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IN THIS
TOGETHER



STRATEGIC MESSAGING TO BUILD TRANSFEMINIST SOLIDARITY

A practical toolkit for feminists and allies

In This Together: Strategic Messaging to Build Transfeminist Solidarity

A practical toolkit for feminists and allies

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wellbeing of trans people since 2005.
TGEU is an umbrella organisation that represents
over 200 member organisations in more than
50 countries in Europe and Central Asia.**

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Introduction

Across Europe and beyond, feminist movements are facing intensified attacks on women's and LGBTI people's rights. Coordinated efforts by authoritarian and anti-rights movements are undermining democratic rights, restricting bodily autonomy and deepening divisions within feminist and broader social justice movements to retain and gain socio-political power. Tensions around gender, safety, resources and identity are instrumentalised under the guise of "protecting women" to justify surveillance and control, and roll back the hard-won rights feminists have fought for.

Many feminists want to come together to overcome these challenges and need the tools to navigate complex and nuanced discussions constructively. With this toolkit, we aim to respond to that need, sharing our learnings and practical guidance from our recent research on how to build common ground, strengthen transfeminist solidarity, and develop effective messaging.

At a time when we need each other more than ever, our hope is that the insights from this research will help feminists speak about the rights of trans people with others who might be on the fence, engaging in conversations from a place of shared values, compassion and care. The insights are also aimed at feminist organisations keen to build bridges across movements, especially those with members who might hold a diversity of views and are interested in finding ways to navigate conflicting perspectives.

Methodology

The insights we gathered are the result of desk research, dialogue across several feminist organisations based in Europe, and message testing in two online focus groups. They reflect what we learned about supporting feminist movements in meeting today's challenges with transfeminist solidarity. In particular, we focused on what concerns show up most often, what values create common ground, and which messages are most successful in building that kind of solidarity.

How we researched

We began with desk research, drawing on TGEU's previous work, feminist and trans-led messaging projects, and existing analyses of anti-gender narratives¹. This helped us map recurring fears, assumptions, and political frames that often show up in public debates, as well as the values, language, and perspectives that resonated in other communication efforts. The conclusions we drew from the desk research shaped the ideas, messages, and questions we later tested with two online focus groups. The same participants took part in each focus group so that we could go more in-depth in understanding their perspectives, and to build trust sharing within the group.

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Who we spoke to

OUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Trans allies looking for practical tools to engage in conversation with their more hesitant peers.

Our goal was to speak to feminists who were on the fence about the rights of trans people — those with hesitations, doubts, or questions they hadn't yet resolved. This group cares about trans people and wants to show up as an ally, but may need reassurance on specific concerns or questions.

Reaching this target audience proved challenging. More time and resources were needed to go beyond existing networks and build the trust required for participants to join conversations that can, at times, feel tense or uncomfortable.

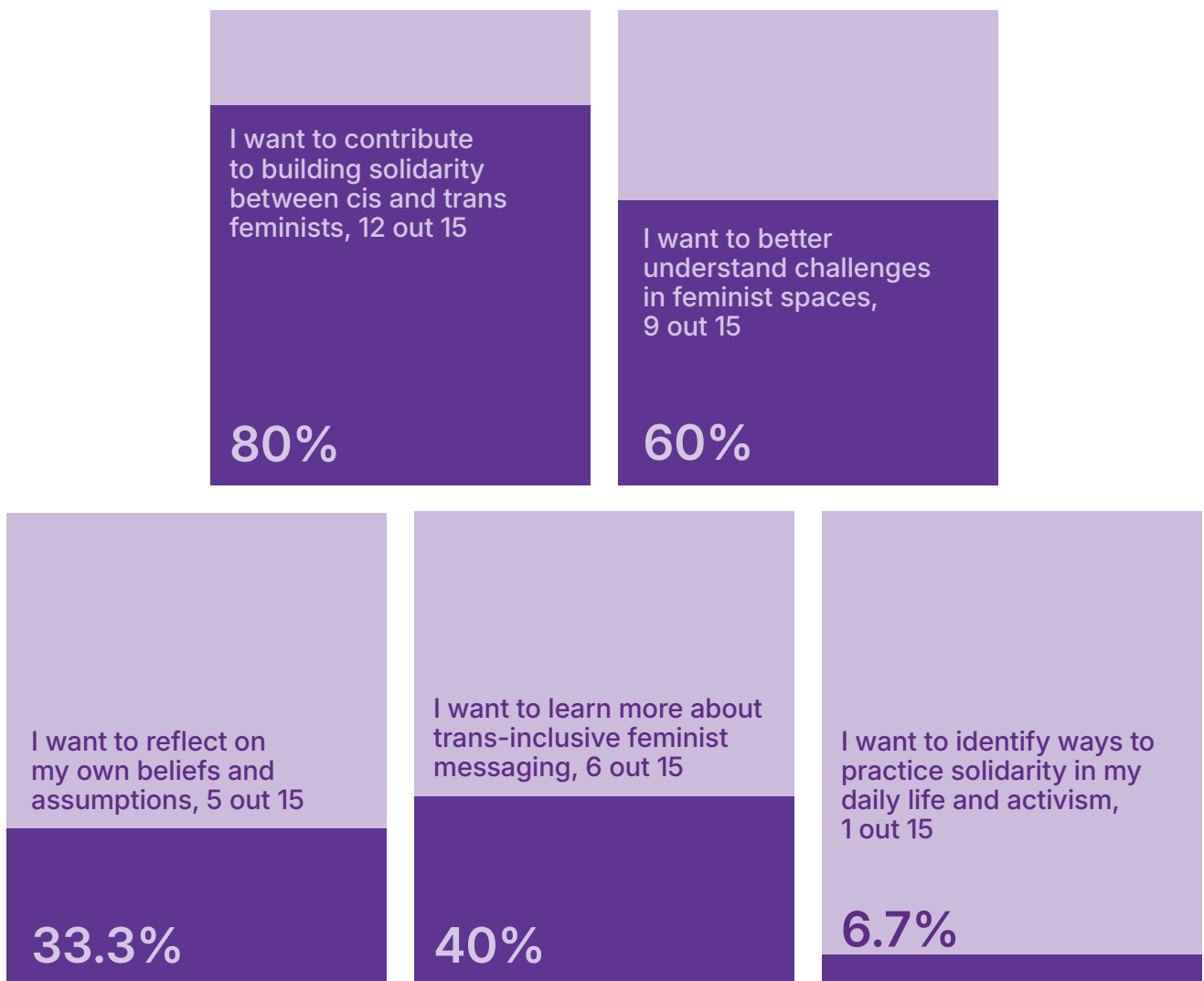
Given these constraints, while our participants held a diversity of perspectives, we shifted our focus to feminists who were already trans allies and looking for practical tools to engage with their more hesitant peers. We believe engaging this target audience is still effective in

¹ Please refer to the References section at the end of the Toolkit for previous TGEU research and other resources on these topics.

building transfeminist solidarity because cis trans allies often serve as trusted messengers to the movable middle². Supporting their labour helps bridge gaps across feminist movements and strengthens solidarity for the rights of trans people.

