

MEDIA FACT SHEET

Europe Abortion Laws 2026: Europe in Global Context

Globally, abortion law has moved in a broadly progressive direction over the past three decades. More than 60 countries and territories have liberalised their abortion laws, while only four — the United States, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Poland — have removed previously existing legal grounds for abortion since 1994. Today, 77 countries allow abortion on request and 12 allow abortion on broad social or economic grounds.

Europe is part of this wider global trend. The 2026 update of *Europe Abortion Laws: Policies, Progress and Challenges* shows that the region's dominant legal trend remains one of reform, with countries continuing to legalise abortion, repeal restrictive laws, remove access barriers, strengthen constitutional protections and move away from criminalisation.

At the same time, the global picture is not one of uniform progress. Recent rollbacks show that legal protections can be weakened or removed, while anti-rights movements continue to push restrictions across regions. These developments underline why abortion rights must be actively protected.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Global progress is real, but uneven.

Over the past 30 years, more than 60 countries and territories have liberalised their abortion laws. Major reforms, court decisions and regional human rights standards in regions including Latin America, Africa and Europe show that progress is possible when lawmakers, courts and civil society act to bring laws regulating abortion in line with international human rights and public health standards.

2. Europe shows that progress is possible, even as abortion rights face global pressure.

In the past decade alone, 21 European countries have enacted meaningful reforms to improve access to abortion care, including by legalising abortion on request, extending time frames, removing procedural barriers, expanding access to medication abortion, repealing criminal penalties and removing financial barriers. Recent developments show continued movement toward stronger legal protections and fewer barriers to care.

3. Constitutional protection is emerging as a safeguard against rollback.

Following France's 2024 constitutional reform and Luxembourg's 2026 reform, constitutional protection for abortion and reproductive rights is gaining ground in Europe, with similar reform efforts underway in Belgium, Sweden and Spain. These developments reflect growing recognition that abortion rights must be protected against future regression.

4. The United States is a major counterexample to the global trend.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, abortion access in the United States has become highly fragmented, with some states banning or severely restricting abortion and others moving to protect access. Abortion is currently banned in 13 U.S. states and severely restricted in many others.

5. Progress remains incomplete.

Despite Europe's reform trend, outdated legal and policy barriers continue to delay, obstruct or deny access to abortion care. These include, among others, criminal penalties,

mandatory waiting periods, biased counselling requirements and requirements that women justify their decision by citing distress or social circumstances.

RECENT EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. Luxembourg: constitutional protection

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. England and Wales: decriminalisation of women

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

3. Faroe Islands: reform of long-standing restrictive law

In December 2025, the Faroe Islands adopted landmark reforms legalising abortion on request up to 12 weeks and replacing a restrictive legal framework dating back to 1956.

4. Jersey: legalisation of abortion and decriminalisation of women

In March 2026, Jersey passed reforms legalising abortion on request before 22 weeks, decriminalising women in relation to their own abortions, and introducing other measures to improve access to abortion care.

KEY NUMBERS

Global

- **More than 60 countries and territories** have liberalised their abortion laws over the past 30 years.
- **Only four countries** have rolled back the legality of abortion since 1994: the United States, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Poland.
- **77 countries** allow abortion on request.
- **12 countries** allow abortion on broad social or economic grounds.

Europe

- **43 out of 49 countries** allow abortion on request, at least in early pregnancy.
- **21 countries** have enacted meaningful reforms to improve access in the last decade.
- **5 countries** retain highly restrictive abortion laws: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco and Poland.
- **1 country** (Andorra) retains a total abortion ban.
- **29 countries** no longer criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways.
- **21 countries** provide abortion care free of charge in all circumstances or ensure it is covered under mandatory health insurance schemes.
- **At least 7 countries** allow full self-management of medication abortion at least in early pregnancy: Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Ukraine and parts of the United Kingdom.

OUTDATED BARRIERS THAT HAVE NO PLACE IN MODERN ABORTION LAW

Despite continued progress, harmful legal and policy restrictions continue to be imposed on access to abortion care across Europe. For example:

- **20 countries** still criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways.
- **14 countries** that allow abortion on request still impose mandatory waiting periods.
- **16 countries** mandate counselling or the mandatory provision of specific non-medical information before abortion.

- **Germany, Georgia and Hungary** still impose mandatory biased counselling sessions that are directive and aimed at discouraging abortion.
- **Albania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland** still require women to justify their decision by citing distress or social circumstances.

These and other barriers have no place in modern abortion law and must be removed.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Global and European developments show that abortion law is not moving in one inevitable direction. Over the long term, the global trend has been towards improving access to abortion care, and Europe's 2026 developments show that progress is continuing in many places. But recent rollbacks, particularly in the United States, and continued anti-rights pressure across regions show that abortion rights can be dismantled quickly when they are not firmly protected.

The lesson is clear: abortion rights must be actively safeguarded. Governments and lawmakers should legalise abortion on request, decriminalise abortion and related care, remove harmful access barriers, ensure affordability, guarantee access to medication abortion and align laws and policies with international human rights and public health standards.

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