



ADOPTED

The Paris Declaration

“Never forgot that it wouldn’t take more than a political, economic or religious crisis for women’s rights to be jeopardised”. Simone de Beauvoir

A Progressive Vision for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights in Europe

27 October 2016

In today’s challenging context for the European Union, facing **multiple crises**, the increase of **conservatism, extremism and anti-European** rhetoric, while reflecting and shaping the future of the European Union, core-values – including women’s rights and gender equality - and universal human rights can not be compromised or set aside.

On the contrary, PES Ministers and State Secretaries for gender equality and women’s rights **call for a clear and ongoing commitment of the EU and all its member states towards women’s rights and gender equality - be it politically, economically or socially.** The EU can not afford losing its leading and exemplary role in this field at the global level and has a responsibility to work towards and achieve the UN 2030 Agenda, especially the goal number 5 on enhancing gender equality

In light of the March 2017 celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty it is essential to collectively reaffirm our strong attachment to the European Union and its core values, but also to assert the impact on and developments of women’s rights and gender equality in Europe.

Therefore, PES ministers and State Secretaries for women’s rights meeting in Paris reiterate their call to the leaders of the EU and EU Presidency to put forward clear targets and tools in achieving gender equality in the following fields.

I. Women, free and equal in Europe Women’s Political Empowerment and Representation

With European Elections only 2 years away, preparing the political landscape for parity representation and following the positive trend of the European Parliament, where women today represent 36,7% of MEPs - 1,5% more than in 2009, the EU must keep efforts up towards the **2019 elections to reach parity in all decision-making bodies and positions.**

In order to continue ensuring the priority and visibility of the Ministerial work done for gender equality at the EU level, we call on the EU Presidency to **re-introduce the Council formation of Gender Equality Ministerial meetings.**

Promoting sexual and reproductive rights



We want to see priority given to **women's and girl's lives and rights, freedom of choice including reproductive choice, liberty and dignity** over any other religious, cultural or marital status considerations. Promoting equal and affordable access to sexual rights including abortion rights does not equate to promoting abortion per se, but it **safeguards women's fundamental rights to have a free choice about their own body and health.**

In order to better understand the obstacles to the integration of sexual and reproductive health prevention and treatment programmes as part of the basic healthcare systems, **the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) should be mandated to collect, analyse and compile Europe-wide data and best practices on SRHR** and EUROSTAT to present gender sensitive statistics

Moreover, the full respect of people's sexual orientation and identity is also a condition sine qua non for social progress. We want girls, and women, to be confident with the idea that they can make their own choices for themselves regardless of their social, religious, cultural, ethnic or geographical background and that there is no task or job that is solely for women or men. Therefore, the implementation of **the EU anti-discrimination directive** is crucial as well combating stereotypes by ensuring gender dimension in employment, youth, education, social and family affairs.

Ending violence against women, including combatting human trafficking

Violence against women is still a problem of epidemic proportions in Europe especially when we know that every day 7 women across Europe die due to domestic violence. The eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking of women, forced prostitution remains our priority. As a result, we call for **a comprehensive and financially well-equipped EU strategy on Combating violence against women, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU and the strengthening of the Daphne Programme** as well as **specific chapter** on actions to protect **women and young girls into the new EU Anti-trafficking Strategy**. Since EIGE is defined as the key agency in Europe for measuring threats in the area of violence against women, EIGE should be mandated to coordinate the monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the EU Member States. In order to fulfil this and other significant monitoring tasks on gender equality issues, EIGE must also be granted adequate financial and human resources instead of facing budgetary cuts. This would especially be significant for the European Commission's priority on Combating Violence Against Women in 2017. Apart from implementation of international agreements, national legislation should be implemented and developed. Special attention needs to be given and investment to be done in education and training on violence for professors, social workers, as medical doctors, teachers and persons working in the judiciary area (lawyers, prosecutors, judges).

Ensuring protection for migrant women and refugees

Also women and girls of migrant background or women refugees are victims of multiple forms of violence and violations of human rights such child marriage, genital female

mutilation and other harmful practices. The **acknowledgment that gender based-violence constitutes grounds for asylum** would also allow the EU to better protect and assist these women. Member states should also **ensure that women's needs are met throughout the asylum process** by providing gender-specific training for staff, gender-segregated sleeping and sanitation facilities, access to gender-sensitive health and counselling services, informing women of their right to make an independent application for asylum.