Motivation to participate in the focus groups

Participants were motivated by a combination of solidarity, learning, and self-reflection:



² With movable middle we refer to individuals and groups who are potential allies and often overlap with other target audiences. They are not yet firmly decided on issues related to the rights of trans people but can be influenced with the right information and narratives.

Positionality

Participants were committed to feminist principles but expressed uncertainty about supporting trans and non-binary people in feminist contexts. While most recognised shared systemic struggles, some were unsure how to navigate tensions or balance attention to cis women's experiences.

I value creating feminist spaces where all voices are recognised, and everyone can shape the agenda meaningfully.

Strongly agree: 12 people, 80%

Agree: 3 people, 20%

I believe building solidarity across different identities and inequalities strengthens the feminist movement.

Strongly agree: 11 people, 55.6%

Agree: 3 people, 20%

I believe trans and cis feminists share systemic struggles (e.g. gender based violence, social norms, patriarchal oppression) that can unite our movements.

Strongly agree: 11 people, 55.6%

Agree: 3 people, 20%

Neither agree nor disagree: 2 people, 22.2%

Strongly disagree: 1 person, 11.1%

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I sometimes feel unsure how to support trans and non-binary people in feminist spaces without causing tension with other feminists.

Agree: 5 people, 33.3%

Neither agree nor disagree: 3 people, 20%

Disagree: 6 people, 40%

Strongly disagree: 1 person, 6.7%

I worry that including trans and non-binary people might unintentionally overshadow or compete with cis women's experiences and needs.

Strongly agree: 3 people, 20%

Agree: 1 person, 6.7%

Neither agree nor disagree: 2 people, 13.3%

Disagree: 5 people, 33.3%

Strongly disagree: 4 people, 26.7%

I sometimes feel unsure how to address class, race, or other intersectional inequalities in feminist spaces.

Agree: 3 people, 20%

Neither agree nor disagree: 5 people, 33.3%

Disagree: 6 people, 40%

Strongly disagree: 1 person, 6.7%

I sometimes fear that my efforts to support trans inclusion will never be enough or will be misinterpreted.

Strongly Agree: 1 person, 6.7%

Agree: 6 people, 40%

Neither agree nor disagree: 4 people, 26.7%

Disagree: 3 people, 20%

Strongly disagree: 1 person, 6.7%

How we tested our messages

We approached message testing from several angles to capture both organisational perspectives and lived experiences.

Cross-movement conversations

We held informal conversations with feminist organisations to gather information on their communication approach with hesitant feminists, to understand what worked and what didn't. Our approach was guided by TGEU members' input too, with a survey aimed at collecting input from different contexts across our network, and verifying we were moving in the right direction. This helped us refine the focus group design and messaging, as well as the joint Manifesto that followed.

Focus groups

We ran two online focus groups with 15 feminists based across Europe³. We brought together both cis and trans feminists to observe and understand the benefits and challenges of holding conversations with people who might share similar values but not identical experiences and perspectives.

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³ Please refer to Annex 2 for more information on demographics of the focus group participants.



Principles to build transfeminist solidarity

This research allowed us to bring together key insights on how feminists talk about the rights of trans people, what helps conversations move forward, and which shared values strengthen solidarity. The following principles summarise what participants told us matters to them the most in feminist spaces, and offer practical guidance for building effective transfeminist solidarity messaging.

Start with what we have in common

Shared values

Across the research, participants returned to a set of values that supporting building common ground:

Equality

the belief that everyone deserves the same chances to live safely, move freely, and build the life each one of us chooses. This includes fair access to work opportunities and quality healthcare regardless of gender, class, race, disability, or identity.

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Bodily autonomy

the freedom to make decisions about our bodies and lives, living on our own terms, without being boxed by other people's ideas of who we should be. From abortion rights, gender-affirming care, freedom from violence, to simply being able to express who you are without fear.

Solidarity

as the commitment to showing up for each other across a diversity of opinions and experiences, and the collective effort to fight against patriarchy together.

Interdependence and collective care

none of us can get through the current realities of austerity, rising violence, shrinking public services, and worsening economic pressure on our own. Collective care is the everyday practice of making sure no one is left to face these conditions alone.

Intersectionality

our movements must reflect the lived realities of working-class, racialised, migrant, disabled, trans, sex-worker and young feminists, and reflect on how these experiences are shaped by patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism.

Values in action – Many disagreements are about how values are understood in everyday life. People may agree on principles like equality, but imagine them playing out differently in specific situations, for example, when thinking about safety in public spaces. Clear messaging should explain what values mean in practice, helping to address any concerns and bring people together around a common understanding.

MESSAGES TO EXPRESS SHARED VALUES

We all deserve freedom from violence. Whether we're walking home at night, reporting abuse, or making choices about our bodies, safety should never depend on who we are and how we express our gender.

Everyone, regardless of their gender, deserves access to safe, affirming, and universal healthcare. Demand bodily autonomy, access to healthcare, reproductive rights, and freedom for us all.

The more feminism stands for equality and freedom for all, the harder it is for anti-choice groups to roll back on our hard-won rights.

Feminism has always fought for the freedom to determine what happens to our bodies, and to shape our lives and choices on our own terms. ⁴

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Shared struggle

Once common ground is established through shared values, show the core struggles that unite us. Naming how we might be affected in similar ways matters, even if our experiences are not identical or interchangeable, because talking about the concrete challenges we face creates connection. For example, both cis and trans people experience overlapping oppression and discrimination, such as physical and sexual violence, struggles over bodily autonomy, and social and economic exclusion based on their gender. Framing these as shared struggles helps people recognise what we are fighting against, together, rather than getting stuck on what sets us apart.

Remember intersectionality – while it is important to show shared struggles, we need to reflect the different ways in which oppression and discrimination show up in each person's life. For example, avoid comparing the experiences of cis women to trans women, or framing them as identical. Instead, begin with a 'bridge' that acknowledges everyone's common challenges, before sharing more information on how trans people, and other intersecting identities, might be most impacted by a specific issue. This can help reduce defensiveness and show more clearly why allyship and cross-movement solidarity are needed.

⁴ For more insights on how we developed language across the two focus groups, please take a look at Annex 5.

MESSAGES TO EXPRESS SHARED STRUGGLE

Too many of us know what it's like to be dismissed, misdiagnosed, or denied the healthcare we need - from delayed diagnoses and denied gender-affirming care to inaccessible services. Trans people in particular face long waiting lists and higher levels of discrimination from doctors. These barriers grow even higher for those who are racialised, disabled, or migrants.

Our struggles are interdependent. If we allow any group to be treated unfairly, it's only a matter of time before all the hard-won rights feminists have fought for are on trial.

Gender based violence is escalating,
impacting women, trans, and non-binary people
in their diversity.



Talk about transfeminist history

In your messaging, show that this is not the first time feminists have united around shared struggles. Highlight historical transfeminist achievements by bringing in examples of solidarity, moments when feminists stood together, challenged injustice, and won.

Honour intergenerational efforts – feminist movements have always spanned generations, and what people told us in our research is clear: everyone wants to feel understood, valued, and recognised for what they bring, regardless of their age. Honour the labour of earlier generations and past victories, and support the leadership emerging today to reflect the intergenerational and intersectional movements we are building. Value all generations' input and wisdom, by focusing on how people have been shaped by different political moments, language, or experiences of organising.

