

#MENSTRUALMATTERSEU

112,000,000 people in Europe menstruate.
Let's not turn it into an anecdote.



#MenstrualMattersEU is a movement launched by several European associations to bring visibility to a topic often overlooked in European policy: menstruation. Through networking, sharing expertise, and taking action, we promote a society where menstrual poverty no longer exists and access to menstrual health is upheld as a fundamental right.

The weight of period poverty in Europe

In 2025, period poverty is a burden for millions of Europeans and a public health emergency .



In the 27 countries of the European Union (EU), there are nearly 112 million people who menstruate. These European figures are rarely seen brought together—because in fact, period is a topic that remains largely unspoken in the EU.

Today, **May 28, 2025**, the [International Menstrual Hygiene Day](#), we want to highlight the weight of period poverty and taboo in Europe through the publication of an exclusive survey and actions in European public spaces.



Because in 2025, more than half of **Europeans still consider menstruation a taboo topic**.

The taboo surrounding periods starts with avoiding the subject. In Europe, like elsewhere, we don't name periods—and if we do, we use euphemisms and images : Rote Welle (the red wave), Niagara Falls, le mie chose (my things), are just a few examples among more than 5000. While some of these expressions may sound funny, they are actually the first sign of a broader taboo—one that grows into hiding a pad up your sleeve, not daring to raise your hand in class to ask to use the bathroom, having to stay home during your period, or being mocked because of a visible bloodstain.

And while the "Weight of Period poverty in Europe" study confirms how deeply entrenched this taboo still is in European mindsets, it also underscores the urgent need to put periods on the political and social agenda, as the taboo has a massive impact on gender inequalities. From period poverty to the neglect of menstrual pain, Europe is far from immune to the harmful effects of misinformation and ignorance.

Today, among the 112 million people who menstruate in Europe, **42% are experiencing period poverty**.

Period poverty means lacking access to enough menstrual products, information and access to basic social and health services to live with dignity and comfort during your cycle¹. It means that nearly **50 million women and other people who menstruate in Europe** are forced to use inadequate alternatives. This number encompasses a wide range of situations that vary from country to country, and none of them should ever be ignored or dismissed—because even one person experiencing period poverty is already one too many. Rags, toilet paper, newspaper, or the overuse of menstrual products—these coping strategies can cause serious health issues and lasting psychological consequences.

Menstruation comes at a cost, and **that cost is not affordable for everyone**. Menstrual products—used every month for an average of forty years—should be treated as **essential goods**. Yet their prices are neither regulated nor reimbursed. In the past two years, due to inflation and the rising cost of living, several European organizations have reported further increases in the price of menstrual products. **50 million people facing period poverty is already far too many**. Understanding that menstruation is a human right and not a privilege, if nothing is done now, the situation is likely to worsen across the EU.

¹This definition of period poverty focuses on the economical dimension of period poverty.





Alongside this deeply unequal and harmful reality, we must add that in **just the past year, 53% of people who menstruate in Europe have repeatedly missed daily activities due to severe period pain**. We remember that pain at any stage of the menstrual cycle is not normal.

It means that **almost 60 million people** miss school, work, or sports because their periods are too painful. Imagine you're preparing for your end-of-year exams—the ones that determine whether you move up a grade. Yet every month, you're doubled over with cramps, suffering from headaches that cloud your thinking, or bleeding so heavily you faint.

Furthermore, a large number of respondents are unaware of the origin of this pain. In fact, almost 1 in 2 people who menstruate have never heard of conditions that may be related to it.

While not all period pain is caused by illness, we now know there are many conditions, diseases, and disorders that can directly impact menstruation—affecting its regularity, volume, and the intensity of pain. A lack of information, awareness, and access to menstrual health care continues to be a major barrier for millions of Europeans.

What can you do when you've always been told it's "normal" to suffer during your period? When you're denied a prescription to diagnose adenomyosis or endometriosis? When you end up in the hospital because you didn't know wearing a tampon for more than four hours could be dangerous? If the places where **women, girls, and all menstruating people live, work, and learn** continue to ignore their realities—if no research is done to relieve their pain, if they don't even dare speak up for fear or shame—**how can we believe they have the same opportunities?**

From Brussels to Naples, from Tallinn to Dublin, and all across Europe, in cities and rural areas alike, millions experience menstruation as an economic, health and social burden. The European Union's values are founded on equality, social rights, access to healthcare, and respect for citizens. It is therefore unacceptable for the EU to overlook menstrual health.

In 2025, it is time to make periods a European issue.

We are calling on MEPs, commissioners, Council of the EU representatives, and all EU institutions to take action by:

- Developing a comprehensive approach to menstrual health, across sectors, and integrating it as a key area of public health and gender equality policy in the EU
- Mapping period poverty across the EU, to help Member States respond appropriately
- Highlighting and supporting public policies that aim to directly reduce period poverty, including:
 - Reducing VAT on menstrual products , or
 - Regulating product prices , or
 - Making menstrual products freely available to all who need them , or
 - Reimbursing menstrual products through national health systems when needed
- Strengthening Member States' capacity in the field of menstrual health
- Raising awareness and spreading information about menstruation and related medical conditions Raising awareness and spreading information about education and menstrual health at least in the educational, health, administrative and social services sectors from an integrative approach to health menstruation and related medical conditions
- Funding projects in menstrual health and menstrual education

- Encouraging research into menstrual products, to eliminate toxic substances and regulate them to ensure safety social and commercial determinants of health that directly affect the menstrual cycles and life stages of women and menstruating people.
- Regulating menstrual products so they are both safe and environmentally friendly

If the lived reality of 112 million people isn't enough to convince that action is needed—what will be?

#MENSTRUALMATTERSEU #ENDPERIODPOVERTY #PERIODFRIENDLYEUROPE

