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Answer given by Ms Lahbib
on behalf of the European Commission
(16.4.2026)

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1057, aims to improve social cohesion and economic well-being across the EU¹. Recital 18 of the Regulation stipulates that the ESF+ should also be used to enhance timely and equal access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, such as healthcare. Therefore, the ESF+ can support initiatives, selected at national level, that aim to ensure and enhance equal and timely access to healthcare services, such as abortion.

Article 7(4) of the Regulation stipulates that Member States shall allocate 25% of their resources to objectives for social inclusion, which includes enhancing equal and timely access to healthcare. The EU competence pursuant to Article 168(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, to provide financial support for healthcare services, encompasses sexual and reproductive healthcare services that are legal in a Member State, including services relating to legal abortions².

The ESF+ strand is implemented through shared management, however it leaves it to the Member States to identify which objectives are to be supported through their programmes. Therefore, if a Member State wishes to use its ESF+ resources to realise the objectives of the citizens' initiative, it is necessary to ensure this is possible under their current programme. If not, the Member State concerned, who may still wish to use its ESF+ resources to realise the objectives of the citizens' initiative, may decide to amend its programme to include this type of action.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013, OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, pp. 21–59, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj>.

² Communication from the Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative 'My Voice, My Choice: For Safe and Accessible Abortion', [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=C\(2026\)3225&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=C(2026)3225&lang=en).