

MEDIA FACT SHEET

Poland in Context: Europe Abortion Laws 2026

Poland continues to be one of a very small number of European countries with a highly restrictive abortion law. While a general legislative trend across Europe over the past few decades is to expand access to abortion care, Poland has moved in the opposite direction. Following the 2020 regressive Constitutional Tribunal ruling, Poland became the only country in Europe, and one of only four globally, to have removed a legal ground for abortion from its laws in the past 30 years.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Poland retains one of Europe's most restrictive abortion laws.

Poland does not allow abortion on request. The law permits abortion only where the pregnancy poses a risk to the pregnant person's life or health or results from a criminal act. Even in these very narrow circumstances, obtaining a legal abortion is almost impossible in practice.

2. Poland stands alone in Europe for rolling back abortion rights.

While 21 European countries have expanded access to abortion care over the past decade, Poland is the only country in Europe to have removed a legal ground for abortion.

3. Poland's abortion law causes grave and systematic human rights violations.

Following a three-year inquiry into the effects of Poland's restrictive abortion law, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [found in 2024](#) that Poland's abortion law inflicts intense physical and mental suffering on women and violates their fundamental rights. The Committee urged Poland to adopt comprehensive reforms to legalise and fully decriminalise abortion. As an interim measure towards full decriminalisation and legalisation, it also urged the Government to introduce a moratorium on all arrests, investigations and prosecutions of those providing assistance to women seeking abortion care. Poland has yet to adopt such reforms.

KEY NUMBERS: POLAND IN EUROPE

- ✗ **43 out of 49 European countries** allow abortion on request at least in early pregnancy. Poland does not.
- ✗ **Only 2 EU Member States** (Malta and Poland) retain highly restrictive abortion laws.
- ✗ **Only 7 countries**, including Poland, have introduced retrogressive legal and policy barriers in the past decade.
- **29 countries**, including Poland, do not criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways. However, Poland continues to criminalise assistance with abortions outside legal pathways, creating a chilling effect on providing abortion care and on those seeking to access abortion.

RECENT EUROPEAN 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. 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.

3. 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.

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