

WOMEN POLITICIANS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE: FOURTH ANALYSIS OF ONLINE DISCOURSE IN KOSOVO

(May – July 2026)



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Introduction

The digital space has become one of the main arenas for political communication and the shaping of public opinion in Kosovo. Online media and social media platforms provide citizens with rapid access to information and opportunities to interact directly with political representatives. At the same time, however, these platforms are increasingly being used to spread disinformation, hate speech, and personal attacks, which disproportionately affect women engaged in political life.

Women politicians face not only criticism of their political positions and public activities, but also attacks targeting their gender, appearance, morality, families, and private lives. In many cases, substantive debate is replaced by derogatory labeling, insinuations, patriarchal stereotypes, and false narratives. These forms of digital violence undermine women's authority and credibility, making their participation in public life more difficult and less safe.

This is the fourth periodic report published by the Democracy for Development Institute (D4D) as part of its monitoring of the treatment of women politicians in the digital space. Through this series of reports, D4D seeks to continuously track trends, narratives, and forms of digital attacks against women in politics, as well as how these patterns evolve across different periods of political developments.

The report analyzes how women politicians in Kosovo were represented, discussed, and treated in online media and on social media during the May–July 2026 period. The monitoring period covers the election campaign, the June 7 elections, and post-election developments, all of which generated high levels of media coverage, public engagement, and discussion. This makes the period particularly important for understanding how heightened political attention affects women's exposure to attacks and manipulative content.

Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, the report examines the volume and trends in media coverage, public engagement, and the prevalence of hate speech in online comments. A total of 150,103 comments were analyzed, of which 13,320, or 9% were classified as hate speech. The report also examines specific cases of false, sensationalist, and gender-based content targeting women politicians, identifying the narratives and techniques used to delegitimize them.

The report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the risks women face in the digital space and to encourage greater accountability among the media, political parties, public institutions, and technology platforms.



Protecting women from disinformation and digital violence is not only a matter of individual safety and dignity, but also of the quality of democratic debate and ensuring equal participation in politics.



Methodology

This report presents the findings of a monitoring exercise examining the visibility, public perception, and treatment of women politicians in the digital space during the period May–July 2026. The monitoring was conducted using PIKASA, a media intelligence and data analytics platform that enables the collection, classification, and analysis of content from online media outlets and social media platforms.

The monitoring focused on the public profiles of women politicians in Kosovo, including those holding executive, legislative, and party leadership positions. The analysis tracked online media mentions, social media posts, public comments, and user engagement for each monitored individual.

Data was collected on a daily basis throughout the monitoring period and analyzed against the following key indicators:

- ♦ *Number of media mentions and news reports;*
- ♦ *Number of social media posts and discussions;*
- ♦ *Level of public engagement (comments, reactions, and shares);*
- ♦ *Presence of hate speech, gender-based attacks, and other degrading content;*
- ♦ *Main topics and events that generated public attention;*
- ♦ *Monthly trends and periods of heightened public discussion.*

PIKASA employs text analysis algorithms to identify content that may be offensive, sexist, or gender based. However, recognizing the limitations of automated analysis, the findings were supplemented by a manual review of the most relevant cases to improve the accuracy of content classification.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, the report includes a qualitative component that examines selected cases of media coverage and online discussions that generated significant public attention. This combined approach made it possible to identify recurring communication patterns, dominant narratives, and the most common forms of online attacks targeting women in politics.

The monthly analysis is based on a comparison between the volume of media coverage and the level of public engagement on social media, allowing for the identification of the events that attracted the greatest public attention during the reporting period. Taken together, these methods provide a comprehensive picture of how women politicians in Kosovo are represented, discussed, and treated across the country's media and digital ecosystem.

Monthly Trends in Media Coverage and Reactions in the Digital Space

Hate Speech Comments Targeting Women in Politics

Data for the May–July period show that, of the 150,103 comments analyzed across online media and social media, 13,320 comments, or 9% of the total, were classified as hate speech. However, the percentage is considerably higher among comments related to certain women politicians.

