

EPF Voting Analysis on the European Parliament Report on “Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”

I Introduction

The following voting analysis looks at the [European Parliament’s Report on “Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” \(SRHR\)](#) authored by Portuguese Social-Democrat Edite Estrela. It is therefore often referred to as the “Estrela Report”.

This non-binding report was the first European Parliament report on the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights in more than a decade, the last one being the Anne Van Lancker Report of 2002. The Estrela report looked at all aspects of SRHR from an EU perspective, including the SRHR of EU citizens, in other European countries and in the EU’s development aid programmes. It strongly emphasized a human rights based approach to SRHR and included the following areas:

- Unwanted pregnancy
- Access to contraception
- Access to safe abortion services
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- Youth-friendly services
- Violence related to sexual and reproductive rights
- SRHR and Development Assistance.

The Estrela report went through various decision-making stages and votes in the European Parliament of which the following timetable gives an overview:

- **18 September 2013:** The European Parliament’s Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) adopts the Estrela report with a comfortable majority: out of 31 MEPs present and voting, 17 voted in favour, 7 voted against and 7 abstained. Prior to this Committee vote, 217 amendments were presented for the draft report - the largest number that a report in the FEMM committee has ever seen. These amendments were overwhelmingly anti-choice in character. The avalanche of anti-choice amendments to the report were all rejected and the large number of progressive amendments were adopted.
- **22 October 2013:** The Report was put to vote during the Strasbourg plenary session of the European Parliament. An alternative resolution to

the report was tabled by the Eurosceptic and right-wing Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD). A large majority of 486 MEPs (out of 665 MEPs present and voting) rejected this alternative resolution with its repressive language on SRHR. However, after intensive anti-choice MEP lobbying against the report and a heated debate during the plenary session, the Group of European Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament (ECR) proposed a procedural motion to refer this report back to the FEMM Committee. A majority of MEPs supported this proposal, with 351 voting for, 319 voting against and 18 abstaining.

- **26 November 2013:** After an intense debate in the FEMM Committee where opponents of the report tried to delay the vote on the unjustified ground of a possible breach of the Parliament’s legal procedure for not allowing further amendments to the report, the Committee rejected this approach and proceeded with the vote on the revised text. As there are no set Rules of Procedure for how a Committee should deal with a report that has been referred back by plenary, the FEMM Committee was tasked to find an acceptable way of dealing with the revision of the report prior to the vote. The coordinators of all political groups (including those of the European Peoples’ Party and the European Conservative and Reformist Group) decided that the report would not be re-opened for amendments but would only allow for split and separate votes (i.e. the possibility to delete existing text or vote against whole paragraphs). The report was adopted with a majority of 19 votes in favour and 15 votes against.
- **10 December 2013:** the Estrela Report was put to vote for a second time during the European Parliament’s plenary session in Strasbourg. For the plenary vote on 10 December two alternative resolutions were tabled and MEPs had to vote on the following texts:
 - an [alternative resolution](#) by the right-wing Eurosceptic group Europe for Freedom and Democracy (EFD) in the European Parliament;