MESSAGES TO TALK ABOUT TRANSFEMINIST HISTORY

Throughout history, feminist, queer, and civil rights movements have shown that real change happens when we act together. From anti-colonial resistance to cross-border fights for abortion access, our movements prove that solidarity builds a better future for all of us.

Movements that come together are the ones that change history. In solidarity, we fight patriarchy and defend rights and freedoms for us all.

Feminist movements have always fought for equality, the right to live with dignity, and access to fair work opportunities. From equal pay and secure housing to access to quality education and public services, feminists have long challenged systems that exploit unpaid care and reproductive work, and put profit over people and the planet.

Hold space for disagreement and getting things wrong

Across every conversation, focus group, and organisational exchange, feminists told us that they want more spaces where they can speak honestly, be listened to without fear, and stay rooted in the values that have guided their movements for generations. Many talked about finding it hard to fit in in feminist circles, especially when starting out, pointing to difficulties around navigating tensions and disagreements.

For example, many cis feminists shared they worry about saying the wrong thing or not knowing enough about trans people's experiences to show solidarity effectively. Trans and non-binary people also spoke about the exhaustion of feeling misunderstood and constantly expected to explain or justify their existence. Ultimately, everyone wants to feel seen, heard, welcomed, and recognised for who they are, not for getting everything perfect.

This tells us there is a strong need for more spaces to build trust with each other and have honest, respectful dialogues where people can bring their full selves and concerns into the conversation.

To build these spaces, we need to meet people where they are, creating moments for people to ask questions, share uncertainty, and be heard without judgment.

In your messaging, this can look like being honest about tensions in feminist spaces. Focus on the importance of learning, reminding your audience that coming together does not mean that there aren't challenges or disagreements to overcome.

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Sit in the uncomfortable chair – acknowledge that feminism can be uncomfortable at times, and that sitting with uncertainty or tension can support growth, learning, and more honest dialogue. We might get things wrong, but we always strive to do better and improve.

MESSAGES TO HOLD SPACE FOR DISAGREEMENT

We do not need to agree on everything to act together against patriarchy and defend the hard-won rights feminists have fought for across centuries.

We are all experts in our own lives, and we don't need to have lived the same experience to show care, solidarity, or support. What matters is our willingness to listen, to learn, and to stay in conversation with one another. Feminism asks us to grow together. To approach each other with curiosity rather than fear, and to understand that learning from one another is a vital part of building trust and solidarity, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Show that patriarchy is the problem

In our focus groups, feminism was defined as an identity that many feel proud of: a source of solidarity, collective strength and empowerment. Above all, it was understood as a shared commitment to fight together against patriarchy and other oppressive systems of power⁵. Naming patriarchy, capitalism, and other oppressive structures as villains is therefore often more effective than trying to disprove claims that trans people and other marginalised groups are a “threat.”

While in some contexts it can be useful to point to cis men as a group that benefits from patriarchal power, it is generally more effective to focus on misogyny and transmisogyny, and on how patriarchy operates in practice—through toxic masculinity, gendered violence, exclusion, and control.

Acknowledge how patriarchy affects cis men – Positioning patriarchy as the “villain” and root cause of harm, can be particularly effective when debunking concerns around safety. When relevant, recognise the ways cis men are also affected. For example, you can emphasise how patriarchy impacts cis men by enforcing rigid gender roles, rewarding dominance and emotional suppression, and framing fear and control as forms of protection, showing how these patterns are central to inequality and violence being produced and sustained.

MESSAGES TO SHOW THAT PATRIARCHY IS THE PROBLEM

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Across Europe and beyond, patriarchal powers continue to build structures and healthcare systems, deciding whose pain is believed, whose bodies are cared for, and whose needs are often ignored.

Patriarchy is what endangers us all, and what these anti-rights actors are really protecting is their power.

Anti-rights groups are spreading fear to divide us, targeting trans people and other marginalised communities instead of addressing the real roots of oppression: patriarchy, racism and systemic injustice. These systems of oppression thrive when we stay apart.

⁵ Please see Annex 4 for focus groups participants' views and feelings on feminism.

Talk about equality over inclusion

'Trans inclusion'⁶ was seen by many participants in our study as unrelatable or patronising, too abstract and performative, or as the implicit assumption that marginalised people are excluded by default, and need the approval or permission from a more privileged group of people to have rights.

In your messaging, talk about equality rather than inclusion. Equality was seen by all participants as a shared feminist value at the basis of solidarity, equality, bodily autonomy, and collective care.

Make equality more tangible – Go beyond naming equality as a shared feminist value and demonstrate how it operates in everyday contexts. Use specific examples of collaboration, mutual support, or collective wins to bring to life how equality is achieved in practice.

Address common fears and concerns

Throughout the research, participants made it clear that many tensions in feminist spaces come from uncertainty and fears, especially that of being erased, misunderstood, or pushed aside. These feelings shape how people approach conversations about gender, safety, and the rights of trans people. Below are the central fears and concerns that surfaced in the study, with insights on how to approach them in your messaging to reduce defensiveness and keep the focus on transfeminist solidarity.

Fear of erasure

Some feminists worry that recognising the identities or perspectives of other feminists could mean erasing their own. For example, cis women might be concerned that recognising trans women and non-binary people might cause difficulties in legal and policy advances, when systems are still built on a binary understanding of sex and gender. This can also cause trans and non-binary people to experience their own fears of erasure, as the conversations can feel like a question of their existence or right to be recognised, and make their experiences be misunderstood or overlooked.

What you can do in your messaging to address the fear of erasure:

- **Recognise differences and commonalities** – Acknowledge that cis and trans people experience oppression differently, but share a commitment to challenging systemic inequality and can face similar struggles. We don't need to live each other's experiences to understand oppression. We can listen to and honour different lived realities, recognising each other's right to live freely and equally.
- **Give concrete examples** – Illustrate how trans people's recognition does not erase cis women's achievements or lived experiences with historical wins from feminists working together. These examples paint a picture for how trans people have supported the feminist movement, and vice versa.

⁶ Refer to Annex 3 for more details about the focus group's participants feelings on trans inclusion.

- **Show the impact of questioning trans identity** – Make clear to your audience that conversations denying or questioning trans people’s existence affect their ability to participate fully and safely in society.
- **Avoid divisive language** – Instead of saying “cis women and trans women” or “cis people and trans people”, stick to saying “women”, “everyone”, “all of us”, and focus on specific identities only when relevant.
- **Check for defensiveness** – Make sure that your language doesn’t come across as defensive or blaming and shaming those who are reading, for example through a quick testing exercise or by using appropriate language models.

See the sections on shared struggle and transfeminist history for examples of messaging you can use to address fear of erasure.

Scarcity mindset

Fears of erasure tend to be intensified by both historical and ongoing struggles for human rights and recognition. This creates a scarcity mindset: the belief that rights, attention, or resources are limited, and that one person’s gain must inevitably come at another’s expense.

