



13 October 2025

Expression of Concern: proposed amendments to PES Resolution 07

Dear Presidency of the Party of European Socialists,

We are writing to you as leading civil society networks and human rights organisations in Europe. With decades of experience and expertise in addressing women's rights and gender equality, human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV, harm reduction, the rights of LGBTI people, human trafficking, migration, racial justice and criminal justice, welcome the progressive language of Resolution 07 *More Feminism = More Democracy*. We strongly align with the clear position in the proposal that 'the fight for democracy is a fight for feminism and against the far right' (line 18) and the promise that PES continues fighting far-right and conservative backlash against the right of women to make their own free choices for their body and life (line 81).

However, it has come to our attention that three proposed amendments to the resolution contravene this firm dedication to women's autonomy over their bodies and lives. The first two amendments, due to be voted on by the assembly in mid-October, propose a regulation that *tackles the demand for prostitution*. The term 'tackling demand for prostitution' is associated with policies that criminalise the clients of sex workers and so-called 'third parties', targeting all people seen as facilitating or profiting from sex work, ranging from managers, brothel keepers, to receptionists, maids, drivers, landlords, and family members. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that **such laws have been contested by major human rights organisations and bodies, and are, on the contrary, prioritised by conservative and anti-rights groups.** In this conservative narrative, 'prostitution' is seen as a threat to 'traditional family values', and 'women in prostitution' need to be rescued and rehabilitated to assume their 'feminine roles' as wives and mothers. The proposed systems of criminalisation reduce sex workers to 'helpless victims', ignoring their right to self-determination and bodily autonomy. Leading human rights and civil society organisations, and the large majority of sex workers, therefore refer to *sex work* and refrain from using the term 'prostitution', which reproduces these negative frames.

We argue that regardless of the work people do, their autonomous choices should be valued and their rights respected and protected. As sex work is highly gendered, stigmatised and often precarious, systems of criminalisation and carceral solutions do not resolve the underlying problems that create marginalisation and precarity in the first place. Sex workers are entitled to the same rights as other workers, including labour protections, social benefits, and safe working conditions. Therefore, the proposed amendments risk undermining the progressive position of Resolution 07, which states to 'choose feminism, solidarity, inclusion and progress' (line 24).

Currently, legislative approaches to sex work vary greatly in Europe. While the 'end demand' law criminalising clients and third parties (as proposed by the amendments) has been introduced in Sweden, France, Ireland, Iceland and Norway; many European countries such as the Netherlands, Austria and Germany instead opt for legalisation of sex work under certain conditions. An alternative legislative model can be found in Belgium, which in 2022 introduced the full *decriminalisation* of sex work, recognising sex work as work and simultaneously introducing robust labour and social protection of sex workers. This model of full decriminalisation is in line with the recommendations of many international public health and human rights organisations and bodies. Our organisations urge that full decriminalisation is the only current framework that improves the rights and health of sex workers, whereas full or partial criminalisation, such as the 'end demand' system, fails to address the root causes of precarious work and instead further reproduces systems of violence against women.

This position is in alignment with the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (WGDAGW) in its [2024 report to the Human Rights Council](#). After assessing different policy approaches to sex work, comparing models of full and partial criminalisation, legalisation and decriminalisation, the Working Group explicitly highlights that the legislative model criminalising clients and third parties (as proposed by the amendments to Res. 07) leads to intensified surveillance and harassment of sex workers by the police. Furthermore, the findings show that the client-criminalisation model leads to increases in arrests and detentions of sex workers, and not of clients. By pushing sex work underground, it also exacerbates the stigmatization and discrimination of sex workers, who report impeded access to housing and financial institutions, [barriers to their sexual and reproductive rights](#) and refusal of basic health and legal services. The Working Group **proposes that the full decriminalisation of adult voluntary sex work** holds the greatest promise to address systemic discrimination, violence and impunity for violations of sex workers' rights.

Likewise, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI), and WGDAGW jointly published a comprehensive [Guide on the Human Rights of Sex Workers](#) in 2024. This document calls for the full decriminalisation and inclusion of sex workers in all areas of policy that affect their lives, recognising them as agents of change and human rights defenders, and addressing the widespread stigma and social exclusion they face.

At the regional level, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [concluded](#) that **a human rights-based approach means that consensual sexual relations between adults for remuneration should not be criminalised**. Criminalisation and the enforcement of punitive provisions against sex workers, clients or third parties significantly reduces sex workers' access to rights and essential services and forces sex workers to live and work in a clandestine manner and in isolation, in fear of the justice system. Conversely, decriminalisation of consensual adult sex work has had positive effects on the safety of sex workers and on their access to social protection and health services, resulting in improved health outcomes.

In addition, the amendment by PSOE considers surrogacy as a form of exploitation. While surrogacy is a sensitive moral issue, the conflation of surrogacy with exploitation is contrary to the proclaimed human rights-based approach. Maintaining a wide margin of appreciation

on surrogacy policy, the European Court of Human Rights consistently analyses whether states have adequately protected the best interests of the child under Article 8. Similar to a range of other forms of gendered or reproductive labour, including domestic work, sex work and unpaid care, women undertake surrogacy for various reasons within a globalised economy underpinned by inequalities. These forms of labour or services are disproportionately performed by women and people of marginalised identities. Criminalising surrogacy increases risks of exploitation, as it drives it underground, reducing the ability of governments and civil society to provide the necessary protection and support to surrogates and to guarantee the rights of children born of surrogacy. Surrogacy can take many forms, and viewing surrogacy as 'inherently exploitative' is an overly simplistic criticism. For many same-sex couples, people with disabilities, people affected by infertility, those who have been forcibly sterilised and trans and intersex people, surrogacy may be one of the few forms of assisted reproductive technology (ART) that enables them to start a family. Assuming surrogacy as exploitation, as proposed by PSOE, may therefore be contrary to human rights, especially the right to family.

We therefore call on the PES Presidency to reject the three proposed amendments as they are contrary to the stated aim of the commendably progressive and feminist Resolution 07.

We thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration. We applaud the feminist aim of the Resolution, and we would like to invite you to an open conversation to provide further information and improve our collaboration.

Undersigned on Monday 13 October 2025,

Aids Action Europe
Amnesty International
CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality
Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN)
European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance (ESWA)
Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice
Feminist Diplomacy Lab
Feminists Holding the Line Coalition
International Planned Parenthood Federation - European Network (IPPF EN)
La Strada International
SekswerkExpertise