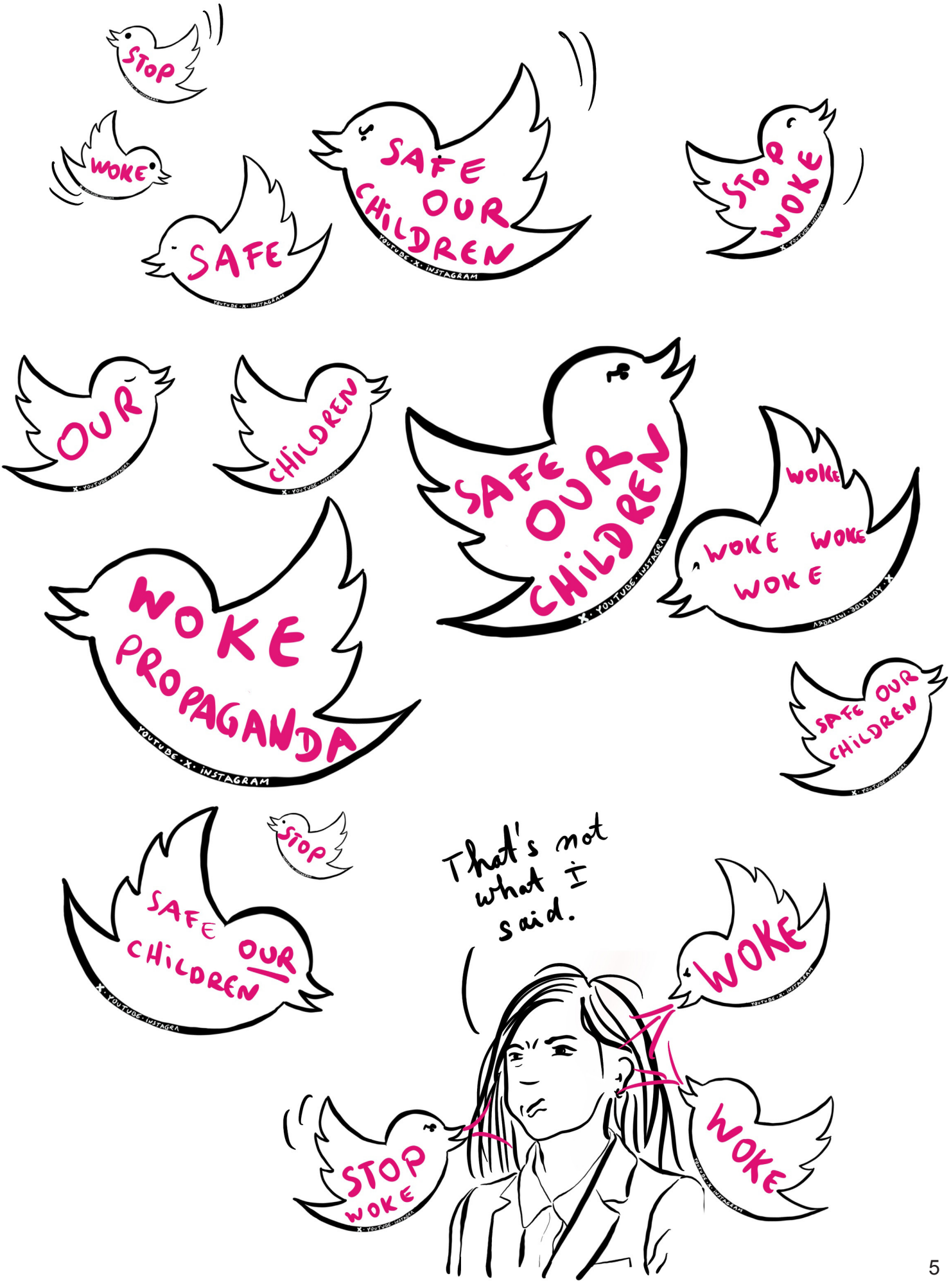


A researcher shares the findings of her work with the intent to engage with the public and objectively inform about the results, but quickly the conversation takes a different turn…