In 2015 women and children made up 75% of refugees fleeing Syria, today women represent 1 million of the refugees in Europe. It is thus important to have a clear **gender dimension in international agreements such as that between the EU and Turkey**.

II- **Women for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth** **Women's Economic empowerment**

Since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, women have in particular been bearing the multiple burden of the effects of this crisis and suffering from increasing difficult and stressful working conditions; either directly through their employment or indirectly through their support systems, both facing huge cuts and a real step back in women's employment. According to the 2014 Eurostat figures, women's employment rate was at 59,6% among the EU 28, with a poverty rates of women varying between 7% (Denmark) and 30% (Romania) according to a 2015 European Parliament Analysis¹.

The implementation of austerity measures that have proven to be counter-productive, both to women's empowerment and the recovery of our economy, need to be transformed into **alternative policies that reduce the multiple gender gaps on the labour market**, be it with respect to **women's employment** across all sectors and all levels, or with respect to **equal pay**, or with respect to the **combination of private and professional life and decent jobs for both women and men**.

We therefore encourage the use of all labour skills and talent available without discrimination on any ground to achieve **the target of 75% of women** and men in employment according to the **EU2020 strategy**. This strategy must be accompanied with yearly **indicators, measures and tools** to increase the participation of women in the labour market, ensure social inclusion and gender equality and strengthen EU Social Pillar. It is crucial for the success of this strategy, not only to aim at increasing the overall per capita percentage of women on the labour market but also put forward measures that enhance the number of women in full-time jobs or part-time jobs that guarantee living wages and decent active aging.

These indicators should be part of the **EU's Multi Annual Framework** in order to guarantee a gender mainstreaming and the earmarking of budgetary commitments (i.e. gender budgeting approach) to support policies that enhance women's employment and promote their skills and talents. While recognizing the national competence in this area, action at EU level is necessary.

Encouraging women and define specific policies to increase women in certain under-represented sectors such as **research, development and IT**, especially in an ever growing

¹ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519193/IPOL_STU\(2015\)519193_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519193/IPOL_STU(2015)519193_EN.pdf)



digitalised world, are essential. Also women's role and participation in the **green economy** sector should be boasted.

We have been calling for all Member States with a pay gap over 10%, on a **2% decrease of the pay gap between women and men** per member state per year per age group. In order to guarantee such a decrease and work towards closing other gaps between women and men, Europe should deliver on closing the gender pay gap, including the pension gap, by considering possibilities such as introducing **European Audits and dissuasive measures**.

Be it in **politics or in company boards**, we have been a strong advocate of **quotas** as a non-exhaustive tool to increase of women's representation. Parity is not only a democratic issue but constitutes an important tool for economic performance. Thus giving women the possibility to participate at all levels of economic and business life should be encouraged. We will continue calling for at least **40 % of women on (executive and non-executive) company boards**. Since women constitute half of the population in Europe, our long-term goal for women in leading positions – in both private and public sector – remains parity.

Work-life Balance

The lack of opportunities for families to balance professional and private life weighs down on women's participation in the labour market, in leading positions, in science and research and on women's position in the family. It is important to fight stereotypes that enhance traditional roles and put barriers in achieving this.

We welcome the Commission's proposal for a new road map: "**New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families**". This roadmap proposes new legislative measures (generalisation of the right to flexible working arrangements, statutory parental leave, encouraging men to take parental leave, improving the directive on maternity leave) and non-legislative measures (developing benchmarks regarding participation of women in the labour market, regular public reporting of results regarding the European semester, earmarking of spending for specific European financial tools such as the European Social Fund, awareness campaigns).

The modification of EU legislation must at the same time encourage a better sharing of parental and care responsibilities, while promoting the access of women to the labour market. In regards to maternal leave, this should be considered within a comprehensive childcare policy and the sharing of care responsibilities between the two parents and/or partners. In this sense, paternity leave, parental leave open to both parents or even access to different forms of childcare constitute favourable solutions towards increased equality between women and men, as well as a better balance between work and family life. Therefore also call on an **evaluation of the Barcelona Targets** should be put forward as soon as possible.

Finally, we call on the EU Presidency and Head of States to take this gender dimension into consideration in their discussion on the future of Europe following the Bratislava Declaration of 16 September.