This scarcity mindset has repeatedly been used to block equal opportunities, including women’s rights, by promoting the idea that any progress made by one group must be protected. These beliefs get rooted in people’s minds not because scarcity is inevitable,



but because politicians, corporations, and billionaires actively hoard power and resources, creating deeper inequality while redirecting frustration towards other marginalised groups.

In this context, scarcity mindset shows up as concerns about trans rights diluting women's rights or as fears of competition for visibility, protection, or material support. Anti-rights movements and authoritarian forces deliberately rely on this zero-sum thinking, presenting attacks on marginalised groups as solutions to broader crises such as economic insecurity. Our research shows that class plays a significant role in shaping these tensions and perceptions, influencing how people understand inequality and where they place blame.

What you can do in your messaging to address zero-sum thinking:

- **Call out those who are actually monopolising resources** — Scarcity mindset is hard to dislodge with values alone, because it is rooted in material realities. Name the politicians, corporations, billionaires and other actors who are actually monopolising resources and opportunities, and are using scarcity mindsets as a strategy to stop equal opportunities for many marginalised groups.
- **Frame rights as interconnected** — Remind your audience that human rights are indivisible and universal. The fight for the rights of trans people is inseparable from the feminist struggle, because freedoms of all feminists are connected.
- **Highlight that attacks on one of us are an attack on all of us** — Challenge scarcity mindset by showing that undermining one group's rights only paves the way for more rights to be taken away rather than protecting existing ones. Show how oppressions intersect across gender, race, class, disability, migration status, and more aspects of people's lives and identities. Avoid focusing narrowly on individual rights or single-issue struggles without recognising broader systemic oppression.
- **Acknowledge the role of patriarchy, and anti-rights and illiberal movement** — Calling out the role of patriarchy, as well as anti-right movements in oppression and discrimination clarifies how division is being intentionally fuelled. In your messaging, recognise that coming together is no longer optional: to fight back anti-rights forces effectively, we need to come together as a united front.
- **Paint the picture of the transfeminist future we are fighting for** — Go back to shared values and invite your audience to imagine what a transfeminist society can look like in practice e.g. one that invests in gender-responsive public services, redistributes wealth and power, and more.

MESSAGES TO CHALLENGE A SCARCITY MINDSET

Anti-choice actors try to convince us that demanding equality for one group means harming another. In reality, our struggles are deeply connected. While our experiences of gender are different and personal, the same patriarchal systems that dismiss any woman's pain also deny a trans person's identity and delay care for those who are disabled, fat, or living in poverty.

Act in solidarity with the trans community to stop anti-rights movements in their tracks.

Protecting the rights of trans people strengthens everyone's freedoms, from bodily autonomy to workplace equality.

That's the feminist future we are fighting for: one that builds public services that respond to diverse needs, redistribute and rebalance wealth and power, leaving no one behind. By coming together and recognising our interlinked struggles, we dismantle systems that exploit and divide us, and reclaim a world where dignity, freedom, and equality are for everyone.

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Fear of being misunderstood

Our study showed that many people feared saying the wrong thing, being judged, or having their concerns dismissed. For some cis feminists, this showed up as hesitating to share their questions for fear of being labelled transphobic, causing harm or not already knowing the 'right' language. A few participants also mentioned feeling that being cisgender meant other intersecting oppressions they may experience, for example, because of their class or migration status, were not considered or given space to, leaving them feeling misunderstood and unseen. Participants shared that many feminists on the fence in their circles were already well-informed; what they most often lack is the opportunity to feel listened to and valued, even when there are doubts to be discussed.

Trans feminists, on the other hand, were more likely to feel unseen and burdened by expectations to explain, educate others, or having to justify their existence when supporting cis feminists with their concerns. This shows us that we need to make space for conversations without exhausting trans participants, questioning their identity, or turning

discussions into debates over who experiences more oppression, instead supporting each other to fight patriarchy together. It's also the reason why investing energy in equipping cis feminists who are already allies can be a turning point in building transfeminist solidarity.

What you can do in your messaging to address the fear of being misunderstood:

- **Create space for dialogue** – Normalise curiosity and questions asked in good faith, while encouraging cis allies to take responsibility for holding harder conversations with other cis feminists, so that trans people don't have to carry that extra work.
- **Make space for uncertainty** – Acknowledge that navigating complex topics can bring doubts and questions, and that no one needs to be an expert to engage, learn, or participate in conversations. No one is "less feminist" or "less valid" for having uncertainties when the shared goal is solidarity and mutual support.
- **Agree to disagree** – Show that we do not need to agree on everything to act together. Solidarity is about coming together as a united front, listening to each other and learning from one another.
- **Emphasise that everyone is an expert of their own experience** – Avoid lecturing or patronising language. Make it clear that everyone has a role to play, bringing their unique strengths and experiences to the feminist movement.
- **Encourage cis allies to affirm trans people** – Remind your audience that many cis people respect and value trans people, and are ready to support. Encourage cis allies to show commitment to transfeminist solidarity, to learning and growing together.
- **Provide guidance** – Share clear, grounded talking points to respond to common concerns, such as questions about the rights of trans people in sports and bathrooms, so that cis allies have the tools to show up for trans people in any conversation.

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Avoid comparing or ranking oppression

Differences in upbringing are sometimes misread as evidence that people cannot recognise or relate to patriarchal harm, when oppression actually operates through structures, and people can meaningfully recognise and resist shared systems of power without having lived the same histories.

In your communication, affirm that solidarity does not depend on identical experiences or backgrounds. Every feminist is shaped and constrained by patriarchy in multiple ways, not a single, uniform experience. Emphasise that patriarchy, misogyny, and other systems of power operate across intersecting identities, producing different realities without cancelling or undermining one another. Hold space for overlapping experiences—without ranking or gatekeeping—to show and support collective feminist struggle.

MESSAGES TO ADDRESS THE FEAR OF BEING MISUNDERSTOOD

We do not need to agree on everything to come together. Every time we work to understand another person's experience and support our trans, racialised, and disabled feminist siblings, we are actively challenging the systems that oppress us all.

Solidarity means learning together and sharing responsibility for difficult conversations. No one should have to explain or justify who they are. Every lived experience matters, and we can act together with care and respect, even when we don't agree on everything.

None of us has all the answers. Questions asked with care help us learn, especially when we create spaces where uncertainty, listening, and growth are welcomed, not judged. Learning is part of being feminist.

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Safety concerns

Safety concerns were another common issue that came up in our research. This is unsurprising, as safety in public spaces is one of the top concerns for many feminists, and something that affects everyone's daily lives. Anti-gender narratives are spreading misinformation and fuelling anxiety about safety in women-only spaces too, while the structural causes of violence—including misogyny, racism, and economic insecurity—are left unaddressed. This shifts attention away from effective solutions, such as well-resourced public services, and feeds the false idea that protecting trans people's rights harms women's safety.

