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24 January 2006

Abortion and its impact on women and girls in Europe

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mrs Hägg and others

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

1. At present, abortion is available in 33 of the 47 countries of Europe. Access to free abortion is always subject to legal gestational limits and sometimes to parental consent for minors. The cost of abortion and its payment by the government or social insurance systems differs considerably from country to country.
2. In a few countries in Europe, abortion is considered a criminal act. In some countries, the legislation is there, but women are still denied abortions when they come to the hospital. Access to abortion is often restricted in Eastern and Central Europe because of shortage of equipment and medications; crowded facilities, poor hygienic conditions, lack of training, inadequate standards of care, high real cost of care, lack of privacy and confidentiality. Women tend instead to turn to places outside the hospital to have an abortion and this can be of great danger for the woman. It is unacceptable that women, in countries where abortion is legal, should be exposed to serious health threats or be forced to carry on with an unwanted pregnancy. In the whole of Europe the estimated number of unsafe abortions annually is 500.000.
3. It is of utmost importance that barriers to existing abortion services are removed, and that the public is informed about where they can obtain abortion care to ensure safety and access to abortion in order to safeguard women's health. Post-abortion care for women who have had spontaneous or clandestine abortion must be available to women within their communities and these services should not be punitive toward women.
4. The Assembly considers that women across Europe must have the possibility to exercise their legal rights and not to be discriminated against. The Assembly calls on the governments of Council of Europe member states to ensure that in the countries where abortion is legal, access to safe, acceptable, high-quality, affordable abortion services, including confidentiality of information and privacy, and a full range of modern contraception is within the reach of every woman within her community, with a particular focus on those women living outside urban areas.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed ¹:

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group