



www.pes.eu/pes-women

#power2women

11 June 2015

ADOPTED RESOLUTION

Power to Women: Feminist Europe of 21st century

2015 marks an important year for gender equality and women's rights, be it in the **European Union** or at **Global level**, coinciding also with the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action

Despite significant progress in women's rights since the creation of the EU, greater labour market participation, representation in decision-making structures, and economic and social independence, as well as the inclusion and cooperation with new and young feminist generations and movements, the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and the guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights remain key challenges. **PES Women thus call on a clear comprehensive EU Gender Equality Strategy.**

The **EU also dedicates 2015's European Year to Development**, which coincides with the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its follow-up (SDGs). Women's rights and Gender Equality are a corner stone of development and thus calling for gender equality and women's rights as a **'stand-alone goal'** is essential but not sufficient. As the Committee on the Status of Women highlights, not one single country has achieved gender equality yet. The 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action thus underlines that also at global level it is time for action, implementation and delivery.

PES Women thus highlights 2015 under the motto 'Power to Women' its vision for women's rights and gender equality for the next 20 years, be it in Europe or around the world. While fostering the work done by the feminist social-democratic movement, PES Women wants - together with the **younger and new feminist generation and movements** – to look forward and complete the list of things to do so that Europe can increase women's representation, participation, employment, economic and social independence, decrease all forms of violence against women and guarantee sexual and reproductive rights.

1. EU Gender Equality in the EU

1.1 Social Empowerment

Despite the efforts in combating stereotypes, we still today witness strong traditional roles and images given, associated and encouraged to women, men, girls and boys be it in education, media, the work place, family responsibilities, politics, etc. PES Women is committed to making sure that the society values equally girls and boys from an early age, through education on gender equality at school and in businesses and administration and through campaigns such as the UN HeForShe campaign. The full respect of people's sexual orientation 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, that there is no task or job that is solely for women or solely for men, and that this is worth fighting for; That the image of women and men projected and the places given in media is equal, fair and free of sexualisation and objectification. That all people are free to live and express their gender identity without fearing to be discriminated against.



www.pes.eu/pes-women

#power2women

PES Women therefore wants to see **the EU anti-discrimination directive** to be adopted and implemented. PES Women will also continue its cooperation with Rainbow Rose to include lesbian, bisexual and transgender in its work on equality and against stereotypes.

1.2 Women's Economic empowerment

Since 2008, PES Women has been drawing attention to the "silent crisis" for women; the financial and economic crisis that has affected in particular women's employment and support systems, which enable them guarantee their economic empowerment. Although this 'silent' invisible crisis is slowly being recognized in the public debate, the implementation of austerity measures that are counter-productive, both to women's empowerment and the recovery of our economy need to be transformed into **alternative policies that reduce the gender gap on the labour market**, be it with respect to **women's employment** across all sectors and all levels, be it with respect to **equal pay** and with respect to **combine private and professional life and decent jobs for both women and men**. PES Women therefore encourages the use of all labour skills and talent available to achieve **the target of 75% of women and men's employment** according to EU2020 strategy are accompanied with yearly **indicators, measures and tools** to facilitate women's access on the labour market. But as long as women's skills and talents are not equally valued, women's employment is difficult to be encouraged. Therefore, PES Women has been calling on a **2% decrease of the pay gap between women and 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 by introducing **European Audits and dissuasive sanctions**. Closing the gender pay gap at an early (st)age allows to decrease the poverty rate for all women, particularly for elderly women. The pension gap, on average in Europe reaches almost 40%, pushing elderly women more and more to the margin of society, into poverty and depending of others. Following the work done with the Commission on reducing the pension gap, PES Women will continue putting pressure in order to reduce this gap. Apart from valuing equally women and men's employment, better and equal rights with respect to **parental leave, with a fair maternity and paternity leave dimension**, and access to affordable and good quality **childcare** and elderly care will increasing women's employment and participation on the labour market.

1.3 Women's empowerment in decision-making

Be it in **politics or in company boards**, PES Women has always been a strong advocate of **quotas** as a non-exhaustive tool to increase of women's representation. Thanks to the work of PES Women within the PES, its member parties, the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee and the EU institutions, progress has been made regarding the political inclusion of women in politics. In the European Parliament there are now 36,7% women which is 1,5% more than in 2009. Our own political family is represented by 45% of women, which is 5% more than in 2009 and we see socio-democratic women holding two strong positions in the new European Commission (the Regional Policy and the High Representative for External Action). We must keep our efforts up towards the **2019 elections to reach parity and to remain the frontrunners on this issue**.