What you can do in your messaging to address safety concerns:

- **Use data to show the actual risks** — Avoid repeating or reinforcing narratives that frame trans people as potential threats. Instead, ground your messaging in evidence rather than speculation. For example, you can highlight research showing that most gender based violence occurs within intimate or familial relationships, particularly involving cis men. You can also emphasise that there is no credible evidence demonstrating that legal or social equality for trans people increases risks to women's safety, as well as sharing extensive evidence on trans people facing disproportionately high levels of violence, harassment, and exclusion.
- **Talk about violence as systemic** — Name patriarchy and other structures of oppressive power as the driver of violence, to shift the conversation away from debunking why trans people are not a threat.
- **Acknowledge safety concerns without exclusion** — Safety concerns are often rooted in experiences of harm and should not be dismissed. At the same time, we can challenge the assumption that exclusion is the only or most effective response in all situations. Show how protecting trans people's rights strengthens broader protections, with policies and practices rooted in equality, collective care, and collective responsibility offering stronger and more sustainable forms of safety.
- **Reframe protection narratives as misogynistic** — Framing women as inherently vulnerable or in need of safeguarding reproduces patriarchal assumptions that women cannot make decisions about their own bodies and lives. Recognise that protection narratives have historically been used to justify control, exclusion, and violence rather than actual safety, and that we need to recognise women's right to self-determination and safety.
- **Highlight how gender is used to justify control** — In your messaging, acknowledge that, while our experiences of gender are unique, binary ideas of gender, and an essentialist understanding of biology, have long been used to justify control over bodies, reproduction, and labour - issues historically challenged by feminist movements.
- **Recognise internalised misogyny** — Patriarchy socialises us to police ourselves and each other in response to patriarchal expectations of safety and respectability. Create messaging that challenges these dynamics, and instead centres collective liberation.

Safety concerns are complex and often led by personal experience and fears rooted in patriarchal oppression. The guidance below won't work for every audience, so we encourage continued research and experimentation to find the most effective ways to talk about safety.

MESSAGING TO ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS

Politicians exclude trans people from shelters, changing rooms, and public spaces under the false promise of “protecting women and children.” In reality, most gender-based violence, whether at home, at work, or on the street, is perpetrated by cis men. Exclusion enforces the same patriarchal systems, policing how we should look and behave, pressuring everyone to narrow ideals of gender.

Claiming women need safeguarding is deeply misogynistic: it treats women as vulnerable objects rather than autonomous people. It also reinforces a system that decides whose bodies, safety, and lives matter.

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Feminism has always challenged the idea that gender has to fit specific roles. Anyone, no matter who they are, where they come from, or the job they do, should be free to be themselves. Yet those who don't fit in what is seen as the 'norm' are still being pushed out of the spaces where everyone deserves to be themselves without fear.

A future where trans people can live safely and openly is a future where all of us can do the same. Together, we can break this cycle of violence and reclaim what feminism has always stood for: bodily autonomy, equality and freedom for everyone.

Trans people are often excluded from decision-making and leadership opportunities.

In our surveys, trans people shared that they are often excluded from leadership or decision-making, tokenised, or treated as spokespersons for entire communities. This reinforces unequal power dynamics and places an unfair burden on them. Even though we did not test messaging on this topic in our focus groups, it is a relevant concern that needs to be addressed across feminist movements, including in relevant messaging.

What you can do to advocate for trans leadership:

Ensure representation at all levels - Make sure trans people are part of decision-making processes. Avoid symbolic gestures of inclusion that don't hold real influence.



Message testing overview

The two focus groups were held a few days apart to give us time to refine our draft messaging based on participant feedback, while keeping the discussion fresh and top of mind for participants. Below, you can see how their insights directly shaped the messaging, providing examples that can help guide your own communications.

Message 1 - Bodily Autonomy

WHAT WE CHANGED BASED ON FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

	FROM	TO
Making values more specific	The right to decide	The freedom to determine
Shifting the focus to the common problem	<p>Trans and non-binary people are often denied this freedom.</p> <p>Trans inclusion and women's rights support each other, even if that can feel complex at times.</p>	<p>Patriarchal powers continue to build structures and healthcare systems, deciding whose pain is believed, whose bodies are cared for, and whose needs are often ignored.</p> <p>Anti-choice actors try to convince us that demanding equality for one group means harming another. In reality, our struggles are deeply connected.</p>
Showing common struggles more clearly, with everyday, intersectional examples	While our experiences of gender are different and personal, and understanding everyone's needs takes time, this is what will help us find collective solutions to our multiple and shared oppressions.	<p>While our experiences of gender are different and personal, the same patriarchal systems that dismiss any woman's pain also deny a trans person's identity and delay care for those who are disabled, fat, or living in poverty.</p> <p>Too many of us know what it's like to be dismissed, misdiagnosed, or denied the healthcare we need - from delayed diagnoses and denied gender-affirming care to inaccessible services.</p>
Inclusion to equality	The more inclusive our feminism, the harder it is for anti-choice movements to divide and silence us.	The more feminism stands for equality and freedom for all, the harder it is for anti-choice groups to roll back on our hard-won rights.
Avoiding dividing trans people from cis people, while still recognising trans people experiencing higher levels of discrimination	<p>Every feminist, cis or trans, should be able to access healthcare safely. Bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, and freedom for us all!</p> <p>Trans and non-binary people are often denied this freedom</p>	<p>Everyone, regardless of their gender, deserves access to safe, affirming, and universal healthcare.</p> <p>Trans people in particular face long waiting lists and higher levels of discrimination from doctors. These barriers grow even higher for those who are racialised, disabled, or migrants.</p>

Message 2 - Freedom from violence

WHAT WE CHANGED	FROM	TO
Highlighting common struggle more clearly	Violence against women is real, violent, and escalating.	Gender based violence is escalating, impacting women, trans, and non-binary people in their diversity.
More specific about the villain	Some politicians	Politicians and anti-rights actors
Adding research backed language instead of explaining the villain's tactics	Some politicians claim to be 'protecting women' while spreading fear of trans people. They limit trans people from accessing bathrooms, sports centres, and changing rooms, targeting anyone who doesn't conform, all under the false promise of safety. In reality, what they are really protecting is their power.	Politicians and anti-rights actors attempt to exclude trans people from shelters, changing rooms, and public spaces under the false promise of "protecting women and children." In reality, most gender-based violence, whether at home, at work, or on the street, is perpetrated by cis men.
Focusing on patriarchy instead of the roll back on human rights as the primary focus	If we allow any group to be treated unfairly, it's only a matter of time before all the hard-won rights feminists have fought for are on trial.	<p>Patriarchy is what endangers us all, and what anti-rights actors are really protecting is their power. Excluding trans people from public spaces enforces the same patriarchal systems that police how women should look and behave, pressuring everyone to narrow ideals of gender.</p> <p>Claiming women need this type of safeguarding is also deeply misogynistic: it treats women as vulnerable objects rather than autonomous people, reinforcing a system that decides whose bodies, safety, and lives matter.</p>

