

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PUBLIC STATEMENT**

AI Index: ACT 35/026/2013
11 December 2013

European Parliament: Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (Estrela Report) rejected at the European Parliament plenary session on Human Rights Day

Amnesty International expresses its disappointment with the vote at the plenary session of the European Parliament (EP) on 10 December, which was not in favour of Edite Estrela's **Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (Estrela Report)**.

The European Parliament acknowledged in a counter-resolution that the European Union (EU) has a role to promote the exchange of best practices on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU and therefore prevented any regression on its current position on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Nonetheless, the non-adoption of the Estrela Report is a serious human rights concern for the European region and beyond at a time when these rights are threatened at a global level.

Tuesday's plenary vote was a missed opportunity for the European Parliament to consolidate around a progressive common position that promotes gender equality and the rights of all individuals to control their reproductive choices and sexuality, and their bodily integrity and dignity, free from violence, coercion and discrimination.

This vote has widespread repercussions for individuals who are still denied the full enjoyment of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. As the review of the 20-year implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD+20) and the deliberations on the new post-2015 development framework are taking place, it questions the EP's commitment to promote a strong and progressive approach to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the post-2015 agenda.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are a human rights issue; all EU Institutions and member states have an obligation to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights. Irrespective of which institutional body has the right to legislate in a given area, the EP has a legitimate and important role to play, as reflected in the draft Estrela report, in drawing attention to and calling for action on human rights concerns both within the EU and beyond.

Background Information

All individuals have the right to make informed choices and decisions about their lives and their sexual and reproductive health and rights, free from discrimination, coercion or violence. European Union (EU) members states are party to one or more of the core international human rights treaties which guarantee these rights: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and consensus documents such as the Declaration and Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

in Cairo (1994); and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995). EU member states have committed to respect, protect and fulfil sexual and reproductive health and rights of all individuals, without discrimination. Through its work, the European Parliament plays a key role in working towards the realisation of these rights.

The report, authored by the Portuguese MEP Edite Estrela of the Socialists and Democrats Group, contains a comprehensive and forward-thinking formulation of obligations as regards sexual and reproductive health and rights, recognising that these are fundamental human rights that need to be respected, protected and fulfilled. The Estrela Report:

- Acknowledges that all individuals have the right to make their own informed and responsible choices as regards their sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence;
- Recognises that sexual and reproductive health and rights are an essential element of human dignity, which need to be addressed in the broader context of structural discrimination and gender inequalities;
- Calls on member states to ensure universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights information, education and services, recognising the need to provide adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sex education;
- Stresses that for individual, social and economic development, it is essential that women have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, timing and spacing of their children through access to voluntary family planning services and modern means of contraception. It emphasises that abortion in no case should be promoted as a family planning method and the need for abortion should be reduced through provision of comprehensive sex education and access to modern contraceptive methods. In addition, measures should be taken to support mothers and couples in difficulty and prevent people from having abortion for social and economic reasons. However, it recognises that women may still need abortion in certain circumstances and recommends that abortion should not be criminalised;
- Recalls that sexual violence or sexual control over women have a damaging, long-term impact on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health;
- Recognises that current austerity measures have a detrimental impact on the quality, affordability and accessibility of public health services; and calls on member states to guarantee sustainable funding to public services and civil society organisations providing services in the field of sexual and reproductive health.