

His Excellency
Mr Nicos Anastasiades
President of the Republic of Cyprus

OPEN LETTER

The Hague, July 16th, 2020

Re: Legislation and Regulation of midwifery practice in Cyprus

Your Excellency,

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) represents over one million midwives from 143 Midwives Associations in 128 countries globally. We collaborate with international organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to strengthen midwifery. ICM envisions a world where every woman and her newborn have access to quality midwifery care, provided by a competent midwife, who works in an enabling environment.

The Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association (CYNMA) (via its Midwives Committee) is our member, and has contacted us, because they are concerned about the impact of proposed legislative changes in Cyprus that govern midwifery and will impact on women's rights and access to midwifery care.

ICM supports the opinion of our member, and believes the proposed regulations to be voted by the Parliament concerning the midwifery practice in the community restricts the right of women to have direct access to a health care provider of their choice and the right to choose the place of birth by e.g. a midwife. It also devaluates the autonomy of the midwifery profession. We further believe that the proposed changes are in contradiction of Directive 2013/55/eu of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013. We therefore urge you to reconsider some of the proposed changes.

We respectfully draw your attention to the following:

1. The internationally accepted [definition and scope of practice of a midwife](#) recognises those midwives who have completed [educational programmes meeting international standards](#) and meeting [international competency standards](#), as autonomous and accountable health professionals.
2. There is no evidence that such professional midwives require supervision in order to practice, or can only be consulted after referral by an obstetrician. Indeed, this is contrary to research evidence that shows that well-educated, regulated and supported midwives working in an enabling health system are the most appropriate caregivers for women and their newborns, in part because they can provide [87% of the essential care](#) required on their own responsibility and without supervision.
3. Care by a qualified midwife is proven to be the best choice for women, their babies as well as from a health system/financing perspective. You can find detailed information of evidence [here](#) and [here](#) which includes:
 - a. Midwifery is associated with more efficient use of resources and improved outcomes when provided by midwives who are educated, trained, licenced and regulated in international standards. Midwifery is a 'best buy' investment;
 - b. Midwifery is associated with reduced maternal and neonatal morbidity, reduced interventions in labour, improved psycho-social outcomes and increased birth spacing and contraceptive use;

- c. Midwifery should be considered a core part of universal health coverage. Quality midwifery care is central to achieving national and global priorities and securing the rights of women and newborn infants;
 - d. Quality relates to the right for women and newborns to the highest standard of health and is synonymous with women-centred care. Providing quality care is most efficient through midwifery care for all childbearing women;
 - e. There were no adverse outcomes associated with midwife-led care but significant benefits, thus it is recommended that all women should be offered midwife-led continuity models of care;
4. The [European Union Professional Qualification Directive 2013/55/EU](#) and amending Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and Council should be implemented and respected by all EU members. These directives reflect the ICM Definition of the Midwife and set out in detail which professions can work without supervision, including midwives who are educated at Academic Bachelor Level. ICM is not aware of any concerns about the quality of midwifery education via the bachelor's programme in the Republic of Cyprus. Should such evidence exist we respectfully suggest that the most appropriate remedy is to invest in midwifery education to ensure that graduates are well educated and competent to practise across the scope of midwifery on their own responsibility and accountability.

Yours Sincerely,



Sally Pairman
Chief Executive ICM

Cc: Demetris Syllouris, President of the House of Representatives - Cyprus
Constantinos Ioannou, Minister of Health of the Republic of Cyprus
Constantinou Costas, Chairman of the House Standing Committee on Health Affairs-Cyprus
President of Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association