

It's high time to defend our stake in Europe Let's speak up again for the Europe we want

Sixty years after the Treaties of Rome were signed, we feminists continue to speak up for the Europe we want. United and in solidarity, we underscore the value of an unified European project and vision rooted in the recognition and appreciation of differences. We reject so called neutral standards, and those standards defined only in pursuit of economic goals.

We reject an Europe of walls, based solely on financial priorities, an Europe that, while denouncing border walls built by others, does not sanction those member states that erect their own border fences.

We reject a Europe that, in the absence of an authoritative and influential foreign policy of peace, turns a blind eye to those member states that deal in arms and participate in conflicts that cause thousands of victims, refugees and internally displaced people.

Women took part in the shaping and making of Europe, we were at the core of its progressive vision. Women fought to affirm the imperative of a gender dimension and perspective in every field of policy and activities in Europe and worldwide. Such vision is grounded in the principles of equality, justice and fairness, in the protection of political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights, in the fight against systemic sexism, racism, xenophobia and all forms of violence.

Women work very hard to build a welcoming and inclusive Europe where international protection would be granted to all without distinction, to European citizens, as well as to migrants and asylum seekers. We fought to ensure that European citizenship would stem from residence in the European territory, that migrant families would be reunited, that migrants would be given access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health, education, housing, work and legal assistance, that trafficking in human beings would be countered and eradicated.

Today, the project of an Europe united in solidarity risks to crumble due to the dismantling of the welfare systems and protection nets in member states caused by austerity policies, by the increase in injustice and inequality, the rise in the number of the poor and excluded and with precarious and unsafe employment becoming the prevalent model in the job market. In blatant disregard and breach of the rights recognized in the Charter of Nice, Europe is rejecting asylum seekers, including victims of trafficking, and thousands of women and men who flee from disasters also caused by the interventionist and neo-colonialist policies of some European member states and the West. These include: civil wars, the propping up of dictators impoverishment, and environmental catastrophes.

All this is coupled with the democratic deficit that prevents women and men of Europe to make their voices heard, and to be recognized and feel as citizens. At the same time, the interaction of European institutions with civil society, with non-governmental networks and movements that are not economic and financial lobbies, is shrinking and being delegitimized if not made altogether irrelevant.

In light of our practices, we are convinced that this Europe which denies human rights and gender differences risks to implode and die. But the destruction of the European project would be disastrous for women especially the poorest, the most marginalized and most vulnerable.

In the past, Europe promoted the growth of rights, of welfare systems, of opportunities and peace. This a heritage that it is now squandering. Locking ourselves behind our national fences is not the answer, however.

We need a new democratic and participatory paradigm with women and their knowledge at its center. We need a new vision for Europe that, in every field, develops new policies, radically different from the present ones. A crucial first step in this direction is the ratification and implementation of the 2011 Council of Europe *Convention* on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul convention), as recommended by the European Parliament.

Let's make of 2017 a year of mobilization in order for the women of Europe to develop concrete proposals, projects and visions for our Europe, for the Europe we want, an Europe united and respectful of the values of solidarity.

On March 25 the heads of state and governments of the European Union will meet in Rome. We want to be there, we want to make our voices heard. We look forward to your suggestions and ideas and we look forward to seeing you on March 23rd at the Casa Internazionale delle Donne to recognize each other, find each other, work together.

First signatories:

Casa Internazionale delle Donne- Roma

Cilap EAPN Italia

Be Free

Coordinamento Italiano della Lobby Europea delle Donne

Gioventù Federalista

Ass. Antigone

Ass. Parsec

Assolei

Rete delle città vicine

Udi Nazionale

Wilpf

Signatories:

Ass. Il Cortile-Consultorio di Psicoanalisi Applicata

Rete femminista “No muri, no recinti”

Trama di Terre/Centro Interculturale delle donne

Associazione Corrente Rosa

CILAP EAPN Basilicata

Ass. IRFEDI, Basilicata

ERMES, cooperativa sociale onlus