



Brussels, 14 April 2020

Dear Ms Elżbieta Witek, Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland,
Dear Members of the Polish Parliament,
Dear Colleagues,

As Members of the European Parliament, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the Parliamentary Document no 39 on amending the act of June 6, 1997 - the Penal Code - known as the “Stop paedophilia” bill - and Parliamentary Document No 36 on the amendment to the Act of 7 January 1993 on family planning, protection of the human fetus and conditions for the termination of pregnancy -known as “Stop Abortion” bill - that will be debated in a first reading in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in your sitting of the 15-16 April 2020.

We are convinced that measures that roll back protections for women’s human rights and self-determination are of grave concern as they undermine a core European Union value, that of advancing gender equality. Under human rights law measures that undermine or restrict existing rights are not permitted and these draft bills violate Poland’s obligation to ensure ever greater protection of human rights.

We are deeply concerned that the “Stop Abortion” bill provide for the prohibition of termination of pregnancy due to severe or fatal foetal anomalies, currently a legal ground for abortion in Poland. Poland’s Act of 1993 on Family Planning, Protection of Human Fetus and the Conditions of Legal Pregnancy Termination is one of the most restrictive laws on abortion in the European Union. The bill would in effect result in a near total denial of access to legal abortion in Poland as most legal abortions are performed under this ground.

The adoption of the “Stop Abortion” bill would violate Poland’s international human rights obligations to protect women’s rights to privacy, health, and freedom from inhuman treatment. International human rights bodies have repeatedly affirmed that highly restrictive abortion laws contravene human rights standards and must be reformed.

We would like to stress that unhindered and timely access to reproductive health services and respect for women’s reproductive autonomy and decision-making is critical to protecting women’s human rights and gender equality. It is essential to ensure the health, human dignity, physical and mental integrity, and reproductive autonomy of women and girls.

Furthermore, we want to express our concern regarding the “Stop paedophilia” bill which would in effect prohibit sexuality education, criminalise teachers, health care workers and other educational professionals, and promote stigma, harmful stereotypes and homophobia. The bill would contravene Poland’s international human rights obligations and we reiterate our call to guarantee the rights to receive comprehensive sexuality education and information as well as

access sexual and reproductive health care for young people in Poland in line with the [European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2019](#).

We are convinced that young people must be empowered and protected through age-appropriate information about sex and sexuality and access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. By restricting the access to such information, the proposed bill puts at risk the health and well-being of young people making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Educators, doctors and carers must be supported, protected and encouraged to be able to provide this essential information. We recall that Poland has a duty under international human rights law to provide mandatory, age-appropriate, standardised, evidence-based and scientifically accurate comprehensive sexuality education.

We respectfully urge Members of the Polish Parliament to reject these two initiatives and to refrain from any further attempts to restrict women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights in Poland.

Yours sincerely,

All of Us Coordinators:

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