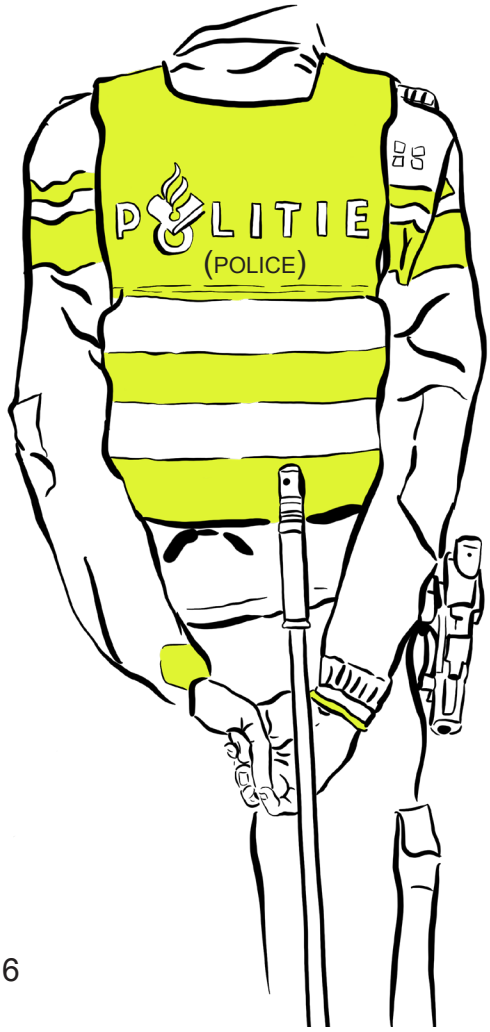
Findings based on years of dedicated own research, grounded in decades of previous work, using state-of-the-art methods and rigorous peer feed-back to ensure qualitative standards.

* The authors hereby state that offensive terms, such as the hurtful and incorrect term in this quote, do not express their views. The purpose of the cartoon is to problematize the use of such terms, which is why we have chosen not to remove the term from the quote.

The post took a life of its own and a simple sharing of findings resulted in massive backlash online and also offline...


STOP
WOKE
SAFE
SAFE OUR CHILDREN
YOUTUBE · X · INSTAGRAM
STOP WOKE
OUR
CHILDREN
SAFE OUR CHILDREN
WOKE
WOKE WOKE WOKE
WOKE PROPAGANDA
YOUTUBE · X · INSTAGRAM
SAFE OUR CHILDREN
STOP
SAFE OUR CHILDREN
That's not what I said.
WOKE
STOP WOKE
WOKE

Question: How would you feel if others intentionally misunderstand you and attack you?



Question: What do you think the police can do? Do you think the tweets were illegal?

Question: What about public figures like politicians? Do you think they receive a lot of hate? Which role does their gender play?

Question: What about people who like or share hateful tweets? Or people who just watch, but do not engage? Why are they doing this?

Now Your Turn!

What is happening in the cartoon?

Describe what is happening in the cartoon. What situation are we in? Describe what the people are experiencing and how they might feel.

Online behavior

Which online platforms do you use (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) and why? Which content do you like to consume? Do you also post your own content? Describe your experiences.

Negative/ hateful comments

Do you think people post a lot of negative or hateful comments online? Have you yourself ever experienced negative or hateful comments online? How did that make you feel?

For groups: An anonymous survey. For each question participants either write “yes” or “no” on a piece of paper, fold it and toss it in a bowl. The moderator counts the vote for each question.

Question 1: I use online platforms.

Question 2: I have seen negative/ hateful comments online.

Question 3: I have received negative/ hateful comments online.

Question 4: I have posted negative/ hateful comments online.

Question 5: I know where I can get help if I receive negative comments online.

Question 6: It is illegal to post negative/ hateful comments online.

Question 7: I know what doxing is.

Question 8: I know what trolling is.

Now your turn!

Imagine that one of your friends experiences hate online. They share their experience with you. What do you think they should do? Should they talk to their parents/ teachers/ police? Should they engage with the perpetrator? Should they ignore it?

"Digital Violence" – Supporting Information

Many people use social media on a daily basis to connect with others, to share images of their life, to engage in conversations and share facts and opinions on current topics. Social media has the great potential to connect people from different places in the world and give voice to and empower people who are often unheard. But, there are also a lot of negative and hateful comments online which are damaging for those who are at the receiving end and can transcend into the real "offline" world. Everyone (private people and public figures) can be at the receiving end of hateful comments online, but often those who belong to marginalized groups are disproportionally affected.

The cartoon shows how a simple tweet of an early career researcher resulted in hateful comments online and swept over into the offline world.

