



INSTITUTE
FOR THE EQUALITY
OF WOMEN
AND MEN

PRESS RELEASE

Criminal complaint against Twitter for non-consensual nudity

Brussels, 7 December 2020 – The Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men has filed a criminal complaint against Twitter. The social media platform refused to take down nude images that circulated without the victim’s consent.

Since 1 July, the Institute has the authority to help victims whose intimate images are distributed without their consent. Some time ago, a victim contacted the Institute's because nude images of her were posted on Twitter without her consent. The Institute asked the platform to remove them immediately. Twitter refused. As a result, it is in violation of the new Belgian law prohibiting the distribution of non-consensual nude images.

In addition to the refusal to remove an image, the Institute finds that Twitter's procedures are problematic. Firstly, Twitter sometimes only removes the images months after the request. Secondly, the victim is asked to provide personal information. With this, Twitter discourages the rapid removal of these images.

“We are not taking this step lightly”, deputy director Liesbet Stevens explains. “First and foremost, we are targeting the people who disseminate these images. But social media must also take their responsibility and not deter victims. And that is exactly what Twitter does.”

Twitter has already come under fire for its lack of action against the distribution of non-consensual nudity. In 2017 Twitter adjusted its policy. Nevertheless, the social media platform still does not seem to be taking adequate action in practice.

The debate on the role of social media in the fight against online sexual violence is in full swing these days. The Institute strives for a good cooperation with social media, but it will not fail to take legal action when victims are left out in the cold.

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The Institute for the equality of women and men was created in December 2002 as the autonomous federal public institution responsible for guaranteeing and promoting gender equality and to combat any form of gender-based discrimination and inequality by developing and implementing a fitting legal framework, structures, strategies, tools and actions. The Institute aims at anchoring gender equality as natural in society in our actions and mentalities.

Victims and witnesses of gender discrimination can obtain information about their rights free of charge and in complete confidentiality or file a complaint with the Institute for the equality of women and men via the toll-free telephone number 0800/12 800 or via its website <http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be>.