
EU Parliament: resolution on “right to abortion” approved in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Reprimands to Italy, Poland and Malta

At the end of the plenary session in Brussels, the European Parliament expressed, by a large majority (336 votes for, 163 votes against, 39 abstentions), its will to include the so-called “right to abortion” in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Such resolution is not binding, but it certainly has remarkable political weight. In the text, the MEPs condemn “regression on women’s rights and all the attempts at limiting or removing obstacles to health, sexual and reproductive rights, and gender equality, on a global scale, even in the EU member States”. Article 3 of the Charter should be amended – they ask – to state that “everyone has a right to independent decision-making about their own body, to free, informed, complete and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the relevant health services without discriminations, including access to safe and legal abortion”. The text calls on the EU countries to “completely decriminalise abortion in compliance with the 2022 WHO guidelines and to remove and fight against obstacles to abortion”, while inviting Poland and Malta to repeal their laws and other measures that forbid and limit abortion. The MEPs condemn the fact that, in some member States, “abortion is refused by doctors and sometimes by whole medical institutions, based on a ‘conscience’ principle, often in situations in which a potential delay would endanger the patient’s life or health”. In particular, the EU Parliament points out that, in Italy, access to assistance for abortion “is being eroded and a wide majority of doctors states they are conscientious objectors, something that de facto makes assistance for abortion extremely difficult in some regions”. According to the text, “abortion methods and procedures should be a compulsory part of the curriculum for doctors and medical students”, Parliament states. The EU member States should “guarantee access to the whole range of services for sexual and reproductive health and the relevant rights, including complete and age-appropriate sex and relationship education”. “Accessible, safe and free contraceptive methods and supplies, as well as family planning advice, should be provided, while taking care of reaching out to the more vulnerable groups”. And, last but not least, the MEPs say they are worried at the “remarkable increase in funding to anti-gender and anti-choice groups all over the world, including in the EU”. They call on the EU Commission to make sure the organisations that work against gender equality and women’s rights, including reproductive rights, receive no funds from the EU.

Valentina Bombelli