Sharing information:

A PhD candidate tweets about the findings of her dissertation about LGBTQI+ representation in politics and invites her followers to her public defense of the thesis. She and her statement are grounded in previous research, state-of-the-art scientific methods and rigorous peer review. She is proud of the results of her hard work. The transported message through the birds is reduced to LGBTQI+ with the T getting bigger and bigger resulting in a tweet that ridicules her research and research topic.

Online reactions:

People who have not read her work nor been at the presentation comment about it. They insult her personally, her research and threaten her.

Offline reactions:

The harassment does not stay online. Instead people organize offline and the statements they are shouting on the street have nothing to do anymore with the original tweet. Instead they generally mobilize against "gender ideology".

Persons involved/ broader consequences:

How to deal with digital violence is an important question not only for the victim, but also for the police and lawmakers, for bystanders who observe digital violence and for politicians and other public figures who fight for gender equality and are frequently receiving hateful messages.

Further Reading

Digital Violence

Digital violence is an umbrella term for various forms of harassment, degradation, discrimination and social isolation on the internet or through other means of electronic communication (for example, through WhatsApp messages). A representative survey by HateAid and the Landecker Digital Justice Movement survey 2000 people from all EU countries found that one out of two of young adults are affected by hate online (HateAid, 2021). Especially, women report withdrawing from engaging online out of fear of being attacked (HateAid, 2021). Women also report being

more afraid to express their opinion online and that they feel online platforms do not do enough to prevent hate. While everyone can experience digital violence, historically marginalized groups like women, people of color or people with disabilities are more likely to be at the receiving end.

Find out by clicking through the **Hate Aid** website:
click here

Forms of digital violence

There are many forms of digital violence, the terms are often not clearly defined and the terms are not mutually exclusive.

Image-based violence: Misuse of images and videos like unauthorized publication or sending individuals offensive pictures like nudes.

Cyberbullying: Includes many actions that are intended to hurt, humiliate and ostracize individuals. For example, posting/ sending insulting and threatening messages.

Doxxing: Publication and collection of private data without consent. For example, publishing the private address or phone number of an individual.

Disinformation, Deep Fakes and Face Swap Apps: Disinformation refers to spreading intentionally false information. It is often accompanied by Deep Fakes potentially created with Face Swap Apps. They enable individuals to easily fake pictures and distribute them.

Hate Speech: Hate speech is an umbrella term for group-related expression of misanthropy like sexist or racist comments. It includes insults, incitement of violence and threats. A hail of hateful comments within a short period of time is often labelled a “shitstorm”.

What are my rights?

The internet is NOT a legal vacuum. Many laws apply in the digital space and among other things insults, threats, and incitement of violence can be punished.

Doxxing. Since January 1st 2024 doxxing is a criminal offense in the Netherlands and may be punished by a fine of up to 22,500 Euros or imprisonment of up to 2 years.

Discrimination. Discriminating statements online can be report to the internet discrimination hotline (MiND Nederland). MiND evaluates the statement and if it is unlawful, it requests the removal of the statement.

Hate Speech: Article 137c and article 137d of the Dutch penal code prohibit insulting groups and inciting hate and violence. The law covers both online and offline offenses.

Digital Service Act 2022

The Digital Service Act was introduced by the European Commission in 2022 to regulate online platforms and digital services within the EU. It addresses a wide range of issues including online content moderation and removal of hateful content.

The key objectives are:

- Establishing clear rules and obligations for online platforms and digital service providers, particularly those with significant reach and influence.

- Enhancing user safety and protection, including measures to combat illegal content, harmful online activities, and disinformation.

- Promoting fairness and competition in the digital market by addressing issues such as platform dominance and unfair business practices.

- Strengthening the accountability and transparency of online platforms, including requirements for reporting and cooperation with authorities.

The Digital Service Act was an important milestone to hold big companies responsible and unburden individuals.

Read more: Digital Service Act

The Cartoonist:

Beldan Sezen is an artist and writer. Her work includes graphic novels, artists' books, drawings, essays, and installations. She is the creative director and co-founder of Cypher, a digital comics magazine that brings audiences into the radical lives and dangerous work of human rights defenders around the world. She lives and works in Amsterdam and New York.

Instagram: @beldan_sezen

Funded by
the European Union

UvA

PUSH*BACK*LASH

© All rights reserved

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2021 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°101061687. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.