

An open letter to EU Member States: Support the advancement of SRHR through the future EU Gender Equality and LGBTIQ Equality Strategies

As Equality Ministers gather at the ‘Equality, Europe!’ [Conference](#) on 23 June under the Polish Presidency, to discuss the future EU Gender Equality and LGBTIQ Equality Strategies for the next five years, IPPF EN and its members across the EU urge Member States to demonstrate bold leadership and unwavering commitment to women’s rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and LGBTIQ rights.

Europe faces mounting pressure on democracy and a backlash against gender equality. The urgency for bold and unified EU action has never been greater. Regressive forces threaten to roll back decades of progress, particularly targeting the bodily autonomy and dignity of women and LGBTIQ persons. We are witnessing rising attacks on reproductive rights, increasing barriers to care, and shrinking civic space in several Member States and at the EU level.

Against this backdrop, we call on Member States to **champion strong, forward-looking Gender Equality and LGBTIQ Equality Strategies post-2025, and to endorse them through Council Conclusions when the time comes**. These documents must reaffirm the EU’s determination to advance equality and ensure that SRHR and the rights of all women and LGBTIQ people are protected, promoted, and fulfilled across the Union.

Building on the ambitious vision laid out in the [Roadmap for Women’s Rights](#), we call for the future Strategies to include **specific actions, recommendations and funding for the following priorities**:

1. Highest standards of health – with SRHR at the core

Everyone in the EU must have access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including SRHR. The Strategies must contribute to ensuring:

- Access to comprehensive SRHR services for all in the EU, in line with international human rights and public health standards, including access to safe, legal, and affordable abortion care and fertility care.
- Access to respectful, high-quality obstetric and gynaecological care, and combating all forms of obstetric and gynaecological violence, including mistreatment during and denial of abortion care and forced sterilisation.
- Specific attention to the needs of LGBTIQ persons, especially trans and intersex people, in accessing affirming and non-discriminatory healthcare.

2. Freedom from gender-based violence

The Strategies must affirm the right of all women and LGBTIQ people to live free from gender-based violence and contribute to:

- Combat all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape based on lack of consent, hate crimes and hate speech, harmful practices, female and intersex genital mutilation, ‘conversion therapies’.

- Guarantee comprehensive support services for all victims of sexual violence, including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

3. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

CSE is essential to keep all young people safe and able to thrive. It equips young people with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to understand consent, prevent violence, and foster a culture of equality and respect. CSE is a crucial tool in countering the rise of disinformation and the spread of masculinist and polarised ideologies among young men and boys. The Strategies must contribute to ensuring:

- Access to inclusive CSE in line with international standards guaranteed in all Member States.

4. Strong institutional mechanisms and Funding

The EU must ensure that progress on gender equality and LGBTIQ rights is monitored, sustainable, and resistant to rollback. The Strategies must prioritise:

- Dedicated and increased funding for civil society organisations advancing gender equality, SRHR, and LGBTIQ rights, notably through a strengthened stand-alone Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme in the next MFF.
- An EU-wide accountability mechanism to monitor implementation and respond to retrogressions in Member States.
- Funding conditionality against anti-gender equality, anti-choice and anti-rights actors.

Intersectionality at the heart

All actions must be rooted in an intersectional approach, addressing the specific, compounded and systemic forms of discrimination faced by **women and girls in all their diversity** – LGBTIQ women, including trans, non-binary, intersex women, migrant and racialised women, Roma women, women with disabilities, and others. True equality leaves no one behind.

Conclusion: A call to the Council

We urge the Council of the EU to champion ambitious future Gender Equality and LGBTIQ Equality Strategies at the Conference, and when the time comes, to endorse them **through Council Conclusions and participate in their implementation**. This will send a strong political message: that Member States stand united in upholding fundamental rights and that the EU will not waver in the face of backlash.

Equality, dignity, and justice cannot wait. The time to act is now.

Signatories:

International Planned Parenthood Federation - European Network (IPPF EN)

Austrian Family Planning Association, ÖGF (Austria)

Fédération Laïque de Centres de Planning Familial (FLCPF - Belgium)

Sensoa, Flemish expert center for sexual health (Belgium)

The Danish Family Planning Association, DFPA (Denmark)

Mouvement français pour le planning familial (France)

pro familia Bundesverband (Germany)

Aidos Italian Association for Women in Development (Italy)

Rutgers (Netherlands)

FEDERA Foundation for Women and Family Planning (Poland)

SECS Association (Romania)

SEDRA-Federación Planificación Familiar (Spain)