

European Parliament urges for the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU for all

On Thursday 24 June 2021 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health. With 378 votes in favour, 255 against and 42 abstentions, the plenary condemned the backslides that several countries are witnessing in the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and urged the European Union to support the Member States to their fulfillment as an essential element of human dignity.

Beyond addressing key issues such as access to abortion and contraception, treating menstrual products as essential basic goods, and access to fertility treatments and birth-related health care for all, the document also highlights the specific obstacles that intersex people face and calls for the protection of their rights. By regarding their 2019 resolution on the rights of intersex people, MEPs reaffirmed their “call on Member States to adopt legislation ensuring that intersex persons are not subjected to non-vital medical or surgical treatment during infancy or childhood, and that their right to bodily integrity, autonomy, self-determination and informed consent is fully respected”.

The resolution further notes a lack of comprehensive, age-appropriate and evidence-based sexuality education, and thus calls on Member States to develop education curricula that reflect the diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics, so as to counter misinformation based on stereotypes or biases. It also recommends to counter discrimination in SRHR services and use an intersectional approach to make sure that all women and girls, including intersex ones, have equal access to those services and rights.

“We commend the European Parliament for taking once again a clear stand against Intersex Genital Mutilation as a harmful practice based on harmful gender stereotypes”, says Dan Christian Ghattas, Executive Director of OII Europe. “The Parliament emphasizes the tight link between ending IGM, combating gender-based violence and achieving intersex equality. This resolution also strongly ties in with previous commitments made by the European Commission to respect, protect and promote the rights of intersex people, including the recently adopted LGBTIQ Equality Strategy. We are looking forward to continuing our work with the EU institutions to ensure that the very essence of sexual and reproductive health and rights – the right of everyone to make self-determined decisions about their own bodies – becomes a reality for everyone in Europe”.

The document closes with a call to the Commission “to take concrete steps in protecting SRHR, starting with the establishment of an EU Special Envoy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the addition of a designated chapter on the ‘State of play of SRHR’ in the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy”.

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