
Germany: abortion and surrogacy, Bishops “worried” about possible legislative shifts

The Commission on Reproductive Self-Determination and Reproductive Medicine set up by the German Federal Government published a report today containing some recommendations for lawmakers. The President of the German Bishops, Mgr Georg Bätzing, immediately said that “the Bishops’ Conference is very concerned” about what was suggested in the report. “A thorough discussion is absolutely necessary” because the Report touches on issues “related to the foundations of our society”. For example, regarding abortion, while the current legal framework protects both self-determination and the health of women and the unborn child, the recommendations indicate that abortion in the early stages may occur without the obligation of counselling, as the embryo is given a lesser right to life in the first weeks. Only when the foetus becomes able to live outside the mother’s womb should the legislator not allow abortion. Mgr Bätzing laments the fact that, according to the Commission, a “full right to life” is acquired only at birth, in contradiction to the rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court. The Report by the Federal Commission also opens to the possibility of “legally allowing surrogacy in Germany under strict conditions”: “The practice of surrogacy violates the dignity of the woman and the child”, said Mgr Bätzing. “The child must not become a commodity, and the woman carrying the child must not be exploited”. Moreover, the Commission itself voiced doubts and concerns about the risk of rights violations, and proposed legal norms to contain them: “We have considerable doubts about whether legal norms can solve the fundamental problems related to surrogacy”. For the Bishops, there is a need to maintain “the current prohibitions on egg donation and surrogacy in Germany”.

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