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Brussels,

Dear Mr Matic, dear Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April 2020 informing me about your concerns regarding the negative consequences on labour and birth care as well as on the protection of women's and their babies' rights in maternity care as health systems focus on tackling COVID-19.

The principles of non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men have guided me throughout my political and professional life and will continue to do so also in my role as European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. The fundamental right to health of women is at the very core of gender equality and women's rights - it is a key principle for my work.

However, according to the Treaty of the European Union, the EU has very limited competence in the area of maternal care. Definition of health policies, organisation and delivery of health services and medical care, including labour and birth care remains a Member State competence and the Commission acknowledges the differences in the EU Member States' national policies and laws in this regard.

We are fully committed to provide our support to Member States' efforts in implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant to women's health. This support is implemented through various means, including by proposing legislation, providing financial support, coordinating and facilitating the exchange of best practices between EU countries and by health promotion activities. We are facilitating regular exchanges of good practices between Member States and stakeholders on the gender aspects of health.

Mr Predrag Fred Matic  
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Please rest assured that whilst respecting the national competences of Member States, we - in particular in these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic - continue supporting the efforts of EU Member States to protect and improve the health of their citizens including the health and well-being of pregnant women, mothers and babies. Our support continues to be guided by one main objective, to ensure the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of their health systems, including when it comes to maternal care.

I would also like to inform you that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has issued a specific leaflet directed at pregnant women<sup>1</sup>, and also provides particular information on pregnant women in its regular risk assessments<sup>2</sup>.

Yours sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/leaflet-information-covid-19-pregnant-women>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-rapid-risk-assessment-coronavirus-disease-2019-ninth-update-23-april-2020.pdf>