

Dear MEP,

Congratulations to your election to the European Parliament.

We would like to take the opportunity to remind you that the women of Europe, and in the world, are setting their hopes to politicians who are ready to secure their rights and strengthen women's positions in society, and urge you to commit yourself to this cause.

We are eight organizations promoting sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to safe and legal abortions. WHO estimates that 68 000 women die every year from unsafe abortions due to restrictive laws, or from not being able to access safe abortions where legal. This is an ongoing disaster that affects women all over the world that needs to be ended. Although unsafe abortion leads to very few maternal deaths in Europe, women still face serious barriers to accessing abortion which could lead to maternal morbidity.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stated in a 2008 resolution (*Access to safe and legal abortion in Europe*, Resolution 1607, 2008) that **the decision on whether or not to have an abortion should be a matter for the woman concerned, and that she should have the means of exercising this right in an effective way**. We want this right to be implemented in all member states of the European Union as well as in all other countries in the world. For that we need your help.

When a state prevents women and girls to make their own decisions concerning their lives and bodies it violates their human rights. We therefore urge you, in your role as a Member of the European Parliament, to get involved in this pressing matter to end the suffering of thousands of women in Europe.

Even though many aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights within the European Union are matters for Member States we believe that it is possible to work on these issues in the European Parliament. One important opportunity for MEPs to put sexual and reproductive health and rights on the Parliament agenda will present itself during the appointment process of the European Commission. When the nominees to the European Commission are to be interviewed by the European Parliament, we encourage you to ask them about their views on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including

abortion. We believe that it is of utmost importance for the EU that all Commissioners, regardless of their proposed area of responsibility, take a stand for women's rights and gender equality.

Becoming an active member of parliamentary committees such as the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality or the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, is another way to play an active part in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. In particular, we urge you to consider these issues when electing chairpersons of the parliamentary committees since they will play a key role in shaping the agenda of the European Parliament in the coming years.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments. We look forward to following your work in the European Parliament and offer our support for advancing these issues within the Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Niall Behan, Chief Executive Officer, the Irish Family Planning Association

Jon O'Brien, President, Catholics for Choice.

Ann Furedi, Chief Executive, BPAS (formerly British Pregnancy Advisory Service)

Marie Pierre Martinet, Executive Director, Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial (MFPF)

Wanda Nowicka, President Federation for Women and Family Planning (FEDERA) and ASTRA Secretariat, Poland

Åsa Regnér, Secretary General, The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)

Isabel Serrano, President, the Spanish Federation of Family Planning Association (FPFE)

Christina Zampas, Senior Regional Manager and Legal Adviser for Europe, Center for Reproductive Rights