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Time to Smash the Gender Backlash

Four Greens/EFA demands for a Feminist Europe

The majority of women continue to suffer discrimination in the EU. European women earn 16% less than men and have pensions that are 36% lower. Access to stable employment is still more difficult for women than for men and women continue to be trapped in low-paid careers, which pose a greater risk of falling into poverty. This situation is even worse if you are not only a woman, but also a migrant, have a disability, are LGTBI* or from a religiously or ethnically diverse background.

In Europe, one in three women have been the victim of sexual violence and 55% (more than 130 million women) have been sexually harassed. Women are still under-represented at the political level and left out from the major decision-making positions in the EU institutions: only one third of the EU commissioners are women and only 36% of members of the European Parliament are women. There has never been a female president of the European Commission and only two women (and 28 men) have ever been president of the European Parliament.

On top of that, we are now also witnessing a backlash in terms of women's rights and gender equality. If the last few years have shown us anything, it is that equal rights for women have become a prime battleground for right-wing populists and neo-conservatives all over Europe. Powerful men such as Trump, Bolsonaro, Putin, Erdogan or Orban, among others, have also picked up these anti-gender equality discourses. Against this backdrop, we, the Greens/EFA, declare ourselves as proudly feminist as ever and will continue working to bring the feminist mobilisations and demands rising up from the streets to the European institutions.

Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

“Those who control people's reproductive lives are in control of these people's lives entirely”

Threats to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are resurgent in many parts of Europe: from the Polish government's attempt to introduce a bill in 2017 to restrict abortion even further in the country, to city councillors in Verona who have declared their city as “pro-life”.

- Greens/EFA will continue **denouncing any attack or backlash attempt on women's self-determination** in Europe and abroad. We will keep on supporting all the feminist activists battling on the ground to ensure their access to this fundamental right.

Eradicating gender-based violence

"I don't want to be brave on the street, I want to be free"

Gender-based violence continues to be one of the most common breaches of fundamental rights inside the European Union. We must prioritise the construction of a post #Metoo society, challenge the existing power relations that perpetuate this violence and empower the silenced voices.

- We demand an **EU directive against gender-based violence** to ensure all EU countries have the same definitions of all forms of violence and provide the same information, access to and provision of shelter, support services, rights, and protection for victims.
- We will push for the **EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention**, which is the first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. We cannot allow neo-conservative and fundamentalist groups with hate and anti-feminist campaigns to hijack this far-reaching convention.

Equal earners - equal carers

"Feminism is the radical notion that women are equal human beings"

Our vision for the future is to build a society where men and women become equal earners and equal carers. Only if men take the same share of responsibility as women in caring for family members, will we be able to eliminate most of the discrimination women face in the labour market and in private spheres.

- We advocate for ambitious and binding measures to **ensure pay transparency**. It is time that both public institutions and private companies take responsibility for eradicating the gender pay gap in their own workplace.
- We will continue working to ensure that all **work-life balance policies** focus on encouraging men to take more responsibilities for caregiving and to promote gender equality. We need to put **care work at the centre of our economies** and recognise it as an essential element for the wellbeing and functioning of our societies.

More women make Europe stronger

"If you are not at the table, you are on the menu."

The presence of women in decision-making bodies is fundamental to ensure that institutions are a fair and democratic representation of our society. Attaining full parity and diverse representation is a way of making all women visible and a benefit to our entire society, which will enjoy more inclusive institutions, a cultural shift in decision-making processes and a pool of talent overlooked until now.

- We call for **gender balance in the European Commission**, a vice-presidency of the European Commission dedicated to women's rights and gender equality, and gender parity in all the main positions of power in all EU institutions, bodies and agencies.
- We call for the final adoption of the **Women on Boards Directive** to set a minimum quota of 40% women on private and public company boards.

We are facing crucial times in the fight for gender equality. In order to smash the gender backlash we need to resist the attacks, but also to keep on advancing. Now is the time to show our ambition and desire to build equal societies. We still have a long way to go, but we know that together we will be stronger. **The time has come to advance towards a Feminist Europe.**

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