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THE EUROPE WE WANT

Realities in Europe

Elections to the European Parliament are due to take place in June 2009 throughout the twenty seven countries in the European Union. European Union is said to be a peace project where democracy and human rights are the leading values. Is this the reality? How to analyze the European policies and their consequences for the lives of the 250 millions of women living in the EU countries? Which Europe do we want? What politicians do we want to see in the EU parliament and what policies? Can we build a fair and egalitarian society without breaking with the present capitalist and patriarchal choices made by EU that produced world crisis, precariousness, unemployment, increasing of religious fundamentalisms and militarism and that penalize first women.

Neoliberalism and social regression-double discrimination of women

The EU today is governed by policy relying on cutbacks of state welfare and decrease of employment rights and social security benefits. Free market principles of profit and competition without limits have been introduced even to the welfare systems in EU countries in the name of efficiency and economic growth, giving priorities to assessment of costs rather than of the gendered needs of women and men. Consequently the states' protection of their citizens has decreased; related jobs have got increasingly a part-time status leading to worsening of both living conditions and pay of the employees who in its majority are women. Labor markets and businesses have been restructured to rely on workers' flexibility and availability. In addition, women are expected to be available for the domestic sphere of the non-paid work, providing care and services for the family and elderly. The current economic crises shows that the whole capitalist system is in crises and yet the measures taken are directed towards its saving, rather than towards its changing. EC proposes redress policies while the roots of the system are not addressed. The fact is that the financial crisis is only managed by men.

The governors of all 27 central banks of the Member States are men. In the key decision making bodies of these organizations men constitute 83%.

Militarization and Armament-Compromising First Women's Lives

Today the EU relies on a Foreign and Security Policy (EFSP) based on military defense security and armament. This program of common military security creates supplementary military structures and asks the States to increase their military budgets and capabilities.

In addition, states of the Union are strongly encouraged to join NATO and to assume the costs from their national budgets, which open doors for NATO further enlargement across Europe, adding to the militarization of the continent. This increase of military expenditure has been compensated with the cutting in the public and social security sector on the expenses of the main part of the population, compromising first women's lives and sense of security.

"Democracy" Without Women's Voices

EU has been largely created on the absence of voices of women. Still more than 3 out of 4 of the main contributors to the democratic process at national level are men. Just 33%, one in three top positions of the public administration of the EU 27 countries are women. Only 31% of Supreme Court judges are women. This is a result not only of the lack of women in the national and European parliaments; it is also a signification of the lack of feminist and social policy based on gender equality as well as the lack of relevant binding laws. There is no common EU legislation on protection of women's rights that is based on the most advanced legislative practices. It is another signification that conservative and economical fundamentalist forces have taken control of the European project, on the expenses of most vulnerable. Democracy in Europe is not connected with the observing and the implementation of human rights and women's human rights, neither of the rights of the disadvantaged and minority social groups. It is rather a democracy that preserves the economical interests of those who sit in power. To consider gender power relations of male control and domination in our societies a political question still remains a strong challenge. Yet, it is necessary if we want to promote a society built on values of real democracy.

Interference of Religions in State Politics and Women's Lives

Interrelated with this development, churches and religious associations are increasing their intrusions in the public sphere. They are being offered privileged status by EU and have been provided with open space for their campaigns against women's reproductive rights. This has opened doors for a growing interference of all religions in people's lives but also to the growing fundamentalisms. The results are that women's rights to self-determination and control of their own body have been compromised and are under attack.

European Constitutional Treaty - For Who is this Europe?

EU has shifted policy from care to control, from state protection to individual choice, from ethics to morality, from solidarity response to dominational aid provider, from disarmament to armament. All that has led to increasing discrimination, segregation, hostility and further gender and other oppressions. EU today is going through a repatriarchalization process.

What people of Europe do not know is that these fundamental economic and security policies have now attained a supra national status as they are prescribed in a constitutional framework for the future of Europe.

Rejected by the peoples of France and Netherlands in 2003 and in its modified form by the people of Ireland in 2008, the EU constitutional treaty promotes and calls for a major structural backwards transformation of European security, from social and human to military and dominational.

This affects negatively not only the daily lives of millions of women and men in Europe but also paralyses any capacity of broader alternative political thinking in respect to foreign policies.

Reality for Women's Human Rights in Europe beyond Resolutions

In this context, appeals from EU leaders on values, peace and gender equality remain in the shadow of an empty rhetoric. Despite of all EU Resolutions, Requirements and Directives on gender equality, the adopted policies in effect reinforce subordinated status of women and the idea of her having a main role as mother and wife. Women in Europe today suffer vast regression of their women's human rights.

European Feminist Initiative - A Voice for another Europe

European Feminist Initiative, a feminist movement, strives to give new meanings to democracy, power, peace and security through making visible

the gender power structures that govern the relations between men and women as a major form of discrimination and oppression, together with racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination based on class, ethnic origin, disability and age.

European Feminist Initiative promotes a new content for democracy: democracy as the capacity of men and women together to have influence over decisions that are taken on their behalf, to allow their participation and their control. That means to see democracy from the perspective of equality between women and men. That means that priorities should be given to policies and actions for women and men to share equal rights and responsibilities in public and private spheres of their lives.

European Feminist Demands

We, women and men that live in Europe have the right to promote gendered democracy and "peace as non only war" both at home and globally through keeping Members of European Parliament accountable for the concrete measures they take towards this goal. We have the right to fair redistribution of resources to enable women their full participation and a better life. It is urgent to integrate in the European construction feminist analyses and people in all the institutions and at all the levels to make them heard. The coming elections to The European Parliament provide this opportunity to elect MEP who will promote and adopt:

1. Equality between sexes as a founding principle in the process of developing Europe, with adopted measures and policies that will produce social changes on the ground.
2. Secularism as a basic principle of the future Europe, ensuring non-interference of religious structures into state politics.
3. Measures and policies that ensure real democracy where both women and men are sharing the power to make decisions and priorities in their own names.
4. Measures and policies that ensure that women and men are enjoying equal rights to secure work, reliable employment and fair salaries for similar work; where priorities are given to social security and protection, to education, health and culture, opening the possibility for both women and men to reconcile personal, family and professional life.
5. Measures and policies that guarantee free movement of persons and acknowledge the full citizenship of all living in the European territory and giving the right to asylum to victims of sexual violence.

6. Measures, policies and EU legislation harmonized on most progressive level to ensure the implementation of women's rights including the right to her own body and sexual orientation, the right to free abortion and the recognition of men's violence against women as a fundamental social problem.

7. Measures and policies towards reduction of military expenditure and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction; closing of NATO military bases in Europe, dissolution of NATO and withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan; re-organization of military structures into civilian units for humanitarian help and ensuring political commitment against any aggression and oppression of other peoples and countries; measures that will lead Europe to become a global driving engine promoting action peace and human security for both women and men worldwide.

Only such visionary political framework can promote a Europe free of violence and free of violence against women, where we can not only demand but enjoy our rights.

For this European Feminist Initiative is going to support:

- All candidates, women and men who stand the test of our political feminist demands and who dare think and act alternatively, for the sake of humanity and human lives in Europe and globally.
- Parties and lists whose programs are in alignment with our propositions, demands and vision for a better Europe and that give space to feminist candidates in an eligible position on their lists.
- Women's organizing on feminist bases for the elections in the forms they choose, according to own context in their different countries in EU.

We turn to all citizens in Europe to go to the polls in June and vote for candidates, parties and lists who promote these demands.

We together can create Another Europe, a Europe of solidarity, peace and human security, a secular Europe of gender equality and human development!