



Herr Erwin Rüdell, MdB
Chairman of the Committee of Health of the German Bundestag

23 August 2019

Dear Herr Erwin Rüdell,

Re: Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Reform der Hebammenausbildung (Hebammenreformgesetz – HebRefG)

I am writing to you as the President of the European Midwives Association (EMA) to express our deep concern about the opposition to the long-overdue reform of midwifery education.

I had an opportunity in May 2019 to attend the Congress of German Midwives Association in Bremen. A key topic was the draft legislation and future of midwifery in Germany. During the panel discussions it was apparent how important the proposed above bill would be in implementing EU Directive 2013/55/EU and modernising the education of midwives in Germany. A long overdue step that will ensure midwives educated and trained in Germany can gain a qualification that is equal to one in every other member state.

Within its constitution EMA has objectives relating to the education of midwives. These are:

1. to promote women's general and reproductive health by disseminating best practice and advancing all aspects of midwifery. This can be achieved through establishing and maintaining the highest attainable standard of midwifery research, practice and education in the EU and wider Europe;
2. to influence the development and the implementation of EU wide legislation on midwifery education and practice;

Therefore, I wish to reiterate my support for the bill drafted on the reform of midwifery education in Germany. On behalf of all EMA members I applaud the progressive step taken by the Federal Ministry of Health in drafting this highly promising new bill.

The transitional period provided for the EU Directive started in 2013 and ends on 18.01.2020. Time is short and I am sure everyone recognises that a gradual transition is no longer an option for Germany. It is therefore even more important that everybody involved including Midwives, Gynaecology and Obstetric Associations, the Federal Government and state governments come together in a constructive way to ensure the successful transition and progression of midwifery education to university level.

On reading the open letter of the German Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, the German Association of Gynaecologists and the German Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, I found their concerns incomprehensible and non-evidence based. They appear nothing short of scaremongering and **are not** a constructive contribution towards improving the quality and safety of



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care given to women, babies and their families. This surely must be the aim of any new legislation in strengthening midwives' education.

Let me explain why, as the President of the EMA, we take such an exception to the contributions from our medical colleagues. We can assure you that a degree level university education has not impacted on the midwifery profession negatively either by becoming less attractive or that midwives no longer would choose to work in clinical practice. On the contrary, amongst all the health professionals the university applications for midwifery courses are oversubscribed. As well as the evidence clearly showing that graduate profession improves safety, reduces mortalities and co-morbidities therefore improving outcomes.

The new draft bill paves the way for a "fit-for-future" midwifery education model by bringing the best of two worlds together: clinical training and academic learning. In order to meet the higher demands of modern care, the established quality of Germany's practical midwifery training will be maintained, while the standards for academic learning will be raised to university level.

I urge you, and indeed all the members of the German Bundestag, to realise the new German Midwives Act, which as designed, will strengthen the midwifery education, improve the quality of care and outcomes for both childbearing women, their babies and families; the core indicator of health of any nation. In doing so, you will have the support of European Midwives Association and of midwives across Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Mervi Jokinen
President European Midwives Association

Cc:

Committee members of Gesundheitsausschuss Deutscher Bundestag
Ulrike Geppert-Orthofer President Deutscher Hebammen Verband