

DeStalk GUIDELINES

for territorial campaigning
to address cyberviolence and
stalkerware against women

DeStalk European territorial campaign guidelines to address cyberviolence and stalkerware against women

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European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence e.V. (WWP EN)

DeStalk: a crosscutting strategy to detect and remove cyberviolence and stalkerware in intimate relationships

Capacity building for relevant private and public stakeholders to address cyber violence and stalkerware against women through the definition of a territorial strategy (Work Package 4)

European territorial campaign guidelines to combat digital violence against women (Deliverable 4.3)

December 2022

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Background

The DeStalk project was developed between January 2021 and December 2022 by a multidisciplinary consortium and with the support of the REC programme of the European Commission. In the project, partners developed a multi-level strategy to combat online violence and stalkerware in intimate relationships. This strategy was implemented through a capacity building action for professionals of both victim support services and perpetrator programmes and local governments on recognizing and hindering the use of cyberviolence and stalkerware that represented a new, widespread and hidden form of GBV.

After building common knowledge and delivering training among professionals and officials, the DeStalk project realised a pilot protocol for multi-actor cooperation on defining a territorial strategy addressing the issue of the online in gender-based violence (GBV), and developed European guidelines and templates for campaigning to be used by institutions towards general public and target recipients.

The aim was to increase capability of European local governments, gaining innovative instruments on how to develop an effective campaign, and extend the reach of professionals, with a large multiplier effect, to raise awareness among the public on issue of cyber violence and stalkerware and call strategic actors to action.

The general objective of the DeStalk campaign is to make digital public space a safe and empowering place for everyone, including women and girls, specifically addressing cyber abuse as a form of intimate partner violence (IPV) through:

- increasing knowledge and technical capacity of **professionals** on methods and tools, and their collaboration to address cyber violence and stalkerware in intimate relationships
- stimulating dialogue and cooperation among **key stakeholders** in order to share the use of the DeStalk protocol and toolkit, and to scale up and follow up in their regions
- raise the awareness of **general public** on the negative impact of cyber abuse, and specifically of women on how to safeguard themselves and other women from such forms of violence
- spreading awareness and engagement of key actors and institutions about the topic as a priority issue, and calling **policy makers** to action



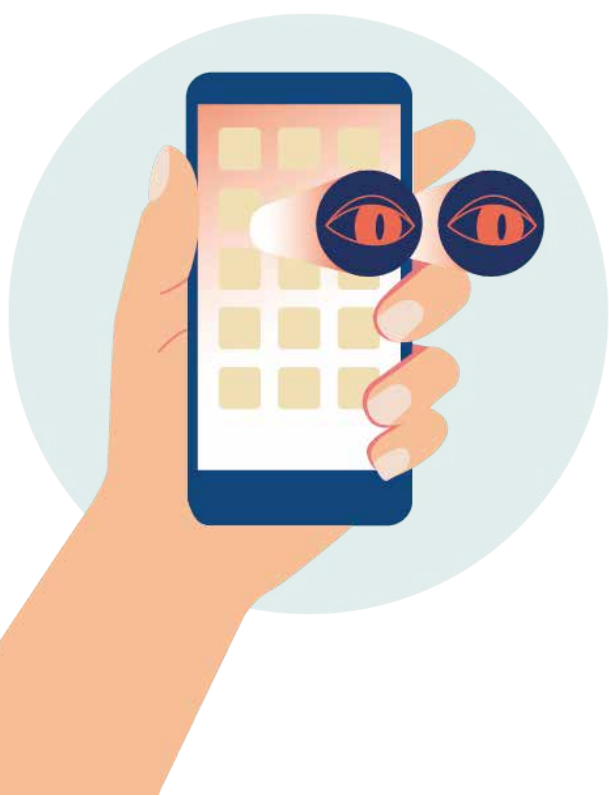
Background

The DeStalk pilot campaign took place in the second year of the project in Italy, the institutional work was established in Veneto Region, and the campaign was then delivered nationally. The campaign work plan aimed at:

