



**TO: Hon. José Manuel Barroso,**  
President of the European Commission

Brussels, 09 April 2014

**CC: Hon. Mairé Geoghegan-Quinn,**  
Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science  
**Hon. Andris Piebalgs,**  
Commissioner for Development

Hon. Mr. Barroso, Hon. Ms. Geoghegan-Quinn, Hon. Mr. Piebalgs,

**RE: ECI(2012)000005 – “One of Us”.**

The ECI in question calls for a ban on EU funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programmes and services in developing countries. Such a ban would undermine international efforts to reduce maternal mortality as well as the fight against HIV/AIDS, child marriage and sexual abuse.

The European Parliament is to hold a public hearing on April 10 and the European Commission will adopt a Communication in response to the above referenced ECI(2012)000005. We, the undersigned organisations, are writing to express our deep concern regarding this initiative. The ECI in question seeks to introduce additional provisions to EU regulations: Regulation (EC, Euratom) N.1605/2002 and Regulation (EC) N. 1905/2006. These riders aim to ensure that no EU funding will be allowed for activities that destroy human embryos, or that presume their destruction<sup>i</sup>. In addition, the ECI aims to prohibit EU from “directly or indirectly” funding abortion services in developing countries by banning funding to organisations that “encourage or promote abortion”<sup>ii</sup>. This could negatively affect a whole range of SRHR programmes and services.

The implications of such a ban would be devastating. Complications from pregnancy, childbirth and unsafe abortions are among the leading causes of death for women aged 15-49 in low and middle-income countries. In total, 800 women die every day due to these complications.<sup>iii</sup> These deaths are largely preventable if adequate measures are put in place to ensure access to essential sexual and reproductive health services. These measures include education and information about sexuality and reproduction, access to contraception and family planning, maternal health services and treatment of the consequences of unsafe abortion. Banning funding would affect all these services, and would put the most vulnerable populations at risk.

Barring funding for these services would run counter to the EU consensus on SRHR, which is stated in a number of key EU documents<sup>iv</sup>. It would also undermine international agreements and UN resolutions<sup>v</sup>. Such a ban would threaten existing achievements in the field of maternal and reproductive health: the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action has contributed to fewer women dying in pregnancy and childbirth; skilled birth attendance has increased by 15 per cent worldwide since 1990; more women now have access to education, work and political participation; more children are going to school, and fewer adolescent girls are having babies<sup>vi</sup>.

In addition, the ECI calls for a ban on EU funding for human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research, even though the EU recently renewed its support for such research in Horizon 2020<sup>vii</sup>. The EU has indeed recognised the positive therapeutic results this research could lead to for a number of degenerative diseases (e.g. heart failure, diabetes, Parkinson’s, Huntington’s and Alzheimer’s) while maintaining strict ethical limits.

All our organisations uphold the basic human right to access these sexual and reproductive health services in accordance with UN and EU values and consensus. Many of our organisations provide essential, life-saving SRHR services to millions of women, young people and men around the world.

We therefore call on the European Commission to maintain its strong commitment to SRHR and continue in its leadership role in this area. We urge the Commission to refuse to act on this initiative, which would put the health and lives of millions at risk.

We look forward to your response and remain at your disposal for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

**Vicky Claeys**  
Regional Director  
International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network

**Viviane Teitelbaum**

President of the European Women's Lobby  
European Women's Lobby

**Johanna Westeson**

Regional Director for Europe  
Centre for Reproductive Rights

**Renate Baehr**

Executive Director  
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung

**Pierre-Arnaud Perrouty**

President  
European Humanist Federation

**Neil Datta**

Secretary  
European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development

**Thilde Knudsen**

Head of Europe Office  
Marie Stopes International

**Dr. Nicolas J. Beger**

Director  
Amnesty International  
European Institutions Office

**Evelyne Paradis**

Executive Director  
ILGA-Europe

**Richard Köhler**

Deputy Executive Director  
Transgender Europe

**Brian West**

Chair  
European AIDS Treatment Group

**Michele LeVoy**

Director  
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants

**Isabel Escribano Fernández**

Dpto. Proyectos y Programas  
Asociación de Investigación y Especialización sobre Temas Iberoamericanos

**Luis Enrique Sanchez Acero**

President  
Federación de Planificación Familiar Estatal

**Estrella Ramil Paz**

Director  
COOPERACCIÓ

**Encina Villanueva Lorenzana**

Gender Coordinator  
Intercambio y Solidaridad InteRed

**Francisco Pineda**

Director  
Paz y Desarrollo

**Claudia Thallmayer & Ursula Dullnig**

Coordinators  
WIDE – Network for Women’s Rights and Feminist Perspectives in Development

**Daniela Colombo**

President  
Associazione italiana donne per lo sviluppo

**Joanna Maycock**

Director for Country Coordination  
ActionAid International

**Ana Rosa Alcalde**

Director  
Alianza por la Solidaridad

---

<sup>i</sup> Regarding Regulation (EC, Euratom) N.1605/2002 the ECI(2012)000005 states that the “EU should establish a ban and end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health.”

<sup>ii</sup> Regarding Regulation (EC) N. 1905/2006 the ECI(2012)000005 aims to ensure that “The assistance of the Union, on the basis of this Regulation, shall not be used to fund abortion, directly or indirectly, through the funding of organizations that encourage or promote abortion. No reference is made in this Regulation to reproductive and sexual health, health care, rights, services, supplies, education and information at the International Conference on Population and on Development, its principles and Program of Action, the Cairo Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, in particular MDG n. 5 about health and maternal mortality, can be interpreted as providing a legal basis for using EU funds to finance directly or indirectly abortion.”

<sup>iii</sup> [www.who.int/whr/2005/whr2005\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/whr/2005/whr2005_en.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> European Consensus for Development: [www.ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european\\_consensus\\_2005\\_en.pdf](http://www.ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european_consensus_2005_en.pdf), European Development Cooperation Instrument: [www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201312/20131204ATT75464/20131204ATT75464EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201312/20131204ATT75464/20131204ATT75464EN.pdf), EU Council Conclusions on the Overarching Post 2015 Agenda [http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article\\_13692\\_en.htm](http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_13692_en.htm), European Parliament resolution of 13 June 2013 on the Millennium Development Goals – defining the post-2015 framework: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2013-0165&language=EN>

<sup>v</sup> Resolution 2122 (2013) on Women and Peace and Security, adopted by the UN Security Council at its 7044<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 18 October 2013. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2122>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/sitemap/ICPDReport>

<sup>vii</sup> Article 19 of the REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC