



Very large, largely silent: how three pornography-hosting platforms assess their governance of sexual content under the Digital Services Act

Carlotta Rigotti, Nicola Döring & Isotta Rossoni

To cite this article: Carlotta Rigotti, Nicola Döring & Isotta Rossoni (06 Aug 2026): Very large, largely silent: how three pornography-hosting platforms assess their governance of sexual content under the Digital Services Act, Porn Studies, DOI: [10.1080/23268743.2026.2692431](https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2026.2692431)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2026.2692431>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 06 Aug 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Very large, largely silent: how three pornography-hosting platforms assess their governance of sexual content under the Digital Services Act

Carlotta Rigotti ^a, Nicola Döring ^b and Isotta Rossoni ^c

^aeLaw Center for Law and Digital Technologies, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands; ^bDepartment of Economic Sciences and Media, Ilmenau University of Technology, Ilmenau, Germany; ^cVan Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

In 2023, the European Commission designated Aylo (Pornhub.com), Stripchat, and XVideos as very large online platforms under the Digital Services Act, subjecting them to binding obligations to identify, assess, and mitigate systemic risks. In 2025, these platforms submitted their first risk assessment reports to the European Commission. This article offers a systematic and critical analysis of these reports from a sex-positive, rights-based perspective – treating both non-consensual sexual content and the suppression of consensual sexual content as systemic risks. The analysis reveals four recurring limitations: methodological opacity; a narrow conceptualization of risk that underestimates technology-facilitated violence against women; structural marginalization of performers and content creators from governance processes; and minimal civil society engagement. All three assessments approach sexual content governance almost exclusively through a harm-prevention lens, remaining silent on the freedoms at stake. The article concludes with recommendations arguing that effective governance must hold protection and freedom in productive tension.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 April 2026
Accepted 10 June 2026

KEYWORDS

pornography; Digital Services Act; transparency; platform governance; sexual autonomy; gender-based violence

1. Introduction

In December 2023, the European Commission designated three pornography-hosting platforms – Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos¹ – as very large online platforms (VLOPs) under Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065, more commonly known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) (European Commission 2023).² The VLOP designation applies to online platforms reaching more than 45 million monthly users in the European Union (EU) and subjects them to a specific set of obligations, including the performance of risk assessment and mitigation under Articles 34 and 35 DSA. This designation, shaped in no small part by the advocacy of organizations and experts across the digital rights and

CONTACT Carlotta Rigotti  c.rigotti@law.leidenuniv.nl

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

sextech landscape (AccessNow et al. 2023; HateAid et al. 2023), signalled that a key blind spot in discussions on platform governance had finally been acknowledged and represented a potential first step towards a future where sexual autonomy is treated as a right rather than a risk.

The designation also took place against a backdrop of growing public debate about the risks associated with pornography-hosting platforms – debates that have centred, above all, on the exposure of minors to sexual content and, to a lesser degree, on gender-based violence (Desmarais 2025; Döring, Le, and Miller 2025; European Commission 2025, 2026; Seck and Klotsonis 2025). These concerns are legitimate and have rightly shaped the policy agenda. Yet this framing also obscures a wider set of concerns that deserve equal attention. Particularly concerning is the potential restriction of consensually created and shared sexual content as a result of broader platform design – one that is based on heteronormative masculine assumptions, and systematically marginalizes sexual identities, desires, and expressions that fall outside that norm (Saunders 2020; Blunt and Stardust 2021; Appelman 2023; Rama et al. 2023). In other words, dominant debates on the platform governance of sexual content have yet to fully embrace a sex-positive and rights-based perspective, in which platform governance is evaluated not only against the harms it prevents, but also against the freedoms it sustains, for example, for performers, sex workers, and content creators from marginalized communities, including LGBTIQ+ individuals and racialized minorities.

This article examines the risk assessment reports submitted to the European Commission in 2025 by Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos, with two aims. First, while the DSA seeks to increase platform observability and redress the structural asymmetry of power between platforms and their users (Leerssen 2024), risk assessments remain highly technical documents largely inaccessible to affected groups. This article is part of a broader effort to render them more legible and to bring affected communities into the conversation (DSA Civil Society Coordination Group 2025; Seck and Klotsonis 2025). Second, and more substantively, the article evaluates these reports against a sex-positive and rights-based perspective that treats both the non-consensual dissemination of sexual content and the restriction of consensual materials as systemic risks requiring serious attention.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the methodology. Section 3 analyses how Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos respectively identify, assess, and mitigate systemic risks related to sexual and gendered content. Section 4 offers a critical analysis of the findings. The Conclusion advances recommendations for future iterations of the risk assessments, addressed to both the platforms and the European Commission.

2. Methodology

This article analyses three primary sources: the risk assessment reports submitted to the European Commission in 2025 by Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos under Articles 34 and 35 DSA. These reports, totalling 217 pages, are publicly available³ and were read in full prior to analysis.⁴ Relevant content from each report was extracted and organized under four thematic dimensions: risk assessment methodology and governance, risk identification, risk assessment, and risk mitigation measures. Following this, the extracted content was critically and comparatively assessed based on four criteria: methodological transparency, conceptual clarity in the identification and framing of risk, integration or

marginalization of sex-positive and rights-based perspectives, and the presence or absence of meaningful stakeholder engagement. A detailed breakdown table of our analytical framework including all evaluation criteria is publicly available via the Open Science Framework repository.⁵

Our analytical framework is grounded in three interrelated but distinct concepts. Sex positivity provides the normative orientation: following Ivanski and Kohut (2017), it is understood here as an ideology that promotes openness, non-judgement, and respect for personal sexual autonomy where consent is present. Sexual autonomy names the specific right at stake – the individual's capacity to express and enjoy their sexuality free from coercion or unnecessary restriction – and is understood in accordance with a rights-based conception of sexuality (Valentiner 2021). The rights-based approach constitutes the analytical framework through which platform governance is evaluated: not only against the harms it prevents, but also against its compliance with human rights standards, including the obligation to refrain from governance practices that unnecessarily restrict consensual expressions. Together, these three concepts are mutually reinforcing rather than redundant: sex positivity motivates the enquiry, sexual autonomy identifies what is at stake, and the rights-based approach determines the standard of evaluation. The article also adopts an intersectional lens (Crenshaw 1989), seeking to illuminate – wherever available data permit – the specific challenges posed by platform governance to LGBTIQ+ communities, sex workers, and any social group situated at the intersections of multiple mechanisms of oppression. The analysis draws on a total of 57 academic and grey literature sources on platform governance, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), and sexual autonomy, as well as publications by civil society organizations (CSOs) responding to the risk assessment reports.

The article does not address all systemic risks identified in the three assessments. It focuses deliberately on those related to sexual and gendered content – understood here as sexually explicit material whose production, distribution, and governance are, on the online platforms under examination, irreducibly shaped by gender norms and power relations – which constitute the analytical core of its argument.

3. Risk assessments in practice: a comparative descriptive account

This section offers a comparative descriptive account of how each online platform explained their risk assessment methodology and governance, and on this basis approached risk identification, risk assessment, and risk mitigation with respect to sexual and gendered content. Given that the DSA does not prescribe a uniform methodology (Leerssen 2023), and that Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos have adopted different approaches, the section opens with a brief account of their methodological choices before turning to the descriptive analysis across the other three dimensions detailed earlier.

