



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 14, 2011

Hungary's Pro-Life Constitution Draws Ire of European Institutions

As pro-life efforts in the United States have been gaining momentum, similar endeavors have garnered some success in European nations as well, most notably Hungary. Though 60 percent of Hungarians favor legalized abortion, the country's new constitution adamantly defends the sanctity of life.



The constitution passed the Hungarian Parliament without issue. As the debate over its ratification is taking place, however, the pro-life stance of the draft (particularly the wording in Article Two: "The life of a fetus will be protected from conception") has drawn fire from certain European institutions and the pro-abortion lobby which may interfere with its approval.

The Center for Reproductive Rights and Amnesty International are both campaigning against this particular provision, asserting that the constitution will restrict access to abortions. Also, the [Venice Commission](#) for the Council for Europe is asking to review the constitution.

When the [European Union](#) learned that Hungary used EU monies to fund the pro-life campaign to encourage support for the constitution, officials demanded that the campaign be stopped. Some officials are even insisting that the money be returned. The *Budapest Times* notes:

Hungary's use of European Union funds to finance a nationwide anti-abortion campaign is not in line with their intended purpose, the vice-president of the EU's executive said on Wednesday during a debate over Hungary's new Constitution in the European Parliament.

Central to the campaign is an emotive billboard advertisement that went up around Budapest and the provinces last month. It carries the image of a foetus and the words: "I understand if you're not ready for me yet, but give me up for adoption instead - PLEASE LET ME LIVE!"

EU functionaries contend that the monies used for the pro-life campaign were allocated for a special program that addressed work-life balance. Therefore, says Viviane Reding, Commission vice-president and European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights, and Citizenship, the campaign must be stopped. She adds:

It is not in line with the project proposal submitted to the Commission by the Hungarian authorities. The Commission asks [the Hungarian government] to stop this part of the campaign without further delay and to remove all existing posters.

According to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the pro-life advertisement campaign was intended to achieve "balanced families."



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Peter Harrach, deputy leader of the parliamentary Christian Democrat party KDNP, a group which backed the campaign, observed, "This campaign addresses women who are ready to give birth to a baby but cannot bring him or her up."

In contrast, women's rights groups such as the Hungarian Women's Lobby complain that the campaign could be the first step toward criminalizing abortion. Julia Spronz, lawyer for the Lobby, contends that the posters have turned a woman's right to abortion into "a moral question rather than a human rights issue." She adds, "It did not respect women's choices over their own bodies. Instead, it just treated their bodies as containers."

UK Independence Party leader and co-president of Europe of Freedom and Democracy Nigel Farage [warned](#) nations that membership in the European Union would result in a loss of autonomy for the member-state. Referring to the control being exercised over Ireland after it was bailed out by the EU, Farage said:

What they're being told as their government is collapsing is that it would be inappropriate for them to have a general election. In fact, they were told they had to have an agreed budget first before they are allowed to have a general election. Just who the hell do you think you people are!

Farage has adamantly declared on more than one occasion that membership in the European Union serves to eliminate both national and local independence of its members, and Hungary's clash with the EU over advertisements geared at seeking approval for its constitution appears to be a prime example of just what he meant.

In addition to the EU's interference with Hungary over its pro-life ad campaign, the Venice Commission from the Council of Europe, which has asked to review the constitution for approval, is the very same group which reviewed the notorious draft constitution of Kosovo four years ago. Its involvement now with the proposed Hungarian constitution has raised concerns. According to LifeNews.com, that Kosovo draft "enshrined abortion rights" by including provisions that preserved "the right [of a person] to have control over his/her body in accordance with the law," and also redefined marriage by removing references to men and woman and replacing them with the wording, "... everyone has the right to marry and found a family."

Even more disturbing than the content of the Kosovo constitution, however, is the process by which it was approved. Again, LifeNews.com:

The people of Kosovo were never allowed to see the draft until it was adopted, even though they held a year-long public debate on it.

The draft that the Venice Commission approved and sent to Pristina [Kosovo's capital] for adoption also made sure that international law was self-executing.

While the new Hungarian constitution includes provisions protecting it from the intrusion of international law — as it states domestic laws must be enacted in order to implement international law — the European institutions appear poised to fight it.

Roger Kiska of the European Center for Law and Justice expressed delight over the constitution, declaring it a victory for life and the family. He deprecated the "shameful" attempts by European forces to influence the passage of the constitution, asserting that the document was overwhelmingly approved by popular electoral vote. He stressed, "I hope that Hungary stays strong in its convictions because what is at stake, life and the family, are too high a price to pay simply to appease the bureaucrats in



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Brussels.”

Meanwhile, the Hungarian government continues to defend its constitution, explaining that it is in line with the European Union’s charter of human rights, and asserting that the changes were necessary in order to replace the “Stalinist” document of 1949.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the new constitution will be in effect on January 1, 2012.

Photo: Hungary’s parliament building, Budapest.



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