Figure 1: Exposure of women politicians to social media comments and hate speech (May–July 2026)



Vlora Çitaku received the highest proportion of hate speech comments at 19%, followed by Blerta Deliu-Kodra at 17% and Fitore Pacolli-Dalipi at 15%. In absolute terms, Fitore Pacolli-Dalipi was targeted by the highest number of hate speech comments, accounting for 2,226 out of the 15,209 total comments analyzed for her profile. Ariana Musliu-Shoshi, Ganimete Musliu, and Arbëreshë Kryeziu-Hyseni each stood at 14%. These data show that comments targeting these women politicians contain hate speech at a considerably higher rate than the overall average of 9%.

From the perspective of disinformation and gender-based digital abuse, this disproportionate targeting indicates that hostile and derogatory language is used to undermine the authority, professionalism, and public standing of women in politics. In addition to criticism related to their political positions and activities, women also face attacks targeting their identity, dignity, and personal lives.

A qualitative analysis of the comments shows that discussions often shift away from political criticism or substantive debate toward personal, insulting, and dehumanizing

attacks. This language takes the form of derogatory labels, insults targeting women's intelligence and professional competence, disparaging references to their background or family history, as well as accusations of criminal conduct and ethnic slurs.

In other cases, the rhetoric escalates into vulgar, sexually explicit language and insults directed at family members. This demonstrates that women in politics face a dual form of pressure: political opposition is compounded by attacks on their morality, appearance, and personal dignity. As a result, the space available for their participation in public debate is narrowed and may create a chilling effect that discourages other women from entering politics and participating in decision-making.

This phenomenon is not limited to media coverage of women politicians but is also present in comments posted directly under their own social media posts. For example, of the 8,737 comments on Ganimete Musliu's posts, 1,134, or approximately 13%, were classified as hate speech. When all monitored posts related to her are included, the figure rises to 1,372 hate speech comments out of a total of 9,562 comments, or 14%.

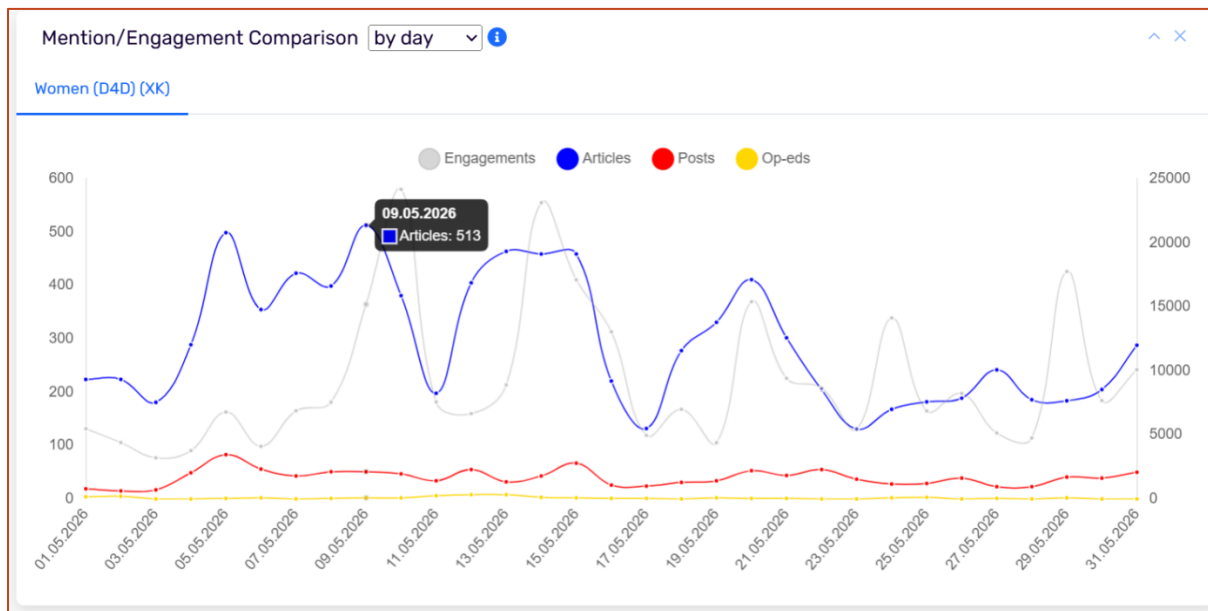
Overall, the data show that digital spaces serve not only as platforms for political debate, but also as environments where gender stereotypes and attacks against women in public life are reproduced and reinforced. Systematic monitoring, more effective content moderation, and an institutional response are therefore necessary to safeguard women's equal and safe participation in politics.



