



Empowering Access: A Strong Call for International Safe Abortion Day

Vienna, 28 September 2023

On this International Safe Abortion Day, the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network stands firmly united in emphasizing the urgent need to strengthen global efforts to ensure universal access to high-quality healthcare services, including safe, affordable, and legal abortion.

In an era where women's human rights, especially their bodily and reproductive autonomy, face relentless challenges, we resoundingly call upon decision-makers and policymakers at both national and international levels. It is paramount to safeguard and advance women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Across the world, the need for access to safe abortion services is a reality for countless individuals. Tragically, the assurance of safe and legal abortion remains elusive for many who seek it. Shockingly, approximately 45% of all abortions are still unsafe¹, leading to a staggering 39,000 annual deaths due to unsafe procedures². These deaths, as highlighted in the WAVE Country Report 2021³, constitute an indirect form of femicide.

The restrictive stance on abortion services, or even outright bans, does not deter women, girls, and those with the capacity to become pregnant from seeking to terminate unintended pregnancies. Instead, it forces them into life-threatening circumstances, magnifying the risks of physical and psychological harm.

Regrettably, 753 million women of reproductive age worldwide currently reside under the yoke of restrictive abortion laws⁴. Although Europe has made substantial progress in the legalization of abortion in recent years, considerable barriers persist. These hurdles are most acutely felt by marginalized and low-income communities. While highly restrictive abortion laws are limited to just five European countries, two of which are EU Member States, the erosion of women's human rights reverberates across the continent.

This erosion manifests as increased opposition to abortion rights, the imposition of mandatory waiting periods, time barriers, exorbitant costs associated with travel for abortion access, and the enduring stigmatization and social exclusion faced by those seeking reproductive healthcare.

Therefore, WAVE calls upon governments worldwide to unequivocally affirm the right to access affordable, high-quality healthcare services, including comprehensive abortion care. This is not a mere healthcare issue; it is fundamental to the preservation of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and, ultimately, human rights.

Abortion Rights are Human Rights.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abortion>

² <https://reproductiverights.org/our-issues/abortion/>

³ https://wave-network.org/wp-content/uploads/WAVE_Country-Report.pdf, p.64

⁴ <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>