



Brussels Resolution, 27 September 2012

MY BODY, MY RIGHTS: EQUAL SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FOR ALL WOMEN IN EUROPE

Gender equality is one of the **core principles** of our political family, as recalled in the Declaration of Principles adopted at PES Council in November 2011; “building on the achievements of the feminist movement, we continue to fight for gender equality. This means that women and men equally share work, share power, share time and share roles, both in the public and in the private realms.” Our political family has always been the frontrunner of women’s rights and of the feminist movement establishing International Women’s Day, fighting for equal civil, labour and social rights, including the achievement of sexual and reproductive rights.

The current crisis and right-wing dominated Europe has challenged and endangered the principle of gender equality, bringing a real conservative backlash to women’s rights. Conservatives have reduced women’s access to the labour market by pushing women back into traditional roles of mothers and housewives and thus threatening women’s empowerment, social economic independence as well as the democratic progress achieved through gender equality policies.

Another striking example of this conservative backlash is that of sexual and reproductive rights. While we had achieved progress in securing sexual and reproductive rights in many European countries, in the past few years, right wing governments have reversed this trend, making sexual and reproductive rights stricter or even non-existent such as in Hungary, Ireland and Spain, where sexual and reproductive rights laws have been altered, abortion been prohibited or even criminalized, family planning programmes restricted and women’s choice limited.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights - as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be reached by 2015 – go beyond the issue of health. Sexual and reproductive rights are basic human rights that contribute towards women’s empowerment in the fields of social, economic and financial development. Giving and securing women’s rights leads to a progressive development of women’s status in the society as a whole and ensures their personal and social well-being. Therefore all women should have access to safe and legal medical services and assistance, including abortion, in all member states to guarantee the principle of equal opportunity and social justice throughout Europe.

PES Women wants to maintain and protect significant progress on choice and access to information; sex education for girls and boys; medical assistance, including abortion; medical infrastructure; the promotion of prevention and contraception methods, such as female condoms and emergency contraception; and counselling tools in all EU Member States. PES Women wants to combat the still existing taboos around sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion. Therefore, we must encourage scientific secular founded policies.

PES Women cannot allow conservative backlash that marginalizes women’s rights or pushes women into vulnerable, unsafe and clandestine situations. We need to ensure women’s free choice. In 2010, PES Women ran the campaign “**My Body, My Rights**” calling for equal sexual and reproductive rights for all women, including migrant women, in Europe. We will continue campaigning under this motto to raise awareness and put pressure on governments to strengthen their progressive efforts concerning sexual and reproductive rights. We will not allow fundamental rights to be restricted due to economic crisis, religious believes or arguments regarding demographic challenges. PES Women supports the initiatives and actions taken across Europe (Spain, Ireland, Romania, UK, ...) especially on the 28 September for the ‘Global Day for Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion’ in order to safeguard and strengthen women’s free choice and access to abortion.