- **Engaging relevant stakeholders** among institutions, services, NGOs, etc., in a territorial campaign addressing cyber violence and stalkerware
- **Raising awareness** among the general public by launching a pilot campaign targeting women, men, and bystanders
- **Develop replicable tools and templates** for a cooperation strategy to address the digital dimension of GBV to be scaled up at European Level

The action included shared activities and tools for private and public stakeholders, aimed at defining a territorial strategy addressing cyber abuse against women in intimate relationships through the development of a territorial campaign, in the following order:

- 1) Establishing institutional groups of representatives with NGOs, services and public entities to discuss and approve the territorial campaign strategy, that included:
 - a) Draft of a **cooperation protocol** defining shared considerations, concepts, objectives, targets, plan of activities and distribution of duties
 - b) Participation in an **institutional round table** and exchange of emails to give feedback on campaign schedule and materials
- 2) Developing a local campaign in Veneto Region on recognizing and tackling online violence and stalkerware, including:
 - a) Designing a **pilot campaign plan** at the local level defining target audience, beneficiaries, communication materials, key messages, media, scale, etc...
 - b) Running the campaign via **press work**, interviews, radio and tv appearance, magazines, and on social media, blogs, etc.
- 3) Organizing a **press conference** to launch the campaign to be done at the Regional Authority's premises including all relevant stakeholders and journalists
- 4) Drafting **European replication guidelines** based on lessons learned from the above-mentioned work plan.





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Why DeStalk campaign guidelines

Almost all our everyday activities are mediated by technology with the Covid-19 pandemic increasing the digital aspects of our lives.

Due to our reliance on the internet and smart devices, they are powerful weapons against us, e.g. if they are used with the intention of controlling or harming another person. In this case the virtual

environment becomes a place where violence is real, extensive, and exacerbated, with long-lasting effects on the quality of life and well-being of that person. Through technology, abusers can easily and covertly stalk and control their partners, making it difficult for them to escape the abuse and for relevant organizations to ensure safety and support effectively.



73%
of women have
been exposed to or
have experienced
some form of **online
violence**

(FRA, 2014)

1 in 2
young women
has experienced
gender-based
cyber violence

(WWW Foundation,
2020)

10%
of women in the EU
have already experi-
enced a form of
cyber violence since
the age of 15

(EIGE, 2017)

5%
of women in the EU
have experienced
one or more forms of
cyber stalking since
the age of 15

(FRA, 2014)

95%
of aggressions
happening online are
against women

(UN General
Assembly, 2006)

70%
of women who have ex-
perienced cyber stalking,
have also experienced at
least one form of phys-
ical or sexual violence
from an intimate partner

(EIGE, 2017)

71%
of gender-based
violence abusers monitor
victims' computer
activities, while 54%
track victims' cell phones
with stalkerware

(Kaspersky, 2019)



The increase of
stalkerware usage on
users' mobile devices
at a global level is
unrestrained with
Germany, Italy, Spain,
and France being
amongst the most
affected European
countries

(Kaspersky, 2021)

Why DeStalk campaign guidelines

Women and girls must be free and safe in spaces they act and live in, both public and private, off- or online. To reach this goal:

- key stakeholders need **appropriate knowledge and tools** to stop violence where it occurs and share pathways to prevent digital forms of GBV, and
- citizens must be able to recognize online gender-based violence and know about about **possible ways out** and how to get support.

The DeStalk campaign strategy intends to:

- 1) **raise the awareness of the different target groups** to shed light on the various risks of online gender-based violence, and
- 2) **provide them with useful information** and practical indications on how to avoid and/or address abuse against women which is committed online or via devices.

Based on the DeStalk experience and lessons learnt, the present campaign guidelines will serve local **multipliers** (mainly victim support services and perpetrator programmes in cooperation with public authorities and services but also cyber security experts and media) to outline their own territorial strategy and adapt the model and materials to **replicate and scale up the action** in their regions.



