

Dear Commissioner Hadja Lahbib,

It is an honor to stand before you today as a representative of women's organizations within the European Union delegation to CSW69. At this crucial moment, we must reaffirm our commitment to a feminist Europe—one where women's rights, equality, and dignity are not just principles, but lived realities. The European Women's Lobby and the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights have laid out clear demands, and I am here to highlight five key areas that require urgent and sustained action.

First, we must champion women's economic independence and work towards a feminist economic model. Women continue to face systemic barriers in accessing decent work, equal pay, decent housing and financial security. The gender pension gap in Europe stands at a staggering 30%, and the unpaid care burden continues to fall disproportionately on women. We call for binding measures that guarantee equal pay for work of equal value, enhanced access to the highest-paying professions, parity in economic decision-making and the recognition of care work as the backbone of our economy. A Care Deal for Europe, akin to the European Green Deal, is necessary to ensure that investments in care infrastructure are prioritized and adequately funded.

Second, we must put an end to all forms of male violence against women and girls. It is unacceptable that one in three women in the EU has experienced physical or sexual violence. We urge the swift recognition of femicide and of rape as Eurocrimes. We must end the neoliberal and patriarchal sexual exploitation of women and girls. The commodification of women's bodies, whether through prostitution, pornography, trafficking, or surrogacy, must be combated with resolute policies. The Equality Model, which discourages the demand that fosters sexual exploitation, online and offline, while providing exit programs and support for survivors, must be implemented at the EU level. Violence against women is not a private matter; it is a societal failure that requires a coordinated, zero-tolerance approach at all levels of governance.

Third, we must ensure women's bodily autonomy and guarantee access to affordable, if not free, high-quality healthcare throughout the life cycle. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental conditions to women's liberation, yet across Europe, access to safe and legal abortion is being restricted. In some cases, these restrictions have cost women their lives. The right to abortion must be recognized in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. We also advocate for universal access to contraception, comprehensive and feminist sexuality education, and the eradication of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced sterilization.

Fourth, young women are at the forefront of the feminist movement, yet we face unique and pressing challenges in an increasingly digitalized world. The digital space, masculine in both form and content, often excludes, marginalizes, and targets young women with harassment and sexual violence. We advocate for concrete measures to ensure our full and safe participation in online spaces, including stronger regulations to prevent and address digital violence, which disproportionately targets women and girls, intersectional digital literacy programs, and feminist-led innovation in the tech sector. The recently adopted European Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence marks a significant step forward by establishing EU-wide minimum standards for prevention, protection, and

access to justice. However, it falls short in fully addressing the pervasive nature of online sex-based violence. As the Digital Services Act is implemented, it must serve as a robust tool to safeguard women and girls from cyberviolence, holding platforms accountable for harmful content, ensuring swift responses to online abuse, and integrating gender-sensitive protections across the digital sphere. Young women must not only be protected but also empowered as key actors in shaping the digital landscape.

Finally, we must reaffirm the critical role of women in peace and security. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by armed conflict, facing heightened risks of sexual violence, displacement, and exploitation. Yet, they are often excluded from decision-making in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. The EU must fully implement UNSC Resolution 1325 and ensure women's rights organizations are meaningfully included in peacebuilding efforts. New financing frameworks should integrate gender mainstreaming principles at all levels, recognizing women as active agents in the peace process. Funding must prioritize gender-sensitive programs that empower women, address their specific needs, and promote their involvement as mediators and decision-makers in conflict resolution. Gender-responsive humanitarian aid and protection are essential to addressing the unique challenges women and girls face in conflict zones. Sustainable peace is only achievable when women are central to security, reconciliation, and the broader peace agenda.

Commissioner Lahbib, the European project must be one of equality, dignity, and justice for all. As we mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is quite clear that progress is not happening fast enough. The feminist future we envision requires not only political will but also binding legislation, adequate funding, and unwavering commitment. This includes consistent financial support for women's organizations, which play a crucial role in monitoring policies, exposing human rights violations, and promoting sustainable and effective solutions. Women are a distinct political subject, whose lived experiences are shaped by structural sex-based discrimination, making it essential to actively combat and dismantle the systems that perpetuate inequality. We look to you to champion these demands and ensure that Europe does not backslide on women's rights but moves forward with ambition and determination.

Thank you.

Diana Pinto

Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights