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Empowering women: promoting access to contraception in Europe

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Petra BAYR and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

European women face severe inequalities in the area of reproductive rights. Low-income women are about five times as likely as affluent ones to have an unintended birth. Studies show that women with higher incomes are much more successful in avoiding unintended pregnancies, also thanks to easier access to contraception and information on it. This further deepens the divides in income, family stability, and child outcomes. There is a pressing need for policies to help close this inequality gap.

According to the Contraception Atlas published by the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) in 2018, the usage of contraception in Europe is lower than in both North America and the Latin America/Caribbean region. Over 43% of pregnancies in Europe are unplanned.

Only three European countries, namely Belgium, France and the United Kingdom offer general reimbursement schemes for contraception and provide information which is widely-available thanks to government-supported websites. Considering the burden that unintended pregnancies place on States and the relatively small cost of contraception reimbursement schemes, it is surprising that just a handful of States provide these services.

This also means that most Council of Europe member States are far from reaching United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and its specific target 5.6 “Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights”.

Ensuring the respect of reproductive rights should be a key concern of governments as it is instrumental in empowering women and therefore in countering gender-based discrimination and promoting equality of all citizens. It is time for the Parliamentary Assembly to analyse the policies and good practices to define and promote the necessary measures to ensure access to reproductive health and rights for all women, irrespective of their income, education or social status.

Signed (see overleaf)



Signed¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
FDG: Free Democrats Group
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group