



COMECE position on the European Citizens' Initiative "My Voice, My Choice"

COMECE calls on Members of the European Parliament to avoid further tension within the European Union and to vote responsibly, with due respect for the existing EU order of competences in the field of abortion and for existing EU health programmes.

Ahead of the vote in the European Parliament on the European Citizens' Initiative "My Voice, My Choice, For Safe and Accessible Abortion" (ECI (2024) 000004), the Secretariat of COMECE wishes to express serious concerns regarding the overall objective of this initiative and to call on Members of the European Parliament to exercise responsibility in their vote, taking into account the implications of this initiative in the current context.

COMECE raises these concerns from the perspective of the teaching of the Catholic Church, which has consistently affirmed that "human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception... Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§2270–2271). At the same time, we speak as concerned European citizens, fully committed to the European integration process and deeply worried, in this highly polarised context, about attempts to bypass national competences and the principle of subsidiarity for ideological reasons. Moreover, we believe that women in vulnerable situations need forms of support other than those proposed by the present and similar initiatives aimed at facilitating abortion.

The aim of the "My Voice, My Choice" initiative is to create an EU funding mechanism for abortion-related services in the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights within the European Union. It is true that according to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union is called to enhance access to quality healthcare with the aim of achieving universal health coverage. However, the same Treaty clearly states that "the Union's action shall respect the responsibilities of the Member States for the definition of their health policy and for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care" (Article 168(7) TFEU). This is particularly relevant in highly sensitive areas such as the regulation of abortion, where Member States have adopted different legal frameworks reflecting ethical and societal choices.

A financial support mechanism must not have the aim or effect of undermining the public order legislation of Member States, nor, more generally, the healthcare and ethical decisions taken by Member States in the exercise of their competences in health matters.

COMECE also wishes to underline that the collective term “sexual and reproductive health and rights” cannot include abortion as an essential health service that should be made universally available. A medical intervention of such gravity and with such important ethical implications cannot and must not be normalised. Other legal frameworks, based on ethical policy decisions made by Member States, are both possible and legitimate.

Furthermore, we would like to indicate that existing EU health programmes, such as the *EU 4 Health Programme 2021 -2027*, already take into account, particularly in cross-border situations, that there is a need for strong, more resilient, and accessible health systems in the European Union respecting the EU order of competences.

COMECE therefore strongly encourages Members of the European Parliament to act with responsibility and respect for the existing EU order of competences and to avoid an unwarranted expansion of existing EU health programmes. In the debate on abortion, what is needed is not further ideological division, but rather prudent policies that genuinely protect and support women, while also safeguarding unborn human life.