Media Activity and Public Engagement in May

In May 2026, media activity and public engagement fluctuated considerably as the June 7 elections approached. The number of articles increased significantly during the first half of the month, reaching its highest point on May 9, with 513 articles. High levels of publication were also recorded around May 5, May 13–15, and May 20, with approximately 400–500 articles per day.

Figure 2. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in May 2026



Audience engagement followed a more volatile pattern and did not always coincide with the volume of published content. The main peaks were recorded around May 10 and 14, when the number of interactions approached or exceeded 22,000. This suggests that certain political developments continued to generate considerable interest even after the initial publication of news reports. However, the chart alone does not make it possible to determine whether the increase in engagement was driven directly by the number of articles or by the content and political significance of the issues covered.

In the second half of the month, the volume of articles declined compared with the first half, although individual increases were recorded around May 20–21 and toward the end of the month. Engagement also showed distinct peaks around May 21, 25, and 29, even though the number of articles on some of these days was relatively lower. This indicates that a smaller number of publications can generate substantial engagement when the content relates to developments of significant public interest.

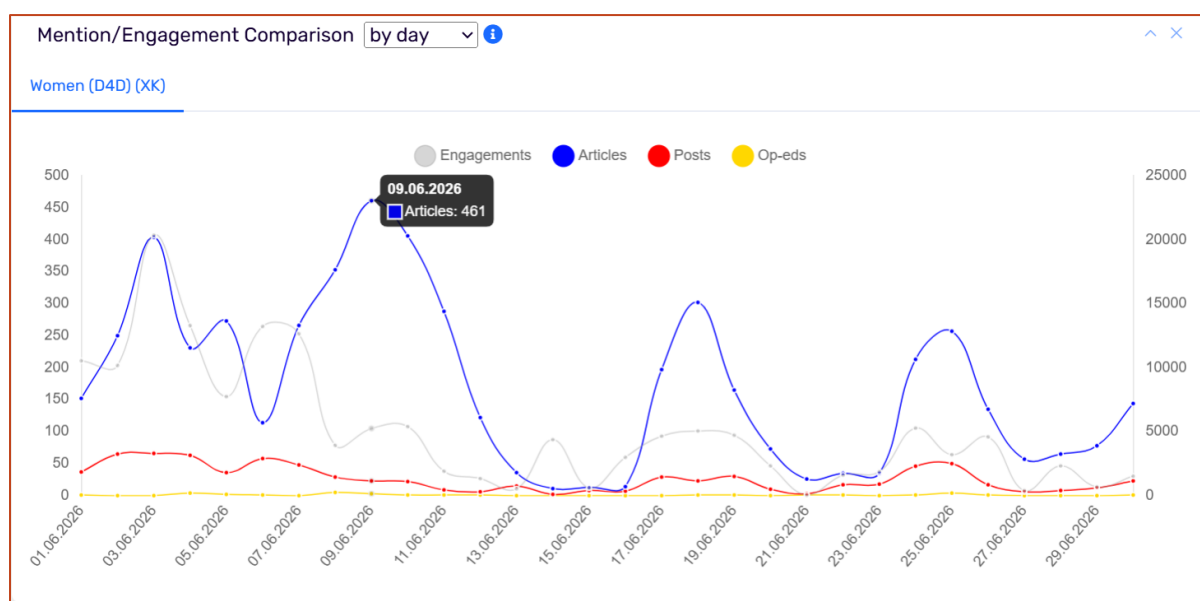
Direct posts on social media remained considerably fewer than articles, generally below 100 posts per day. Moderate increases were recorded around May 5, 15, 22, and 31. Opinion pieces and other authored content accounted for only a minimal share of the monitored content and had no discernible impact on the overall trends.

Overall, the chart reflects an intense but uneven information environment, characterized by waves of publications and engagement associated with specific developments in the run-up to the elections. Audience attention appears to have been influenced more by the significance and sensitivity of political events than by the volume of published content alone.

Media Activity and Public Engagement in June

In June 2026, public discussion focused primarily on developments related to the June 7 elections, the election results, and statements by women politicians involved in the debate. The data show a high level of media activity in the period leading up to and immediately following the elections, followed by a noticeable decline during the second half of the month.

Figure 3. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in June 2026



Public engagement increased most sharply at the beginning of the month, peaking on June 3 at approximately 20,000 interactions. This high level of engagement, recorded before election day, indicates heightened audience interest in political developments and statements during the final stage of the campaign. After this peak, engagement gradually declined, although several smaller increases were recorded during the remainder of the month.

The number of articles reached its highest level on June 9, two days after the elections, with 461 articles published. This peak coincides with the period of reporting and commentary on the election results. Relatively high publication levels were also recorded in the days leading up to the elections, particularly on June 3 and June 6–8.

Following the main wave of election coverage, the number of articles declined significantly around the middle of the month. However, the chart shows two secondary waves: the first around June 17–19, peaking at approximately 300 articles,

and the second around June 24–25, with approximately 250 articles. These increases suggest a temporary resurgence of media attention to post-election developments and reactions from political actors. Toward the end of the month, media activity declined considerably before increasing slightly on June 30.

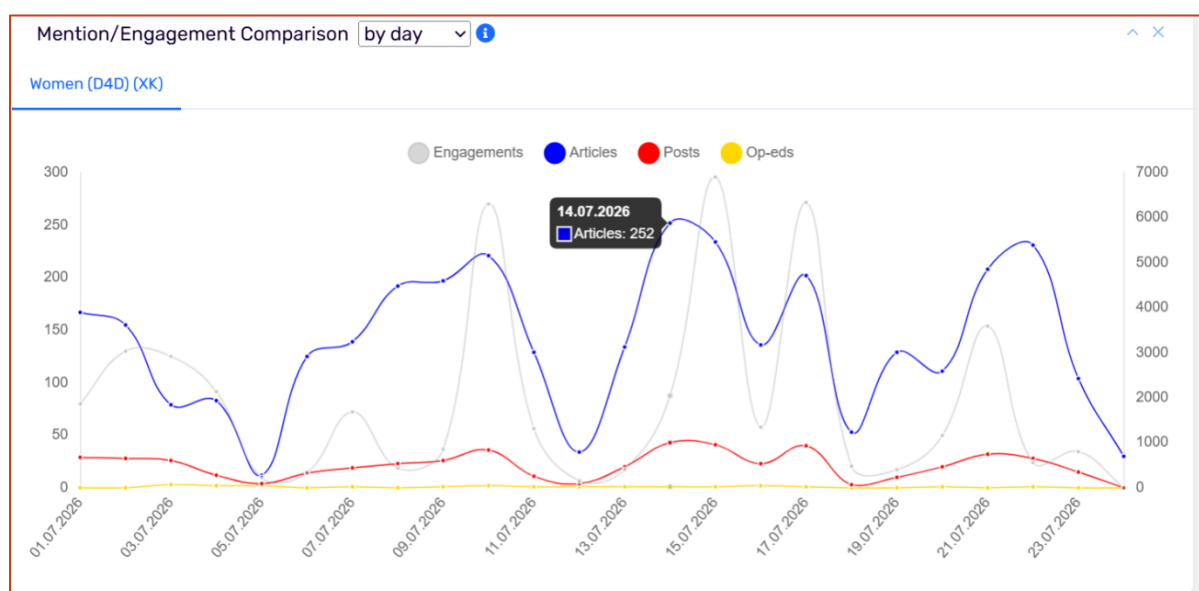
Direct posts on social media generally remained below 70 posts per day and partly followed the pattern observed for articles. They were more frequent at the beginning of the month and increased again around June 24–25. Opinion pieces and other authored content accounted for only a minimal share of the overall content throughout the period.

Overall, the chart reflects a clear election-related cycle in media attention: public engagement peaked before the elections, while the volume of published articles peaked immediately afterward. This difference in timing suggests that the public was more active during the period of anticipation and pre-election debate, while the media intensified their reporting after the vote, with the publication and interpretation of election results and political statements. However, the relationship between these peaks and specific topics would need to be confirmed through content analysis, as the chart shows the volume of activity but not the topics or factors driving each increase.

Media Activity and Public Engagement in July

Data for the period from July 1 to 24, 2026 show a considerable decline in activity compared with May and June, when public debate was focused on the elections. The daily number of articles did not exceed approximately 250, while engagement peaked at around 6,800 interactions. Although overall activity was lower, several brief spikes were recorded in connection with specific political developments and issues of public interest.