3.1. Methodology and governance

The DSA leaves VLOPs considerable discretion in how they design and conduct their risk assessments, requiring only that methodologies be tailored to the specificities of the service and proportionate to the systemic risks involved (Article 34). This flexibility is reflected in the heterogeneity of the three assessments.

Aylo (Pornhub) provides the least methodological transparency. Beyond noting the use of a severity–probability matrix, where severity ranges from negligible to very critical and probability from improbable to frequent, the impact assessment for Pornhub.com offers no information about who conducted the assessment, what evidence was used, how long the process took, or whether any external stakeholders were involved (Aylo 2025). This opacity makes it difficult to evaluate the robustness of Aylo (Pornhub)’s conclusions or to assess their compliance with Article 34 DSA in any meaningful way.

Stripchat and XVideos, by contrast, ground their assessments in internationally recognized risk-management standards. Both rely primarily on the ISO 31000 standard, which provides guidance on integrating risk management into core organizational processes and decision-making. Stripchat supplements this with the Enterprise Risk Management framework developed by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO), while XVideos explicitly justifies its choice of ISO 31000 based on international recognition, alignment with the DSA objectives, and methodological flexibility (Stripchat 2024; XVideos 2025).

In terms of governance, Stripchat centralizes oversight in a Compliance Committee composed of the Director, the Head of Legal, and the Head of Support and Moderation. Following risk identification, the assessment involves the development of evaluation criteria, analysis of interactions between risks, and prioritization based on combined likelihood and impact scores. Likelihood is determined by the moderation department on a 1–5 scale informed by moderation statistics and professional judgement, while impact is assessed separately by the legal department on the same scale. Final risk levels are determined using a heat-map matrix (Stripchat 2024). XVideos does not disclose its governance arrangements in equivalent detail, but describes a six-step process: scoping, risk identification through brainstorming sessions and scenario planning, likelihood and impact scoring, prioritization, mitigation planning, and ongoing monitoring. Both Stripchat and XVideos maintain continuously updated risk registers documenting inherent and residual risk scores, treatment recommendations, and final classifications (Stripchat 2024; XVideos 2025).

3.2. Risk identification

Pursuant to Article 34(1) DSA, risk identification must cover the dissemination of illegal content, foreseeable negative effects on fundamental rights, adverse effects on civic discourse and public security, and harms related to gender-based violence, public health, and physical and mental well-being. Article 34(2) DSA further requires online platforms to examine how their design and operational choices, including recommender systems, content moderation, terms and conditions, advertising models, and data practices, contribute to those risks. The three online platforms vary considerably in how comprehensively they fulfil these requirements.

Aylo (Pornhub) organizes its identified risks across the DSA’s macro-categories. Under illegal content, it pinpoints non-consensual material, doxxing, and harassment. Under fundamental rights violations, it flags hate speech and stereotyping on the basis of sexual preferences and behaviour, as well as sex trafficking, linking these to its stated core values of consent, freedom of sexual expression, authenticity, and diversity. Risks related to minors, pornography-induced harm, and the potential for sexual content to

foster unrealistic expectations or interpersonal harm are grouped under gender-based violence, public health, and physical and mental well-being. Aylo (Pornhub) also acknowledges the role of its advertising and recommender systems as overarching risk factors, although without specifying how these systems contribute to particular risks or how they were assessed (Aylo 2025).

Stripchat identifies a broader range of risks, spanning content and, to a lesser degree, platform design. Content-related risks include extreme pornography, non-consensual intimate imagery, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), sexual exploitation, hate speech, and discriminatory content. Further risks concern privacy violations, harassment, gender-based violence, and minors' access to the service or appearance in private shows. Stripchat is notably more explicit than Aylo (Pornhub) in acknowledging the systemic role of its recommender system, identifying risks such as the promotion of illegal or violent content, discriminatory treatment based on protected characteristics, the exposure of users to extreme material before moderation can intervene, contributions to harmful body image norms, and adverse effects on mental and sexual health. The assessment also identifies platform-specific risks such as the misuse of parallel channels to distribute illegal content and the transfer of registered accounts to unauthorized users or minors. Throughout, Stripchat consistently links identified risks to potential reputational damage and regulatory exposure, underscoring a dual focus on user protection and organizational liability (Stripchat 2024).

XVideos adopts the most structured approach to risk identification, organizing risks across 12 domains, several of which are directly relevant to sexual and gendered content. The category of illegal content distribution encompasses the dissemination of unlawful or unauthorized material, including hate speech, as well as the over-moderation or erroneous removal of legitimate content. Gender-based violence covers harmful content targeting individuals on the basis of gender, including image-based sexual abuse and cyber-harassment. The protection of minors category addresses both under-age access to adult content and the creation or circulation of exploitative material. A dedicated fundamental rights category identifies privacy violations arising from insufficient data governance, discriminatory outcomes in automated decision-making affecting marginalized groups, threats to human dignity encompassing exploitation and degradation, and undue restrictions on freedom of expression resulting from inconsistent moderation. Further categories address transparency in recommender system outputs, users' limited understanding of content policies, and the risks generated by algorithmic design. XVideos also acknowledges that these categories are interlinked – threats to freedom of expression, for instance, may arise across multiple domains simultaneously – and frames potential impacts at three levels: users, society, and the platform itself (XVideos 2025).

Across all three online platforms, risk identification remains predominantly focused on user-generated content, with design-related and structural risks receiving comparatively less attention. A recurring limitation is the narrow framing of TFGBV, which is largely confined to the non-consensual dissemination of sexual material, and the selective – and often unjustified – mention of certain forms of violence, at the expense of others. Stripchat's treatment of the recommender system constitutes a partial exception, although even there the analysis remains descriptive rather than evidence-based. The governance of consensual content, including the conditions under which it is amplified, suppressed, or demonetized, is largely absent from all three assessments.

3.3. Risk assessment

All three online platforms follow a two-stage logic in their risk assessments: evaluating inherent risks, that is, the likelihood and severity of harm in the absence of any controls, before arriving at residual risk levels once existing mitigations are factored in.

Aylo (Pornhub) concludes that all systemic risks for Pornhub.com fall within the medium-to-low range once existing safeguards are taken into account. Severity is assessed primarily through three factors: the number of viewers potentially affected, the number of direct victim-survivors, and the irreversibility of harm. What drives the overall low-to-medium classification, however, is Aylo (Pornhub)'s treatment of probability. Even where it acknowledges that the severity of certain risks – including CSAM, hate speech, stereotyping based on sexual preferences, and extreme pornography – is critical, it consistently rates their probability as remote or improbable. This downward adjustment is attributed to the existence of extensive organizational and technical mitigation measures (Aylo 2025).

Stripchat documents its assessment through a heat-map matrix assigning inherent and residual levels to each identified risk. Risks classified as critical include various forms of hate speech and discriminatory content in livestreams and chat messages, the promotion of illegal or harmful material via the recommender system, CSAM, and scenarios involving minors accessing the service through false identities or appearing in private shows. A second group of risks is assessed as significant, encompassing extreme pornography, sexual exploitation and human trafficking, harassment and grooming, privacy violations linked to algorithmic processing, and the recommender system's potential to direct users towards illegal content before moderation can respond. Non-consensual imagery, privacy violations arising from content reuse, and materials promoting gender-based violence are treated as moderate risks. Finally, risks such as the recommender system's potential to restrict freedom of expression or extreme pornography's adverse effects on physical and mental well-being are assessed as minor. The rationales offered for likelihood estimates vary considerably in quality. In some instances, likelihood is inferred from moderation statistics or user complaint volumes; in others, most notably for harassment and grooming, it is extrapolated from overall interaction volumes rather than specific evidence. Recommender system risks are assessed as having a low probability of materializing, on the grounds that the system does not incorporate external links, relies only on similar content already available on the platform, and does not use protected characteristics as ranking signals (Stripchat 2024).

