

Proposal for Skopje Spring Congress 2020

Proposal
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LYMEC Spring Congress, April 3 to 5, 2020 in Skopje

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Status: accepted rejected transferred to _____

The Skopje Spring Congress 2020 may decide:

1 Right to abortion

2 Considering that:

- 3 • According to the latest estimates by the WTO and the Gutmacher Institute, 25 million
4 unsafe abortions were performed across the world in 2014. In the same year, about 56
5 million abortions were performed across the world. Slightly under half were high-risk
6 abortions
- 7 • The right to abortion is still limited in more than two-thirds of all countries.
- 8 • Europe has always been at the forefront of the fight to liberalise abortion laws and the
9 legalisation of women's access to safe and legal abortion.
- 10 • The WTO specifies that laws should not impose medically unnecessary delays to a
11 requested abortion, such as mandatory waiting periods.
- 12 • In some European countries, short time limits for access to abortion on request can have
13 harmful impacts on women and may impede them from obtaining the health care they
14 need. When applied in a restrictive manner short time limits can be particularly harmful for
15 adolescent girls and women belonging to marginalized communities who may not always
16 be able to obtain care within the legal timeframe. This may result in women needing to
17 travel to other jurisdictions to access legal abortion or accessing abortion care at home
18 outside of the scope of the law and under threat of criminal prosecution.

19 Condemning that:

- 20 • Six European countries still do not allow abortion on broad social grounds and two of
21 them, Poland and Malta, are members of the EU.
- 22 • Pope Francis, who is known for having a more progressive ideology as compared to his
23 predecessors, declared in 2019 that abortion is always unacceptable, regardless of
24 whether a fetus is fatally ill or has pathological disorders. He also urged doctors to help
25 women bring to term pregnancies likely to end in the death of a child at birth or soon after,
26 thus denying condonement to any Catholic who had carried out such practice.
- 27 • This stance has significant negative consequences for women in poorer countries where
28 religion is more widespread, and legitimises doctors not to perform their duty on grounds
29 of conscience.
- 30 • Although the general trend has been one of progress towards liberalization, in recent

31 years some countries in Europe have witnessed attempts to roll back existing legal
32 protections for women's access to abortion. At times they have led to the introduction of
33 new regressive preconditions that women must fulfil prior to obtaining abortion care.
34 These include mandatory biased counselling and mandatory waiting periods. There have
35 also been attempts to completely ban abortion or to remove existing legal grounds for
36 abortion. There have also been a number of court challenges contesting the
37 constitutionality of access to abortion and seeking to advance medical professional's
38 entitlements to refuse to legal abortion care.

39 Believing that:

- 40 • Each person has the right over their own body.
- 41 • There has been a regression on sexual rights, and we, as liberals, must not allow or
42 stand for these rights being taken away or limited, but instead widen them on grounds of
43 freedom and individual autonomy.
- 44 • Measures that roll back reproductive rights, by introducing new barriers or scaling back
45 the legality of abortion care, violate the principle of non-retrogression under international
46 human rights law.
- 47 • Third party authorisation procedures, requiring prior permission from parents, guardians,
48 doctors or official committees before a woman can access abortion care, disproportionately
49 impact adolescent girls, women with disabilities, women living in poverty and women
50 belonging to marginalised communities and undermine their human rights and place them
51 at risk.
- 52 • Sexual education for teenagers should never be dependent on their parents' beliefs, as it
53 is necessary information for a healthy life and relationships.

54 Defending that:

- 55 • Any doctor should not be compelled to perform a surgery that goes against their personal
56 beliefs, as freedom of religion is a core liberal value, but, at the same time, this should not
57 prevent a woman from receiving the care she has requested. Doctors are professionals
58 and, if they are asked to perform such practice, they should, or otherwise step down on
59 grounds of conscience and allow another doctor to perform the surgery in a timely and
60 secure manner. If no doctor in a specific hospital is willing to perform the surgery, the
61 hospital has the responsibility to find another one capable and willing to perform it.
- 62 • Reform process such as the one that Northern Ireland and Gibraltar have gone through to
63 repeal highly restrictive abortion laws are the only way forward in a true liberal and
64 democratic European Union.

65 LYMEC:

- 66 • Rejects any mandatory waiting period for abortions at request, as these waiting periods
67 undermine access to timely and affordable care and restrict women's human rights and
68 autonomous decision-making.
- 69 • Believes in providing abortion upon request up to and including the 22 week of
70 pregnancy. Abortions should be performed as soon as possible upon request and

71 preferably before the 12th week of pregnancy. However in circumstances where a
72 woman's life is threatened or a fetus is unlikely to survive, an abortion may be performed
73 after the 22 week, if supported by 2 medical professionals.

- 74 • Rejects compulsory counselling for requested abortions, as they compel a woman to wait
75 before she gets to make a decision she has already taken. They should be available but
76 not compulsory.
- 77 • Requests institutions to ensure that all abortion counselling is impartial and not made on
78 grounds of morality or religion.
- 79 • Rejects third party authorisation procedures for women with no mental disorder who can
80 make an informed adult decision about their body and future.
- 81 • Rejects rules requiring women to explain that they are seeking an abortion because of
82 their social or family circumstance or on grounds of distress, as they stigmatize abortion,
83 undermine autonomous decision-making and should be removed.
- 84 • Urges EU countries to remove criminal sanctions for abortion practices, as they can
85 cause significant harm to women's health and wellbeing, can delay or prevent access to
86 post-abortion care, intensify abortion stigma, heighten barriers in access to legal care and
87 create a chilling effect on medical professionals' provision of information and care.
- 88 • Believes sexual education should be compulsory in schools.
- 89 • Condemns the Catholic Church for its treatment of members who have abortions.
- 90 • Calls upon member organisations to encourage and promote the least represented
91 gender within their organisations as it makes politics more representative, the political
92 outcome more balanced and the results more sustainable.
- 93 • The LYMEC Bureau to forward this resolution to the ALDE Party and to the ALDE
94 Council.
- 95 • The LYMEC member organisations and member contacts in the EU member states and
96 applicant states to pressure their mother parties and other politicians to achieve the aims
97 of this resolution.

98 This resolution archives resolution 2.24 "A Call for a Change in Vatican Policy" (Former 2.35 prior
99 to London 2019) of the Policy Book.

Attention: This is a preview! The official text is printed in the proposal book for Skopje Spring Congress 2020 03 - 05 April 2020.