

## Online misogyny and democratic participation: Women in politics under attack

Across the European Union, women in politics are disproportionately targeted by online gender-based hate speech. Research by the European Parliament shows that female politicians receive significantly higher volumes of abusive online messages than their male colleagues, often containing sexist, sexualised, or threatening language.

Case studies from countries such as Germany, France, and Italy reveal recurring patterns. Female candidates are attacked not for their policies, but for their appearance, motherhood, or perceived deviation from traditional gender roles. In some cases, coordinated disinformation campaigns combine hate speech with false narratives to undermine credibility.

The impact is profound. Many women report limiting their online presence or withdrawing from political debates altogether. This weakens democratic representation and discourages future generations of women from entering political life.

In response, EU institutions and Member States are adopting preventive measures. Parliamentary monitoring units, rapid response reporting tools, and awareness campaigns have been introduced. The EU Gender Equality Strategy explicitly recognises online violence as a barrier to equal political participation.

Best practices show that combining legal safeguards, platform accountability, and institutional support can significantly reduce the silencing effect of online misogyny.