XVideos begins its assessment with a system-level analysis of how its core operational components shape the risk environment, in direct application of Article 34(2) DSA. For recommender systems, the assessment highlights the possibility that algorithmic ranking may amplify harmful or polarizing content, gradually expose users to increasingly extreme material, normalize gender-based violence, reinforce harmful body image norms, and create content echo chambers. For content moderation, XVideos acknowledges that automated systems may misclassify lawful content as illegal, that victim-survivors may face barriers in reporting and removing harmful material, and that opaque or inaccessible moderation policies may result in disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression. The analysis of terms of service focuses on their potential to disproportionately affect socially marginalized groups, while data-related risks are described in terms of breaches,

unauthorized tracking, weak security measures, and the improper monetization of user data. Inherent risk scores are derived from a 5×5 likelihood–impact matrix. The majority of risks, approximately 85%, fall within the medium range, encompassing protection of minors, gender-based violence, illegal content distribution, data privacy, user rights, algorithmic design, threats to freedom of expression, and discriminatory practices. One risk is classified as high: threats to human dignity, interpreted broadly to include deepfake, sexual exploitation, and degrading forms of content (XVideos 2025).

Across the three assessments, a shared structural pattern is visible: inherent risks that might otherwise attract regulatory attention are consistently reclassified as residual once the existence of mitigation measures is acknowledged, often without independent verification of those measures’ effectiveness. The severity–probability matrix, while analytically coherent in principle, produces outcomes that are largely shaped by each online platform’s own characterization of its safeguards, rather than by external audit or empirical evidence.

3.4. Risk mitigation

Under Article 35(1) DSA, VLOPs are required to implement reasonable, proportionate, and effective measures to address identified systemic risks, with due regard to their potential impact on fundamental rights. All three online platforms describe multilayered mitigation strategies combining technical controls, organizational procedures, and external partnerships.

Aylo (Pornhub) presents its existing mitigation architecture for Pornhub.com as broadly adequate under Article 35 DSA, with the partial exception of minors’ access and exposure to pornographic content. For CSAM and non-consensual content, Aylo (Pornhub) relies on identity and consent verification, applied retroactively to existing content, alongside automated detection tools designed to identify both known and previously unseen illegal material prior to publication. These are supplemented by download restrictions, hash-based fingerprinting, banned-word filtering, deterrence messaging, delisting procedures, trusted-flagger channels, and standard reporting mechanisms. Aylo (Pornhub) also references engagement with CSOs in the development of certain tools and adherence to image-based sexual abuse principles. For doxxing, harassment, and sex trafficking, mitigation centres on performer-oriented educational materials encouraging self-protective practices, alongside restrictions on user profiles and private messaging. Hate speech is addressed primarily through policy enforcement, accompanied by a narrative distinguishing consensual adult role-play from real-world harm. Over-blocking is addressed through identity and consent verification and layered moderation processes, presented as safeguards against erroneous removals. Risks related to minors and pornography-induced harm are addressed through regulatory age-verification tools and the platform’s in-house Sexual Wellness Center. With respect to recommender systems, Aylo (Pornhub) asserts, without empirical substantiation, that Pornhub’s safeguards exceed those commonly deployed by social media platforms, and highlights the option for users to disable the recommender system entirely as a measure enhancing individual control over content exposure (Aylo 2025).

Stripchat frames its mitigation strategy around safeguards that are already in place, spanning terms and conditions, content moderation, reporting mechanisms, identity

verification, and human oversight, which it considers sufficient to reclassify identified risks as residual. These measures are characterized as both preventive and detective in nature, implemented through a combination of manual, automated, procedural, and policy-based tools. Stripchat explicitly acknowledges that no set of controls can entirely eliminate systemic risk, and on this basis sets out forward-looking recommendations, including enhancements to computer-vision functionality for uploaded video content, revisions to the registration process to encourage meaningful engagement with community guidelines, and the establishment of priority handling procedures for trusted-flagger notices. Stripchat further specifies its maximum tolerable residual risk thresholds, adopting a zero-tolerance approach to CSAM and gender-based violence, while tolerating occasional, non-systemic instances of other categories of illegal content and fundamental rights violations, provided these are promptly addressed and do not generate significant media attention (Stripchat 2024).

XVideos structures its mitigation strategy around a dedicated Mitigation Measures Register, which maps 74 individual measures to specific risk scenarios, classifies each by function – that is, preventive, detective, corrective, or reactive – and assigns effectiveness ratings of high, moderate, or low. The majority of measures are rated as moderately effective, indicating that while they contribute to risk reduction, their impact remains conditional or dependent on broader systemic arrangements. Content moderation is described as a hybrid system combining automated detection and trained human moderators, supported by notice-and-action mechanisms, complaint-handling procedures, trusted-flagger priority channels, and content ghosting techniques. Terms of service and data-protection measures, including encryption, privacy policies, and security safeguards, are presented as complementary pillars of the mitigation architecture. Protection of minors is addressed through age-assurance mechanisms, content labelling, and parental-guidance tools. Beyond internal controls, XVideos treats external engagement as an integral component of its mitigation strategy, referencing cooperation with law enforcement, CSOs, and trusted third parties. For risks that remain at a medium residual level, the online platform adopts a continuous reduction strategy, including deepening civil society collaboration on non-consensual content and gender-based violence, partnering with other platforms for real-time removal of known illegal material, refining algorithmic detection thresholds through academic research, and engaging experts in artificial intelligence ethics and digital identity on emerging technological risks (XVideos 2025).

Across the three online platforms, mitigation measures are consistently presented as extensive. All three rely significantly on automated filtering, particularly keyword-based tools, without disclosing how these lists are constructed, updated, or evaluated for accuracy. Human moderation is referenced across all assessments, but none provides substantive information on moderator training, working conditions, or psychological support. Reporting mechanisms are described in procedural terms, with no discussion of accessibility, responsiveness, or the experience of those seeking redress. External partnerships with CSOs and hotlines are mentioned, but largely in descriptive terms, with limited evidence of how these collaborations are operationalized within platform design or moderation workflows. These structural limitations, and their normative implications, are addressed in the next section.

4. What the risk assessments miss: methodological, conceptual, and normative blind spots

The risk assessments submitted by Aylo (Pornhub), Stripchat, and XVideos represent a meaningful, if incomplete, first step in subjecting pornography-hosting platforms to the kind of structured, publicly accountable risk governance that the DSA envisions. Read together, however, they reveal a set of recurring methodological weaknesses, conceptual limitations, and normative blind spots that significantly constrain their value, as both legal instruments and policy measures for advancing the rights of those most affected by the governance of sexual content online.

