

COALITION FOR FERTILITY
Advocating for Comprehensive and Inclusive Fertility Policies in Europe:
A Collective Declaration

Involuntary childlessness, including infertility as a medical issue, is a pressing challenge for European societies. Infertility, defined as the inability to conceive after 12 months of unprotected sexual intercourse, affects more than 1 in 6 Europeans of reproductive age. Involuntary childlessness, on the other hand, extends beyond medical definitions, affecting individuals and couples struggling to conceive due to various reasons, including medical, social, or personal factors.

Europe cannot afford to leave those in need of fertility care behind. In fact, many individuals aspire to have children but cannot due to a lack of institutional and structural support, the impossibility of reconciling family and work, and no access to fertility treatment. It is imperative for states to ensure these preventable and addressable challenges do not hinder these aspirations.

Involuntary childlessness is also a complex socio-economic problem that interacts with many other factors and has gender-specific impacts. Hence, our advocacy is driven by the need for policies that are not only comprehensive but also intersectional, recognising the diversity of those affected by involuntary childlessness.

We must recognise the lived experiences of individuals with medical conditions like cancer, endometriosis, and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and others affecting male infertility, as well as that of minorities and discriminated groups, such as persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and people of colour.

There are significant discrepancies in access to fertility care, influenced by legal, financial, educational, infrastructural, and psychosocial factors. Discrimination, a lack of proper legal frameworks, a general lack of funding, and insufficient knowledge about fertility and fertility preservation, particularly among young people and cancer patients, exacerbate these challenges. Moreover, dire economies and the climate crisis are creating uncertainty, which may lead people to give up their dream of having a family or delay childbearing to an age where conceiving becomes increasingly difficult.

The implications of involuntary childlessness are profound and impact every aspect of a person's life, such as their mental health, relationships and work. Thus, this multifaceted challenge demands a bold, unified, and politically firm response. The envisioned policies must be geared towards enhancing access to comprehensive sexuality education, prevention, diagnosis and ensuring equal access to safe and effective fertility treatments, as well as psychosocial care. Whether arising from medical, genetic, environmental, or other factors, infertility is an unabating challenge requiring prompt regulatory intervention.

To address these multifaceted challenges, we call for:

- **Internationally Implementing the Right to Found a Family:** As families evolve, so must our policies. We advocate for policies supporting autonomy in personal family decisions.
- **Ensuring Universal Access to Fertility Services:** Making fertility treatments and knowledge accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.
- **Unveiling the Long-Term Challenge of Involuntary Childlessness:** Often overlooked, involuntary childlessness is a significant condition with complex implications, including its impact on mental health. Improved access to accurate and publicly available information about fertility, infertility, and involuntary childlessness is essential, alongside mental health support for those affected.
- **Implementing Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programs:** Empowering people with knowledge on fertility and family decisions.
- **Providing Targeted Support for Marginalized Groups:** Ensuring that minorities and discriminated groups receive equitable fertility care.
- **Adopting a "Fertility in all Policies" Approach:** Every policy must be assessed for its impact on people's freedom to build the family they desire. This should apply to policies with a

direct effect on biological fertility, e.g., on chemicals and pollution, as well as to policies affecting socioeconomic aspects of family planning, e.g., on employment, housing and childcare.

The Coalition urges European policymakers to recognize and address involuntary childlessness as a matter of social justice, economic stability, and human rights. We offer our collective expertise and stand ready to collaborate with governments and institutions in developing and implementing effective policies that ensure free choices in family life become a reality for all across Europe.

About the Coalition:

This Coalition is a collaborative effort of diverse partners from civil society and stakeholders united in advocating for integrated and inclusive fertility policies in Europe. We stand for policy reform to overcome involuntary childlessness, recognising the deep-seated impact on individuals and broader socio-economic domains. This Coalition aims to drive discourse and initiatives that foster reproductive health and education, reflecting a shared vision of allowing all across the continent to build the family they desire.

