

Statement on the participation of the President of the Croatian Medical Chamber in the “March for Life”

The president of the Croatian Medical Chamber (*Hrvatska liječnička komora, HLK*) Mr. Trpimir Goluža publically participated in the March for Life in Zagreb on Saturday, 20 May 2017. Mr. Goluža has been President of the Croatian Medical Chamber since 2015, before which he was President of the Croatian Association of Hospital Physicians (*Hrvatska udruga bolničkih liječnika, HUBOL*), an organisation he helped establish in 2014.

In addition to being a member of the Croatian Medical Chamber, Mr. Goluža is also a member of the Croatian Medical Association, the Croatian Society for Gynaecology and Obstetrics and the Croatian Society for Perinatal Medicine in addition to other international organisations.

In Croatia, the March for Life was organized by the neo-conservative citizen’s organisation In the Name of the Family (*U ime obitelji*) which promotes a set of “traditional” values and religious beliefs, but also and most importantly, a political agenda which seeks to prohibit safe and legal abortions, delegitimise gender equality, women's and LGBT rights in Croatia. Instead, In the Name of the Family **publically promotes the dangerous narrative that women's and LGBT rights are merely components of a leftist “gender ideology” and therefore equally valid other perspectives which do not uphold human rights.**

In addition to actively participating in the March Mr. Goluža also took a photo of himself wearing a “March for Life” t-shirt and posted it on his Facebook page. He furthermore posed for media photographs with Željka Markić, head of the In the Name of the Family Initiative that organised the March but was also behind the 2013 Constitutional Referendum to prohibit same-sex marriage. In doing this **Mr. Goluža, a specialist gynaecologist-obstetrician, used his public office to express his personal religious beliefs on a matter that is at the very core of his profession, breaking ethical and professional standards and causing irreparable harm to the people and profession he is supposed to represent.**

While individuals are entitled to their religious freedoms and beliefs, as a public figure and the President of the Croatian Medical Chamber, **Mr. Goluža's presence at the March for Life can only be taken as an open and public threat to women's sexual and reproductive rights in Croatia.** Indeed, taking into account how similar neoconservative movements have been effective in rolling back women's access to safe and legal abortions and other reproductive health matters in Poland and elsewhere, it is **clear that Mr. Goluža's participation in the Walk cannot be viewed as merely an expression of his personal religious beliefs and ambitions, but instead must be recognised as part of a wider political agenda that threatens to roll back the state of women's sexual and reproductive rights in Croatia.**

Professional national organisations such as the Croatian Medical Chamber represent professionals with different personal beliefs cannot be used as a platform for furthering a political agenda. **Representatives of these organisations are public figures and must be neutral and professional when appearing in public.**

In actively participating in a public event and then unabashedly publicising his participation, Mr. Goluža has used his professional platform to further his personal ambitions and in so doing has put pressure on other Croatian healthcare professionals who may not share his beliefs. None of

this is conducive to scientific discourse or to improving the status of a profession that is currently facing enormous challenges. Finally, this **behaviour sets a dangerous precedent where ethics and professional standards can be disregarded whenever it serves a powerful individual's personal gain**, regardless of the repercussions for service users and the profession.

If the President of the Croatian Medical Chamber cannot be neutral in such matters, **his membership should consider whether he should continue to be president at all.**

Signed in Zagreb, 22 May 2017

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Hollaback Croatia
Movement for a Secular Croatia
Roda – Parents in Action
SOS Rijeka – Centre for non-violence and human rights
The Association for Human Rights and Civil Participation PaRiter
The Centre for Civil Courage
The Centre for Civil Initiatives Poreč
The Centre for Research, Education and Promoting Gender Equality ZAR Vukovar
The Centre for Women's Studies Zagreb
The Centre for Women's Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka
The Emancipation Space Association
The Lesbian Group Kontra
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Trpimir Goluza

May 20 · 🌐

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