

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**



Letter from **European members of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**
to the **Council of the European Union**
to the **groups in the European Parliament**
to the **President of the European Commission**
to the **Council of Ministers**
to the **Council of Europe**

Now is the time to strengthen EUROPE's peacebuilding capacities!

The COVID-19 pandemic acts as a magnifying glass showing the effects of priorities made by decision makers in our societies. It has become clear that security depends on access to health care, food supplies, education, affordable housing, dependable incomes and that we all take care of each other. Weapons cannot provide any of this. It is also clear that the pandemic has hit marginalised groups hardest. We in Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a global women's peace organisation, have long been calling attention to how human security and safety has been underfunded in favour of militarised security that protects borders at the expense of human lives. The current pandemic shows the fallacy of national security practices. Weapons have been useless for providing security during the pandemic and will be no more useful against global warming and its consequences. The European Union's "New Deal" is an opportunity to show political will and concrete action to work towards a transformation of the EU into a safe, sustainable, just, and peaceful union.

We welcome the EU's ambition to shape the future of the EU, of its citizens and neighbours to be "free from fear". To hold to that vision, we call upon all European Union institutions and member states to:

- Disarm and divest from military and defence sectors. Move the money from military and national security investments. Weapons can be used to threaten, frighten, harm, and kill. Cease the internal arm transfers and cease arms exports and transfers to all actors that can be suspected to use arms to perpetrate human rights violations, including gender-based violence. Strengthen the EU criteria for arms control to ensure that European states are not complicit in human rights violations, including gender-based violence, or in supporting repressive non-democratic regimes, elsewhere in the world.
- Develop the EU's conflict prevention capabilities and triple its funding. Prevention costs less than conflict management or resolution, in human lives, eco-systems, and in economic terms. Invest in mediation and prevention through civilian conflict prevention missions. Research show that peace is more sustainable when inclusive: Women and marginalised groups must have full and equal participation at all decision making and implementation stages.

- Ensure the New Deal is a Green Deal. Cut the EU's ecological footprints to a level that will let Earth remain habitable. The pandemic has shown a remarkable capability and willingness of people and institutions to change and adapt, and to face the challenge together. Reduce consumption and waste, divest from fossil fuels and toxic industries, and invest in sustainable energies and production. Create incentives based on care instead of profit to counter the harm that neoliberal economics is causing.
- Implement gender budgeting across all sectors to reduce poverty and in particular gendered poverty. The pandemic has shown that it can be lethal to be poor. Reducing the gap between rich and poor and ensuring equal access to basic amenities is a crucial security issue.
- Ensure compliance with the European Declaration of Human Rights for all Member States. Put political and legislative pressure on Member States that dismantle the rights of women and LGBTQ+ groups, including their sexual and reproductive rights. Demonstrate to governments that attempt to use this pandemic as a distraction to dismantle the Human Rights of vulnerable groups that they will not succeed.
- Ensure compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the right to apply for asylum. Ensure safe ways to enter the European Union and legal means of immigration, for refugees and other migrants. Remove the inhumane migrant camps in Greece and along the so called Balkan route, and immediately put a stop to violence against migrants along the external borders of European Union but also within the Union. Divest the resource-draining militarised Frontex operation and place the funds in ensuring safe, dignified, and gender- and LGBTQ-sensitive migrant shelters within Europe. The pandemic shows that threats to human safety are global, not contained by militarized national borders.
- During the pandemic many of the open borders that have signified the European Union have been closed. Now is the time to work on trust-building, cross-border cooperation, and supranational institutions to ensure continued openness and cooperation among Member States and neighbours. Ensure the active and meaningful participation by democratic civil society, including women's organisations such as ours that have a long and successful history of building international trust and peace.
- Ensure stable funding opportunities for civil society organisations. The pandemic has shown how civil society have used their footholds and local knowledge to provide essential services and information to their societies. Civil society organisations are vital to democratic, inclusive, just, peaceful, and sustainable societies and require funding, especially during recessions, to continue working.

With high hopes of a liveable future in Europe, yours in feminist solidarity,

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Speaking on behalf of WILPF sections in Finland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, UK, Holland, Italy, Spain and partners in Bosnia, Austria, Kosovo, Serbia.