

Spain's far-right Vox requests names of gender-violence workers in Andalusia

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The party claims it has seen complaints that some government employees are unqualified to shape decisions on child custody and abuse

Vox, a Spanish far-right party that gained parliamentary representation at regional elections in Andalusia last December, wants to know the names of government workers who deal with gender violence.

Francisco Serrano, a Vox deputy and the party leader in the southern region, has filed a parliamentary request asking the Andalusian government for the identities of all the workers at its Gender Violence Integral Assessment Units.

Vox said the petition is one of many it will file to monitor how the funds received in recent years are being used

These units comprise psychosocial teams from family courts and other experts specializing in minors, and their job is to evaluate the risk factor for women who suffer from gender violence.

Serrano also wants to see the registration numbers showing that these experts are members of the relevant professional associations. The request encompasses "all the psychologists, social workers and forensic doctors" who have served with these units between 2012 and 2019.

Vox earned 12 seats at the Andalusia regional elections on a message that included strong criticism of Spain's gender-violence legislation, and its leaders campaigned for a repeal of these laws, which they view as biased.

Governing deal

The party agreed to support the Popular Party (PP)'s Juan Manuel Moreno as the new regional premier in exchange for concessions on education, family and cultural issues. While Vox itself is not part of the new administration, which is shared out between the PP and Ciudadanos, it holds the key to getting legislation passed.

"We have received complaints from people assuring that these workers are not qualified to perform their duties on gender violence issues or on decisions regarding the custody of minors, and that in some cases they are not even registered with any professional association," said a party source, according to Spanish daily ABC.

Serrano himself once worked as a family judge and in 2011 he was suspended for bending the law in a child custody case. At the time, and later as a lawyer, he repeatedly questioned the ability and effectiveness of the services that he is now requesting information about.

In a tweet shared on Thursday, Serrano reiterated his belief that “judges are entering judgments on the strength of reports made by unqualified and highly ideologized professionals, and which can determine the freedom of an accused party or the future of children.”

Vox’s spokesperson in the regional parliament, Alejandro Hernández, said that the request for information is just one of “many that Vox will file to monitor how the funds received in recent years are being used.”

Former Andalusia premier Susana Díaz, whose Socialist Party (PSOE) held power in the region for 36 straight years until its December defeat, equated Vox’s initiative with “the blacklists of 40 years ago.”

Women’s rights have often been targeted by the far-right party, which hopes to reap additional success at the upcoming local, regional, national and European elections. Vox’s 100-point campaign program included the repeal of gender violence legislation, axing abortions subsidized by the public healthcare system, eliminating gender parity in political parties, and shutting down “radical feminist subsidized organizations.”

Vox wants to offer women “alternatives” to “avoid the tragedy of abortion”

It will now be up to the parliamentary board, where the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox hold a majority, to decide whether the petition gets accepted. The chamber’s legal advisors will analyze whether Vox’s request breaches data privacy laws.

If the petition is accepted, it will get passed along to the regional justice department, to which the gender violence units report. This department is currently under the stewardship of Andalusian deputy premier Juan Marín, of Ciudadanos.

Vox has accused the previous Socialist administration of wasteful spending on gender violence policies. Between 2016 and 2018, the Andalusian government allocated €33.5 million through the Andalusia Women’s Institute (IAM). Most of those subsidies are handled locally by councils of all political stripes, which provided services to 102,000 women across the region in 2018.

During the recent negotiations to form a new government, Vox unsuccessfully pushed for a Family department that would provide special assistance to large families and adopt “pro-birth” policies. As for abortion, which is available on demand in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, Vox wants to offer women “alternatives” to “avoid the tragedy of abortion.”

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