Campaign outline

Given its general goals, the development of a campaign requires identifying two crucial and interrelated set of elements::

- significant and reasonable **target groups**
- constructive messages for clear **specific objectives**

According to the characteristics of those items, and to other external aspects (such as financial resources, possible synergies with stakeholders, coincidences with calendar, etc.), the campaign plan can be drafted, identifying:

- **communications media** (different social media, newspapers, magazines, tv, radio, blogs, ...)
- **tools** (posts, interviews, press releases, events, printed material, videos...)
- **contents** (messages, including concept, images and wording)
- **stakeholders** involved, and distribution of duties
- **time schedule**, that must be reasonable and effective

A key preparation step is represented by the **content strategy**, which needs particular attention and includes some points to be adopted for every message to be successful:

- **benefit:** The need our target audiences feel they have or might have and how the campaign responds to/addresses it,
- **reason why:** The rational aspect underlining that what we are telling them is actually interesting or helpful for them,
- **tone of voice:** To be able to speak to emotions and values, and have an impact in terms of actions the target audiences will be motivated to take,
- **supporting evidence:** Information to prove that what we are sharing is concretely meaningful, e.g. statistics.

In the following paragraphs the already developed DeStalk campaign will be used to explain possible actions and features and provide advice and recommendations.



Campaign outline

■ Specific objectives and target groups

The DeStalk campaign team developed a shared action to reach citizenship, institutions and policy makers, services, experts, and other multipliers, to raise awareness on the digital dimension of cyber gender-based violence and provide information and guidance on possible ways out.

In particular, the pilot campaign intended to:

- **empower women** and enable them to recognize digital forms of gender-based violence and increase their safety
- **deter men** from using devices and the internet to control or limit the freedom and well-being of their (ex-) partners
- **raise the awareness of bystanders** on digital violence against women and their capacity to support potential victim or perpetrator in the way out
- **improve knowledge and practice of specialized services** to deliver coordinated and upgraded responses
- **call public authorities and policy makers to action** through more dedicated and integrated planning and budgeting

In the learning by doing experience, an additional objective of the campaign was undertaken to **educate journalists and media** and other communicators on the most suitable ways to address GBV and cyberviolence and challenge their common imagery on these topics.

A clear definition of specific objectives helped develop appropriate contents and choose suitable means and tools.

■ Set of proposed actions and potential outcome

(1) Public events within feminist national festivals

The team applied for the inclusion of a DeStalk awareness raising event targeting the general public into an important national festival dedicated to women. The online event was publicized within the online billboard of the 2022 edition directly involving 100+ experts on gender equality and women's empowerment and reaching an enormous number of women from the general public. The DeStalk event had 200+ sign-ups and 98 participants who interacted for a whole morning on Saturday 22 October.

DeStalk was also presented at another specialized festival on 10 December 2022 organized by major activists and victim support services in Italy around cyber violence against women. The event had 40 participants while the promotion reached over 15.000 users on social media.

(2) Press work including press releases, media pitch publications, interviews for magazines, local newspapers, radio, tv

In collaboration with the specialized communications agency Comunicattive, the team developed three press releases, which were sent to the agency's selected media contact list including: Press directed at women, press directed at men, tech press, press dedicated to social or gender-related issues, national and regional press.

The press releases included:

- 1) An announcement of the campaign and information on the public event targeting women

Campaign outline

- 2) Factsheets and information on a European replication event
- 3) Information on a press conference in Venice and short video reels

Moreover, the DeStalk spokesperson delivered several interviews explaining the phenomenon and promoting project materials.

The media pitches were tailored to specific media and journalists and included images, factsheets, statistics on the phenomenon and on project outcomes, pictures and quotes from relevant team members and stakeholders.

In total, 60+ press items were published: 50+ print and online articles were published in newspapers, specialized blogs and magazines, 10+ newsfeeds were delivered via radio and tv broadcasting, with a total 2,04 million OTS (Opportunity To See indicator showing the average exposure frequency of items).

