



Ubisoft

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Three Ubisoft chiefs found guilty of enabling culture of sexual harassment

Former staff likened offices of video game company in Paris to a 'boys' club above the law'

Angelique Chrisafis in Paris

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Three former executives at the video game company [Ubisoft](#) have been given suspended prison sentences for enabling a culture of sexual and psychological harassment in the workplace at the end of the [first big trial](#) to stem from the [#MeToo movement](#) in the gaming industry.

The court in Bobigny, north of Paris, had heard how the former executives used their position to bully or sexually harass staff, [leaving women terrified](#) and feeling like pieces of meat.

Former staff had said that between 2012 and 2020, the company's offices in Montreuil, east of [Paris](#), were run with a toxic culture of bullying and sexism that one worker likened to a "boys' club above the law".

Ubisoft is a French family business that rose to become one of the biggest video game creators in the world. The company has been behind several blockbusters including [Assassin's Creed](#), [Far Cry](#) and the children's favourite [Just Dance](#).

The state prosecutor, Antoine Haushalter, had told the court the world of video games and its subculture had an element of "systemic" sexism and potential abuse and called the trial a "turning point" for the gaming world.

Thomas François, 52, a former [Ubisoft](#) editorial vice-president, was found guilty of sexual harassment, psychological harassment and an attempted sexual assault. He was given a three-year suspended prison sentence and fined €30,000 (£26,000).

The court heard how he once tied a female member of staff to a chair with tape, pushed the chair into a lift and pressed a button at random. He was also accused of forcing one woman wearing a skirt to do handstands.

She told the court: "He was my superior and I was afraid of him. He made me do handstands. I did it to get it over with and get rid of him."





Thomas François, a former Ubisoft editorial vice-president, was found guilty of sexual harassment, psychological harassment and an attempted sexual assault. Photograph: Xavier Galiana/AFP/Getty

At a 2015 office Christmas party with a Back to the Future theme, François allegedly told a member of staff that he liked her 1950s dress. He then allegedly stepped towards her to kiss her on the mouth as his colleagues restrained her by the arms and back. She shouted and broke free.

François had told the court there was a “culture of joking around”. He said: “I never tried to harm anyone.”

Serge Hascoët, 59, Ubisoft’s former chief creative officer and second-in-command, was found guilty of psychological harassment and complicity in sexual harassment.

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He was acquitted of sexual harassment and complicity in psychological harassment. He was given an 18-month suspended sentence and a fine of €45,000.

The court heard he once handed a young female member of staff a tissue in which he had blown his nose, saying: “You can resell it, it’s worth gold at Ubisoft.” The

court heard that Hascoët bullied assistants by making them carry out personal tasks for him such as going to his home to wait for parcel deliveries.

Hascoët had told the court he was unaware of any harassment, saying: “I have never wanted to harass anyone and I don’t think I have.”

Hascoët’s lawyer, Jean-Guillaume Le Mintier, said his client was considering an appeal.

The former Ubisoft game director, Guillaume Patru, 41, was found guilty of psychological harassment and given a 12-month suspended sentence and a fine of €10,000.

The court heard he had punched walls, mimed hitting staff, cracked a whip near colleagues’ faces, threatened to carry out an office shooting and played with a cigarette lighter near workers’ faces, setting alight a man’s beard. He had denied the charges.
