

Make Noise for Free Choice

Liberal Women's report on the importance of a global free choice

- **Free choice a human right**
- **Free choice a global concern**
- **Free choice is freedom from oppression**

A new perspective on free choice

Not long ago, sexual and reproductive health and rights were excluded from the list of other Human Rights. Fortunately, this is no longer the case/this has changed. But these rights are constantly challenged, even here in Europe.

It is not long ago since sexual and reproductive health and rights were recognized as human rights. However, these rights are constantly challenged, even in Europe. We cannot accept that women's fundamental rights are neglected and brushed aside. The European Union must be a watchdog; ensuring the choice, access and quality of sexual and reproductive health and rights

We do not demand a common abortion legislation in the European Union. However, it is urgent that the perspective on abortion is shifted and that the union supports three essential standpoints:

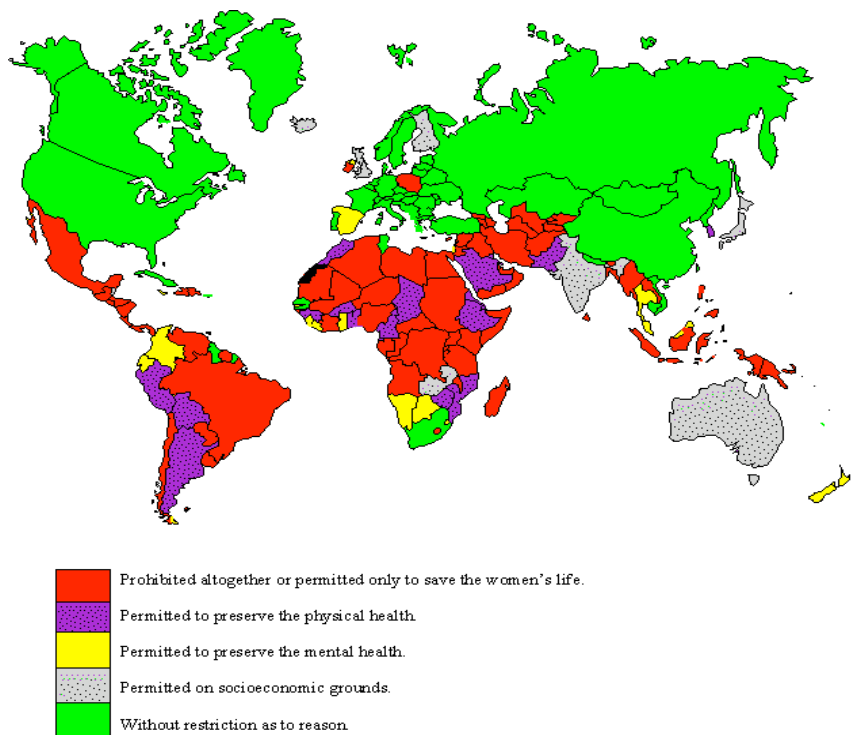
- **Free choice is primarily a human right – not only a public health issue.**
- **Access to legal and safe abortions is a global concern - not only a national.**
- **Render the struggle for free choice the same status as the commitment of eradicating all other oppression of women.**

Make noise for free choice

The right to free and safe abortions is a controversial issue. Powerful forces are counteracting women's struggle for their right to safe abortions. Millions of women in Europe are by law denied the control over their own bodies. It is estimated that more than half a million women risk their lives and health in unsafe abortions in Europe every year.¹ The access to safe abortions is also a matter of financial resources. Women well off can afford an abortion in private clinics even in countries that prohibits it, or they travel abroad to receive help. Those who cannot afford to do so are compelled to seek the dangerous solution of an unsafe abortion. Those who are injured and die are in most cases the poorest women.

The governments in the European Union who do not allow the access to safe abortions must be put under pressure. If the European Union wishes to be regarded as a modern project and a staunch supporter of justice and equality, it must lay out the women's right to abortion in plain text.

¹ UNFPA, WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Entre Nous No: 59-2005*, page 3



Free choice - a human rights issue

The denial of a woman's independent choice to make a decision over her own body violates a number of human rights:

- **The right to health** is a universally recognized human right to which all people are entitled; respecting women's right to health requires the decriminalization of abortion.
- **The rights to non-discrimination and equality:** abortion is a medical procedure that only women need. The denial of health care services needed only by women is a discriminatory act. The U.N. Human Rights Committee has repeatedly established a clear link between women's equality and the availability of reproductive health services, including abortion.
- **The right to privacy:** decision of parenthood is deeply personal and exactly the type of interest privacy rights should protect.

The United Nations Human Rights Council, UNHRC, has established that it is a crime against human rights to deny a woman the access to abortion if it's legal in the country. The European Court of Human Rights in 2007 ruled that a Polish woman's human rights had been violated when she was denied an abortion on therapeutic grounds. The Supreme Court of the United States of America has through the case Roe vs. Wade, ruled that laws against abortion laws against violates the constitutional right to privacy. In the

USA, where the anti-choice movement is strong, the states are forced to yield to the federal power.

Free choice – combat poverty

More women, and their newborns, die as a consequence of pregnancy related complications every year than who die in AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria put together. Every hour, eight women perish in the suites of unsafe abortions. The maternal death is a humanitarian disaster, let to continue in silence. In some African countries 40 percent of the maternal deaths are caused by restricted access to safe abortions.

Out of 200 million pregnancies world wide, 72 million are unwanted. There will always be unwanted pregnancies, hence, women will always undergo abortion weather it is legal or not.

The access to contraceptives, maternal healthcare services and ultimately legal and safe abortions is a question of life or death for the women of the world. The most intimate issues holds the key to meeting global challenges; the struggle against poverty and maternal death.

The individual's reproductive and sexual rights are fundamental for prosperity and a better quality of life. There is a strong relationship between poverty and reproductive rights: attacking poverty improves reproductive health and realizing sexual and reproductive rights helps en poverty. The improvement of sexual and reproductive health care is the most cost-efficient investment into development.

Deaths due to unsafe abortions are preventable and must get the highest priority in the European Union's action plan for reproductive health in the context of poverty reduction. Where women are empowered to decide on their own lives they contribute to the foundation for economic recovery. To this end women have to be in control of their own bodies. All women have the right to safe and legal abortions.

Related links:

<http://www.womenonwaves.org/attachment-682-en.html>

<http://www.ippf.org/en/>

<http://www.rfsu.se>

http://www.who.int/topics/reproductive_health/en/

<http://www.womenonwaves.org/>

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/>

<http://www.unfpa.org/rh/index.htm>

<http://www.rhsupplies.org/>

<http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/>

<http://www.womenonweb.org/attachment.php?status=portrait>

<http://www.womenonweb.org/>