



**The #ItStopsNow campaign highlights the systemic problem of sexual violence and harassment faced by third-level students and calls for collective action to ensure the safety, equality and full participation of every student.**

The campaign builds on the momentum of movements like #MeToo by empowering students to lead change in ending victim-blaming attitudes, believing and supporting survivors, challenging toxic behaviours, and understanding and acting on genuine consent.

The campaign has a number of goals:

- Raise awareness of issues of sexual violence and harassment in third-level institutes and of how these impact students, in particular women students and those from marginalised groups, such as women from ethnic minority, disability and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Include a broad range of students who experience sexual violence and harassment, challenging gender inequality and stereotyping which contributes to a culture of sexual violence and harassment.
- Encourage students to actively participate in creating a culture of zero tolerance to sexual violence and harassment, providing information and resources on how individuals can lead and take responsibility for cultural change.

## **What are the key campaign messages?**

#ItStopsNow emphasises the fact that every student has the right to an education free from sexual violence and harassment. Broad cultural change is needed to prevent and combat sexual violence and harassment, and we are all responsible for ensuring this happens. Ensuring student's voices are heard is essential, not only because of their heightened exposure to harmful behaviours, but because the values they take from their college experience will shape the future.

### **Believe and support survivors**

Disclosing an incident of sexual violence and harassment can be extremely difficult. As well as feelings of fear and distress, or holding an expectation that little can be done, survivors often face victim-blaming attitudes, all of which contribute to significant under-reporting. As friends, families, colleagues and classmates, when a survivor speaks out, we need to meet them with understanding, belief and support.

### **Don't stand by, speak up!**

Sexual assault doesn't exist in a vacuum: wolf-whistling, catcalling, sexist jokes, 'slut shaming' and more lay the foundations of a sexual violence culture. Women have been at the vanguard in the fight against this culture, but now it's time for others to join us in creating a safe and equal society: each of us has a responsibility to not participate in these behaviours and to call out those that do. We all must also actively include marginalised groups in the process of change. Women with disabilities are three times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence, with ethnic minority or migrant women also experiencing higher prevalence rates.

### **Before you do it, say it, or post it, check if they consent.**

A cultural shift away from simply presuming consent is essential. Consent should be ongoing, mutual, voluntary and enthusiastic. It extends beyond physical and verbal behaviours to online spaces as well. Online sexual harassment is an increasingly prevalent issue for young students, with toxic behaviours becoming minimised and normalised in society. Understanding and acting on genuine consent is therefore key to ending the culture of sexual violence and harassment.

## **What resources are available?**

#ItStopsNow works to build a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and violence by raising awareness of these issues through active campaigning, and ensuring long-term, sustainable change.

### **Online Activity**

The #ItStopsNow website ([www.itstopsnow.org](http://www.itstopsnow.org)) provides a much-needed 'one stop shop' for students, student unions, societies and staff to act against harmful behaviours and promote gender equality. The website provides information and resources to students and staff on how they can get involved in the campaign, as well as guidance and support links to student survivors of sexual violence and harassment. Regular campaign updates, webinars, related research and more are also shared through the website.

#ItStopsNow is also active across Twitter ([@ItStopsNow\\_EU](https://twitter.com/ItStopsNow_EU)) and Facebook ([@ItStopsNowEU](https://www.facebook.com/ItStopsNowEU)).

## **Mural**

The #ItStopsNow mural is an engaging installation promoting the campaign's central messages, which third-level institutes are encouraged to display on their campuses. The mural displays popular myths and engrained attitudes towards sexual violence and harassment, before dispelling these and promoting the campaign's call to action. The mural is available to institutes to download and install, with students and societies encouraged to lead its development.

## **Awareness-Raising Material**

The #ItStopsNow campaign video was launched in October 2018, showcasing the experiences and perspectives of students on sexual violence and harassment. The video calls on students and staff to consider and act on the collective responsibility to end harmful behaviours and gender inequality. Along with the video, campaign posters and stickers are also being distributed around college campuses to raise awareness and generate action. The #ItStopsNow team will also undertake outreach activities with students and staff, such as running stalls or hosting talks at college and society events.

## **Webinars**

A series of webinars has been produced and made available on the #ItStopsNow website and social media. The webinars explore online harassment, the bystander approach to sexual violence and harassment, and legal frameworks around these issues.

## **Why is this campaign important?**

Sexual violence and harassment remains an ongoing and prevalent issue for many women students in third-level education in Ireland and across Europe. Today's students are living through a pivotal time for women's rights and equality, yet, paradoxically, at a particularly vulnerable time in their own lives. Women and girls represent 8 out of 10 victims of sexual assaults in Europe, with women aged 18-25 most at risk.

For far too long, women students have confronted behaviours and crimes ranging from incidents of rape, groping, stalking and catcalling to online harassment, secret filming, and the sharing of private or unsolicited, explicit images.

Research from the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) shows that:

- 31% of women students in Ireland have reported feeling harassed in their current educational institution
- One in four women students have experienced unwanted physical groping
- Only 3% of students reported an incident of sexual harassment or violence to their institution or An Garda Síochána.

Meanwhile, in 2016, students represented 45% of those who were treated in the six Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATUs) in Ireland.

#ItStopsNow therefore underlines the critical need to raise awareness of sexual harassment and violence issues and to eradicate the harmful behaviours which impede women's rights, security and enjoyment of the college experience.

## Who is behind the campaign?

#ItStopsNow is an integral part of the Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third-Level Education (ESHTE) project, which aims to prevent and combat sexual violence and harassment in third-level institutes across Europe.

The ESHTE project is funded by the European Commission, with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) standing as its lead coordinator and working with the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) in Cyprus, Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS), the Women's Issues Information Centre (WIIC) in Lithuania and the Women's Equality Commissioner, Ludwig -Maximilian University in Munich, Germany.

Each project partner is working closely with staff and students in higher education institutions, statutory agencies, and NGOs focused on combatting sexual violence and harassment against women. In Ireland, the NWCI facilitates a National Advisory Committee (NAC) to support the development and implementation of the project. As well as the NWCI, the NAC members include student unions and higher education institutes across the island, statutory bodies, and non-governmental and support organisations

### For more information:

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