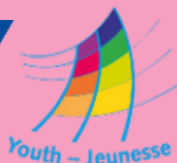


European  
YWCA



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# STUDY SESSION EVALUATION REPORT 2025

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# SUMMARY

From 5–9 May 2025, the European YWCA hosted a transformative study session at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, bringing together 35 young women from across 12 countries.

The theme: Empowering Change: Advancing Gender Equality and Peacebuilding in Europe, was developed in alignment with thematic priorities identified by the European YWCA Board and reflected broader Council of Europe frameworks.

Promotion for the session was carried out through the European YWCA network and our Instagram channel [@european\\_ywca](#), which remains an active space for sharing updates, resources, and future opportunities. While we worked intentionally to secure a broad geographical spread of participants, feedback suggests that outreach is still not reaching all local YWCAs, and we are committed to improving this in future cycles.

The week offered participants space to deepen their understanding of peacebuilding, anti-discrimination, intersectionality, feminist leadership, and the importance of well-being in activism. A flexible and creative educational approach ensured that learning remained accessible, engaging, and reflective of participants' lived experiences.

Evaluation took place throughout the week, allowing for real-time adaptation and feedback. A formal report was submitted to the Council of Europe covering logistical and practical aspects. This current report provides a snapshot of participant feedback on educational content, learning style, and the overall atmosphere of the session. It will be followed by more detailed reflections shared with the European YWCA Board and disseminated to relevant bodies.

Participant feedback has generated strong ideas for future topics, with particular interest in continued focus on inclusive leadership, trans rights, and intersectionality. A number of participants expressed a desire for the European YWCA to further explore trans inclusion and inclusive language at the network level. Some also shared that their local YWCAs have rebranded to be inclusive of all faiths and none, and suggested this shift be raised for discussion at the upcoming General Assembly.

There was a clear appetite for continued engagement, with 96% of participants expressing interest in future opportunities. To support this, we plan to:

- Create a shared drive of session materials and collaboratively sourced resources.
- Share our prep team's planning documents to support transparent learning.
- Develop a training pool to grow leadership capacity and support young women in becoming facilitators of future sessions and initiatives.

This study session affirmed the value of collective learning and community care in building feminist leadership across Europe—and we look forward to the next steps together.

# INTRODUCTION

## **EMPOWERING CHANGE: ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND PEACEBUILDING IN EUROPE**

From 5–9 May 2025, young women from across Europe gathered at the European Youth Centre Budapest for a dynamic and transformative study session. Arriving on the 4th and departing on the 10th, participants immersed themselves in a week of learning, sharing, and growth in the vibrant city of Budapest.

This study session was designed with a clear and ambitious aim:

**To bring young women together from across Europe to grow as transformative leaders, equipped to face the challenges of a changing world.**

Throughout the session, participants explored and worked towards the following objectives:

- Increase awareness of antiracism, discrimination, and intersectionality.
- Strengthen knowledge and skills for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in relation to local contexts.
- Share experiences and best practices from local YWCAs.
- Build confidence in taking leadership and advocacy roles to promote inclusive and anti-discriminatory practices.
- Recognise the importance of well-being in activism as change-makers.

The programme welcomed 35 young women representing a diverse range of countries, bringing rich perspectives from local and national contexts:

- Finland (1)
- Belgium (6)
- Scotland (8)
- Poland (1)
- Albania (4)
- Armenia (4)
- Sweden (3)
- Greece (4)
- France (1)
- Norway (1)
- Italy (1)
- Republic of Moldova (1)

The study session was designed and facilitated by a preparation team of five young women from across Europe. They were joined during the session by Nomi, an intern from a YWCA Antwerp (Lucy's), bringing valuable insight, and were supported throughout by Ida our Educational Advisor from the Council of Europe, ensuring alignment with the Council's values and educational approach.

Their collective energy, insight, and passion shaped the week into a truly collaborative and empowering space for learning and connection.

Funding was applied for by the study session Course Director, from the European YWCA Board, and provided by the Council of Europe.

# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

*On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>, we hosted dinner, welcome drinks and games for the arriving participants*

## DAY 1

From the outset, we committed to using a wide range of learning styles and creative formats throughout the week—recognising that people engage and process information in different ways. We aimed to keep things flexible, dynamic, and responsive, never staying in one approach for too long in case it didn't suit everyone. This helped create an inclusive and stimulating environment where participants could connect, reflect, and contribute in ways that worked for them.

We opened the week with a welcome session, covering introductions, housekeeping, and an overview of the goals for the study session. We included plenty of fun, interactive icebreaker games to build connection and start establishing a sense of trust and shared purpose.

Our first workshop, “Where We Stand: Gender Discrimination & Everyday Realities,” encouraged participants to explore how gender inequality plays out in their daily lives, creating space for reflection, storytelling, and critical discussion.

In the evening, we celebrated the rich diversity of our group through a cultural sharing event. Participants brought food, music, traditional dances, and customs from their backgrounds, turning the evening into a vibrant and meaningful exchange that honoured the uniqueness of each person and community present.

