



**ADOPTED STRATEGY PROPOSAL
By PES Women Executive**

European Women's Rights Charter

14 April 2010

Strategy proposal

Taking into consideration

- The existing EU legislation and actions on women's rights and gender equality and the still existing inequalities between women and men and between women across Europe, a visionary progressive approach for gender equality in Europe is essential through a tangible European Women's Rights Charter as stated here after.
- The commitment of the European Commission to enhance the situation of equality between women and men in Europe.
- The European Commission's declaration on the 15th anniversary celebration of the Beijing Platform.
- The Women's Rights Committee intention to request further research on the European Women's Rights Charter and work on a stronger Charter.
- The ongoing negotiations of the Europe 2020 Strategy for green, smart and inclusive growth.
- The upcoming European Strategy on Gender Equality.
- The existing CEDAW convention and its optional protocol.
- The original proposed goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

We propose to

- Have an (online) consultation in the framework of the PES initiative "Progressive Societies"
- Continue the work done by the PES Women Working Group on our vision of a European Women's Right Charter in cooperation with our partners linked to the above-mentioned PES initiative
- Request an own-initiative report in the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee calling on the European Commission to re-open the issue of the Charter and do an in depth study



- Organise for one of the upcoming International Women's Day a call for action on the European Women's Rights Charter, linked to ongoing work.
- Discuss this with all PES Leaders
- Include reference of the European Women's Rights Charter in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the upcoming European Strategy on Gender Equality.

Background note

The PES and PES Women recognise the progress made in the past fifty years in the field of gender equality, but also acknowledge ongoing inequalities, discrimination and shortcomings when it comes to women's rights across Europe. This is why for the European Elections 2009, the PES made a strong commitment to the European citizens with respect to gender equality by devoting the fourth Manifesto chapter to "Championing gender equality in Europe". Among the nine manifesto proposals in this chapter, the PES put forward the idea of a European Women's Right Charter to guarantee the same rights for all women across Europe in all fields and aspects of life.

*"We propose to create a European Women's Rights Charter, to improve women's rights and opportunities and to promote mechanisms to achieve gender equality in all aspects of social, economic and political life."*¹

The PES Manifesto proposals were not merely loose thoughts for an election programme, but a long term commitment to European citizens. Therefore, straight after the European Elections, the Socialist family reiterated their 7 step demands formulated in the Toulouse Declaration² for the first hundred days following the European elections to fight the recession and mass unemployment and to ensure social security.

Moreover, following the hearing of President José Manuel Barroso based on his five year programme sent to the European Parliament in his bid to be re-elected Commission President for a second term and the demands put forward by social democrats including the creation a European Women's Rights Charter, Mr Barroso welcomed and committed himself to this last-mentioned proposal. As recent as the January 2010 Commissioners' hearing, Commission Designate Ms Viviane Reding, responsible for Women's Rights, expressed her intention to closely cooperate with Mr Barroso on this Charter, which should underline and highlight the European values on gender equality.

At the 2009 Prague Congress, the PES reiterated its commitment to gender equality, giving a clear mandate on women's rights issues, on redefining feminism and on presenting a clear PES and PES women position on the European Women's Rights Charter. As a first exchange of views, PES Women organized its 2009 Annual Conference on Feminism in the 21st Century a deep internal reflection on today's feminism looking at social justice, social welfare and solidarity, equality between women and men and human rights, including the urgent need to address violence against women and trafficking of women.

¹ http://elections2009.pes.org/files/u1/ManifestoBook_EN_Online.pdf

² Political Declaration adopted on 24th April 2009, Toulouse, People first: a New Direction for Europe, http://www.pes.org/files/u1/Adopted_Political_Declaration240409.pdf



On 8 March 2010, for International Women's Day and for the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, the European Commission presented a declaration on the European Women's Rights Charter underlining the work achieved by the European Union in promoting and achieving gender equality and reiterating its commitment on continuing their work in 5 different areas: equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, equality in decision making, dignity, integrity and end to gender based violence and gender equality beyond the union. The presentation of this document, without the consultation of the European Parliament, lacks a visionary and progressive perspective for women's rights and gender equality for the coming five years.

Despite the above-mentioned European Commission Paper, PES Women through the Working Group, bringing together a core group of PES Women Members and NGOs such as the European Women's Lobby, European Women Scientists (ATGender), experts (academics, FEPS,...) and other close partners (ETUC, ECOSY, Committee of the Regions PES Group, S&D Group...) have been discussing and exchanging ideas on the content and the framework for such Charter.

