

## Press release – Polish de facto ban on abortion puts women's lives at risk, says Parliament



In a resolution adopted with 455 votes to 145 and 71 abstentions, Parliament says that the ruling of 22 October by Poland's Constitutional Tribunal to make abortion illegal in cases involving severe and irreversible foetal defects "puts women's health and lives at risk", as most legal abortions in the country are performed on those grounds. Banning that option, which accounted for 96% of legal pregnancy terminations in Poland in 2019 (1,074 out of 1,110), would lead to an increase in "unsafe, clandestine and life-threatening abortions", MEPs warn.

The text notes that the decision was made by "judges who are elected by and are fully dependent on politicians from the ruling coalition led by the Law and Justice Party (PiS)".

### **Women's rights are fundamental human rights**

Parliament underscores that, in line with the European Court of Human Rights' case law, restrictive abortion laws violate women's human rights. MEPs agree 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.

Women's rights are fundamental rights, states the Chamber, recalling that the EU institutions and the member states are legally obliged to uphold and protect them. MEPs point out that Polish medical professionals are increasingly invoking the conscience clause, even when asked to prescribe contraceptives, or to prevent access to prenatal screening. Thousands of Polish women are forced to travel abroad every year to access a health service as essential as abortion, further endangering their health and

putting their wellbeing at risk, they add.

### **Support protesters, not violence**

MEPs express their support and solidarity with Polish citizens, in particular women and LGBTI+ persons who “despite the public health risks, took to the streets to protest against grave restrictions on their fundamental freedoms and rights”. They note that the ruling was made when there were severe restrictions in place to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, “impeding any proper democratic debate”.

The text condemns the excessive and disproportionate use of force and violence against protesters by law enforcement forces and others such as far-right nationalistic groups.

### **Rule of law is collapsing in Poland – the EU must act**

According to Parliament, this ruling is “yet another example of the political takeover of the judiciary and the systemic collapse of the rule of law” in Poland. MEPs ask the Commission to assess the unlawful composition of the Constitutional Tribunal. According to the Parliament, the Tribunal’s composition constitutes grounds for challenging its rulings and thus its ability to uphold the Polish Constitution. The Council, for its part, should address this and other allegations of violations of fundamental rights in Poland in the framework of the Article 7(1) proceedings.

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## **[Press release – Deal on lobsters gets go-ahead from Parliament](#)**



In exchange for the elimination of duties on live or frozen lobster imported

from the US, the EU will get duty relief of a comparable economic value on its [own products](#), such as prepared meals, certain crystal glassware and cigarette lighters. This is the first EU-US negotiated tariff-reduction in over 20 years, and is applicable for all WTO trading partners.

Parliament supported the agreement with 638 votes for, 45 against and 11 abstentions “as a basis for renewed constructive transatlantic engagement”.

The resolution notes that the EU and the US have been engaged in a dispute over US tariffs levied in June 2018 on European steel and aluminium and agricultural products.

**[Bernd Lange](#) (S&D, DE), rapporteur**

“Over the last few years, trade relations between the EU and the US have been marked by tension. This deal on lobsters clearly shows that the EU prefers cooperation to confrontation. The US must stop slapping unilateral tariffs on our companies. We have to settle the Airbus-Boeing case and explore how we can act together, for example, on WTO reform. We must keep in mind that we have more in common than what divides us,” said the rapporteur who also chairs the Trade Committee.

#### **Next steps**

[Council has already approved](#) the regulation. Following the plenary vote, the regulation will enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Journal, with retroactive effect from 1 August 2020.

#### **Background**

In the first EU-US tariff reduction deal in two decades, the two partners agreed on 21 August to eliminate or reduce customs duties for a small number of tariff lines covering €168 million of EU and US exports. Check the [list of products here](#).

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**[Press release – MEPs condemn Turkey’s activities in Varosha, Cyprus, and call for sanctions](#)**



In a resolution adopted by 631 votes in favour, 3 against and 59 abstentions, MEPs condemn Turkey's illegal activities in the Varosha suburb of the city of Famagusta and warn that its partial "opening" weakens prospects of a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem, exacerbating divisions and entrenching the permanent partition of the island.

