

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003006/24
to the Commission
Arba Kokalari (PPE)
(18 December 2024)**

Subject: Abortion rights in the EU

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has recently published a report criticising Poland's restrictive abortion laws and stating that they are resulting in serious and systematic breaches of women's human rights, and that the breaches themselves can be regarded as torture or cruel or inhuman treatment. The criminalisation of abortion creates a climate of fear where doctors do not discuss pregnancy termination with their patients. In cases where patients have to wait until a health risk has developed into a life-threatening condition, they are also reluctant to seek abortion owing to uncertainty and fear.

What specific steps is the Commission intending to take to ensure that women throughout the EU can enjoy their fundamental rights, including the right to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to prevent similar breaches occurring in other Member States?

Submitted: 18.12.2024

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(18 March 2025)**

The Commission is strongly committed to upholding and promoting the fundamental rights of women throughout the EU. The Commission is also fully committed to advancing women's rights and gender equality in all policy areas, including health policies and it recognises that sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are an essential part of achieving gender equality.

This is evident in the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 ⁽¹⁾, which stresses that the EU supports women's human rights, its defenders, SRHR, and efforts to curb sexual and gender-based violence throughout the world.

However, it is important to note, that regulatory powers regarding health policies and therefore SRHR and sexual education, lie within the competences of the Member States. The EU competence is limited to encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, to lend support to their action.

The Commission organises exchanges of best practices on gender equality, in the context of its Mutual Learning Programme ⁽²⁾, including on women's health and SRHR.

The directive on combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence ⁽³⁾, adopted in May 2024, obliges Member States to ensure that victims of sexual violence have access to healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare services, in accordance with national law.

The Commission will continue promoting women's rights throughout the EU and across policy areas, including SRHR. The Commission presented a Roadmap for Women's Rights in connection with the International Women's Day in March 2025 and the principles identified in the roadmap will guide the development of the next Gender Equality Strategy post-2025.

⁽¹⁾ Gender equality strategy — European Commission https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

⁽²⁾ Mutual learning programme <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/mutual-learning-programme.html#:~:text=The%20mutual%20learning%20programme%20%28MLP%29%20encourages%20EU%20countries,EU%20countries%20at%20national%2C%20regional%20and%20local%20level>

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj/eng>