Women's representation is not only a democratic issue but an issue of using all potential of the labour market. Thus giving women the possibility to participate at all levels of economic and business life should be encouraged through specific measures such as the quota for women on boards. PES Women will continue calling on **40 % of women in (executive and non-executive) company boards**.



www.pes.eu/pes-women

#power2women

Women in decision-making, be it political or economic, contribute to democratic and diverse approach as well as the role models for younger generations to come. PES Women has always tried to aspire and be the voice of all people in society.

1.4 Combating Violence Against Women

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. PES Women has been calling for the eradication of all forms of violence against women, including trafficking of women and forced prostitution. Sexism in ordinary daily life as well as trafficking reducing women to the level of objects used and abused should be addressed through a comprehensive Framework Strategy on Combating violence against women. This is why PES Women has been calling for a **European Year on Combating Violence, for a comprehensive EU strategy and on the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.**

1.5 My Body My Rights

Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights remain high on our agenda under the motto 'My Body My Rights'. PES Women has been and will continue fighting the conservative backlash wherever the right of women to make their own choice for their own body is questioned or denied in and outside Europe. Therefore PES Women wants to see **priority given to women'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 to their own body and health. PES Women recalls the need for significant progress on choice and equal affordable access to **information; comprehensive sexual education** for girls and boys; **medical assistance**, including abortion; **medical infrastructure**; recruitment and **training of medical personal**; the promotion of **prevention and contraception** methods, such as female condoms and emergency contraception; and counseling tools in all EU Member States. PES Women will keep demanding a commitment to combat the still existing taboos around sexual and reproductive rights and legal gender recognition, as well as sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

2. Power to Women around the World

2.1 Beijing Platform for Action: 20 years and beyond

While we celebrate 20 years of the Beijing Action for Platform, we know that not a single country has achieved gender equality yet. Before moving towards a 5th world women's conference, we need to ensure that progress is achieved in the current 12 critical areas of concern. To that end, PES Women reiterates the **need to reclaim ownership of gender equality, shift from just rights to women to power to women** and the need to create a framework across the world that allows women's economic, political and social empowerment. PES Women's priority is to keep pressure on including and defending Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

As a political movement, we need to **reconnect** with the **younger generations** and with **civil society** and build alliances and platforms with new and upcoming women's rights organizations to reflect the demands, concerns and needs of today's changing society. As political movement



www.pes.eu/pes-women

#power2women

we need to reconnect with women from different regions, building bridges and partnerships between women from the North and the South, with migrating women and fight inequalities and ensure that European Migration Policies include a strong gender and feminist perspective to tackle in particular the obstacles women face.

The work of UN Women and the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) is thus crucial and indispensable and cannot be done without the adequate financial investment on women's rights and gender equality. Also at global level, gender budgeting can lead towards more visible and effective results towards achieving gender equality.

2.2 Sustainable Development Goals: going beyond UN's Stand-Alone Goal

In 2015 the Millennium Development Goals achieve their deadline and while preparing the Sustainable Development Goals, PES Women welcomes the EU and UN Women's efforts in ensuring that Gender Equality **will remain a Stand-Alone Goal, but wants a more ambitious approach**, one addresses women's rights and freedom globally as a matter of justice quintessential to the world development and beneficial to everyone. PES Women calls for this same approach in the European Development Strategy and calls on the EU and its member states to **also financially invest in this priority and ensure that sexual and reproductive rights** are included in this strategy.

2.3 Gender Equality in EU External Policies

PES Women has been engaged on supporting women around the world. **Women are key actors** of change, be it in emerging democracy, transition countries or areas of conflict. Far too often we see women being frontrunners during revolutions and change but not being included in transition processes and decision-making. This is why **PES Women will continue supporting women's projects, networks and partners in the MENA region** to empower them economically, socially and politically.

PES Women is also continuously calling for the implementation of UN Security Council **Resolution 1325 (SCR1325) to include women in peace and security processes at all levels but also to better protect women victims in conflict areas**. In the past year through several ongoing conflicts around the world, rape and (sexual) violence against women and children have been increasingly used as a weapon of war. While SCR 1325 should ensure women have **equal access and protection by laws of war**, women who are victims of sexual violence or rape in need of urgent medical do not receive the adequate and necessary medical assistance including access to **safe and 'legal' abortion under international humanitarian law**. PES Women therefore calls for the recognition of sexual violence, including rape, as an illegal weapon of war and for international aid and law to allow adequate health care, including abortion, for women victims in conflict areas.

Moreover, women's rights and **gender equality should be a prerequisite of any international agreements** and relations between the EU and other regions of the worlds like for the ongoing EU Trade agreements. PES Women urges **systematic gender impact assessments** in these contexts.