

MEDIA FACT SHEET

Switzerland 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. Switzerland is part of this broader trend, with recent reforms set to improve access to care. However, outdated legal barriers remain and further reforms are needed to remove them.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Switzerland allows abortion on request in early pregnancy, but outdated restrictions remain.**

Switzerland allows abortion on request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and thereafter, abortion is permitted when it is necessary to avert the danger of serious physical injury or serious psychological distress. Abortion is still regulated in the Penal Code, and those requesting abortion on request must declare that they are in a state of distress before they can access care.

2. **Switzerland is one of only four European countries that still require women seeking abortion on request to specify they are in a state of distress.**

Albania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland are the only countries in Europe that allow abortion on request but still retain this kind of requirement. France and Belgium have removed similar distress requirements in recent years.

3. **Switzerland's law continues to criminalise abortion outside legal pathways.**

Switzerland is one of 20 European countries that still criminalise women who have abortions outside legal pathways. Across Europe, 29 countries no longer criminalise women in relation to their own abortions. Healthcare providers and those who assist can also face criminal penalties for abortions carried out outside the legal framework.

4. **Switzerland has taken steps to remove remaining cost barriers to abortion care.**

In March 2025, Switzerland adopted legislative reforms to ensure that abortion care is fully covered under basic health insurance, without deductibles or co-payments, from the beginning of pregnancy as of 1 January 2027.

KEY NUMBERS: SWITZERLAND IN EUROPE

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

- ✗ **Only 4 countries** (Albania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland) still require women to justify their request for abortion by citing distress or social/family circumstances.

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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