

Resolution on Youth Forum support for the review of the Beijing Platform for Action

Adopted by the Executive Committee
Ponta Delgada, Azores (Portugal), 14-15 April 2000

Background

Gender Equality, women's policy and promoting young women to achieve these aims are some of the main-principles of the European Youth Forum's overall youth policy (compare also D97-282 (final)). This policy recognizes the specific issues that young women face. It names the responsibilities and obligations of the European Youth Forum and its members by addressing these issues.

About 50% of young people find themselves potentially disadvantaged solely because of their sex. Additionally and more importantly, many young women face multiple discrimination, not only based on gender but also on age, skin color, ethnic background, religion, class, sexual orientation, physical disability, immigration status, marital status and geographical location.

The Beijing Platform for Action, set up at the Forth World Conference on Women in 1995, has not given enough attention to the special situation of young women, their needs, issues and deeper vulnerability due to the following reasons:

- young women's lack of live experience
- young women's denied access to certain knowledge
- young women's lack of economic and social independence
- young women's low social status
- young women's search for own identity

During the Beijing+5 review process in march 2000 eighty young women from all over the globe showed tremendous initiative and formed a youth caucus. Their goal was to stress the needs of a young point of view.

Proposal:

The European Youth Forum supports young women's involvement in the review of the Beijing Platform for Action. The European Youth Forum will also take actions in order to have the specific needs of young women to be recognised. The European Youth Forum will promote the lobby for the inclusion of young women's issues in the different national Platforms for Action following the UN General Assembly Special Session (Beijing +5).

The support of a young women's point of view of the Beijing Platform for Action entails:

- the continuation of the policy of the European Youth Forum regarding gender equality
- the implementation of specific programs to achieve gender equality
- promoting awareness of young women's issues worldwide
- the affirmation of the important and responsible role of younger generations in the realization of these aims
- the recognition of and support of the great efforts of youth initiatives and youth caucuses in the Beijing +5 process.
- The prioritization of gender equality and women policy as one of the main work areas in the UN related work of the European Youth Forum.

Recommendations concerning young women to include in the different national Beijing Platforms for Action

The European Youth Forum may act and lobby –together with its members– the Commission, The Council and the member states to include some of the following recommendations in their particular (national) Beijing Platform for Action.

Regarding Information and Health Services as an Empowerment Tool for Young People

- To adopt policies to ensure the access of young people to information, education and services in order to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection .
- To ensure the highest possible standard of care, to provide health information and services, including comprehensive and accessible sexual and reproductive health care information and services, and to respond to the new needs of women of all ages.

-To ensure that all women, irrespective of marital status, have universal access to quality and affordable health services, to provide the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including rehabilitation and access to other support systems for women with disabilities, rural and poor urban women and adolescent girls.

-To re-direct health information, services and training for community health workers in order to incorporate gender sensitivity and to take into account users' perspectives regarding interpersonal and communications skills and ethical standards, as well as users' right to privacy, informed consent and confidentiality.

Regarding Violence against Young Women

-To take into consideration the danger of sexual harassment and intimidation of young women in learning, leisure and social institutions, to sensitize key-persons in these fields and to provide protecting assistance for victims.

-To consider young women as specifically targeted in situations of armed conflict where they are subjected to various forms of violence, especially systematic rape that is used as a weapon of war; to increase awareness that these forms of violence also extend to refugee camps and temporary spaces for displaced women; to protect young women in these situations who do not receive sufficient social support and adequate reproductive health care.

-To sensitize society to the fact that domestic violence is the most widespread form of violence against women, young women and girls; to redefine violence to include not only physical acts such as beatings, sexual fondling, incest and rape, but also psychological violations.

-To increase awareness and take measures against the fact that young women are the largest group lured into the sex industry; to provide these young women with the unmet needs such as reproductive health care, information and social support systems.

Regarding Women's Right to Safe Abortion

-To recognize women's right to chose over her body; to address unsafe abortion practices as a major cause of maternal death and injury; to express the need that health systems train and equip health services providers and take all measures required to ensure that if a woman chooses to abort, that it is legal, safe, and accessible to all, independent of their social and cultural background.

-To undertake impact analysis of measures to eradicate violence against all women and girls; to recognize that the denial of the right to chose and the subsequent denial of safe conditions for abortions are a violation of human rights as they may lead to unsafe medical intervention causing health complications and death.

Regarding the Elimination of Economic Inequalities to achieve Gender Equality

-To ensure that within the National budgets resources are allocated for comprehensive actions to foster gender equality and gender equity in policy programs; to mobilize governments to address and undertake measures against social, political and economical inequalities of girls and women.

Regarding Education as a Tool for Empowerment

-To provide compulsory, free of charge and accessible education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and to ensure completion of at least primary education for girls.

-To take all measures, structural and financial, in order to prevent the marginalization of women of all ages with regard to information and communication technologies (ICT); to promote policies and programs for women of all ages to be actively involved in the definition, design and development of new technologies.

Regarding Young Women's Participation in Decision-making Processes

-To ensure that on a global level the UN Youth Unit, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW, on a European level the Commission and The Council, and on national level the member states establish positions, support and promote programs, and create networks to address the needs and concerns of young women with the full participation of young women.

-To ensure that women of all ages are involved in the decision-making processes at all levels, including as special envoys and special representatives on country delegations to regional and international forums, including the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and multilateral regional banks.

-To ensure that youth representatives are elected to all levels of governing bodies and school and university boards to advise on youth issues and to ensure youth participation at all levels of policy and decision-making processes.

-To establish and facilitate youth councils and include young women in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.