MEPs call on Turkey to transfer Varosha to its lawful inhabitants under the temporary administration of the UN (in accordance with [UN Security Council Resolution 550 \(1984\)](#)) and to refrain from any actions that alter the demographic balance on the island through a policy of illegal settlement.

### **Tough sanctions against Turkey**

A sustainable solution to reunify the island of Cyprus and its people can only be found through dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiations, MEPs stress. They call on the European Council to maintain its unified position on Turkey's illegal actions and impose tough sanctions in response.

MEPS regret that the Turkish authorities have endorsed the two-state solution for Cyprus and reiterate their support for a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement on the basis of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with a single international legal status. They also call on the EU to play a more active role in bringing the negotiations under UN auspices to a successful conclusion.

### **Tense EU-Turkey relations**

As Turkey distances itself more and more from European values and standards, EU-Turkey relations are at a historic low, warns Parliament. Its illegal and unilateral military actions in the Eastern Mediterranean infringe on the sovereignty of EU member states Greece and Cyprus. MEPs also point out Turkey's direct support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as its actions in Libya and Syria.

### **Background**

The Turkish army fenced off Varosha immediately after the invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The Greek Cypriots who fled from Varosha were not allowed to return and with public entry prohibited, Varosha has effectively become a ghost town.

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## **Re-election of EIOPA's Vice-Chairperson and changes to EIOPA's Management Board composition**

Today, the Board of Supervisors of the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) re-elected Mr Peter Braumüller, Managing Director of Insurance and Pension Supervision at Austrian Financial Market Authority (FMA) as Vice-Chairperson of EIOPA.

In addition, Ms Zuzana Silberova, Executive Director of the Financial Market Supervision Department at the Czech National Bank was re-elected as a Member of the Management Board for a second term of office, and Mr Alberto Corinti, member of the Board of Directors at Italian national supervisory authority, Istituto per la Vigilanza sulle Assicurazioni (IVASS) was elected as a member of the Management Board.

The [Management Board](#) , chaired by EIOPA's Chairperson, Gabriel Bernardino, ensures that EIOPA carries out its mission and performs the tasks assigned to it in accordance with its Regulation.

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## **Press release – MEPs warn of deteriorating fundamental rights in the EU**



MEPs strongly condemn the efforts in some member states to weaken the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary and reiterate the critical need for an [EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights](#). They point to attacks on media freedom, independence and pluralism, highlighting the democratic role of journalists and whistle-blowers. They also call on member states to refrain from adopting laws that restrict the freedom of assembly, and to put an end to disproportionate and violent interventions by law enforcement authorities.

### **Protection for disadvantaged people**

Vulnerable groups (particularly women, people with disabilities, the elderly, children, migrants, Roma, Travellers and LGBTI+ people), have been disproportionately affected by cuts in government spending, MEPs say, and call for policies that take into account human, economic and social rights. They also draw attention to the importance of a just environmental transition, protecting young people priced out of housing, and to children in poverty.

The report condemns the “organised backlash” against gender equality and women’s rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, stressing the right to modern contraceptive methods and safe and legal abortions. It also strongly condemns the alarming rate of femicide in the EU and the segregation of Roma women in maternal health care, calling for this discriminatory practice to be banned immediately, as well as for remedies for the victims of forced sterilisation.

Parliament expresses grave concern over reports that asylum seekers are facing violent pushbacks and over the humanitarian situation in hotspots. Intimidation, arrests and criminal proceedings against organisations and individuals for providing humanitarian assistance must end. Humanitarian corridors and humanitarian visa programmes must be set up.

### **Tackling extremism**

MEPs warn that hate speech and different forms of racism are becoming normalised, not only by extremists but also by certain government representatives or political leaders, and call for an effective ban on neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups. They also condemn all attacks on Christians, and call for their equal treatment in Europe and worldwide, following attacks at places of Christian worship.

Further, Parliament:

- underlines the link between organised crime, corruption and freedom of expression, detention facilities, social rights access and human trafficking;
- is concerned about the shrinking space of civil society;
- underlines the risks associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence and data processing for behavioural manipulation; and
- highlights prison conditions, calling for common EU standards in line with international law.

The report was adopted with 330 votes in favour, 298 against and 65 abstentions.