

MEDIA FACT SHEET

Belgium in Context: Europe Abortion Laws 2026

Across Europe, countries are showing that progress on abortion rights is possible, even as abortion rights face global pressure. Belgium is part of this broader trend. In 2018, Belgium removed abortion from the Criminal Code and repealed the requirement for women to justify their decision by citing distress. Further reforms to improve access to abortion care are currently being considered.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Belgium allows abortion on request in early pregnancy, but outdated and harmful restrictions remain.

Belgium allows abortion on request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. After this point, abortion is permitted where the pregnancy poses a serious risk to the pregnant person's health or in situations of foetal impairment. Belgium also imposes a six-day mandatory waiting period before abortion can be accessed.

2. Belgium's law continues to criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways.

Belgium is one of 20 European countries that continue to criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways. Across Europe, 29 countries no longer criminalise women in relation to their own abortions.

3. Several reforms to Belgium's abortion law are currently under consideration.

Legislative proposals pending in Parliament seek to improve access to abortion care, including by extending the time limit for abortion on request to 14 or 18 weeks, reducing or fully removing the mandatory waiting period, and decriminalizing abortion. Proposals to enshrine abortion rights in the Belgian Constitution are also being considered by Parliament.

KEY NUMBERS: BELGIUM IN EUROPE

- ✓ **43 out of 49 European countries**, including Belgium, allow abortion on request at least in early pregnancy.
- ✓ **21 countries**, including Belgium, have enacted reforms to improve access to abortion care in the past decade.
- ✓ **21 countries**, including Belgium, provide abortion care free of charge in all circumstances or ensure it is covered under mandatory health insurance schemes.
- ✓ **3 countries** (Germany, Georgia and Hungary) impose mandatory biased or directive counselling aimed at discouraging abortion. Belgium does not.
- ✗ **20 countries**, including Belgium, still criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways.
- ✗ **14 countries** that allow abortion on request, including Belgium, still impose mandatory waiting periods.
- ✗ **16 countries** that have legalised abortion, including Belgium, still require mandatory counselling prior to abortion

EUROPE-WIDE DEVELOPMENTS

Most recent developments across Europe show that countries are continuing to repeal restrictive laws, remove barriers to care and strengthen legal protections for abortion rights.

- 1. Constitutional protection is emerging as a safeguard against rollback.**

In June 2026, Luxembourg became the second country in the region, after France in 2024, to explicitly enshrine the freedom to access abortion in its Constitution. Constitutional reform efforts are currently underway in Belgium, Sweden and Spain.

- 2. Criminalisation of abortion is increasingly being questioned.**

In April 2026, England and Wales repealed criminal law provisions criminalising women for accessing abortion care outside of legal pathways, and pardoned those previously convicted. Across Europe, 29 countries no longer criminalise women in relation to their own abortions.

- 3. Even long-standing restrictive abortion laws are no longer politically immovable.**

In 2025-2026, the jurisdictions of Jersey and the Faroe Islands both legalised abortion on request. Reforms to legalise or decriminalise abortion are being considered in a few countries, including Andorra, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Poland and Scotland.

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