Message 3 - Economic justice

WHAT WE CHANGED	FROM	TO
From dignity to equality and feminist history	Dignity and security are a right, not a privilege. And still today, too many of us are struggling to make ends meet, to find safe homes, or to access healthcare without fear or discrimination.	Feminist movements have always fought for equality, the right to live with dignity, and access to fair work opportunities. From equal pay and secure housing to access to quality education and public services, feminists have long challenged systems that exploit unpaid care and reproductive work, and put profit over people and the planet
Moving away from the focus on trans people. Talking about the impact of economic inequality more broadly, showing its links with anti-rights agendas	<p>Austerity, wage inequality, and anti-trans laws are working hand in hand to keep us divided and struggling.</p> <p>Trans people are twice as likely to experience unemployment and poverty, and face widespread discrimination in housing and healthcare access. When trans people are pushed out of jobs or denied housing, it weakens protections for every woman and feminist already facing precarious work, unpaid care, or economic violence.</p>	<p>And still today, too many of us are struggling to make ends meet. Precarious work, unaffordable housing, and limited access to adequate social protections hit hardest for those already pushed to the margins, such as migrant women disproportionately doing undervalued care work, and trans people who are excluded from stable and dignified employment.</p> <p>Austerity, pay gaps and glass ceilings are working hand in hand with anti-trans and anti-migrant laws to keep us divided instead of collectively demanding justice.</p>
Simplify language and adding a vision	It doesn't have to be this way. When we fight economic injustice together, across gender, class, and backgrounds, we strengthen social protections that benefit everyone.	<p>It doesn't have to be this way. When we fight economic injustice together, in all our diversity, we strengthen social protections and collective care that benefit everyone - from childcare and eldercare to accessible healthcare and public services.</p> <p>That's the feminist future we are fighting for: one that builds public services that respond to diverse needs, redistribute and rebalance wealth and power, leaving no one behind. By coming together and recognising our interconnected struggles, we dismantle systems that exploit and divide us, and reclaim a world where dignity, freedom, and equality are for everyone.</p>

Message 4 - Solidarity

WHAT WE CHANGED	FROM	TO
From right to protest to human rights and more inclusive language	Today, across Europe, the right to protest is under attack. Standing up for the rights of others - be that migrants or trans people - means facing brutal criminalisation.	Today, across Europe and beyond, human rights are under attack. Acting in solidarity for the rights of others often means facing criminalisation and intimidation.
Make the villain more specific, acknowledging the root of the problem	This crackdown is part of a broader anti-rights agenda, spreading fear and division between us. But history shows us that fighting side by side works against all odds.	Anti-rights groups are spreading fear to divide us, targeting trans people and other marginalised communities, to distract us from addressing the real roots of oppression: patriarchy, sexism, classism, and other interlinked systemic injustice. These systems only survive when we stay apart.
Expand the concept of solidarity, and make it more specific	Movements that stand together are the ones that change history. Every time we work to understand another person's experience, and stand in solidarity with them - including our trans, racialised or disabled feminist siblings - we stop the anti-rights movements on their tracks. Be on the right side of history. Support the trans community for a better future.	We do not need to agree on everything to show solidarity. Every time we work to understand another person's experience and support our trans, racialised, and disabled feminist siblings, we are actively challenging the systems that oppress us all. Movements that take action together are the ones that change history. We are in this together: we fight patriarchy and defend rights and freedoms for us all.

Looking forward

While this toolkit is designed to support you in developing messaging that strengthens transfeminist solidarity, the insights from this research are just a starting point – change requires collective action.

This is why we partnered with **AWID, Deutscher Frauenrat, EL*C, ENAR, Heinrich Böll Foundation, and IPPF European Network** to develop a Manifesto on transfeminist solidarity you can share and amplify. We wrote this manifesto because taking a clear stance in the current political landscape matters and can make a difference.

This Manifesto is an invitation to choose solidarity over division, to expand rather than narrow our understanding, and to defend a feminist future where everyone is free to live as themselves safely.

We encourage you to take action today: read the Manifesto, share it with your networks, or use the principles here to initiate dialogues within your organisation and across movements, and build transfeminist solidarity in your own work.

If you are committed to carrying this work forward at an organisational or collaborative level please reach out to us at TGEU to connect, exchange and build together tgeu@tgeu.org



IN THIS TOGETHER

*A Joint Manifesto for
Transfeminist Solidarity*

Feminist movements must act as a united front against threats to our fundamental freedoms, fighting together for human rights principles, justice and equality.

tgeu.
TRANS EUROPE
AND CENTRAL ASIA

awid



DEUTSCHER
FRAUENRAT

IPPF

 EUROCENTRALASIAN
LESBIAN*COMMUNITY

 ENAR
European
Network
Against
Racism

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
FEMINISM AND
GENDER DEMOCRACY
Global Unit

Across Europe, women and LGBTI people are facing unprecedented attacks as part of a global backlash that reaches far beyond the region. Exclusionary laws, hostile media campaigns, and restrictions on essential healthcare, education and housing are rapidly escalating. The consequences are devastating.

Misogyny, including transmisogyny, intersects with transphobia, racism and xenophobia in deadly ways. These overlapping systems of oppression are reinforced by racist policies that fortify borders, criminalise migration and justify surveillance of racialised communities. The result is the consolidation of illiberal, right-wing power and the erosion of protections for women and LGBTI people. Gender-based violence remains shockingly high, with one in three women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Trans people are particularly affected: in recent years, 90% of reported murders of trans people were transfemicides, targeting trans women, transfeminine people, and disproportionately affecting Black and trans women of colour, as well as trans sex workers.

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This systemic violence shows up as economic and societal violence as well. Anti-rights actors and governments continue to restrict abortion access, refuse to recognise diverse families and protect bodily autonomy. Austerity cuts deepen these inequalities, cutting essential public services and shaping who has access to safety nets, healthcare, legal protections, and the time or resources to seek gender-affirming care.

None of this is happening by chance. Anti-rights movements are becoming more organised and strategic in weakening the hard-won freedoms that women and LGBTI people have fought for. They exploit and deepen existing divisions within feminist and queer movements for political gain, framing basic human rights that ensure safety and equality for trans people as incompatible with the same human rights that guarantee women's safety and equality. This puts our rights at risk and makes it harder for our movements to fight back.

In the face of this hostile political landscape, solidarity has never been more urgent. We must act together to resist these attacks and defend human rights.

We call on feminists, in all our diversity, to act together and defend the shared principles that have always driven our collective fight: equality, human rights, and equal protections for everyone.



We, the undersigned organisations, come together to dismantle patriarchy in all its forms, through the following principles:

We take action for a solidarity-based, transfeminist future

A transfeminist future is shaped by solidarity. It expands rights, care, and justice for all: a future where trans people can live safely and openly is a future where everyone can do the same.

We stand in opposition to the authoritarian and exclusionary future that anti-gender movements seek to build – one rooted in racism, ‘traditional’ family structures and gender roles that maintain patriarchal control and roll back the rights of women, LGBTI people, and other marginalised communities. We envision a future where everyone can enjoy their freedoms regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, migration status, disability and economic status.

We firmly believe the rights of trans people are part of the feminist fight

Defending the rights of trans people is a feminist fight and a key part of the broader struggle for reproductive justice, bodily autonomy, equality and human rights. When we fight for the rights of trans people, we also acknowledge how the feminist movement has been strengthened and shaped by the leadership and labour of trans people. Historically, Black and brown trans women, in particular, have been at the forefront of feminist activism, advocating for housing and healthcare, fighting violence and advancing social justice for everyone.

