WHO ARE TRANS PEOPLE?
Transgender or trans people have a gender identity or gender expression that is different than the gender assigned at birth. Some trans people – but not all – take legal, social, and/or medical steps to transition, that is, express their inner gender identity. More than two thirds of trans people do not identify in the gender binary, in other words, not exclusively as female or male (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2014). This is why it is usually better to refer to “gender equality” rather than “equality between women and men”.

Gender identity refers to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. (EU External Action Service, LGBTI Guidelines, 2013)

WHAT ISSUES DO TRANS PEOPLE FACE?
In our societies a person is perceived as either “male” or “female” – two mutually exclusive categories. As a result, trans people and all those who transgress gender norms are likely to experience stigmatisation and discrimination. Violence, being declared mentally ill, and social exclusion fuel one another. Public measures that explicitly include trans people, however, can have a positive impact (FRA, 2014).

How many are there? There are no official statistics, but 1% of a representative EU-wide survey reported trans-related discrimination (Eurobarometer, 2015), indicating that up to 5 million trans people may be living in the European Union.

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Trans People
Facts

10 Facts
On Transgender Rights and Gender Equality

Photo: © Kristina Josic Photography for Zagreb Pride
Gender stereotypes reduce women and trans people of and devalue their personalities. Trans people are often expected to overtly comply with gender stereotypes, e.g. gender stereotypes permission for legal or medical transitioning might hinge on wearing a skirt/ make-up (for a trans woman), being heterosexual etc. Women, men, and all other gender identities suffer from societal taboos, thus limiting everyone’s exploration of individual and diverse gender expressions or gender roles.

**Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes reduce women and trans people often to being the punch line of a joke, over-sexualize them, and devalue their personalities. Trans people are often expected to overtly comply with gender stereotypes, e.g. permission for legal or medical transitioning might hinge on wearing a skirt/ make-up (for a trans woman), being heterosexual etc. Women, men, and all other gender identities suffer from societal taboos, thus limiting everyone’s exploration of individual and diverse gender expressions or gender roles.

**Gender-based Violence**

Gender-based violence is a burning issue for the women’s right movement and the trans movement as they fight against individuals being singled out and attacked for their gender, gender identity, or expression: one in three women and 34% of trans people in the EU have been victims of violence (FRA, 2014). Trans women are “punished” for being women (and for “giving up” being a man), while trans men might be more vulnerable to domestic and sexual abuse. Being poor and/or a young trans person further increases the risk for a violent attack. Underreporting, shame, and dependence on the attacker are commonly shared concerns for women and trans people alike. Many women and trans people who are affected by gender-based violence cannot access safe spaces, shelters, or dedicated services. Often, these structures are under-resourced and not prepared to also serve trans persons. Additionally, public awareness, statistics, law enforcement, and prevention programs are too scarce, restricted, or overstrained.

**Employment**

Did you know the average hourly wage of a trans woman drops by 20% after coming out? The structural devaluation of women’s work (gender pay gap) culminates in a gender identity pay gap for trans women (Geijtenbeek, Plug, 2015). Women and trans people encounter the glass ceiling on their way to higher ranking positions; their gender is problematised and their qualifications are overlooked. Being fired or discriminated against when pregnant and/or transitioning hits a person when they are often most vulnerable.

**Locked-up Potential**

The women’s right movement has been fighting hard to end patronisation based on gender, as well as having legal and mental capacities taken away from women. Trans people are wrongly declared as mentally ill by the World Health Organisation, similar to how ‘hysteria’ or ‘homosexuality’ diagnoses were used to pathologise and control women.

**Political Representation**

Women’s rights organisations have been calling out the barriers many women encounter when trying to progress through the political hierarchy. 29% of the EU population would not be comfortable with a trans identified head of state. One of the results of lacking political representation is that allocated financial resources remain scarce for both groups.

**Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is the root cause for both misogyny and transphobia: gender differences are used to back a system of male supremacy with women, trans, and gender non-conforming people in inferior positions. The trans community and the women’s right movements are fighting the violent consequences of disobeying gender norms and questioning predetermined gender roles.

**Human Rights for Everyone!**

Despite the women’s rights movement and the trans movement having won recognition for some key concerns, they are still far from having full access to their rights.

**Bodily Integrity and Sexual & Reproductive Rights**

While the women’s rights movement and the trans movement fight for individuals to be able to make their own decisions, their bodies remain under-served and over-policed: 23 states in Europe require a trans person to be sterilised before recognising their gender identity. Gender affirming medical treatments often depend on unwanted treatment, such as sterilisation, other surgical interventions, hormone treatment, or psychotherapy. Properly resourced family planning and safe abortion services are key in reducing pregnancy-related mortality and achieving universal access to reproductive health (World Health Organisation, 2012).

**Trans Equality is Not a Threat to Women’s Rights**

Accepting and supporting human rights for trans people does not eradicate the specific existence or experience of women and their struggle for equality. On the contrary, greater gender diversity benefits all by allowing everyone to explore and define their gender identity more individually. It is likewise important that the trans rights movement supports full equality for all women.