The critical terrain the risk assessments open is vast, and this article makes no claim to exhaust it. Questions of child protection, platform liability, the interplay between the DSA and sector-specific regulation, and the broader political economy of pornography-hosting platforms all deserve dedicated treatment that falls outside the scope of the present analysis. What this section offers instead is a focused critique organized around four interconnected dimensions that are central to the article's core argument: methodological opacity and symbolic compliance; the narrow and, at times, incoherent conceptualization of risk; the structural marginalization of a rights-based and sex-positive perspective; and the broader governance tensions that the assessments expose within the DSA framework itself, namely their meaningful – or limited – stakeholder involvement.

4.1. Methodological opacity and symbolic compliance

The most immediate and pervasive limitation across all three assessments – one that mirrors patterns already observed in the risk assessments of other VLOPs (DSA Civil Society Coordination Group 2025) – is the opacity of the methodological choices underpinning them. The assessment of Aylo (Pornhub) is the starkest case: beyond the bare reference to a severity–probability matrix, it discloses no information about who conducted the evaluation, what evidence was consulted, how long the process took, or whether any external stakeholders were involved. This level of opacity renders the evaluation of its compliance with Article 34 DSA and of the robustness of its conclusions impossible, and impairs any meaningful comparison with the other two assessments. Stripchat and XVideos fare better on paper, grounding their methodologies in ISO 31000 and, in Stripchat's case, the COSO Enterprise Risk Management framework. Yet reliance on these internationally recognized standards should be interpreted with caution. ISO 31000 explicitly requires transparency, proactive stakeholder engagement, and consideration of the interaction and compounding effects of multiple risks. The evidence reviewed suggests that these requirements are honoured more in form than in substance: external stakeholder involvement is either absent or inadequately documented, risks are largely assessed in isolation rather than in relation to one another, and the standards' underlying participatory logic appears to have been absorbed into a compliance exercise rather than genuinely operationalized. This dynamic, whereby adherence to a recognized framework is invoked as justification while material departures from its underlying intent go unacknowledged, is precisely the kind of symbolic compliance that the DSA's systemic risk architecture was designed to prevent (Eder 2024). It also speaks to a broader pattern within the adult entertainment industry of performing transparency

– presenting the appearance of accountability through public relations campaigns and yearly reports about video consumption – while the structural conditions that enable harm and fundamental rights restrictions remain largely unexamined and undisturbed (Rama et al. 2023; Saunders 2025).

A related concern is the governance structure of the assessments themselves. Where governance arrangements are disclosed, they are dominated by senior legal and managerial functions, with no meaningful participation from non-managerial staff, affected communities, or independent experts. Stripchat's Compliance Committee exemplifies a model of oversight that, while internally coherent, is structurally ill-equipped to surface the perspectives of performers, users, or CSOs whose daily experience of the platform's risk environment differs substantially from that of its management. The DSA's expectation of meaningful stakeholder engagement under Recital 90 is not merely procedural: it reflects a substantive recognition that risk identification and assessment require epistemic diversity (Griffin 2025). Without it, the assessments risk reflecting the institutional logics and economic interests of the platforms themselves rather than the full range of systemic harms their services generate, a structural concern that is sharpened by the fact that the adult entertainment industry has become one of the most profitable sectors of the digital economy, with commercial incentives that do not always align with the rights and safety of those whose labour and expression sustain it (Saunders 2020).

4.2. *Narrow and incoherent conceptualization of systemic risk*

A second, closely related set of limitations concerns the conceptual quality of the risk identification and assessment processes. Across all online platforms, the treatment of online and technology-facilitated violence remains narrow, predominantly equating gender-based violence with the non-consensual dissemination of sexual content, a category still frequently labelled, inaccurately, as 'revenge pornography', despite extensive scholarly and policy consensus that the term is misleading and carries victim-blaming connotations (McGlynn and Rackley 2017; Viola and Volta 2025). This selective focus stands in sharp contrast to the expanding body of interdisciplinary literature documenting the diverse and intersectional forms of TFGBV (Rigotti and McGlynn 2025; Le and Döring 2026), and to the growing legislative attention at EU level, most recently reflected in Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Rigotti, McGlynn, and Benning 2024). By structuring their risk identification so firmly around this single category, the online platforms not only undercount the breadth of gendered harm their services may facilitate, but also implicitly narrow the scope of mitigation obligations they are required to address.

Conceptual incoherence further weakens the assessments at the definitional level. Stripchat's characterization of human trafficking as 'forcefully engaging models against their will and obtaining income from Stripchat as a result' (Stripchat 2024, 33) conflates distinct activities and omits the specific acts, means, and purposes required under established legal definitions, including those enshrined in Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. Aylo (Pornhub)'s suggestion that viewers are more affected by deepfake content only when they recognize the victim-survivor reflects neither established literature on image-based sexual abuse nor basic risk logic, since the harms of non-consensual synthetic intimate

imagery are not contingent on victim recognition (McGlynn and Toparlak 2025; Le and Döring 2026). XVideos' reliance on the category of 'problematic content', without further specification, blends legal, ethical, and moral criteria in ways that obscure, rather than illuminate, the nature and severity of the underlying risks. Taken together, these definitional imprecisions are not merely academic concerns. As feminist epistemology has long argued, categories of harm are never neutral: they encode particular standpoints, render certain experiences legible while obscuring others, and distribute protection unevenly as a result (Tuana 2017). In a risk governance framework where conceptual choices directly shape severity and probability scores – and therefore the mitigation obligations that follow – definitional imprecision is not a technical shortcoming but a political one, with material consequences for those whose experiences of harm fall outside the frameworks the online platforms have chosen to adopt.

A further weakness lies in the treatment of probability. Across all three assessments, high-severity risks are consistently downgraded to medium or low overall classifications on the basis of existing mitigation measures, without independent verification of those measures' effectiveness. The Aylo (Pornhub) classification of CSAM and hate speech as remote or improbable, despite their critical severity, is the most striking example of this pattern (Aylo 2025), but it recurs in varying degrees across all three platforms. At its core, this approach conflates the existence of a safeguard with its demonstrated effectiveness. That conflation is particularly problematic in the absence of independent audit evidence, and sits uneasily with a growing body of literature documenting the systematic gap between the formal existence of content governance measures and their operational effectiveness (Gorwa 2019; Douek 2022; Drolsbach and Pröllochs 2023). This gap is especially pronounced in the moderation of sexual content, where automated tools and human review have repeatedly produced a dual failure: leaving victim-survivors of gendered abuse inadequately protected, while restricting consensual sexual expressions (Tiidenberg 2021; Appelman 2023; Rigotti, McGlynn, and Benning 2024).

The structural incentive that emerges as a result of this is equally concerning: when online platforms both identify risks and assess the effectiveness of their own mitigations, the residual risk classification becomes less a product of rigorous analysis than of self-certification. This dynamic exemplifies what scholars have identified as the structural risk of corporate capture inherent in meta-regulatory frameworks (Kausche and Weiss 2025), not the simple subordination of regulators to regulated entities, but the more subtle process by which delegating compliance responsibilities to regulated companies systematically advantages those best positioned to control the terms of their own accountability. In the context of the DSA's systemic risk framework, where the European Commission is likely to lack the operational capacity to independently verify the thousands of mitigation measures described across all designated VLOPs, this asymmetry of information and expertise risks becoming a permanent structural feature rather than a transitional limitation of the framework's early implementation.