Figure 4. Daily trends in news articles, social media posts, and public engagement in July 2026



The number of articles increased gradually from July 6 to 10, reaching approximately 220 articles. Following a sharp decline on July 12, media coverage increased again and peaked on July 14, with 252 articles. Another wave was recorded on July 17, with approximately 200 articles, while the final significant increase occurred on July 21–22, with more than 200 articles per day.

Public engagement did not always follow the same pattern as the number of news articles. The most notable increases were recorded around July 10, with more than 6,000 interactions; on July 15, when engagement reached its highest level during the period at approximately 6,800 interactions; and on July 17, with more than 6,000 interactions. These peaks coincided with coverage of Hykmete Bajrami's statement on conditions in the pediatric ward and discussions surrounding the appointment of a prosecutor by the acting president. However, the precise contribution of each topic to the increase in activity would need to be confirmed through content analysis.

The time lag between the peak in the number of articles on July 14 and the peak in engagement one day later suggests that audience reactions may have continued after the initial publication of the news. Similarly, the increase in engagement on July 17 was proportionally greater than the volume of articles, indicating that the significance or sensitivity of an issue can generate substantial public reaction even without an exceptionally high number of publications.

Direct posts on social media generally remained below 50 per day. Key surges were recorded around July 14–15, July 17, and July 21–22, partly mirroring the pattern observed for articles. Opinion pieces and other authored content accounted for an almost negligible share of the monitored content.

Overall, the monitored period in July reflects a shift from an intensive election cycle toward a more fragmented media agenda. Attention was no longer concentrated on a single political process but instead rose in brief waves around specific statements and decisions. This indicates that, following the elections, public engagement was driven more by the sensitivity of individual issues than by the overall volume of media coverage.



Cases of Disinformation and Gender-Based Attacks Against Women Politicians

False and Sensationalist Content Targeting Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu

Monitoring conducted through the Pikasa platform shows that, between July 1 and 23, 2026, the Facebook page *Gazeta Diaspora* published 11 articles focusing on Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu. The content repeatedly used sensationalist headlines and unfounded or false claims designed to arouse users' curiosity and direct them to the *ballkantoday.com* website.



The screenshot displays five Facebook posts from the page 'Gazeta Diaspora'. Each post features a thumbnail image, a headline with alarmist emojis (such as 🚨, 🚩, 🚨, 🚨, 🚨), a link to <https://trend.ballkantoday.com>, and engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares, and views).

- Post 3:** Headline: 'Opa - Vjosa Osmani kandidate per kryetare te LDK-se? Ky lajm do iu befasoje 🚨 Detajet e plota ketu: <https://trend.ballkantoday.com/en/opa-vjosa-osm...>'
- Post 4:** Headline: 'LAJMI I FUNDIT: Vetëvendosje merr vendim për Vjosa Osmanin 🚨 Detajet e plota: <https://trend.ballkantoday.com/en/vetevendosje-merr-vendim-per-vjosa-...>'
- Post 5:** Headline: 'Çka tha Vjosa Osmani qe i çuditi te gjithë 🚨 Lexojeni: <https://trend.ballkantoday.com/en/vjosa-osmani-me-nje-mesazh-qe-po-trazon-politiken-vdekj...>'
- Post 6:** Headline: 'Nuk do ta besoni se çka tha Vjosa Osmani, lexojeni vet 🚨 Detaje: <https://trend.ballkantoday.com/en/votuesve-te-lvv-se-nuk-do-tju-pelqej-kjo-deklar...>'
- Post 7:** Headline: 'VIDEO 🚨 Gani Geci publikon videon që Vjosa Osmani nuk do të donte ta shihte kurrë: Ja çka thoshte kur... 🚨 Detajet e... <https://trend.ballkantoday.com/en/gani-geci-publikon-videon-qe-vjosa-osmani-nuk-do-te-donte-ta-shihte-kurre-ja-cka-thoshte-kur-...>'

The posts featured alarmist emojis, provocative questions, and wording that implied extraordinary developments without providing verifiable information. These included claims about potential shifts in party affiliation, political conflicts, and "major blows." Such elements are characteristic of clickbait content, which is designed to increase clicks and engagement, potentially generating financial benefits through online traffic. As a result, the distinction between factual reporting and manipulative content becomes less clear to the public.

