



FPFE

Federación
de Planificación
Familiar Estatal

Public statement

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Spanish abortion reform would endanger adolescents' health, not protect them

On 14 April, Spain's Parliament voted to accept for debate a proposed amendment to the country's abortion law that would oblige 16 and 17 year olds who decide to have an abortion to obtain the permission of their parents or legal guardians, even when such requirements may put them at risk of serious conflict, violence or abuse. This amendment, if adopted, would be a threat to the health of these adolescents who may then turn to clandestine and unsafe abortions.

FPFE President Luis Enrique Sanchez underlines that requiring such permission to practise abortion "is not going to protect these adolescents, as was made clear in the past. The data shows that they will continue to abort, without informing their parents or a judge, and do so unsafely." With this new application for amendment of the law, which affects a particularly vulnerable group under the age of 18 who have serious family problems, the government effectively aims to gradually "eliminate women's rights to make their own decisions on maternity, their lives, their civil rights, their sexuality and their reproductive choices," warns FPFE's President. He adds that in fact, "what any sensible government should do is encourage and develop access to family planning services for men and women, implement these issues within the education system and address pedagogical capacity building for sexuality education development in the curriculum of primary and secondary education."

With this new bill, the Government is simply seeking to cater to the most conservative part of the electorate in the forthcoming elections. Spain's ruling Partido Popular (the conservative People's Party) is trying to exploit the lack of knowledge among significant segments of the population, whom they want to mislead into believing that the existing 2010 law deprives parents of being privy to the decision of their daughters, a fact that is yet to be proven. In 2014, 3.6 percent of all abortions in Spain were by young people between the ages of 16 and 17. Of that percentage, only 12.38 percent that is, between 400 and 500 adolescents, did not inform their parents, in line with the law that protects adolescents when there is the possibility that such information could cause a serious conflict or even domestic violence within the family.

The Partido Popular has once again ignored the recommendations of international organizations. The UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women recently recommended that the 2010 law on sexual and reproductive health and abortion remain unchanged, on the grounds that amending it would only further restrict access to safe and legal abortion for these adolescents. It said: "We recommend that this measure not be implemented."

FPFE believes that the bill:

1. Violates young women's right to choose and could be a violation of their legal autonomy established under the Children Act and Patient Autonomy.
2. Creates significant discrimination, considering the age of majority for clinical purposes attributed to males of the same age, because it would then mean that in all health matters, the decision and consent of the young women in question would be bypassed.
3. Ignores the fact that over 90 percent of young girls who have terminated their pregnancy in the last year have done so with the knowledge of their parents, sometimes even being accompanied by them.
4. Puts at risk a vulnerable segment of the population, the young people who may suffer abuse or physical violence from their parents, if they communicate their decision to abort. A small percentage of women also end up headed towards clandestine abortions, helplessness and legal uncertainty, and even death.

The FPFE makes a commitment to this group and has already launched social and political initiatives before the public authorities and international human rights bodies.

Furthermore, FPFE alerts health professionals to speak out, taking into account the risks that this latest ruling party move could create for the public health system.