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## News Release

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GFK Healthcare study on 'Youth and Contraception' marks World Contraception Day 2017:

### **Bayer supports improved access to information for sexuality education**

- Number of unplanned pregnancies remains high globally
- Study supported by Bayer shows that adolescents want to be addressed as equals and informed digitally

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**Berlin, September 26, 2017** – The technical term in social psychology is cognitive dissonance. It refers to situations where people act against their better knowledge – by smoking, for example. Or by not using contraceptives even though they don't want to become pregnant. What causes such behavior? What role is played by the way in which knowledge is passed on?

In a new global study supported by Bayer, GFK Healthcare polled around 3,000 adolescents on their attitudes toward sexuality and contraception. The results are both encouraging and alarming at the same time. On the one hand they show evidence of improved access to information worldwide. But they also indicate that the number of teenage pregnancies remains alarmingly high.

According to WHO 41% of 208 million pregnancies worldwide are unplanned. 11% of all births are given by young women between the ages of 15 and 19. That's about 16 million teenage pregnancies a year. In the 'Youth and Contraception' study, an alarming 25.1% of respondents stated that they were so unlikely to become pregnant that they didn't need to use any method of contraception.

Much in the answers seems contradictory. On the one hand, the respondents agreed across all nationalities that the issue should be less of a taboo; yet surprisingly they also said they were able to talk about it with their partner without embarrassment. According to the study, in many countries schools and teachers are still the first to address the topic of sexuality and sex education. At the same time, the adolescents say they are not satisfied with this kind of sexuality education and prefer to get their information on the internet.

A cross-generation discussion seems to be difficult – regardless of people's respective culture and life circumstances. So successful sexuality education evidently requires not only the transfer of knowledge as such, but also an opportunity to ask questions and exchange experience.

These results confirm the importance of the World Contraception Day (WCD): This campaign consists of many projects throughout the whole year and culminates at September 26 to generate maximum publicity. The expanding use of digital channels and social-media activities offer young people an opportunity to meet and exchange information online without revealing their name and face. The subject of contraception is also shared and distributed by 'WCD ambassadors', who discuss their views worldwide – not in a patronizing way, but as conversations between equals.

"World Contraception Day has taught us that passing on knowledge not only takes time, but that the campaign itself also needs to keep on learning," Dr Michael Devoy, Chief Medical Officer, Bayer AG, said. "The campaign promotes an open dialogue and reacts with friendly, partnership-based expertise. Every adolescent who is well-informed and assumes self-determined responsibility for his or her family planning is a role model for others. The campaign gives these role models a platform."

At the same time, the campaign also targets parents and teachers, healthcare providers and, last but not least, governments and decision-makers, encouraging them to also promote the subject at the political level. The number of international partners in the WCD Coalition has risen to an impressive 14 since its launch. Bayer was there from the start.

Sexuality education and contraception belong together. Self-determined family planning with unrestricted access to contraceptives, and knowing how to protect yourself from

sexually-transmitted diseases, are essential if we are to move toward a world in which every pregnancy is a wanted pregnancy.

### **About the study**

The study on 'Youth and Contraception' examines the attitudes of young people aged between 13 and 25 years to sexuality and contraception. GfK Health surveyed a total of 3,013 young men and women from 15 countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific region, as well as Latin and North America. The answers given to 9 questions and 11 statements reflect what young people think about this issue and indicate what still needs to be done to help preventing unplanned pregnancies. The study's findings can be found on the World Contraception Day website (in English only): <https://www.your-life.com/>

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