

17-YEAR OLD GIRL FINDS AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO HELP HER PEERS REPORT VIOLENCE THROUGH A FAKE COSMETICS WEBSITE

Children innovating, creating and expressing

Europe and Others: Poland

Disturbed by reports of rising domestic violence under coronavirus lockdown, a Polish high school girl decided to launch a fake online shop to offer a lifeline to victims trapped in their homes. "Firstly, I heard about the increase in domestic violence cases during the pandemic. Then I heard about a French initiative, where people go to the pharmacy and ask for a special mask that lets the pharmacist know they are a victim of domestic violence," 17 year old Krystyna said. Through this fake cosmetics website the victim can hide requests for help from their abuser at home by appearing to be shopping online.

When a victim writes asking to buy a cream, a psychologist responds instead of a salesperson and asks how long the "skin problems" have been going on for, or how the affected skin reacts to alcohol. If someone places an order and leaves an address, it is actually code asking for authorities to visit their home.

Since its launch, more than 350 people have contacted the website. Most of the victims are young, under 40, and about 10% are male. "More younger women prefer to write on Facebook than to call on the phone, it's more natural for younger women to use Facebook chat. Most of the men writing to us are teenagers," she said. The initiative was one of 23 projects to receive the EU's Civil Solidarity Prize, a one-off contest offering €10,000 to reward civil society organisations tackling the consequences of Covid-19.

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