## DAY 2

Day 2 focused on deepening our understanding of peacebuilding through the lens of human rights and conflict resolution. We began with a workshop exploring the strong interconnection between these themes, encouraging participants to think critically about justice, dignity, and long-term peace. Next, we heard an inspiring presentation from one of our participants—a leader with rich experience in peacebuilding. Her personal stories and insights sparked meaningful reflection and dialogue. In the afternoon, we visited the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The visit was both welcoming and thought-provoking, offering a behind-the-scenes look at embassy work, as well as the kinds of peace and human rights initiatives they support in Hungary. Participants engaged with curiosity, asking insightful questions and gaining new perspectives.

## DAY 3

Day 3 focused on leadership, identity, and activism. We began with a Transformative Feminist Leadership workshop, exploring how self-awareness is the starting point for meaningful, lasting change. The World YWCA RiseUp! Manual was used.

This was followed by a session on Tackling Racism and Discrimination in Leadership, where participants co-created definitions and reflected on power, bias, and inclusion.

In Lights, Camera, Action for Change, groups explored key topics like online safety, fake news, AI, power & representation, everyday peacebuilding and women's roles in peacebuilding—creating short films to express their ideas. These were screened in the evening.

As always, we closed with a daily reflection—central to the week's process—offering space for feedback, emotional check-ins, and reminders that caring for the changemaker is a vital part of the work.

## DAY 5

We started the final day with group photos, capturing the spirit and connections built over the week. We held a workshop, led by Marietta Herfort, focused on intersectionality and anti-discrimination, highlighting the experiences of Roma women in Hungary and the work being done to support them.

In Taking it home: lessons learned, participants reflected on what they'd gained and how to apply it in their own lives. Throughout the week, they had been developing personal reflection toolkits exploring activism and wellbeing.

We then wrote 'love letters'—kind messages written to each participant by the group—and ended with a farewell night full of karaoke, hugs, and a celebration of the deep friendships formed among inspiring young women.

## DAY 4

Day 4 began with a Feminist Walking Tour through Budapest led by a prep team member, honouring the women who have shaped Hungary's past and present. We heard powerful stories of courage, resistance, and change—bringing local feminist history to life.

As part of a daily tradition, we also shared the story of a different Hungarian woman with the group, spotlighting voices that have too often gone unheard.

The afternoon was set aside for well-deserved free time, giving participants space to rest, reflect, or explore the city at their own pace.

***We're all united and together on this journey. There's nothing more powerful than a movement and collective voices for change - participant***

# STUDY SESSION SCHEDULE

**REGISTRATION:** 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 08.45-09.30

GROUND FLOOR RECEPTION. PLEASE TAKE YOUR COMPLETED CLAIM FORM

**BREAKFAST** SERVED DAILY: 7.00-9.00 **QUIET SPACE: ROOM 319** (ALL WEEK)

**SUNDAY 4TH MAY: DINNER** 19.00-20.00 & **WELCOME DRINKS:** FLOOR 4 AT 20.30

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.30	<b>Floor 4</b> Welcome Session	<b>Garden:</b> Check in	<b>Garden:</b> Check in	<b>Garden:</b> Check in	<b>LATE START</b>
10.00		<b>Floor 4</b> Conflict Resolution & Human Rights	<b>Floor 4</b> Transformative Feminist Leadership	<b>Floor 4</b> Stepping into Leadership: The EYWCA Way	<b>Garden:</b> Check in
10.30					<b>Garden</b> Study Visit Feedback
11.00	COFFEE	COFFEE	COFFEE	<b>Reception area</b>  Feminism in Budapest Walking Tour (11.00-13.00)	COFFEE
11.30	<b>Garden</b> Connections & Fun	<b>Floor 4</b> The Art of Peaceful Conversation: Challenges and Change	<b>Floor 4</b> Tackling Racism and Discrimination in Leadership		<b>Floor 4</b> Intersectionality and anti-discrimination: our work with Roma women with Marietta Herfort, Director of Phiren Amencia International Network
12.00					
12.30					
13.00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH		LUNCH
13.30				<b>FREE TIME</b>	
14.00	<b>Floor 4</b> Where We Stand: Gender Discrimination & Everyday Realities	<b>Reception Area</b>  Study Visit: Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Budapest (15.00-18.00)	<b>Garden</b> Lights, Camera, Action for Change		<b>Floor 4</b> Taking It Home - Lessons Learned & Next Steps
14.30					
15.00	COFFEE		COFFEE		COFFEE
15.30	<b>Floor 4</b> Reflection Session		<b>Floor 4</b> Reflection Session		
16.00					<b>Garden</b> Photos
16.30					
17.00	<b>FREE TIME</b> <i>The prep team will be in Room 301 from 17.00-17.30 if you need us</i>		<b>FREE TIME</b> <i>The prep team will be in Room 301 from 17.00-17.30 if you need us</i>		<b>FREE TIME</b> <i>The prep team will be in Room 301 until 17.30 if you need us</i>
17.30					
18.00		<b>Garden</b> Reflection			
18.30					
19.00	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	
19.30					
20.00					
20.30	<b>Cultural Sharing Event</b> BASEMENT CLUB	<b>FREE TIME</b>	<b>Film Screening</b> BASEMENT CLUB	<b>FAREWELL EVENT</b> BASEMENT CLUB	

# PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Throughout the week, we gathered participant feedback in real time, which helped us adapt and improve the session as it progressed. After the study session, we completed a formal team evaluation for the Council of Europe, where we shared detailed feedback on logistics, the venue, and related practical matters.