4.3. Marginalization of sex-positive and rights-based perspectives

Perhaps the most significant normative limitation of the three assessments is their failure to engage with the governance of consensual content as a rights issue per se. The

dominant framing across all three online platforms, and indeed across the broader public discourse surrounding the VLOP designation of pornography-hosting services, is one of harm prevention: the primary question asked is what risks these platforms generate, and what measures can reduce them. This framing is necessary but insufficient. A genuinely sex-positive and rights-based approach to platform governance of sexual content must also ask what freedoms are at stake, who bears the costs of over-restrictive moderation, and whether the platform's design choices, algorithmic architecture, and terms and conditions actively enable or obstruct the exercise of sexual autonomy. Pornography, when produced and consumed consensually, constitutes a legitimate form of sexual expression and, as such, engages the full spectrum of rights associated with sexual autonomy (Schmidt 2024). That pornography-hosting platforms profit substantially from the circulation of this content makes their silence on its positive dimensions not only a normative oversight but also a structural contradiction: they derive commercial value from sexual expression while accepting no corresponding obligation to protect the conditions under which that expression can flourish.

On these questions, the three assessments are largely silent. Aylo's (Pornhub's) treatment of over-blocking is limited to a reiteration of its identity and consent verification processes, presented as safeguards against erroneous removal (Aylo 2025), with no acknowledgement of the significant economic and reputational consequences that erroneous or discriminatory moderation decisions impose on performers, particularly those from already socially marginalized communities. XVideos' identification of over-moderation as a risk category within illegal content distribution is a notable exception (XVideos 2025), and represents a more sophisticated understanding of the tension between harm prevention and freedom of expression. However, even there, the analysis remains descriptive and is not connected to a broader account of whose expression is disproportionately restricted, or why. The intersectional dimension of over-moderation and algorithmic recommendation – their tendency to bear most heavily on content created by or for socially marginalized communities (Appelman 2023; Rama et al. 2023) – is absent from all three assessments. This silence is difficult to reconcile with the commercial reality that these platforms profit from organizing, aggregating, and ultimately commodifying sexual desire (J. Miller 2019), while bearing no corresponding accountability for the governance choices that determine whose desire is made visible and whose is suppressed.

This silence has structural causes. The DSA's systemic risk framework is designed primarily to identify and mitigate harm, and its enumerated risk categories do not explicitly include the suppression of lawful sexual expression or the rights of sex-related content creators. This creates an asymmetry in which harms attributable to the presence of illegal or harmful content are systematically more visible, and more legible as policy concerns, than harms attributable to the absence or suppression of lawful content. This asymmetry is not accidental: it reflects the broader cultural and political tendency to treat sexuality as a domain requiring regulation and containment rather than one in which autonomy and expression deserve affirmative protection (Dvoskin and Kadri 2025). It is also inscribed in the technical architecture of the online platforms themselves. The algorithms underlying pornography recognition, content moderation, and classification systems are not neutral instruments: they tend to encode heteronormative standards and reproduce a dominant perspective on sexual desire, ordering and categorizing

content in ways that render certain forms of sexuality legible and monetizable while pushing others to the margins (Saunders 2020). The datafication of pornography is therefore not merely a technical process but a normative one, with consequences for whose sexuality is made visible, whose is suppressed, and whose is profitable.

Within this cultural logic, the risks of too much sexual content are readily imaginable and easily politicized, while the risks of too little – such as the silencing of marginalized voices and the chilling effect on legitimate expression – remain difficult to articulate within the dominant vocabularies of platform governance. Addressing this asymmetry requires not only more inclusive stakeholder engagement but a deliberate interpretative effort to read the fundamental rights provisions of Article 34(1) DSA, including the rights to dignity, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, and health, as encompassing the positive dimensions of sexual autonomy, not merely its violations.

A sex-positive and rights-based approach does not minimize the harms that pornography can generate, nor does it treat all sexual content as equally benign. Pornography is not inherently harmful; its impact depends on factors including context, consent, production conditions, and the viewer's capacity for critical engagement. While the topic remains contested, empirical studies on subjective user experiences frequently report positive outcomes for many viewers (Kohut, Fisher, and Campbell 2017; D. J. Miller, Hald, and Kidd 2018; Litsou, Graham, and Ingham 2021; McKee et al. 2022). Ethical, consensual adult content can serve as a medium for sexual exploration, education, and personal expression, and its potential harms are most effectively addressed not through blunt suppression but through investment in digital literacy, comprehensive sex education, and the development of critical media skills that enable individuals to recognize and critically engage with portrayals of sexuality, relationships, and consent shaped by social norms and power relations (Ashton, McDonald, and Kirkman 2019; van Reenen and Stewart 2023; Gosztonyi, Ruskai, and Lendvai 2025). What a sex-positive approach insists upon is that these nuances be taken seriously within platform governance: that the question is not whether to regulate sexual content, but how to do so in a way that protects those at risk of harm without systematically penalizing those whose expression, identity, and livelihood depend on the digital spaces that pornography-hosting platforms provide.

4.4. *Near-total absence of stakeholder involvement*

The limitations identified are not solely attributable to the platforms' choices. They also reflect structural tensions within the DSA framework itself that are particularly acute in the context of sexual content governance. The delegation of risk identification to regulated companies creates an inherent potential for corporate capture (Eder 2024; Griffin 2025; Palumbo 2026), whereby the interests and institutional logics of VLOPs shape the assessments that are meant to hold them accountable. The severity–probability matrix, while analytically useful, struggles to capture harms that are cumulative, structurally gendered, or not reducible to discrete quantifiable incidents. Furthermore, the framework's reliance on procedural formalism, reinforced by the role of private standard-setting bodies and profit-oriented audit firms (Laux, Wachter, and Mittelstadt 2021), risks producing assessments that are technically compliant but normatively meaningless.

The near-total absence of meaningful civil society engagement in the preparation of these assessments is particularly troubling in this regard. This is not a technical shortfall; it is a governance failure with direct consequences for the quality and legitimacy of the assessments. Without the epistemic contribution of organizations working with affected groups, the assessments cannot adequately capture the full range of systemic risks the DSA requires them to address. The limited and selective engagement with scientific literature across all three assessments raises serious concerns about the evidentiary foundations of their conclusions, and sits uneasily with the Recital 90 DSA expectation that risk assessments draw on ‘the best available information and scientific insights’ (Regulation (EU) [2022/2065](#), recital 90). These concerns are sharpened by the absence of scientific consensus on the effects of pornography, a field in which methodological disputes, ideological commitments, and the failure to account for the diversity of consumers and performers have long complicated the production of reliable, generalizable knowledge.

5. Conclusion

The designation of Aylo (Pornhub.com), Stripchat, and XVideos as VLOPs under the DSA was a legal and policy milestone. For the first time, pornography-hosting platforms of significant scale were brought within a binding due diligence framework, required to identify the systemic risks their services generate, assess their severity and probability, and implement proportionate measures to address them. Their risk assessments examined in this article represent the first public output of that obligation and, as such, they deserve to be read with both critical rigour and a degree of analytical generosity. First-generation compliance documents are rarely exemplary: they are, by nature, iterative starting points, especially given Article 34(1) DSA, which mandates the annual performance of risk assessments.

