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*Young Women's leadership for  
Collaborative Sustainable  
Communities*

# THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA, MENTAL HEALTH, AND CLIMATE CHANGE ON YOUNG WOMEN IN THE EU: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE #WECOLEAD  
ARTICLE SERIES





In #WeCoLead, the partner organizations brought together young women from different EU countries to discuss and share experiences on their feelings towards mental health topics, the pandemic, and their relationship with social media. Creating a series of reels was an opportunity for the participating young women to share findings with others, support them not to feel alone, help them identify the small things that can make a positive difference, and create an online space for thoughts and maybe more discussions on the topics of gender, climate change, sustainability, and critical thinking ([#WeCoLead International Report, 2022](#)).

In many European countries, social media has become one of the most common ways of communication, especially among young people. According to our research, young women experience socioeconomic inequalities in their lives, to different extents, which can be traced down to gender discrimination taking place in many European countries. Not all young women have the possibility to access information or platforms to give voice to their experiences and feelings in the same way. Thus, social media has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public and encouraging stakeholders to improve commitments to gender equality. By looking at the work of various young female activists presented on social media, the participants were inspired to make their voices be heard by using social media ([#WeCoLead International Report, 2022](#)).



## Barriers for young women to access leadership positions and equally participate in society

During the first part of our research within the #WeCoLead project, the team conducted local workshops and gathered data through surveys in 5 different EU countries (Sweden, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Hungary). We asked young women aged 18-30 what the barriers that they face in their respective societies in terms of leadership were. The answers included accessing the labour market, entering higher education, personal inspiration, entrepreneurship, and barriers to sustainable practices in businesses and daily life ([#WeCoLead Toolkit 1](#), 2023).



We also asked civil society and organizational representative who work with young women the same questions: what barriers they face in their work with young women that prevent them from having a social and environmental impact? Although the results had differences between the national contexts, many barriers were aligned: patriarchal structures, sexism, discrimination, and gender gaps in all sectors resulting in socioeconomic inequalities for different groups of young women.



Another very relevant barrier was the gendered stereotypical roles within the family and the household. This was noted to affect young women because they have less time for themselves, their social life and professional development. Different categories of young women (entrepreneurs, students, mothers, professionals, migrant workers, etc.) also named lack of psychological support and financial security as main barriers preventing them from taking leadership roles and accessing the labour market. All these barriers have negative effects on young women, often redirecting their career choices and adjusting their personal lives.

## REFERENCES:

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