

# Why “One of us”, the European anti-choice petition, should be monitored and tackled

Posted: Tue, 17th Sep 2013 by [Julie Pernet](#)

*A statement on the "One of us" petition by **Julie Pernet** on behalf of the European Humanist Federation.*

Launched in May 2012, the European citizens' initiative "One of us" has reached the required number of signatures — 1 million — to be [presented to European institutions](#). Since the creation of this new participatory tool at the EU level, it is the [second petition](#) to reach requirements established by the Commission.

## What is it (really) for?

This petition aims at protecting "human life in Europe", "Human Dignity of every citizen in the EU" and "defend the life of the weakest", i.e. protect the human embryo from the moment of conception.

More than of a symbolic sacralisation of the human embryo — issue on which the EU has no competence — the petition calls on European institutions to act on very concrete European policies:

First, it calls on a ban of EU funding for human embryonic stem cells (hESC) research even though this funding currently applies only for countries which allow this research (such as Belgium, UK or Sweden); even though it affects 7 days frozen embryos leftover from in vitro fertilization after parents' consent; even though this promising research could help healing a number of degenerative diseases (e.g. Parkinsonism, Huntington's and Alzheimer's diseases, diabetes and heart failures).

Second, it calls on a ban of EU funding for NGOs which provide sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services in developing countries, even though these services save lives, reduce poverty and increase women's control on their sexuality and body. This initiative is part of a strong lobbying action of several countries and extremist religious organisations (such as [European Dignity Watch](#)) which spread misinformation that Europe is paying for pre-selecting children based on gender and forced abortion in poorest countries.

On a more general perspective, this initiative is another mean for conservatives to impose their values at the European level and restrict people's rights and freedom of choice.

## Who is behind it?

This initiative is funded by the Italian pro-life organization Fondazione Vita Nova (50 000 euros). It has officially been [supported by Pope Francis](#) and is represented by Patrick Gregor Puppink, Director of the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), an Evangelical anti-choice NGO based in Strasbourg (France).

The ECLJ is the European part of the American Centre for Law and Justice and has specialized in litigation at the European Court of Human Rights where it attempts to limit recognition of LGBT's and reproductive rights.

## What's next?

"One of us" has until 1st November 2013 to collect more signatures. After a verification of statements of support by national authorities, the initiative will officially be submitted to the European Commission. In the next 3 months, the organisers will have the possibility to meet Commission representatives and present the initiative to Members of the European Parliament. The Commission will then decide whether it proposes an action or not.

If conservatives are fully allowed to use European citizens' initiative to make their concerns heard at the European level, it would be serious backlash if the EU met their requests. Because as a secular entity based on shared principles, the EU cannot ground its policies on religious dogma; because as humanists, we think that freedom of research and women's sexual and reproductive health should be secured within and outside the EU and not be hampered to please anti-choice views.

The EHF calls on decision makers to secure EU funding for hESC research and SRHR when Horizon 2020 and EU budget are voted at European Parliament this autumn.

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