

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Dismantling of Maternity Care by the Greek Ministry of Health**

Maternal and neonatal health is at risk in Greece. A new proposed Midwives' Scope of Practice currently pending approval seriously undermines primary and secondary perinatal care.

On the occasion of World Maternal Health Day on January 23, the government was expected to send a clear message of support to mothers, newborns and professionals who are at the front line of their care. Instead, on that very day, the proposed Midwives' Scope of Practice directly endangers perinatal health.

The Greek Ministry of Health places thousands of pregnant women at risk—particularly those living in remote areas, such as the Greek islands, or those who give birth prematurely—who are left without maternity care, if no physician is present in the facility. The new Scope of Practice is abolishing the professional right of midwives to independently conduct physiological birth in a Primary Health Care setting. Furthermore, by placing hospital-based midwives under medical supervision, the proposed legislature reinforces an outdated, highly medicalized model of care, which has been proven to increase complications and negatively affect the health of mothers and newborns. Midwifery has been an autonomous profession in Greece since 1989, as it is throughout Europe, in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC.

The proposed Scope of Practice:

- Ignores the fact that physiological childbirth is the fundamental professional right for midwives who are recognized as experts at low-risk birth without unnecessary intervention.
- Ignores the legally established prescribing rights of midwives.
- Degrades primary health care.

These omissions are not a result of negligence on the part of the committee that drafted the document. They constitute an institutional dismantling of maternity care.

By degrading midwives' right to support women at birth, the decision of the Ministry of Health:

- Contravenes both the Greek and European legal frameworks. European Directive 2005/36/EC safeguards the midwives as an autonomous regulated profession with defined competencies, including physiological birth.
- Seriously undermines the midwifery-led continuity of care model (MLCC), which is recognized as the optimal model of perinatal care and which the Greek government itself reinforced via voting for the creation of Birth Centers in 2022.
- Exacerbates the problems caused by the Greek medicalized model of care, with well-known consequences: increased cesarean section rates (more than 60%) and complications, approximately 80% induction of labor, and a huge financial burden on the National Health System.

For years, our country has been experiencing a negative trajectory in maternity care. At a time when the international scientific community clearly acknowledges that autonomous midwifery care saves lives, the government's choice is not simply wrong—it is dangerous.

The Association of Independent Midwives of Greece and the Hellenic-British Midwifery Association state unequivocally that a Scope of Practice which does not recognize the midwife as an autonomous provider of perinatal care is unacceptable. Maternal and neonatal health is not negotiable.

***Association of Independent Midwives of Greece***

***Hellenic-British Midwifery Association***

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