(3) Institutional press conference and campaign launch event

In collaboration with the institutional partner's referent person, a press event was organized to be held in Venice on 25 November, then shifted to 24 November due to a sudden ministerial meeting. The press event lasted one hour and included about 20 participants in person and remotely connected among stakeholders and journalists, and active speakers represented DeStalk coordination, tech experts, practitioners, campaign spokespersons, victim support service network and institutional partners. Holding slides and posters were developed together with infographics and press folders with press release, pictures and quotes. Two video reels were launched in preview during the press event.

(4) Adaptation of illustrations and design and launch of two short video reels

Eight illustrations and two video reels were designed and created in collaboration with D.i.Re (the Italian national network of victim support services) and Relive (the Italian national network of perpetrator programmes). The designs were based on images and messages outlined ad hoc for the campaign through:

- Keeping the visual identity of the overall DeStalk project
- Focusing on the abusive action instead of on characterization of perpetrator or victim
- Depicting women as active and empowered individuals subject to certain harmful acts which do not characterize them as individuals
- Depicting perpetrators as ordinary men who can choose accountability and ask for help to stop abusive behaviors
- Focusing on relationships and support of specialized services as pivotal resources to combat digital abuse and not being alone to face that
- Representing the way out in terms of getting free after receiving appropriate support, and enjoying own new position and context



Campaign outline

■ Content strategy: DOs and DON'Ts

As mentioned before, the campaign messages should provide key stakeholders with **appropriate knowledge and engagement** and make citizens able to recognize online gender-based violence and to be informed about **possible ways out and how to be supported**.



Based on this, in the content outline the following aspects should be avoided:

- **Victimization of women** (e.g. wording and images with woman depicted as suffering or humiliated)
- **"Monsterification" of men** (e.g. images of dark hooded shadows, too specific examples of violent behaviours)
- **Potentially harmful information** (e.g. name or link to website where stolen intimate pictures are shared, info on how stalkerware can be installed)
- **Morbid titling and easy wording** which could revictimize women, minimize abuse, shift the focus (e.g. sick love, revenge porn)
- **Difficult language**, vague or random information (e.g. too technical language, confusion among glossary, mentioning child sexual abuse data in an article about digital intimate partner violence)



Good communication practices include:

- **Using non-stereotyped imagery** and fair wording to allow both men and women to identify and feel the message is for them
- **Keeping the focus on the abusive behavior** and clearly defining what is to be considered as violence
- **Promoting a holistic approach** and direct women to services instead of insisting on tech indicators of abuse
- Sharing an empowering message for women with **focus on the way out** and give practical info on how to get support
- Sharing a **constructive message for men** with a focus on accountability and on the possibility of changing one's behavior through specialized services
- **Stating clear commitment** and offer of the organization(s) running the campaign, and underlining institutional engagement to increase sense of safety and credibility

Lessons learnt

■ Success highlights

Building common knowledge is less difficult with providers who are already aware and trained: involvement of a specialized communication agency (February 2022)

Given that none of the partners were experienced enough in developing effective and real campaigning to reach the general public and unknown institutions and media, especially through press work and content development, it was decided to collaborate with Comunicattive, a feminist communication agency specialized in gender equality promotion, with experience in developing campaigns to address violence and also to bring men to accountability.

