

# GIRLS CONNECT TO SHAPE THE EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP

BACKGROUND PAPER

EUROPEAN WEEK OF  
ACTION FOR  
GIRLS

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL 2020

This year, the [European Week of Action for Girls](#) (EWAG) is back! For the eighth time, we will make sure International Day of the Girl takes centre stage. As a coalition of nine civil society organisations, we are creating a space for the youth's voices to be heard by the European Union (EU) Institutions in Brussels. In 2020, we'll do things slightly differently, we'll do it the youth's way!

In 2019, the EWAG youth activists spoke out in the European Parliament, and were the ones on the panel, having one-on-one advocacy meetings. They were the ones advocating for their rights and what they believe the EU must do to champion them all over the world.

In 2020, our group of over 20 young activists will be coming together online, directly from their communities in Europe and Africa. The objective is to create a platform to ensure youth's voices are heard and taken into account when the European Commission sets up the priorities for the EU-Africa Partnership.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

This year, EWAG will focus on the relationship between the European Union and the African Union (AU). The European Commission wants to create an equal partnership with Africa. Both sides, the European Union and the African Union, will have the opportunity to discuss the partnership during a Summit planned for the end of October 2020. Young people and women have already been highlighted as a key priority group for the renewed partnership. Through EWAG, we want to make sure that girls and young women in particular are not left behind, and that their voices and priorities are heard prior to and during the summit. We have pre-selected a number of themes that the young advocates, coming from the EU and AU, can build on: health, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, education, and youth economic empowerment, as well as participation in decision-making.

## WHY EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP?

On 9 March 2020, the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) published their Joint Communication Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa. This document will help frame the discussion between European and African Heads of States during the 6th AU-EU Summit that will take place at the end of October 2020, and will contribute to redefining the partnership between the EU and Africa around common priorities.

While the EU's joint communication that has been presented mentions women and youth, as EWAG we would like to make sure that women and youth are also mainstreamed throughout the future partnership between Africa and the EU.

Why? Simply, because we know how paramount it is to have both women and youth involved as driving forces of sustainable development and peace. Girls face distinct challenges based on their age and gender, and their needs often fall through the cracks. As a result, we will be bringing together young advocates from both Africa and Europe to talk about their realities, their needs and their challenges to feed into a true EU-Africa Partnership!

EWAG will be a space for girls to speak out about how the EU-Africa partnership can reflect their aspirations and unlock their potential. It is crucial that the EU strategy enables dialogue between both regions, allowing for mutual learning and joint and coordinated actions, especially on issues that affect girls and young women both in the EU and the AU - such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Especially in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the well-being of girls and women requires renewed attention. The pandemic has amplified many challenges for girls all over the world. Domestic violence numbers have gone up, while many children weren't able and are still unable to go or return to school. Placing girls at the centre of policy-making is an opportunity to overcome barriers women and girls face in accessing education and other essential rights and services, and helps place them at equal footing.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS YEAR'S EUROPEAN WEEK OF ACTION FOR GIRLS

In this context and unlike the previous editions, we will go fully digital! From the summer until the fall the EWAG youth advocates will connect, exchange and formulate their messages, design their action plans and come up with strategies to make sure their voices are heard. You will be able to hear them out on different social media channels, by keeping an eye out for #GirlsConnect. The International Day of the Girl will be pivotal for this year's EWAG, so expect us to call on you to amplify the youth's calls. Together we can make a change!

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More on [www.europeanweekofactionforgirls.org](http://www.europeanweekofactionforgirls.org).

Follow us at [#EUGirlsWeek](https://twitter.com/EUGirlsWeek).



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