



Statement: International Women's Day

Today, on International Women's Day, the European Youth Forum calls on European leaders to increase efforts to advance gender equality in our societies and to stand up against those seeking to undermine this progress. We deserve better!

Gender equality is far from being a reality in Europe and intersecting forms of discrimination continue to play a powerful role in shaping the lives of young people; affecting their opportunities, well being, health and access to services. Many women and girls face even greater risks of not being able to access their rights because they are discriminated doubly, including those from a migrant or refugee background, lesbian, transgender or intersex women, Roma women and girls, homeless women, black women, Muslim women and those with disabilities.

Ensuring that the societies we live in are truly gender inclusive requires policy change across all sectors at European and national level. The European Youth Forum believes that:

- Young people must have the right to choose when it comes to their sexual health. In the past year we have witnessed attempts to severely restrict access to sexual and reproductive health. In Poland, this infringement on human rights prompted a huge outcry from millions across Europe. Providing information and quality education free from discrimination and stigmatisation is paramount to ensure the safety and health of all young people regardless of gender or sexual orientation.
- All Member States must ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This is an urgent and potentially life saving step that cannot be delayed any further. Gender based violence is one of the biggest inequalities of our time that must not be ignored.
- Young people transitioning to the workplace must have the right to equal opportunities and equal pay. In the labour market, gender can influence chances of employment, job promotion and retention and also the level of salary. It is unacceptable that a young woman starting work can expect to earn 16% less on average than a man with the same qualifications.

International Women's Day is not only a celebration but also an opportunity for action. "We need to acknowledge that there is nothing private about our bodies when decisions are being made for us, but we do not need to accept this", states Carina Autengruber, vice president of the Youth Forum. **"I demand to have control over my body and be free from discrimination and violence."** We know our rights and we are standing up for them. Now we need the leaders of Europe to do the same to support and protect the rights of all young people, urgently. The future of our societies depends on it!

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