



Statement of the Nordic Catholic Bishops to the Report on the Situation of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the EU, in the Framework of Women's Health presented by MEP Predrag Fred Matic

The promotion of human dignity is an essential concern for the Catholic Church. This concern includes an endeavour to foster, and work towards, access to health care for everyone. It involves combating discrimination and the social and cultural prejudice that conditions the destiny of many people, especially women. We see, then, many positive elements in this report.

At the same time, we take issue with the move, explicit in the report, to classify abortion as a healthcare measure and a human right. By definition, healthcare measures and human rights are intended to *secure* people's health and to *protect* their lives. That cannot exclude the life of the unborn.

A classification of abortion as a healthcare measure and a human right blurs these concepts, opening them to arbitrary interpretation.

Such a move would further marginalise persons, institutions, and countries that oppose abortion, presenting them as being in opposition to 'human rights'.

In the context of the European Union, this initiative interferes unduly with the legitimate autonomy of each member state to elaborate its own legislation on abortion and other ethical issues.

By proposing to define the right of healthcare personnel to conscientious objection as a problem and a challenge to law, the report jeopardises individuals' entitlement to follow their conviction in moral and religious matters, placing them at risk of losing their job or even barring them from access to work in healthcare.

As Catholic Bishops we defend human life from conception to natural death. We work for the right of individuals, politicians, and institutions to question abortion without being marginalized or subject to discrimination. We wish to ensure that the complex issue of abortion will remain, for the good of all, a subject of enlightened public debate.

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On behalf of the Nordic Bishops' Conference

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