

To: orbanviktor@orbanviktor.hu  
Subject: Stop Budget Cut on Abortion

Dear Mr Prime Minister Viktor Orbán,

We are writing to express our concern that two Hungarian MPs of your coalition partner KDNP have introduced an amendment to the bill on Hungary's 2012 budget to delete the 400 million forints (1.374 million euros) originally planned to support the medical bills of women who cannot afford to pay for an abortion. Currently the mandatory health insurance covers only the cost of abortions carried out on health-related grounds. If the pregnancy is the result of a crime or if the abortion is requested for other, legal, reasons, the price has to be covered by the woman herself. However she can ask for a reduction or waiver based on her socioeconomic situation. It is this option that your colleagues at KDNP want to abolish.

Studies cited by the Guttmacher Institute—a highly respected think tank relied upon by both sides of the abortion debate—indicate that restricting poor girls' and women's access to abortion results in women carrying unwanted pregnancies to term against their will. This should not happen if abortion is legal in a country. Research shows also that even the poor women who manage to scrape the money together do so at a cost: they use money they would otherwise spend on utility bills, food and clothing for themselves and their children, they pawn necessary household item and and are forced to wait 2 to 3 weeks longer than those women who find themselves in a more advantaged financial situation. This results in more complicated, later abortions, and some women will undoubtedly miss the deadline for a legal abortion altogether.

Deleting this amount from next year's budget will deprive the poorest and most vulnerable of women and adolescents from the ability to exercise some control over their fertility. Thus the proposed measure would have a clear discriminatory effect, targeting those who are already in a disadvantaged position in society and making it even harder for them to regain control over their lives. Our sources in the Hungarian medical profession claim that much of this funding covers the abortion costs of teenage girls who live in poverty or in children's homes, and of other women who are so poor that the cost of an abortion (29,710 forints or 102 euros) constitutes a major barrier in their access to legal reproductive health services. These girls and women could easily lose their chance to access education; their ability to raise their already existing children could be negatively affected if they were to give birth to another child; and they could be exposed to an even deeper level of poverty.

We would like to remind the Hungarian government of its obligations under human rights law, for example, under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These treaties and their respective monitoring bodies specify that practices that discriminate against women and girls and barriers to health care must be removed in order

for Hungary to live up to its international obligations. Any steps that worsen the situation for women and girls in their access to reproductive health care and that increase discrimination shall be seen as retrogressive and are as such prohibited under international human rights law.

For the above-mentioned reasons we request you to stop this amendment by speaking up against it and by instructing members of your party to vote against it.

Respectfully yours,

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Anne-Marie Rey

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