The choice of a communication agency expert on the topic was fundamental, because it reduced additional effort required to train the agency staff, as well as to co-design the campaign and review all content, especially with regards to the do-no-harm principle, the correct wording and choice of images, and the choice of positive and constructive messages focusing on change. This **helped the development of a pertinent and effective content strategy.**

Institutionalization of message and reach: establishment and meeting of institutional roundtable (June 2022)

Including the Regione del Veneto directly in the campaign helped **bringing the topic into relevant public entities agendas and the campaign at the institutional level.**

Online communications do not stop at regional borders, wide response network needed: agreement for collaboration with national networks (July 2022)

The scope of the campaign shifted from regional to national after considering a) the fact that it would be delivered mainly online and b) the rising interest on the topic expressed by Italian participants to the training workshops. It was decided to get in contact with national victim support service and perpetrator programme networks, respectively DiRe and Relive, and to set up specific agreements to ensure national coverage in terms of response to cases of digital violence by victim support services and perpetrator programmes through tailored training and participation in the campaign development and delivery. This helped **improve the collaboration among services, ensuring a coordinated response, as well as more safety and soundness in such responses.**

Less is less, more is more: re-designing planned activities and split events according to target and timing (November–December 2022)

The original DeStalk campaign plan foresaw that the press conference and the final event would be done at the same time and include approx. 100 people. This was not considered beneficial due to many reasons, mainly related to time schedule of project and campaign, to difference in features of type of events, and to extreme variety of targets. Therefore, two events were organized: a press conference was planned on 25 November with approx. 20 participants among public officials, journalists and stakeholders, and an additional final event was organized for European participants on 16 December 2022. This improved our **response to different targets and timing.**

Lessons learnt

■ Challenges

Risk of misuse of provided information or misunderstanding during interviews

Unfortunately, information shared during interviews can be misunderstood, partially ignored, or misused for many different reasons, which can be related for example to not fully understanding the phenomenon and/or terminology, political news and trends, need to match with other expert's statement, etc. The suggested strategy is to always agree with the interviewer on review and editing steps and a related time schedule before the draft is sent to the editor, and to pay attention during the interview to clarify what is supposed to be considered as part of the official interview, and what is just for informal clarification. This way the challenge will turn into an opportunity to educate communicators. Another important strategy is the request to see the interview questions in advance, to have the opportunity to prepare accurately and to filter out undesired topics.

Attention to timing and thematic seasons overload

The choice of the right time for deploying a campaign is crucial for its success, in particular if it includes both online communications, especially when strongly thematic, and in person events especially when significantly involving public institutions, because it can bring to some barriers related to wrong timing or overloaded schedule, with the risk of not getting the desired attention by media and public. De-seasonalizing the campaign or keeping it within the 16 days, for example, is a strategic choice, both are valuable options that need to be considered carefully.

Budget related aspects

The development of a campaign requires quite a high budget to cover costs related mainly to press work and content and graphic design. Collaborating with a specialized agency increases efficiency in terms of effort, however the cost of an external service has a significant impact on potential multipliers which are usually small NGOs. The available budget and staff time and effort impact on the size and variety of the campaign activities, which we suggest outlining modularly and prioritize according to specific context.

Gendered interest and response of media

Within the press work, almost all journalists interested in the topic and campaign are women, while there are no responses from editorial staff of men's newspapers and magazines. While being an indicator of responding to women's need, this seems to be a clear obstacle for the campaign to reach men among the general public through such media. This underlines the need to keep working on accountability of men and on their engagement as change makers.

Resources and templates

Besides collecting a thorough list of **external resources on the DeStalk webpage**, the consortium developed a comprehensive set of resources for potential multipliers to know more and improve their capacity and reach. The items listed below complement these **Guidelines for a territorial campaign**:

Safe Online: Practical Guide for Women free from digital violence to be used as an annex to VSS toolkit or a stand-alone resource



E-learning course for public and private entities addressing GBV on fundamentals on cyber-violence and stalkerware against women



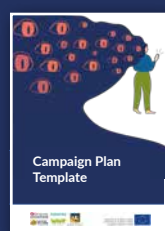
Protocol of cooperation for public authorities and services to deliver a shared campaign tackling the digital dimension of IPV



Toolkit for practitioners of victim support services and of perpetrator programmes to address digital violence against women



Campaign plan template based on DeStalk pilot campaign to be adapted to outline further territorial comms actions



Comms materials and samples, such as infographics explaining types of online abusive behaviors, short video reels for women and men in their way out, etc.





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