

Fair Play South West¹ ‘Manifesto’ for the 2019 EU Elections²

Membership of the European Union has been good for UK women

1. It has enabled and empowered UK women to participate in Europe-wide networks and formal structures of women to influence policies and legislation in a way which has not always been possible within the UK itself.
2. At times when the UK government has not always had women’s equality and rights at its heart, membership of the EU has brought us:
 - a. Fundamental Treaty obligations on equal treatment of women and men;
 - b. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value;
 - c. Directives on equal treatment in pay, employment, statutory and occupational social security, access to goods and services, for example;
 - d. Rights for pregnant workers, maternity and paternity rights;
 - e. Pension rights for women;
 - f. And others³.
3. The EU has funded a number of projects within the UK specifically to advance the rights, safety and well-being of women and continues to do so⁴, including for example:
 - a. Projects to support survivors of domestic abuse, violence against women and rape;
 - b. Projects to enable women to access decent employment;
 - c. Projects which promote women’s equality and gender mainstreaming.

We don’t know how long we will be in the EU, but for as long as we are our representatives will make a difference for good or bad⁵.

Please let it be for good. Please support the ‘manifesto’ overleaf.

¹ **We are the Women’s Equality Network** in the south west of England

(<http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/>), @FPSouthWest

We are not a political party and we do not have candidates standing in this election. We issue this statement / ‘manifesto’ in case it helps people decide how to vote.

² **What do MEPs do?** Much like MPs in the UK, the main job of MEPs is to assess, amend and, ultimately, accept or reject legislation. The European Parliament is one of three EU institutions responsible for legislating. The European Commission brings forward legislation to be debated. The Council of the EU, on which ministers from national governments sit, amends, approves and rejects legislation alongside the European Parliament. The Council and Parliament both have to agree for a piece of legislation to be enacted. MEPs will also approve by a majority the next president of the European Commission. Should a candidate be approved or rejected by a small margin, British MEPs could be decisive in determining the outcome. This could call into question the legitimacy of both the president and the approval process should Brexit happen and UK MEPs leave the Parliament.

³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/59/equality-between-men-and-women>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-European-elections-and-Brexit.pdf>

In light of the benefits for women of membership of the EU:

We urge all women to vote in the upcoming EU elections on 23rd May.

The right to vote in UK elections was gained by women after nearly 30 years of campaigning, demonstrating, torture and death, until 1928 when all women were finally given the same rights as men to vote. This hard won right must not be squandered.

Voting is a women's right.

We urge all voters to vote for candidates who will take their seats in the European Parliament in a positive way.

Some candidates have announced their intention, if elected, to disrupt the activities of the Parliament so as to show their disapproval of the EU itself. Such a negative attitude would not advance the needs of UK people and their election would be a lost opportunity to influence the EU to make progressive policy and legislation for women.

We urge all women to vote for candidates who do not incite violence or express hate against women, or anyone else.

We urge all women to question candidates on how they will aim to progress women's equality and rights if they are elected.

We urge all people to vote for candidates who either have a track record of working for women's equality and rights and/or promise to do so.