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Concept Note

LAUNCH OF EUROPEAN UNION WOMEN AND YOUTH IN DEMOCRACY (WYDE) | WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE *"Advancing Women's Political Participation and Decision Making."*

14 March 2024, 11:30 AM-12:45 PM
United Nations HQ, Conference Room D

Background

Persistent barriers to women's equal and effective participation in decision-making arise from deeply rooted and unequal power relations. These underpin discriminatory laws, policies and institutions, and feed widespread violence against women in politics. Despite women's increased engagement in public life at all levels over the past 30 years, change is slow. The gender gap persists at all levels and spheres of decision-making. Women constitute just 26.7 percent of national legislators worldwide, 35.5 percent of locally elected officials, and 22.8 percent of cabinet ministers.¹ Only 26 countries are headed by a woman Head of State and/or Government.² At the current rate of progress, gender parity will not be reached in national legislatures before 2063, or among Heads of Government before 2150.³

Against such a backdrop, the European Union launched in 2023 the *Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative (WYDE)*, which seeks to strengthen the rights, empowerment, and participation in public and political life of youth and women as key actors of development and change. A multiparter initiative, WYDE includes five interlinked components: "*Youth Participation in Public Affairs*" (WYDE | Civic Engagement); "*Youth for Freedoms of Association and Assembly*" (WYDE | Freedoms); "*Youth and women in Parliaments*" (WYDE | Inter Pares); "*Youth and Women in Political Parties*," (WYDE | Political Parties) and "*Advancing Women's Political Participation and Decision Making*" (WYDE | Women Leadership). Each of these components aligns with the European Union Gender Action Plan 3, the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020–2024 and the Youth Action Plan.

UN-Women, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) will jointly implement the **WYDE / Women's Leadership Initiative** through the project titled: *"Advancing Women's Political Participation and Decision-Making through Social Norms Change, Networking and Global Advocacy."* Over three years, the four partners will support the EU's shared ambition to enhance progress towards achieving SDG 5 gender equality goals, as well as to leverage collective action, partnerships, coordination, knowledge, and resources at a global level to promote the full and effective participation and decision-making of diverse women, especially those most often left furthest behind, through social norms change, networking and global advocacy.

WYDE / Women's Leadership will prioritize changing social norms and shifting cultural attitudes that portray women's roles in communities and society as incompatible with political power; and put a specific focus on building critical skills of young women and engage men and boys, office holders and the media as allies for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Strongly linked to the Gender Equality Forum Action Coalition 6 on Feminist Movements and Leadership, the four partners under *WYDE / Women Leadership* will leverage their convening power to facilitate feminist and women's rights organizations' participation in global and regional advocacy spaces and access to decision-making fora. It will enhance synergies between women's rights movements, member states, decision makers, the international community, the media, and other key actors, including the WYDE community across its different components, to maximize the effectiveness of spaces for coalition building, advocacy, and campaigning to promote WPP.

Objectives and participants

The in-person event will

- Launch the *WYDE / Women's Leadership*
- Showcase the partnership between the European Union, UN Women, International IDEA, IPU and UCLG, under the WYDE Community and partners' commitment to increase women's political participation.
- Facilitate exchange among participants on social norms change work.

The event will bring together participants at the UN CSW, including representatives from multi-lateral organizations, governments, experts and practitioners, other WYDE implementers, and civil society organizations.

Format and agenda

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UN HQ, Conference Room D

11:30-11:35	Moderator welcomes speakers and participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kristina Lachaga, Women's and girls' empowerment advocate/Recording Artist and Host
11:35- 11:40	Video message from EU Commissioner

11:40 -11:50	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit, Gender, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission • Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women (TBC)
11:50 – 12:10	Presentations from WYDE Women Leadership partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Ballington, Global Policy Advisor on Political Participation, UN Women • Massimo Tommasoli, Director-Global Programmes , International IDEA • Hon. Paddy Torsney, Permanent Observer to the United Nations, Head of the New York Office, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) • Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
12:10 – 12:40	Moderator kicks off a discussion with event participants on work done around social norms change
12:40-12:45	Moderator closes event

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, November 2023, <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=11&year=2023>; UN Women, August 2023; <https://localgov.unwomen.org/>; Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women (2023). [Women in politics: 2023](#).

² Data as of 10 January 2024. UN Women calculation based on information provided by Permanent Missions to the United Nations. Countries with monarchy-based systems are excluded from the count of Heads of State.

³ UN Commission on the Status of Women 65th Session on *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls: agreed conclusions* [E/CN.6/2021/3](#).