Framework

Both, the Working Group discussion as well as the results of the Annual Conference debate and exchange of views among PES Women members concluded that the framework for a European Women's Rights should be carried by a platform that is visible, effective, target-driven and has a sufficient budget to ensure that the content is implemented and respected in all Members States. Europe cannot afford having another symbolic non-binding agreement with no impact on the development and implementation of gender equality proposals, such as the declaration presented by the European Commission on 8 March in the context of the Beijing +15 celebrations. Although an adequate platform does not exist at present, several alternative options could be envisaged such as the post-Lisbon Strategy platform with concrete targets and follow-up/implementation monitoring system.

The Charter should avoid any overlapping or duplication of existing systems, mechanisms or tools, be it at European or at International level. In other words, it should not replace the Gender Pact nor the Gender Roadmap follow-up, nor should it undermine existing international conventions such as CEDAW³. Gender equality can only be achieved with accompanying legislation, an implementation of rules, incentives and monitoring mechanisms.

Content

The Charter should take as starting point, and thus non-negotiable basis, four existing texts; Convention on the Elimination against all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the European Charter for Fundamental Rights (ECFR), the Gender Roadmap and the PES Manifesto Text. The CEDAW international convention should be part of the Charter as a commitment of the EU and all its member states to ratify and implement this international convention. The ECFR, since the full ratification and thus implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, is the legal basis on which each European Citizen can fall back on, to

³ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>



claim and defends its rights. The Gender Roadmap (and its follow-up) would give thus each Member State indications on the different policy fields gender equality needs to be improved. The PES Manifesto proposals would give the Charter the PES finger print on the following issues. Besides, all issues should have clear measurable targets with specific deadlines.

Social Affairs

Introduction of **improved parental leave** rights for men and women across Europe up to the highest standards in Europe. Support both parents so that they can **balance their caring responsibilities with their professional responsibilities**. To support this goal, we propose that Member States achieve the existing EU target of 33% child care coverage for 0-3 year olds and 90% coverage for children from 3-school age, and adopt and enhance complementary EU qualitative targets for child care.

Tackle the issue of the aging population, especially with respect to the situation of **elderly women**.

Harmonise policies and rights for women on divorce throughout the EU.

Enhance migration and integration policies in respect of women's rights and the importance of women's role in this global tendency.

Equal representation and economic independence

Ensure equal **political representation of women and men in all decision-making** bodies at all levels of governance. Introduce quotas in the political sphere as well as in managerial boards, based on the Norwegian model, in order to enhance overall women's representation, participation in leadership bodies, influencing policy-making and improve women's socio-economic independence. Parity should be an obligatory/mandatory part of the European Commission composition process, based on the Belgian Senate proposal.

Measures encourage and supporting **women entrepreneurs, scientists and researchers** to broaden their opportunities. Have better representation of women not only in political decision-making bodies but also in entrepreneurial field, financial systems,

...

Introducing clear measures and precise targets in order to ensure **closing the gender pay gap** -including the pension gap-, which is vital to improve living standards, fight poverty and increase economic growth.

Gender mainstream the Europe 2020 Strategy in order to improve equal representation and participation on the labour market, break the labour market segregation patterns, glass ceiling effect and structural hierarchies and ensure women in top positions through specific quotas on managerial board compositions. Have a gender impact assessment of the current socio-economic crisis as well of an in depth study on the gender pay gap.

Women and health

Ensuring and promoting women's rights in all **health issue** including sexual and reproductive health rights throughout the European Union, healthcare issues (such as free access to medical treatments for gender specific issues) and labour health issues. In the context of SRHR, the ongoing right-wing debate on the right of the foetus should be carefully examined.

Gender-based violence

Proposing to step up European efforts to **eradicate human trafficking and sexual exploitation** through closer judicial and police cooperation.



Encouraging and supporting the EU and its Member States in their efforts **to stop domestic and gender-specific violence**, including that perpetrated against women of ethnic minorities, through all appropriate EU programmes and funds.

Continue building on the proposal of the Spanish Presidency of creating an Observatory against violence and introducing a European Help line for women victims.

When dealing with combating violence and trafficking, children's rights and situation should also be addressed.

Women and education

Encourage better opportunities for **women in education** by broadening and diversifying education opportunities for women, fighting stereotypes in female/male dominated studies as well as eliminating traditional role models in school curricula.

Adapting language use to eliminate linguistic gender influenced expressions. Education should be broadened, fight stereotypes in models and school curricula.

Improving access to education by combating structural and electronic illiteracy affecting in particular women of all backgrounds

Women's rights in EU external relations

Ensure that our work also extends to women outside the EU and focus on **women in development** while taking into consideration the new structure of the UN for gender equality bodies.

Enhance the work, policies and assistances for women in conflict areas by underlining the aspect of international solidarity.

Enhance the relation between development policy and trade, migration, peace and security policy with a specific gender dimension.