We centre intersectionality

Discrimination and oppression impact our lives differently depending on our social positions, while privilege shapes who is protected from harm. An intersectional feminism recognises that capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, ableism, whorephobia, and classism reinforce one another and must be dismantled together.

We are interdependent

Our collective liberation is fundamentally and intrinsically interconnected because human rights don’t discriminate; they are universal and indivisible. We understand that to achieve this, we need to come together. Fighting for equality is not about choosing one group’s rights over another. It is about holding governments accountable for providing effective responses to pressing issues such as ending gender-based violence, ensuring access to comprehensive healthcare, freedom of movement, and securing stable, affordable housing so that everyone can live freely without fear and leave situations that limit their rights.

We unite across differences

We cannot afford to be divided and enable anti-rights movements’ efforts. We have a collective responsibility to act when anyone’s rights are under attack and to speak out for and with trans, racialised, undocumented and disabled people. Across our differences, we commit to dialogue, mutual respect, and working together to build stronger, united movements. We take active steps to stop anti-rights movements in their tracks with much-needed cross-movement conversations and spaces for knowledge and experience exchange.

We choose solidarity over neutrality

Solidarity requires commitment to action. Silence in the face of injustice reinforces harmful norms, isolates those being targeted, and signals to bystanders that violence and discriminatory behaviour are acceptable.

We build a transfeminist solidarity that will stand the test of time with concrete actions in our organisations, communities, and daily lives.

That's why we commit to:

→ **Advancing an intersectional, anti-racist and anti-oppressive feminism**, recognising that liberation for women must include trans and racialised women, migrants, and sex workers.

→ **Showing cross-movement support by defending the rights of marginalised groups under attack**, across feminist, migrant-led, anti-racist, decolonial, disability, labour and sex-worker movements, and civil society organisations.

→ **Demanding that governments and funders resource and sustain grassroots human rights organisations**, especially those led by trans people and Black and Brown people, whose frontline work is essential yet chronically underfunded.

→ **Defending each other against debates and policies that misuse 'protections'** to target and stigmatise trans people.

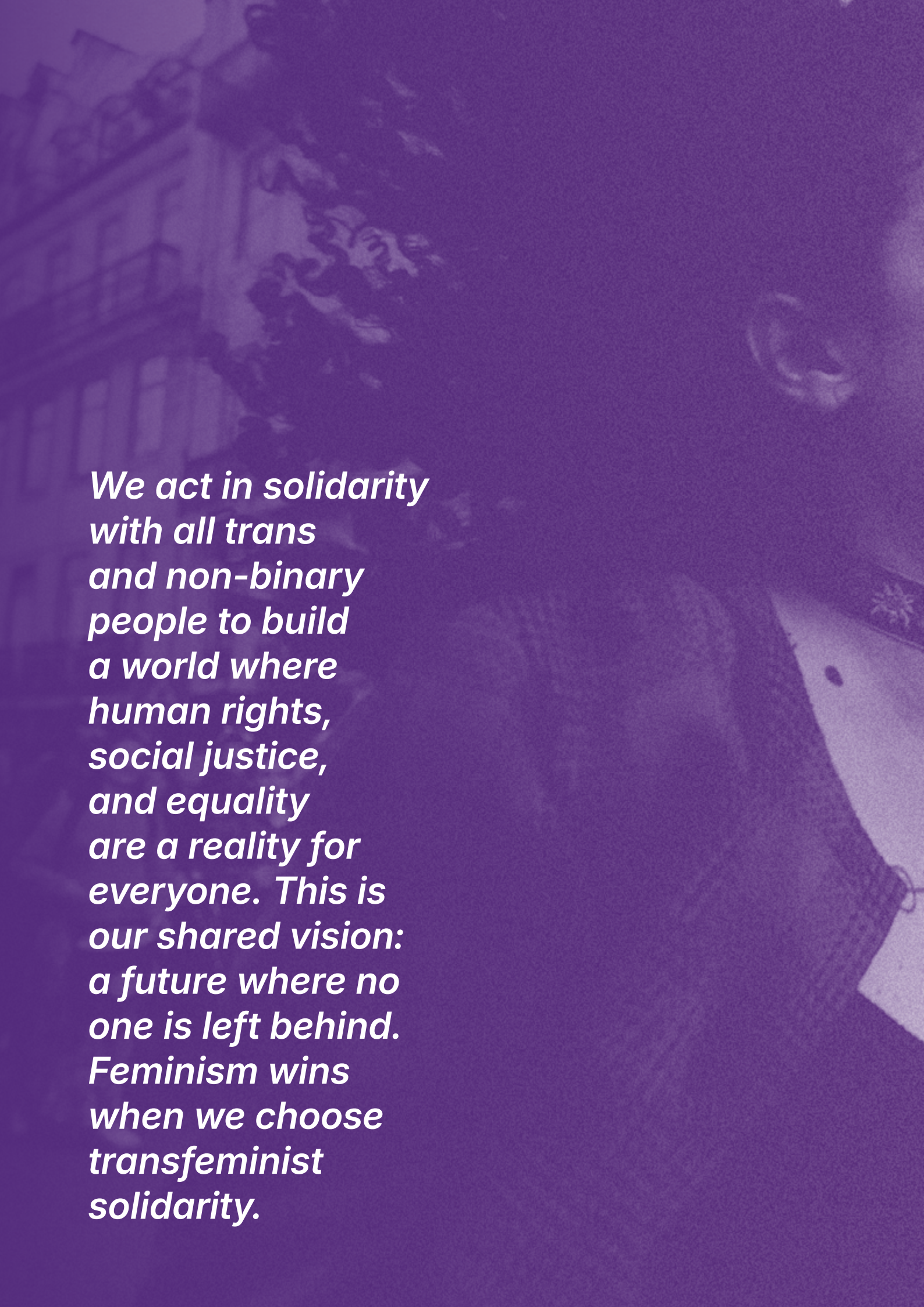
→ **Call for the right of every person to bodily autonomy**, integrity, agency and the right to identity protected by law without exception.

→ **Creating inclusive, welcoming, respectful and representative feminist spaces** within our groups.

→ **Amplifying trans, racialised, and disabled feminist voices in leadership and decision-making**, ensuring contributions to shaping agendas, priorities, and political strategies.

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TGEU — Trans Europe and Central Asia, AWID, Deutscher Frauenrat, EL*C, ENAR, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Global Unit for Feminism and Gender Democracy, IPPF European Network



*We act in solidarity
with all trans
and non-binary
people to build
a world where
human rights,
social justice,
and equality
are a reality for
everyone. This is
our shared vision:
a future where no
one is left behind.
Feminism wins
when we choose
transfeminist
solidarity.*



Annexes

ANNEX 1

Research questions and assumptions

At the start of the project, we designed a set of research questions & assumptions to guide our desk research and focus groups.

Our Core Research Questions

Our research questions focused on how values, experiences, and fears shape feminist responses to trans solidarity. We were particularly interested in what helps move people from hesitation and what kinds of messaging felt credible, relatable, and politically grounded.

