



ADOPTED

Declaration of PES Ministers for gender equality

'Accelerating gender equality for a truly feminist and equal Europe'

8 July 2020

2020 was supposed to be the year to spotlight women's achievements by marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and launching the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. But instead of pushing the gender equality agenda further, the world was struck by **the COVID-19 pandemic, which has entrenched injustice and inequality across our society**. Persisting gender inequalities have become even more apparent during the pandemic: in particular the unequal division of paid and unpaid care work between men and women. Additionally, wages for paid care work are often lower than in other professions. We are seeing the danger of an increased gender bias, and enforced traditional gender roles assigning many women to be the main carers for households, families and communities. The pandemic is also causing women additional distress due to the heavy mental load, unsafe working and living conditions, as well as economic precarity.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, we are not only at risk of backsliding significantly on women's and minority rights, but we are seeing gender equality issues being side-lined as a second degree concern by conservative, extremist, anti-European and anti-democratic forces. **This crisis has proven without doubt that women and their work are vital to the functioning of our system and social cohesion**. They are on the frontline of the crisis as essential service workers and unpaid carers however still underrepresented in decision-making. The increased visibility of care and service professions during the pandemic is a momentum that we have make use of to enhance the status of those professions.

We will not allow conservatives and right-wing forces to fail women and girls any longer. On the contrary, **we, the PES Ministers for gender equality and women's rights, are calling for a clear and ongoing commitment by the EU and all its member states to strengthen women's rights and gender equality - politically, economically or socially**. This is the moment to put gender equality and women's rights at the heart of the EU's recovery strategy and to deliver bold and ambitious policies. Improving gender equality will lead to greater economic growth, diversity and justice and will thus benefit society as a whole. Overcoming this pandemic will only be possible if the role of women in this fight and in general, beyond this crisis, is properly recognised and if the disproportionate burden they are carrying is addressed accordingly. As we recover we must seize the opportunity to progressively transform Europe by implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights and a progressive gender equality agenda, which is essential for building a healthy, just, sustainable and feminist future.

The work of the European institutions is crucial in this process. While the European Parliament and the European Commission have enshrined gender equality as a key portfolio and priority, we still do not have a formal Council configuration for gender equality, where governments can come together to coordinate their efforts at the EU-level. Therefore, **we, the PES Ministers**



for gender equality and women's rights, call on the EU leaders to create a formal Council Configuration for Gender Equality in order to strengthen progress on true gender equality not just on paper.

We call for a joint effort at the European level to foster gender perspectives and ensure gender equality in practice.

We will continue fighting against all forms of gender-based violence and for women and children in all their diversity to live free from any form of discrimination. This includes the fight against cyber violence, sexism and hate speech in the internet.

We will lobby for a European feminist economy, based on equality, intersectionality, inclusivity, diversity, solidarity, dignity, justice, human rights, wellbeing and sustainability. This means fighting for an inclusive labour market, which promotes women's economic independence, work-life balance, equal pay, decent wages and working conditions.

We want to enhance the status of care professions especially with regard to the working conditions, career options and fair pay.

We need a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid care work between women and men.

We fight for an end to gender stereotypes and toxic gender roles.

We want women to be represented and participate in political and economic decision-making on an equal footing with men.

We call for gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting to be the norm in policy-making at all levels.

We fight for all women to live and love freely, with full autonomy over their bodies and access to sexual and reproductive health care and rights, taking into consideration the national realities.

We, the PES Ministers for gender equality and women's rights, have the political will. We are asking the EU leaders to take their responsibility and develop the necessary institutional infrastructure to progress on gender equality.

SIGNATURES:

Franziska Giffey, Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

Mariana Vieira da Silva, Minister of State for the Presidency, Portugal

Taina Bofferding, Minister for Equality between women and men, Luxembourg

Christie Morreale, Regional Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Equal Opportunity, Women's rights and Health, Wallonia Belgium

Rosianne Cutajar, Junior Minister for Equality and Reforms, Malta