Call to uphold Women’s rights, gender equality, SRHR & LGBTQI+ rights in Romania

Dear President,

As Members of Parliaments from across political parties, we wish to express our deep concern about the adoption of an explicit amendment to the National Education Law by the Romanian Senate on 16 June 2020 that prohibits information on gender identity in schools, universities and other educational spaces in particular "activities that spread the gender identity theory or opinion, understood as the theory or opinion that gender is a different concept from that of biological sex and that the two are not always the same".

If enacted, gender studies and courses on women’s rights and equal opportunities at universities could be abolished, scientific literature defining and using the term gender could be banned or confiscated, meaning that access to accurate and evidence-based knowledge and information would be blocked which is an infringement on the right to education and freedom of thought and expression. All teachers, school counselors, academics, doctors, social workers, non-governmental organisations and professional trainers would be banned from addressing topics related to gender and gender equality incl. on transgender persons.

Romania historically has had the highest teenage birth rate in Europe. By banning conversations about the difference between gender and biological sex, Romania would make it challenging to address these topics in its sexuality education and act against the interests of its young people in general – and in particular against its LGBTQI+ community.

Moreover, Romania would violate its anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation both of which are legal obligations as a member of the European Union. Discrimination against the country’s LGBTQI+ community would be legitimised. And furthermore, Romania would violate its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The adoption of this law would align Romania with extremist and authoritarian measures of neighbouring Hungary and Poland in these areas.

Your mandate as the President of Romania is decisive for human rights and freedom of thought and expression in Romania. We urge you to respect the fundamental human rights of all Romanians and ask you not to promulgate the Education Law no. 87/2020 with the amendment adopted by the Senate which bans any reference to gender identity in schools and universities, but to send it back to Parliament for re-examination.

Brussels, 24 June 2020
Yours sincerely,

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