
Germany: Bishops back new organ transplant law. Card. Marx, “it protects freedom while also boosting donations”

The German Bishops support the reform of the organ donation law aimed at boosting donations that the Bundestag has approved in its meeting yesterday, 16 January. A heated debate has accompanied the vote in a Parliament called to decide between a law that would have introduced a system of “presumed consent” to donation, and a law that, while keeping the existing system of informed consent, has introduced a donor register, and the opportunity for citizens to be asked when renewing their national ID if they would like to donate organs. “The adopted law can transform people’s willingness to help into an individual desire to donate one’s organs”, said Card. Reinhard Marx, President of the German Bishops. “While ensuring the highest possible degree of freedom”, the law “introduces measures that raise people’s awareness of the issue of organ donation”. On the eve of the vote, the Catholic laity, too, said they were in favour of the law maintaining explicit consent, which is essential to protect the “voluntariness of the act” and the right to self-determination and avoid a “conflict between the right of the recipient and the right of the dying”, said ZDK President Thomas Sternberg. Germany has 11.5 donors per million population; Italy has 24.7; and Spain, which is the world leader, 48.0 per million (WHO figures, 2018).

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