

Position Statement

Access to safe, quality and legal abortion and a safe care post-abortion

EMA believes that it is the right of every woman to have control over her own body, to have access to safe, quality and legally provided abortion and a post-abortion care.

It is universally recognised that sexual and reproductive rights are fundamental qualities to any human [1] which means that every woman has the right to make informed choices regarding her opportunities provided within the law to terminate pregnancy [2]. Pregnancy happens in women's bodies and women must have the liberty to decide on it. More than that abortion allowed by the law and performed in conditions of safety, is every woman's human, fundamental and civilized right.

Unfortunately, there are still countries in Europe with highly restrictive abortion laws that do not permit a termination of pregnancy on request or on broad social grounds. Although 41 European countries have endorsed legislation that allows abortion performed based on medical advice or on woman's request, women in these countries are still faced with difficulties in having the right to have control over their own body and the autonomy to decide whether or when to become a mother [3].

Although it is demonstrated that severe complications from unsafe abortions contribute to maternal morbidity and cause between 4.7%–13.2% of maternal deaths, it is estimated that Worldwide every year about 25 million of unsafe abortions are still performed [4].

It is a well-known fact that the continued criminalization of abortion does not stop women to seek ways to discontinue their pregnancy should they have decided to do so. In many situation women are forced to access services which are neither safe nor legal and can potentially lead to severe harm, mental health issues or even death [5].

According to The European Court for Human Rights, laws that restrict abortions in all circumstances may be considered as forms of inhumane and degrading treatment [6]

EMA holds an opinion that such restrictive attitudes can be life-threatening for the woman but also lead to significant complications within the family unit and subsequently inflict the society.

The safest option for pregnancy to be discontinued, whenever this is necessary, remains the safe abortion performed in accordance with WHO guidelines and standards, thus ensuring that the risk of severe complications is minimal.

Also the access to adequate Post Abortion Care (PAC) is a critical element of women's health and has been identified as an effective intervention to decrease maternal morbidity and mortality also in settings where access to induced abortion is restricted [7].

Midwives are in position to play an important role in increasing access to induced abortion, post abortion contraceptive counselling and PAC, and scaling up their involvement in abortion care is a key strategy in expanding access to safe abortion care. Several studies have confirmed midwives' ability to provide post abortion care and abortion care using both medical and surgical methods [8,9]. All over the world midwives should be educated, prepared and allowed to provide care for women before and after a termination of pregnancy in hospital settings.

Every midwife has a duty of care to ensure that all women will receive appropriate and prompt information, advice and medical care whenever they need it. If in a particular country, there are no regulations or guidelines in relation to the statutory rights to conscientious objection to participate in care providing related to the abortion process, EMA's opinion is that WHO Guidelines [10] and European Public Health Acts should be applied and used as a Guidelines to support the midwives and other healthcare professionals.

EMA believes that sexual and reproductive rights are fundamental qualities to any human, and supports the rights and the freedom of every woman to make informed choices regarding her own body and to have the access to safe and performed by qualified clinicians legal abortions; as well as a qualified medical care during the post-abortion period.

EMA considers that the ban on abortion or the transformation of abortion into a hard-to-access service is an unjustified deprivation of the woman's rights to make an informed choice. Every society should be aware that for its welfare it is essential that the women have a right to decide freely and in dignity when and how they will plan to become mothers. Every country in Europe, and all-over the World, should guarantee the freedom and the safety of abortion by legalizing the reproductive health services and putting in place and monitoring well-designed and easily accessible healthcare services.

EMA is of the opinion that all women must have unlimited access to appropriate and evidence-based information in relation to contraception and abortion which will allow them to make informed choices and access appropriate services.

All fertile women, no matter the race or geographical position have the right to respect, dignity and physical and physical integrity and to make decisions regarding their own body.

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