On such premises, the analysis offered in this article makes clear that the limitations of these assessments are not merely technical or incidental, but structural. Across all three online platforms, methodological opacity undermines the verifiability of conclusions; conceptual imprecision distorts the identification and scoring of risks; and the near-total absence of external stakeholder engagement deprives the assessments of the epistemic diversity that meaningful risk governance requires. Most significantly, all three assessments share a common normative blind spot: they approach the governance of sexual and gendered content almost exclusively through the lens of harm prevention, while remaining largely silent on the freedoms at stake, namely the rights of performers and content creators to consensually produce and share sexual content without discriminatory or disproportionate interference, and the right of users to access such content as an expression of their sexual autonomy.

This silence is not politically neutral. By framing the governance of sexual content primarily as a child protection and gender-based violence problem – important as those concerns are – the assessments, and the broader regulatory and public discourse they reflect, reproduce an asymmetry in which harms arising from the presence of illegal or harmful content are legible and actionable, while those generated by hegemonically masculine and heteronormative platform design remain invisible and unaddressed. The communities who bear the costs of that invisibility are also those least represented in the

governance processes that determine how online platforms are designed and held accountable.

A rights-based and sex-positive approach to platform governance does not require choosing between protecting users from harm and protecting their freedom to exercise sexual autonomy. These are not competing objectives but mutually constitutive ones. Effective protection from technology-facilitated violence is a precondition for the meaningful exercise of sexual autonomy online. Equally, a platform architecture that systematically restricts consensual sexual expression, through overbroad keyword filters, discriminatory algorithmic ranking, or terms of service that conflate legal content with harmful conduct, fails its users both as a safety instrument and as a rights-respecting framework. Read in light of the DSA's broader commitment to safeguarding fundamental rights as a structural objective of platform governance, not merely as a constraint on enforcement but as an affirmative dimension of the systemic risk framework established under Articles 34 and 35, both of these failures are properly understood as legal concerns, not merely ethical ones.

The challenge for future iterations of these impact assessments, and for the European Commission's supervisory engagement with them, is to operationalize that understanding in practice by moving beyond a harm-prevention logic that treats sexual content primarily as a source of risk, towards a framework capable of holding protection and freedom in productive tension. Translating that challenge into action requires concrete commitments from both the pornography-hosting platforms and the European Commission. For the pornography-hosting platforms, four priorities stand out:

- Methodological transparency must improve substantially: future assessments should fully disclose governance structures, evidence sources, scoring criteria, and the assumptions underlying the reclassification of inherent risks as residual.
- The conceptualization of risk must be broadened and made more rigorous, moving beyond the dominant focus on non-consensual content to encompass the full spectrum of TFGBV, with definitions consistent with established legal frameworks, including Directive (EU) 2024/1385, and responsive to an interdisciplinary literature that continues to outpace the conceptual frameworks currently deployed in these assessments.
- The governance of consensual content must be treated as a rights issue rather than a reputational one: online platforms should map how their moderation systems, recommender algorithms, and terms of service affect creators from marginalized communities, document error rates and the demographic distribution of moderation decisions, and make procedural guarantees – including notice-and-action mechanisms, statements of reasons, and internal complaint-handling systems – genuinely accessible to those most likely to need them (Drolsbach and Pröllochs [2023](#); Kaushal et al. [2024](#); Trujillo, Fagni, and Cresci [2025](#)).
- Stakeholder engagement must become substantive rather than symbolic: structured consultation processes should involve CSOs, scholars, performers, and victim-survivors of technology-facilitated violence, with findings that are traceable in the assessments themselves and with appropriate compensation for participation.

Yet the quality of future risk assessments will ultimately depend on more than platform goodwill. Risk assessments are only as meaningful as the accountability architecture

surrounding them, and the current framework places enormous trust in the willingness of commercially powerful platforms to self-report accurately, engage critically with their own governance failures, and internalize norms that may cut against their business interests. Without robust oversight, binding methodological standards, and a regulator prepared to use its enforcement powers, the due diligence framework risks becoming a mechanism for laundering non-compliance as procedural legitimacy – a sophisticated tick-box exercise rather than a genuine instrument of rights-based governance. The broader question of platform accountability is not incidental to the DSA's ambitions: it is their precondition.

For the European Commission, the priorities are correspondingly institutional. Binding methodological guidance should be developed for risk assessments by VLOPs hosting sexual content, establishing a harmonized taxonomy of systemic risks that captures over-moderation, algorithmic amplification, and intersectional discrimination alongside the more visible harms already addressed in current practice. A formal and adequately resourced mechanism for civil society participation in the preparation and review of VLOP risk assessments should be established, with specific provisions ensuring that under-resourced organizations are not systematically excluded. The European Commission should also issue interpretative guidance clarifying that the fundamental rights enumerated in Article 34(1) DSA encompass the positive conditions necessary for the exercise of sexual autonomy, not merely protection from its violations. Doing so will require meaningful consultation with CSOs that represent sex-positive perspectives and experiences of sexual autonomy. Certain EU-level policy trends would appear to run counter to these approaches.⁶ Institutional spaces with balanced representation of competing views related to sex work and sexuality education are sorely needed in order for interpretative guidance to stem from genuine democratic dialogue. Given the European Commission's limited capacity to monitor implementation on a regular basis, dedicated funding opportunities for civic monitoring – grounded in gender equality and sex positivity – should also be considered.

The risk-centred logic of the DSA, while valuable for identifying violations, carries an inherent limitation: it is better equipped to identify the presence of harm than to affirm the conditions under which rights are positively enjoyed. Rights are not only frequently under-defined in the current framework – often without proper reference to existing international and EU law – but are also weighed against competing commercial and state interests (Rangone and Megale 2025). Accordingly, it is worth questioning whether the language and logic of risk, although helpful in identifying violations – provided that risks and related rights are adequately defined and measured – can truly capture the extent to which rights are being enjoyed by all relevant parties. The United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework highlights states' and businesses' responsibilities to prevent human rights violations, as well as offer remedy when these violations occur, yet also emphasizes the need to actively respect rights (OHCHR 2011). While the measures suggested to fulfil this goal do not fully reflect its breadth and ambition, respecting rights arguably entails also a positive obligation to promote, support, and facilitate their enjoyment, by fostering an enabling environment (Akandji-Kombe 2007). The language of risk, which is so intimately tied to preventing harm, leaves little room for positive obligations, which, if instead

pursued, could lead to embedding rights and principles such as sexual autonomy and gender equality within company culture.

In the light of this, it is apparent that the DSA is not, and cannot be, the sole instrument through which the governance of sexual content is reformed. It should be used in combination with other instruments available at the EU level – including Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which addresses prevention alongside criminal measures – as well as alongside national criminal and civil law, sector-specific regulation, evolving platform standards, sexuality education, and the broader societal norms that shape what counts as harm, what counts as positive expression, and whose sexuality is afforded legitimacy. But as the first binding framework to subject pornography-hosting platforms of significant scale to systematic due diligence obligations, the DSA occupies a uniquely significant position. This position is all the more significant given the rapidly shifting landscape: artificial intelligence pornography platforms are proliferating and developing their own governance regimes largely outside legally binding frameworks (Lapointe et al. 2026). How the risk governance framework of the DSA is interpreted, implemented, and enforced in the coming years will shape not only the legal landscape for sexual content online but the broader question of whether digital spaces can be made genuinely safer and freer, not in spite of one another, but because of one another.

