



**Meeting Parliamentary Group
Gender Equality Agenda for a New Europe
11 April, 17:30
Via Di Campa Marzio, 78 – Rome**

BACKGROUND INFO

- You are part of a **roundtable**, with 6 other panelist
- Each having **10 minutes** to give a presentation, followed by Q&A
- Other Participants of the debate are; Roberta Angostini; Silva Costa; Zita Gurmai; Birgit Kompel, Pia Locatelli; Catuscia Marini and Livia Turco
- The **audience** is party activists, NGOs, Civil Society, University Teachers and intellectuals.
- **First** part of your intervention, emphasizing **why a progressive Europe** with a strong gender perspective is need and **2nd part** of your intervention, the proposals of the **PES/PES Women on Gender Equality** for the European Elections.

PART 1; Why a progressive Europe needed more than ever before

- Greet and thank Livia and Pia.
- happy to be again in Rome and see some familiar faces again, after the PES Women Summit and PES electoral congress at the end of February, beginning of March.
- The PES Electoral Congress designated our common candidate for the upcoming European Commission President after the European Elections, Martin Schulz, German Member of the European Parliament and current President of the European Parliament and adopted our PES Manifesto for the European Elections. This was a first in our political family but also on the European Political scene as a whole to present appoint a Common Candidate.

- It was symbolically a strong message to have our PES Women Summit in Rome, because a few years ago the Italian Women went into the streets to demonstrate and say they had enough of how women were perceived and the role they were given. Under the slogan “Se non ora quando” – if not now, when? Progressive women and men started a new movement claiming their equal share and participation in private, professional and political life.
- Having just gotten out national elections in Hungary, where the results of the right-wing and extreme right wing, is alarming, and shows that we need to stand-up just like the Italian Women and say enough is enough, and shows that it's not a 'new Europe we need, but a Progressive Europe one.
- With this in mind and looking at the women electorate, we know that when and if women go out voting for European elections, they tend to vote for left/progressive parties. But the challenge we have today is to get women to vote and make women and men understand that Europe can and does make a difference for women's rights and gender equality and that Progressives can have a positive impact on that.
- This is why the PES decided to be the party for women and put women's rights and gender equality at the heart of its programme.
- What does this mean? The PES not only wants to ensure equal representation of women and men on the European lists and in the next European Parliament but we also want to put forward issues that concern women in their daily life.
- We need to re-centre and re-focus the equality issue at the core of our political parties and have the whole party, including the leaders, male leaders to talk about gender equality and women's rights' instead of hiding behind empty words without acting upon them. We need to ask ourselves

whether we want to turn back the clock 30 years for women or whether we want to keep progressing.

- After the 70s, we felt we had achieved a lot in terms of gender equality and we thought that from then onwards, we would only improve. But we were wrong, we left the issue aside and in a void, giving other parties the space to take over the gender equality/women's rights 'space' and in the meantime, with the multiple crises and the right-wing rhetoric taking over, the conservative backlash took slowly but surely over.
- Today we are faced with young women - who had taken their rights for granted - going back into the streets in Europe and claiming their sexual and reproductive rights. It is and feels like a shock therapy in which our rights are pulled out from underneath our feet, a shock therapy that also progressive men understand and understand that if we want to represent the women, the young women of our society, the single mothers of our society, the young professionals that are struggling to find employment, we all NEED to talk about issues that concerns women and underline what has happened recently in the European Parliament
- The Edite Estrela Report on Sexual and Reproductive Right was high-jacked by the right wing and the Annual Gender Equality Report rejected by the Conservatives. This is what is happening in the European Parliament.

PART 2: What the PES/PES Women is proposing for gender equality.

So what is the PES/PES Women doing?

- On 1 March, here in Rome, Martin Schulz, our PES Common Candidate did too understood that talking about issues that matter and influence women's lives is essential. I quote him; *"In five years, I want to say that we are closing the gender pay*

gap and more women are holding top jobs; because I want my daughter to have the same opportunities my son has.”. Moreover, he promised that if elected, he would make a gender balanced commission. Yes Martin Schulz has sent a clear message to women; he has heard their concern and wants to tackle the existing inequalities.

- Finally, at the 21st century leaders speak out about gender equality. But this should not be only in campaign speeches, but continuously in our programmes and proposals. We should always talk to 100% of the citizens/electorate and not only to 48%.

This is why the PES and PES Women call for 3 main priorities in this field;

- 1) Guaranteeing women’s **economic empowerment** by urging real engagement on **closing the gender pay gap**. I’m proud to hear our common candidate Martin Schulz saying *“In five years, I want to say that we are closing the gender pay gap and more women are holding top jobs; because I want my daughter to have the same opportunities my son has.”*
 - 2) **Ensuring women’s sexual and reproductive rights for all women** across Europe independent from their geographical, social or economic background.
 - 3) **Combating Violence Against Women** and make sure that figures such as 7 women dying daily in Europe due to gender based violence do not longer exist.
- The PES and our Common candidate can make a difference and give power to women, be it politically, economically or socially; understand what today’s societal issues are and dare to speak out about them. That means that we have no fear in saying that we do not want to turn back the clock for women, that abortion should be a choice, a free choice and right for all women in Europe, that having 7 women a day dying in Europe due to gender-based violence cannot be tolerated or that only-male composed governments are unacceptable.

- Reality is that women, younger women but also men, want to feel and see represented, want to equally share responsibilities in today's realities of longer studies, combining careers and private life, facing the issues of the crisis, ... and it is in this context that we need to refocus the issue of gender equality and women's rights.