

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

8 March 2024

English only

Statement of the Advisory Council on Youth on International Women's Day

8 March 2024

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is "Inspire Inclusion" to celebrate the diversity and empowerment of women and girls in all areas of life. While this day recognizes women's unique achievements and contributions to the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of society, it also serves as a reminder of the significant progress that still needs to be made before achieving full gender equality and inclusiveness in social spaces.

The Advisory Council on Youth acknowledges that the expanding room for discussion on inclusion and representation in recent years has uncovered the consequences of the long history of oppression of women and girls, and their exclusion from socio-political life. Gender-based violence, child marriage, and poverty are some of the obstacles to women's and girls' access to education and employment. In that regard, data indicate that only one quarter of countries in the world have achieved gender parity in upper secondary education, and that more young women than young men in Europe are neither in employment, education or training (NEETs).¹ This highlights the need for targeted support for young women's integration into education and the workforce and sheds light on invisible barriers that women and girls, especially those from underrepresented groups, face in their everyday lives. This prevents us from achieving a truly diverse and progressive society and places the burden of responsibility on the individual.

The Advisory Council on Youth emphasises the importance of building sustainable structures for women's and girls' meaningful participation in all areas of life. To this day, fewer than one third of UN member states have ever had a female leadership and 94% of the girls and young women surveyed globally recognize that their participation in political life entails challenges.² We need to continue eliminating obstacles to women's and girls' participation to empower them to take up important political and decision-making positions, thereby achieving a wider diversity of perspectives in leadership and innovation.

We call on member States and youth organisations to further commit and take immediate, concrete action to foster diversity and the inclusion of women and girls by raising awareness of the structural barriers and discrimination that obstruct their full participation in socio-political life. We further encourage member States to actively tackle the issues of gender-based violence and discrimination by adopting and implementing the necessary legal measures and by further ratifying and implementing the Istanbul Convention to create safe environments for women and girls.

We call for structural measures to support women seeking leadership roles and to promote women's and girls' advancement, economic empowerment, and achievements. Revisiting recommendations set in the study commissioned by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of

¹ Eurostat, [statistics explained: statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training](#).

² Yurttagüler, L. and Pultar, E. (2023) [New forms of youth political participation Statistical survey](#), p. 13, Youth Partnership.

Europe in the field of youth “Contemporary forms of young women’s participation: priorities, challenges and ways forward?”,³ we call for the implementation and monitoring of relevant international instruments in this field, for introducing and promoting effective youth and gender quotas that can guarantee systematic balanced representation, and for strengthening gender-responsive youth policies and programmes through relevant legislation on gender equality and youth participation.

The Advisory Council on Youth will continue to advocate against discrimination in physical and online spaces based on gender roles and stereotypes, as well as for equal access to the rights of women and girls with a special focus on the intersectionality of identity through cooperation between the Council of Europe youth sector, member States’ institutions and civil society.

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.

³ Lavizzari, A. and Yurttagüler, L. (2023) [Contemporary forms of young women’s participation: priorities, challenges and ways forward?](#), Youth Partnership.