This report captures participants' reflections on the session's themes, content, educational approach, and overall atmosphere. It offers just a snapshot of the rich feedback collected. A fuller set of reflections will be shared with the European YWCA board and then disseminated to relevant people and bodies.

## Overall Experience and Learning Outcomes

96% of participants rated their overall experience as Very Positive.

Programme Appropriateness: 90% said the programme methods were either Fully or Mostly appropriate.

Safety and Inclusivity: 100% of participants felt Fully or Mostly safe to express themselves.

Knowledge Gains: 83% said they definitely increased their peacebuilding knowledge and skills.

Participants rated the focus on well-being in activism especially highly 4.87/5 showing strong appreciation for the focus on care and mental health throughout the study session.

96%

Intend to continue their engagement or help with future events

"IT IS HARD TO  
SAY GOODBYE"

77%

Felt very confident in their ability to take on leadership and advocacy roles after the session

## What Participants Took Away

- “The sense of community.”
- “Accept who you are, listen to your body, and reach out to people or communities.”
- “The connections I made with the young women from across Europe were invaluable.”
- “Do more research and get involved.”
- “Connections—locally and internationally—are vital to being an activist and peacebuilder. Mental health matters too.”
- “Sharing experience is important to keep growing, going, and be inspired.”
- “The sorority we created in just a few days.”
- “You created such a warm, inclusive space – I felt so accepted.”
- “Thank you to the prep team – it was an unforgettable experience.”

## Average Learning Ratings (out of 5)

Awareness of Antiracism & Intersectionality - 4.57

Peacebuilding & Conflict Transformation- 4.53

Sharing Practices from Local YWCAs -4.53

Leadership & Advocacy Confidence - 4.77

Importance of Well-being in Activism -4.87

Expectations Met 9.1/ 10



# Next Steps

Based on participant feedback and team reflections, the following actions will help build on the momentum of the study session:

## **Resource Sharing:**

- A shared drive will be created to host materials from the study session, including slides, handouts, and tools. We'll also include the collaboratively created list of resources that participants contributed throughout the week.

## **Transparency & Learning:**

- The prep team's planning documents and session outlines will be shared to support transparency and peer learning—especially for those interested in facilitation or organising similar events in future.

## **Leadership Development & Training Pool:**

- There was high interest among participants in continuing their involvement. We will build on this by developing European YWCA training pool, creating space for participants to grow into facilitation and leadership roles within future study sessions and projects. This will also support succession planning and capacity building within the movement.

## **Strategic Follow-Up with European YWCA:**

- A summary of key themes and participant suggestions will be shared with the European YWCA Board.

## **Inclusion and Identity:**

- Several participants called for deeper engagement with trans inclusion and the use of inclusive language across all levels of the YWCA. These themes will be raised with the Board to support a more intentional and inclusive approach going forward.

## **Faith-Inclusive Branding:**

- Some participants noted that their local or national branches have rebranded to be inclusive of all faiths or none. A request was made for this to be acknowledged and discussed at the next European YWCA General Assembly. This feedback will be passed on for consideration.



*My biggest takeaway is the empowering sense of community built among young feminist leaders and activists from all across Europe. The week's sessions (especially those focused on Transformative Feminist Leadership, racism, and mental health) offered invaluable tools and perspectives that deepened my understanding of inclusive peacebuilding. Engaging with such a diverse group of passionate individuals reaffirmed my belief in the power of collective action to address gender-based discrimination and advance meaningful change - participant*

*This session exceeded my expectations. It was a beautiful inclusive journey that will last with me forever - participant*

*Thank you again for your incredible work and your kindness towards each and every one of us. It was the best experience at a feminist event I've ever had- participant*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study session would not have been possible without the generous support and partnership of the **Council of Europe**, whose funding and hosting made this entire experience a reality. We are also deeply grateful to the incredible team at the **European Youth Centre Budapest** for ensuring our stay was smooth, enjoyable, and inspiring. We extend our thanks to our partner organisation, **World YWCA**, for their invaluable collaboration, and to the many **local YWCAs** whose support made it possible for participants from around Europe to join us. Special appreciation goes to our wonderful preparation team – Anila, Ainya, Inez, Leila, and our dedicated Course Director Erika – for their hard work and commitment in shaping and delivering this study session. Most importantly, heartfelt thanks to all of the participants. Your energy, knowledge, openness, and willingness to share made this journey truly meaningful and transformative.

**WE THANK YOU**  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN  
**OUR WORK**