Notes

1. Throughout this article, these online platforms are referred to using the names under which they were formally designated by the European Commission. Stripchat and XVideos are designated under their platform names, whereas Pornhub is designated under the name of its parent company, Aylo.
2. Stripchat was subsequently de-designated following a reduction in its European Union user numbers and is no longer classified as a VLOP (see European Commission 2025). Its risk assessment nonetheless remains analytically relevant and is included in this study. XNXX, owned by the same company as XVideos and designated as a VLOP in July 2024, has not yet published a risk assessment report and is therefore outside the scope of this analysis (see European Commission 2024).
3. The reports are available online. Accessed 16 April 2026. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-brings-transparency#ecl-inpage-lsets8qr>.
4. While the following analysis is based in part on preparatory research conducted with the Digital Intimacy Coalition, of which all the authors are members, it represents an independent academic contribution. All analysis, interpretations, and conclusions are those of the authors alone.
5. Available online. Accessed 16 April 2026. <https://osf.io/mv5zb/overview>.
6. The European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2023 on the regulation of prostitution in the EU is illustrative in this regard. In particular, its preparatory report shows the adoption of a broadly abolitionist framing that sits in tension with frameworks centred on sexual autonomy and sex positivity, and that has been criticized for insufficiently centring the voices and lived experiences of sex workers and sex worker-led organizations (European Parliament 2023; Rossoni and De Massol De Rebetz 2025).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This article was prepared with support from the network 'Interdisciplinary Pornography Research', funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG; project number 568648320). The second author, Nicola Döring, is a member of the network.

ORCID

Carlotta Rigotti  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8956-0677>

Nicola Döring  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1299-4586>

Isotta Rossoni  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0654-2228>

References

- AccessNow, AIForensics, AlgorithmWatch, Association PALOMA, Association for Support of Marginalized Workers STAR-STAR Skopje, Avaaz Foundation, Center for Democracy and Technology, et al. 2023. 'Very Large Porn Platforms Must Be Designated as VLOPs Now!' https://panoptikon.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/very_large_porn_platforms_must_be_designated_as_vlops.pdf.
- Akandji-Kombe, Jean-François. 2007. *Positive Obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights*. <https://rm.coe.int/168007ff4d>.
- Appelman, Naomi. 2023. *Disparate Content Moderation: Mapping Social Justice Organisations Perspectives on Unequal Content Moderation Harms and the EU Platform Policy Debate*. The DSA Observatory. https://dsa-observatory.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Report-Disparate-Content-Moderation_10202312.pdf.
- Ashton, Sarah, Karalyn McDonald and Maggie Kirkman. 2019. 'What Does "Pornography" Mean in the Digital Age? Revisiting a Definition for Social Science Researchers.' *Porn Studies* 6 (2): 144–168. doi:10.1080/23268743.2018.1544096.
- Aylo. 2025. *Report on the Results of the Risk Assessment for Pornhub.Com Pursuant to Article 34 of the Digital Services Act*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-brings-transparency#ecl-inpage-lsets8qr>.
- Blunt, Danielle and Zahra Stardust. 2021. 'Automating Whorephobia: Sex, Technology and the Violence of Deplatforming: An Interview with Hacking//Hustling.' *Porn Studies* 8 (4): 350–366. doi:10.1080/23268743.2021.1947883.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.' *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (8): 139–167.
- Desmarais, Anna. 2025. 'The Age Verification Era: Which EU Countries Are Restricting Access to Adult Sites?' *Euronews*, November 17. <https://www.euronews.com/next/2025/11/17/the-age-verification-era-which-eu-countries-are-restricting-access-to-adult-sites>.
- Döring, Nicola, Thuy Dung Le and Dan J. Miller. 2025. 'Cyberpornography.' In *Research Handbook on Cyberpsychology*, edited by Michelle F. Wright, 149–167. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Douek, Evelyn. 2022. 'Content Moderation as Systems Thinking.' *Harvard Law Review* 136 (2): 526–607.
- Drolsbach, Chiara and Nicolas Pröllochs. 2023. 'Content Moderation on Social Media in the EU: Insights from the DSA Transparency Database'. arXiv, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2312.04431>.
- DSA Civil Society Coordination Group. 2025. *Initial Analysis on the First Round of Risk Assessments Reports under the EU Digital Services Act*. <https://cdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RA-Report-Assessment-Report.pdf>.
- Dvoskin, Brenda and Thomas E. Kadri. 2025. 'Safe Sex in the Age of Big Tech Feminism.' *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology* 39 (1).
- Eder, Niklas. 2024. 'Making Systemic Risk Assessments Work: How the DSA Creates a Virtuous Loop to Address the Societal Harms of Content Moderation.' *German Law Journal* 25 (7): 1197–1218. doi:10.1017/glj.2024.24.

- European Commission. 2023. 'Commission Designates Second Set of Very Large Online Platforms under the Digital Services Act'. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_6763.
- European Commission. 2024. 'Commission Designates Adult Content Platform XNXX as Very Large Online Platform under the Digital Services Act'. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-designates-adult-content-platform-xnxx-very-large-online-platform-under-digital-services>.
- European Commission. 2025. 'Commission Opens Investigations to Safeguard Minors from Pornographic Content under the Digital Services Act'. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1339.
- European Commission. 2026. 'Commission Preliminarily Finds Pornhub, Stripchat, XNXX and XVideos in Breach of the Digital Services Act for Allowing Minors to Access Their Services'. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_722.
- European Parliament. 2023. *Report on the Regulation of Prostitution in the EU: Its Cross-Border Implications and Impact on Gender Equality and Women's Rights*. A9-0240/2023. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0240_EN.html.
- Gorwa, Robert. 2019. 'What is Platform Governance?' *Information, Communication & Society* 22 (6): 854–871. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573914.
- Gosztanyi, Gergely, Szonja Ruskai and Gergely Ferenc Lendvai. 2025. 'The European Regulation of Porn Platforms before and after the Digital Services Act.' *Porn Studies* 12 (3): 395–410. doi:10.1080/23268743.2025.2476962.
- Griffin, Rachel. 2025. 'Governing Platforms through Corporate Risk Management: The Politics of Systemic Risk in the Digital Services Act.' *European Law Open* 4: 223–253. doi:10.1017/elo.2025.17.
- HateAid, Anna Nackt, Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes, DATAWO, Digital Dignity e.V., European Women's Lobby, Glitch, et al. 2023. 'Porn Platforms Must Be Designated as Very Large Online Platforms'. <https://hateaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/hateaid-open-letter-adding-porn-platform-as-vlops.pdf>.
- Ivanski, Chantelle and Taylor Kohut. 2017. 'Exploring Definitions of Sex Positivity through Thematic Analysis.' *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 26 (3): 216–225. doi:10.3138/cjhs.2017-0017.
- Kausche, Katharina and Moritz Weiss. 2025. 'Platform Power and Regulatory Capture in Digital Governance.' *Business and Politics* 27 (2): 284–308. doi:10.1017/bap.2024.33.
- Kaushal, Rishabh, Jacob Van De Kerkhof, Catalina Goanta, Gerasimos Spanakis and Adriana Iamnitchi. 2024. 'Automated Transparency: A Legal and Empirical Analysis of the Digital Services Act Transparency Database.' In *The 2024 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*, 1121–1132. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: ACM.
- Kohut, Taylor, William A. Fisher and Lorne Campbell. 2017. 'Perceived Effects of Pornography on the Couple Relationship: Initial Findings of Open-ended, Participant-Informed, "Bottom-up" Research.' *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 46 (2): 585–602. doi:10.1007/s10508-016-0783-6.
- Lapointe, Valerie A, Simon Dubé, Aurélie Petit, Tinhinane Kessai, Sophia Rukhlyadyev, Vivianne Gravel and David Lafortune. 2026. 'The Governance of AI-generated Pornography Platforms: A Content Analysis.' *New Media & Society*, doi:10.1177/14614448261421873.
- Laux, Johann, Sandra Wachter and Brent Mittelstadt. 2021. 'Taming the Few: Platform Regulation, Independent Audits, and the Risks of Capture Created by the DMA and DSA.' *Computer Law & Security Review* 43: 105613. doi:10.1016/j.clsr.2021.105613.
- Le, Thuy Dung and Nicola Döring. 2026. 'Perspectives on Non-consensual Deepfake Pornography: A Content Analysis of Reddit Discussions Initiated by Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders.' *Sexuality & Culture*, doi:10.1007/s12119-026-10566-x.
- Leerssen, Paddy. 2023. 'Counting the Days: What to Expect from Risk Assessments and Audits under the DSA – And When?' *DSA Observatory*. January 30. <https://dsa-observatory.eu/2023/01/30/counting-the-days-what-to-expect-from-risk-assessments-and-audits-under-the-dsa-and-when/>.
- Leerssen, Paddy. 2024. 'Outside the Black Box: From Algorithmic Transparency to Platform Observability in the Digital Services Act.' *Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society* 4 (2): 1–29. Weizenbaum Institute. doi:10.34669/WI.WJDS/4.2.3.

