

February 18, 2025

Dear Members of the Dutch Parliament,

EPATH is the European Professional Association for Transgender Health, a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to promoting evidence-based healthcare, education, and research in the field of transgender health. Our members include healthcare professionals, researchers, and advocates from across Europe.

We strongly support the legislative initiative to ban conversion practices in The Netherlands. A ban on the practices is an important step in protecting transgender people and anyone who questions their gender identity from harmful treatment.

The harm transgender people can experience from conversion practices is well documented. Studies have shown that these practices can lead to severe psychological distress, increased rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation (e.g., Drescher et al. (2016), Dromer et al. (2022), Kinitz et al. (2021), Motmans et al. (2023), Turban et al. (2020)).

Adolescents and adults who are referred for gender affirming healthcare are to be treated with respect for their right to bodily and mental integrity, autonomy and self-determination and the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

This is why we advise health professionals to reject approaches that have the goal or effect of conversion. That is also why a ban on conversion practices would not affect the work of health professionals that work according to medical standards regarding transgender healthcare.

Vulnerable transgender adolescents and adults should feel safe when seeking support, medical care and mental care. Under no circumstances should a person's need for exploring their gender or their insecurities about social or medical transition be exploited to establish conversion of a person's gender identity. Medical standards are present to protect people under medical care but will not entirely prevent vulnerable transgender people experiencing lifelong mental health problems from conversion practices practiced by those who do disregard these medical standards or who work outside the medical establishment.

That is why we call upon you to affirm the legislative initiative to ban conversion practices.

Sincerely,

The Board of EPATH

References

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