

12 November 2012

To the Members of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee of the European Parliament:

As NGOs working in Europe, we write to strongly oppose the appointment of Tonio Borg as the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy. Europeans deserve commissioners who are fair, just and capable of administering the law in a manner that advances the public good. Mr. Borg is not suited for these requirements.

Mr. Borg's record and public statements over his years in the public eye in Malta suggest that his positions are inconsistent with those of the majority of Europeans. Borg's nomination raises concerns for a number of reasons, especially because of his trenchant antichoice positions and his opposition to equal rights for gay people and fair treatment for immigrants. His positions on these issues place him well outside the mainstream.

Since he is a candidate for health commissioner, of particular concern is Borg's vehement opposition to women's access to abortion, a critical component of reproductive healthcare. In 2005, Borg, who works closely with the antichoice Gift of Life movement, announced a proposal to introduce a ban on abortion into the Maltese constitution. He wrote a preamble for the Malta Charter on the Dignity, Rights, Protection and Development of the Unborn Child, a document that states that the antichoice movement "deserves to be, and can be, diffused beyond Maltese shores, amongst other societies, cultures, religions and civilizations"—meaning, "in the local, European and world scene." This suggests that Mr. Borg's views on abortion and sexual and reproductive health and rights are not just personal, ethical views, but aim at a broader European political perspective. In his capacity as EU Health Commissioner, this ideology could have an impact on domestic provisions in other Member States, thereby breaching the principle of subsidiarity.

Borg holds other positions that are troubling as well. In 2011, he voted against Malta's Divorce Bill, while the outcome of a popular referendum led to divorce being made legal. Speaking before Parliament in 2009 about parity in cohabitation laws for same-sex couples, Mr Borg said, "We will only protect those who deserve protection," rejecting the position that same-sex couples deserve fair treatment. For those who are not his fellow citizens, he holds no more respect. In 2004, Amnesty International and the European Human Rights Commissioner decried the treatment of asylum seekers under Borg's jurisdiction as Malta's Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Justice.

Mr. Borg is ill-suited to represent or to serve the European people as the Commissioner of Health. We urge the members of this committee to advise the Parliament and the President to reject Mr. Borg's appointment.

Signed,

Catholics for Choice (Global)

Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial (France)

ASTRA Youth Network (Central & Eastern Europe and Balkan countries)

AIDOS, Associazione italiana donne per lo sviluppo (Italy)

European Humanist Federation (Europe)

Dachverband Freier Weltanschauungsgemeinschaften e.V. (DFW) (Germany)

Sex og Samfund (Denmark)

Rutgers WPF (Netherlands)

Center for Reproductive Rights (Global)

ILGA-Europe (Europe)

KARAT Coalition (Central & Eastern Europe and Central Asia)

YouAct, European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights (Europe)

RFSU (Sweden)

IGLYO - the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organization (Global)

Equilibres & Populations (France)

Väestöliitto – Family Federation of Finland (Finland)