



Brussels, 16 June 2023

Dear President Metsola,

We are writing this letter to you, knowing your firm commitment to the values of unity and diversity of our institution.

It is with great concern that we have received information of racist and Islamophobic harassment, which took place at the European Youth Event on 9 and 10 June in Strasbourg.

This phenomenal event is a celebration of democracy, which brings together thousands of young people from all over the European Union and the world, to share and shape their ideas on Europe's future. It is a unique opportunity for 16 to 30 year olds to interact, inspire each other and exchange their views with experts, activists, influencers and decision-makers, right in the heart of European democracy.

According to the event's official website, the EYE strives to promote equality, inclusiveness and sustainability with a strong commitment to accessibility for everyone.

However, in the past years, there have been growing concerns about the behavior of far right participants at the event. Their racist and discriminatory actions have been blatant, disregarding the code of conduct of the event.

An open letter by over 148 MEPs condemned the events already in 2021, calling on the EP President Sassoli to take immediate action. The incidents were also reported in the press. President Sassoli replied to the letter, condemning the hateful treatment of attendees. He promised that an internal investigation would be initiated, and measures to identify the perpetrators and to evaluate necessary needs would be taken.

Despite this, the harassment and discrimination of participants continued again this year.

Attendees wearing Identity and Democracy Group lanyards engaged in discriminatory conduct towards other attendees of the event. In an organized manner, they filled many seats in sessions addressing topics of inclusivity and migration, with the intention to cause disorder within these sessions, and in some cases, harass participants and facilitators.

Furthermore, as participants would leave the sessions, the individuals concerned would approach participants that were identifiable as Muslims due to their headscarf, or target individuals wearing the t-shirt of FEMYSO, the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations. These individuals would engage with the participants in an intimidating manner, preventing the participants from attending other sessions.

To our knowledge, persons affected by discriminatory behaviour were mostly members of FEMYSO, the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, a pan-European network of 31 Member Organisations across 21 countries, responsible for bringing a delegation of 100 young Muslims from across Europe to the heart of our democracy.

In an escalation of the intimidation, pictures were taken without consent of other youth participants (one was known to be underage), and distributed by far right participants across online platforms.

We have received testimonies of the harassment and discriminatory behaviour, and have seen screenshots of the insulting online posts. Many participants report feeling extremely unsafe, especially when they discovered images of them appearing on tweets by the far right youth. While many had thought that European spaces were inclusive, and promoted equality, their lived experiences were one of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation.

It is essential to grant young activists safe and equal opportunities to engage with EU institutions. This atmosphere of fear and intimidation needs to be stopped.

The European Parliament is a world-class institution representing nearly 450 million people. Our Union has over 71 million young people, representing 16% of our population, who remain highly underrepresented in both national and international parliaments.

In light of the upcoming European elections in 2024, and in the aftermath of the European Year of Youth, we call on the leadership of the European Parliament to strengthen democracy and unity - not to allow hate and divide to rule our common peace project.

Therefore, we ask you, President Metsola, to:

- come forward with an open statement condemning the intimidation and discriminatory behaviour which took place at the EYE in 2023,
- produce a clear action plan on the measures which will be taken by the European Parliament to hold the islamophobic and racist participants accountable, and
- show solidarity and offer direct support to the persons affected by the violence.

Yours sincerely,



Terry REINTKE



Philippe LAMBERTS

Co-Presidents of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

Sources:

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