

What is the *Harassment and Harmful Communications Act 2021 (Coco's Law)*?

The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 was brought into force in Ireland on 9 February 2021.

The Act changed and broadened the law relating to harassment and created a new offences to deal with the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, both online and offline, and provides anonymity for the victims of those offences.

The text of the Act can be found on the Oireachtas website at bit.ly/HHCROact

5 Key Aspects of Coco's Law

1

Definition of Intimate Imagery:

The law creates a definition of intimate imagery in *Section 1*, and under this law, intimate imagery is considered to be any photo, film or digital representation, which shows – or seems to show – any of the following or any mix of them:

- a person's genitals, buttocks or anal region and, in the case of a woman, her breasts, or
- the underwear covering the person's genitals, buttocks or anal region and, in the case of a woman, her breasts, or
- a person who is nude, or
- someone engaged in sexual activity.

2

Sharing Intimate Images without Consent:

Under *Section 3* of this law, it is illegal to share (record, distribute or publish) intimate imagery of another person without the consent of the person in the images, if doing so seriously interferes with the peace and privacy of this person or causes them alarm, distress or harm.

This means that if someone shares a picture of you which is sexual or intimate without your consent, and it causes you to be upset, they have committed a crime.

3

Sharing Intimate Images without Consent and with Intent to Cause Harm:

Under *Section 3* of this law, it is illegal for someone to share (record, distribute or publish), or to threaten to share, intimate imagery of another person without their consent.

If the person who shared, or threatened to share, the images intended to interfere with the peace and privacy of the other person or cause them harm, alarm or distress, this is a further crime under *Section 2* of the law. If the person is reckless as to whether this could cause harm, this is also a crime.

This means that if someone shares, or threatens to share a picture of you which is sexual or intimate without your consent, and does this intending to cause you to be upset, they have committed a crime.

4

Sending or Sharing Grossly Offensive or Threatening Communication:

Section 4 of this law means it is illegal to share, send, or publish communication (messages) that are grossly offensive or threatening, to another person or about another person, with intent to cause harm.

This means that if someone sends messages which are grossly offensive or are threatening to you, intending to upset you, they have committed a crime.

It also means if someone sends messages which are grossly offensive or are threatening about you to another person, intending to upset you, they have committed a crime

5

New Definition of Harassment:

Section 10 of the law changes what harassment means. Harassment may be a result of persistent communication **with** a person but now is also considered persistent communication **about** a person, sometimes referred to as indirect harassment

Other Legal Changes Created by Coco's Law

Coco's Law has also created other amendments and additions to laws connected to sexual harassment and image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), including:

- Under *Section 5* of the law, it is illegal to identify a victim of one of these crimes or to distribute or publish information that may lead to the identification of the victim.
- *Section 11* of the law alters the *Domestic Violence Act 2018* and makes an intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator an aggravating factor in sentencing a crime under *Section 2* or *3* of Coco's law.

What you can do if you've Experienced Sexual Harassment or Abuse Online, or if someone has shared a Video or Image of you without your Consent:

- You can call the 24-hour National Helpline at 1800 778888 for free, confidential support at any time. Webchat support is also available during office hours at www.drcc.ie
- You can report online abuse at any Garda station – a list is available [here](#). Every Garda division now has a Divisional Protective Services Unit which is specially trained to deal with sexual offences.
- You can contact Hotline.ie, the Irish National Centre responsible for combatting illegal content online and removing intimate images.
- If your image has been posted on an online social channel or site, you can request the site to take it down – most channels have a report/complaint button or contact link, and a policy and procedure on removing images.
- Organisations such as *Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse* offer services which can help to remove the image or video's digital footprint – you can see their website here: <https://stopncii.org/>

Remember: You can call the 24-hour National Helpline at 1800 77 8888 at any time to receive free, confidential support.

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