Women Politicians in the Digital Space: Fourth Analysis of Online Discourse in Kosovo



The monitored content also displays elements of gender-based disinformation. Osmani-Sadriu is portrayed at times as powerless and dependent on decisions made by other political actors, and at other times as being involved in personal scandals or allegedly “unwanted” material. Such framing shifts attention away from her institutional role and responsibilities toward insinuations targeting her personal reputation and credibility.

The posts included in the monitoring reached an audience of more than 20,000 users and generated reactions, including insulting comments and hate speech. Their reach demonstrates that even a relatively small number of posts can have a significant impact when the content is designed to provoke emotional reactions and be shared rapidly.

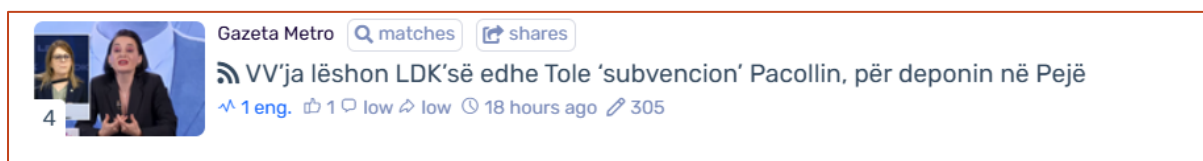
These cases underscore the need for systematic fact-checking, reporting content that violates platform standards, and cooperation with fact-checking organizations. However, determining whether the underlying motivation is financial or political, as well as definitively classifying each post as disinformation, requires separate verification of the content, its source, and the publisher's intent.

Disinformation and Gender-Based Attacks Targeting Fitore Pacolli-Dalipi

Monitoring of content related to Fitore Pacolli-Dalipi reveals a recurring pattern of political and gender-based attacks, primarily built around two delegitimizing narratives.



The first narrative portrays her as a “national traitor” through manipulated images, the use of Serbian symbols, and unverified claims. This form of portrayal combines political opposition with ethnic stigmatization and generates reactions that include insults and ethnically based hate speech. Subsequently, the debate shifts away from specific political positions or responsibilities and toward attacks on her identity and affiliation.



The second narrative seeks to associate her public image with corruption and political nepotism. To this end, private communications or interactions are used out of context, alongside stigmatizing nicknames such as “Tole ‘subsidy’ Pacolli.” The repeated use

of such labels seeks to create an automatic association between her name and alleged scandals, even when the posts do not provide sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations.

In addition to political delegitimization, the comments also contain direct gender-based attacks. The documented behavior includes dehumanizing comparisons, animalistic epithets, and gender-based attacks intended to malign her character and personal integrity. Such language is unrelated to her political work or positions and instead draws on patriarchal stereotypes intended to shame women and exclude them from public debate.

This type of content can gain wider reach when it originates from statements by public figures, is republished by online media, or is turned into clickbait headlines. The combination of political accusations with gender-based and ethnic insults creates a hostile digital environment that undermines the quality of public debate and may discourage women from participating in politics.

The data indicate a recurring pattern at the narrative level, but not necessarily an orchestrated campaign involving different actors. Establishing organized coordination would require additional data on the sources, timing of the posts, connections between pages, and how the content was disseminated.



Recommendations

1

Strengthen media accountability mechanisms by promoting ethical reporting standards and avoiding the amplification of misogynistic narratives and gender-based attacks.

2

Enhance the monitoring and response capacities of relevant institutions, including regulatory bodies, fact-checking organizations, and civil society organizations, to improve the identification and response to gender-based disinformation.

3

Expand media and digital literacy programs to help citizens recognize manipulated content, gender-based stereotypes, and disinformation campaigns targeting women in public life.

4

Encourage political parties and public institutions to adopt and enforce clear codes of conduct that explicitly condemn sexist language, online harassment, and gender-based attacks by public officials and political representatives.

5

Strengthen cooperation with social media platforms to facilitate the faster reporting and more effective removal of content that promotes hate speech, online harassment, or gender-based disinformation.

6

Establish and reinforce support mechanisms for women in public life, including access to legal assistance, psychological support, and digital security training, to help mitigate the impact of online abuse.

7

Promote positive narratives and the equal representation of women in the media and public discourse in order to challenge harmful stereotypes and contribute to a more inclusive, democratic, and gender-equal public sphere.