- Litsou, Katerina, Cynthia Graham and Roger Ingham. 2021. 'Women in Relationships and Their Pornography Use: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis.' *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 47 (4): 381–413. doi:10.1080/0092623X.2021.1885532.
- McGlynn, Clare and Erika Rackley. 2017. 'Image-based Sexual Abuse.' *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 37 (3): 534–561. doi:10.1093/ojls/gqw033.
- McGlynn, Clare and Rüya Tuna Toparlak. 2025. 'The "New Voyeurism": Criminalizing the Creation of "Deepfake Porn".' *Journal of Law and Society* 52 (2): 204–228. doi:10.1111/jols.12527.
- McKee, Alan, Katerina Litsou, Paul Byron and Roger Ingham. 2022. *What Do We Know about the Effects of Pornography after Fifty Years of Academic Research?* 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Miller, Jennifer. 2019. 'Bound to Capitalism: The Pursuit of Profit and Pleasure in Digital Pornography.' *Fast Capitalism* 16 (2), doi:10.32855/fcapital.201902.010.
- Miller, Dan J., Gert Martin Hald and Garry Kidd. 2018. 'Self-perceived Effects of Pornography Consumption among Heterosexual Men.' *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 19 (3): 469–476. doi:10.1037/men0000112.
- OHCHR. 2011. *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework*. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf.
- Palumbo, Andrea. 2026. 'Systemic Risk Management and the Constitutional Limits of Delegating Political Discretion: An Analysis of the DSA and the AI Act.' *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 17 (2): 454–475. doi:10.1017/err.2025.10069.
- Rama, Ilir, Lucia Bainotti, Alessandro Gandini, Giulia Giorgi, Silvia Semenzin, Claudio Agosti, Giulia Corona and Salvatore Romano. 2023. 'The Platformization of Gender and Sexual Identities: An Algorithmic Analysis of Pornhub.' *Porn Studies* 10 (2): 154–173. doi:10.1080/23268743.2022.2066566.
- Rangone, Nicoletta and Luca Megale. 2025. 'Risks without Rights? The EU AI Act's Approach to AI in Law and Rule-making.' *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 16 (3): 1082–1097. doi:10.1017/err.2025.13.
- Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and Amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), 2022 O.J. (L 277) 1. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>
- Rigotti, Carlotta and Clare McGlynn. 2025. 'Online and Technology-facilitated Violence against Women: The EDVAW Platform's Contribution to Human Rights Protection and Monitoring.' *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 43 (2): 82–103. doi:10.1177/09240519251334080.
- Rigotti, Carlotta, Clare McGlynn and Franz Benning. 2024. 'Image-based Sexual Abuse and EU Law: A Critical Analysis.' *German Law Journal* 25 (8): 1472–1493.
- Rossoni, Isotta and Roxane De Massol De Rebetz. 2025. 'The Convenient Villain and the Stereotypical Victim: How Demand and Vulnerability Help Construct Anti-Policies in Trafficking and Smuggling.' *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 13 (3): 372–391. doi:10.1177/23315024251316543.
- Saunders, Rebecca. 2020. *Bodies of Work: The Labour of Sex in the Digital Age*. Dynamics of Virtual Work Ser. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.
- Saunders, Rebecca. 2025. 'Big Data on Pornhub Insights: Datafication and the Making of a New Sexual Culture.' *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 31 (6): 1847–1864. doi:10.1177/13548565251363693.
- Schmidt, Anja. 2024. 'The Abuse of Sexual Images between Liberal Criminal Law and the Protection of Sexual Autonomy.' In *Criminalizing Intimate Image Abuse*, edited by Gian Marco Caletti and Kolis Summerer, 1st ed., 103–120. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seck, Marie and David Klotsonis. 2025. *Gender-based Violence on Pornographic Platforms: A Gendered Reading of DSA Risk Assessments Reports*. CDT Europe. <https://cdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Brief-on-Porn-Platforms-RA.pdf>.
- Stripchat. 2024. *Stripchat Risk Assessment Report*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-brings-transparency#ecl-inpage-lsets8qr>.
- Tiidenberg, Katrin. 2021. 'Sex, Power and Platform Governance.' *Porn Studies* 8 (4): 381–393. doi:10.1080/23268743.2021.1974312.

- Trujillo, Amaury, Tiziano Fagni and Stefano Cresci. 2025. 'The DSA Transparency Database: Auditing Self-reported Moderation Actions by Social Media.' *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 9 (2): 1–28. doi:[10.1145/3711085](https://doi.org/10.1145/3711085).
- Tuana, Nancy. 2017. 'Feminist Epistemology: The Subject of Knowledge.' In *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, edited by Ian James Kidd, José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, 125–138. New York: Routledge.
- Valentiner, Dana-Sophia. 2021. 'The Human Right to Sexual Autonomy.' *German Law Journal* 22 (5): 703–717. doi:[10.1017/glj.2021.35](https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2021.35).
- van Reenen, Dionne and Robert Scott Stewart. 2023. 'Alt Porn as a New Sexual Script.' In *Sexuality and Eroticism in a Post-Pandemic World: Beyond the Biopolitics of the New Normal*, edited by Phil Shining and Jon Braddy, 201–226. Leiden: BRILL.
- Viola, Marco and Eleonora Volta. 2025. 'Stop Calling It "Revenge Porn". Hermeneutical Injustice in Image-Based Sexual Abuse.' *Social Epistemology*, 1–16. doi:[10.1080/02691728.2025.2525238](https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2025.2525238).
- XVideos. 2025. *Risk Assessment Report on the Results of the Systemic Risk Assessment under the Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 Digital Services Act (DSA)*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-brings-transparency#ecl-inpage-lsets8qr>.