Overarching Question

38 *What value-based messaging strengthens trans-feminist solidarity among hesitant, progressive cis women organising in Western Europe?*

To better understand hesitation, we explored the values, feelings, needs, and pressures shaping how feminists relate to the rights of trans people. This included looking at where uncertainty shows up, what concerns remain unspoken, and what questions people need answered to feel able to act in solidarity.

- What values, feelings, needs, and desires motivate hesitant feminists?
- What else drives hesitation or resistance?
- Where does confusion or resistance originate from, and on which topics?
- What uncertainties or doubts does our target audience hold?
- Which questions do hesitant, progressive feminists most want answered?

We also examined where shared feminist commitments could act as bridges. This part of the research focused on common struggles, shared political goals, and existing work that supports the rights of trans people, even when it is not named as such.

- What offers common ground?
- Which shared feminist values can serve as bridges?
- What common struggles (e.g., gender-based violence, bodily autonomy, economic justice, healthcare) can we rally behind together?
- What knowledge, stories, or clarifications shift toward active solidarity?

- What kind of feminist futures resonate with hesitant feminists?
- What makes it clear that the rights of trans people are essential to the feminist fight and vision?
- What else influences openness to solidarity?
- Which messengers (peers, influencers, writers, organisers, scholars) hold credibility, and in what settings or platforms?

The assumptions we tested in our Focus Groups

Alongside our research questions, we worked with a set of assumptions that shaped how we designed and tested the messaging. These assumptions reflect patterns observed in feminist organising spaces and our desk research.

Values and Motivations

Our target audience shares core feminist commitments, while holding differing views about how the rights of trans people fit within feminist organising. Our target audience may be:

- Motivated by shared feminist values such as equality, bodily autonomy, access to healthcare, economic justice, and freedom from violence, but disagree on how these values show up in practice.
- Driven by collective action, but feels hesitant when the focus is on the rights of trans people rather than women's rights.
- Responding positively to forward-looking, solution-oriented messaging that shows concrete ways to act together.

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Hesitation and Resistance Drivers

Hesitation might emerge from a mix of uncertainty, fear, and external narratives rather than from a specific fixed opposition. In particular, our target audience's hesitations may arise from:

- Confusion or misunderstandings about trans and non-binary experiences.
- Fear of being seen as 'wrong' or 'controversial' within feminist spaces, which may cause caution or silence.
- Worrying that trans people's right to self-determination poses a threat to women's rights, particularly around safety, sexual and reproductive rights, or gender-based violence.
- Having concerns that recognising the identities or perspectives of trans people means erasing their own identity.

Messaging assumptions

We also reflected on the type of messaging that might work in opening conversations, reducing resistance, and building solidarity between feminists.

- Bridge-building language that recognises different feminist histories and generations can encourage curiosity, openness, and a sense of shared struggle. In particular, referencing feminist histories where trans and cis feminists have worked together can increase legitimacy and reduce the perception that the rights of trans people conflict with women's rights. In contrast, messaging that tells cis allies what they should do differently can feel accusatory and lead to defensiveness or disengagement.
- Messaging that connects the rights of trans people to wider struggles helps clarify what feminists have in common. Our target audience often responds more strongly to concrete, everyday examples than to abstract arguments. References to healthcare, work, education, reproductive rights, and safety help make intersecting struggles more visible and relatable.
- Emphasising that learning together is part of feminist solidarity can help reduce fear of getting things wrong and support ongoing engagement.
- Framing the rights of trans people as strategic and part of a shared feminist future can resonate with a wider number of feminists, especially when it is presented as a way to strengthen feminist wins rather than competing with them.
- Naming patriarchy, racism, white supremacy, and organised anti-rights movements helps situate the rights of trans people within broader systemic injustice and oppression.

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ANNEX 2 Demographics

Focus Groups Applicants

We received 59 applications to take part in the focus groups. From this pool, 15 participants were selected to take part. Participants were selected primarily for their willingness to engage with and build transfeminist solidarity, the diversity of perspectives they expressed around concerns about the rights of trans people, and their connection to and involvement with feminist movements. As we reviewed applications, we noticed that while many cis women applied, a large proportion of applicants either provided limited detail about their positionality and concerns, or were already strong trans allies.

Age

Participants spanned a range of age groups, with the largest share aged 25–34 (6, 40%), followed by an even distribution across 18–24 and 45–54 (4, 26.7% each), and a smaller representation of participants aged 35–44 (1, 6.7%).

Gender identity

While gender identity was not the first criterion, we aimed to balance cis women, trans women, and non-binary participants to capture a variety of perspectives, roughly aiming for equal representation. A few last-minute dropouts influenced the final demographics, which skewed slightly toward trans participants. The following figures include overlapping identities for those participants who have more than one gender identity:

- **Woman:** 7 people, 43.8%
- **Trans woman:** 2 people, 12.5%
- **Non-binary / agender / gender diverse:** 6 people, 37.5%
- **Did not describe:** 1 person, 6.3%

Location

Due to funding, this research focused on feminists based in Western Europe. Participants were based in the Netherlands (3, 20%), Belgium (2, 13.3%), Italy (3, 20%), the UK (6.7%), Albania (1, 6.7%), France (1, 6.7%), Norway (1, 6.7%), Poland (1, 6.7%), Latvia (1, 6.7%) and Slovenia (1, 6.7%).

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Connection to feminist organising

Most applicants identified as being connected to organised feminist spaces. 69.5% reported being members of a feminist organisation, while 30.5% were not formally affiliated. This mix allowed us to capture perspectives from both institutional feminist spaces and those engaging with feminism in less formal or grassroots ways.

Part of a feminist organisation: 10 people, 66.7%

Not part of a feminist organisation: 5 people, 33.3%

Familiarity with trans inclusion in feminist spaces

As part of the application process, we asked participants to share information about their background and their views on trans inclusion in feminist spaces, to understand the range of positions within our target audience. The data may suggest that despite most of our group feeling familiar with trans inclusion, there are still hesitations or lack of confidence around how to navigate this topic.

- **Familiar:** 9 people, 60%
- **Somewhat familiar:** 5 people, 33.3%
- **Very familiar:** 1 people, 6.7%

ANNEX 3

Trans inclusion



During the focus groups we asked participants to share their feelings and thoughts around trans inclusion. Participants' responses clustered around several interconnected themes. A first group centred on core feminist values, such as solidarity, equality, care, bodily autonomy and self-determination. These framed trans inclusion as a fundamental feminist principle.

A second cluster points to trans inclusion as a more relational and political practice, relating it to listening, allyship, reciprocity, building together and education, suggesting that inclusion is understood as something actively practiced in everyday feminist spaces.

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A third set of responses reflects a more structural and critical lens, naming patriarchy, gender essentialism, medicalisation, tokenism, and misogyny as the power systems and feminist tensions that shape debates around trans inclusion.

Finally, a smaller but significant cluster captures the emotional and experiential dimensions of trans inclusion, pointing to the lived consequences of inclusion and exclusion, and relating it to visibility, representation, safety, isolation, acknowledgement.

This data showed us that participants view trans inclusion as both a shared feminist commitment and an ongoing political process that requires reflection, accountability, and care. However, when testing our key messaging talking about trans inclusion, messages were more resonant when they talked about the value of equality and addressed systemic oppression and lived experience instead of focusing on inclusion.

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