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Press release | 09.06.2015

Women's Rights are Human Rights

Press release from SNP MEP Alyn Smith

Alyn Smith SNP MEP has today praised the European Parliament for adopting a groundbreaking new report on gender equality.



Despite pressure from right-wing organisations, the EU Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men Post 2015, known informally as the Noichl Report after its rapporteur Maria Noichl MEP, passed by 341 votes to 281, with 81 abstentions.

Alyn said:

"The genius of the European Union is that while the Member States are very much in charge of running their own affairs, we can lead by example and be constructive in our criticism, and set more progressive targets as a collective for the Member States to live up to.

"Today's report is just such an example, and it's about time. The Noichl Report covers areas ranging from economic independence to gender-based violence. It calls on the Commission to assist Member States in drawing up action programmes for gender equality, and to pay special attention to new forms of violence against women, such as cyber-stalking.

"Universal access to sexual and reproductive health is a fundamental human right, and I refuse to pander to the Right when talking about rape survivors being denied access to safe abortions, or when little girls are hauled away to experience the barbarism of female genital mutilation (FGM).

"In the true spirit of gender equality, it stresses the importance of flexible working to allow both men and women to balance work and family life. The report suggests a minimum of 10 days of parental leave to be divided between both parents, which throws into sharp contrast the very attractive Scandinavian systems for parental leave, with the rather lower rights in other jurisdictions.

"LGBTI rights are also covered via an inclusive definition of family, and transgender rights safeguarded. Member States should enable the full legal recognition of a person's preferred gender on all security documents.

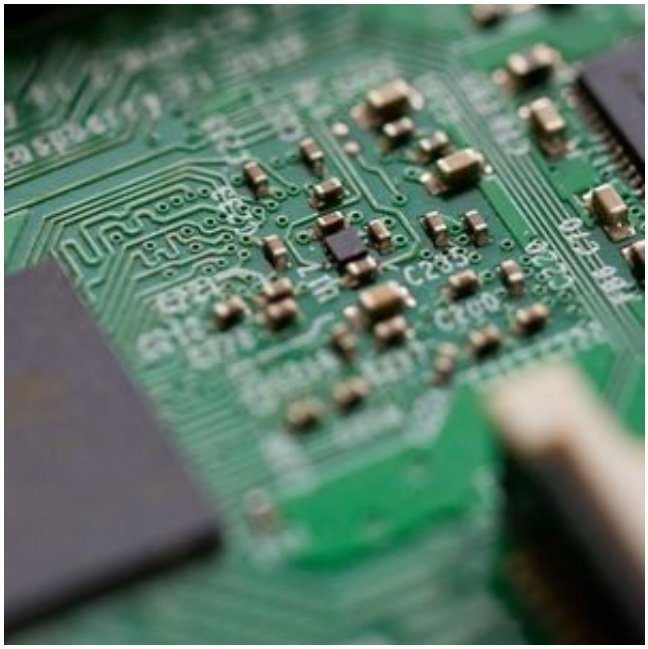
"Parliament has also voted to ratify the Istanbul Convention on domestic violence. Countries ratifying the treaty are obligated to protect and support victims. They must also establish services such as hotlines, shelters, medical services, counselling and legal aid.

"All in all, this is a powerful move by the European Parliament, and I'm proud to have voted in favour."

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