

# ABORTION TOURISM TO GROW IN UKRAINE DUE TO POLAND'S BAN



In October, Poland restricted abortions, even in cases where fetal defects, diseases or abnormalities occur. Ukraine, on the other hand, allows legal terminations between 12 and 24 weeks. An increase in abortion tourism is thus expected.

Ukraine's abortion tourism may become widespread after one of its neighboring countries, Poland, tightened its laws against abortions, banning almost all terminations.

**Poland's anti-abortion law, dating from 1993, is one of the harshest in all of Europe.**

However, on October 22, the Polish Constitutional Court placed even more restrictions on pregnancy terminations by prohibiting it also in cases in which fetal defects, diseases or abnormalities occur, which was the cause of 98% of abortions in the country.

Now, terminations are only legal in Poland in cases of rape, incest or if the mother's life is at risk.

On the other hand, Ukraine allows voluntary termination between 12 and 24 weeks of pregnancy. Furthermore, its legislation allows this service to be provided to Polish citizens. While doctors cannot face legal retaliation for inducing such terminations in Ukraine, they could go to prison in Poland if they clandestinely terminated pregnancies.

According to experts, abortion tourism is likely to grow in Ukraine, but not very much though. The reason is, that in absolute numbers there are not that many cases of terminations that were performed in Poland over fetal defects, diseases or abnormalities.

Abortion tourism is not unique to Ukraine. Dutch organization Women on Waves has been working on abortion cruises for 20 years, taking advantage of the legal vacuum of international waters. In 2015, they tried to send a drone with drugs to induce pregnancy terminations from Germany to Poland, but the package was confiscated by the Polish police.

**Although the abortion laws are much more flexible in Ukraine, its practice is still dangerous for Polish women who travel there.** The point is that once they return to Poland, they cannot receive proper medical follow-ups, so they can suffer serious physical consequences in the event of a complication.

Sweden is yet another country who plans to offer help to Polish women. abortion laws. Swedish Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen announced that the country will offer free, subsidised, and safe abortions in Sweden to women from Poland.

"It is time for Sweden to stand up for Polish women in the same way that Poland once stood up for us! In the 1960s, when abortion was banned in Sweden, thousands of Swedish women travelled to Poland where abortion was legal," Lindhagen said.

Similarly, in Iceland, the Minister of Health, Svandís Svarvarsdóttir, proposed to offer free abortions to women who are not able to undergo the termination in their home countries for legal reasons.

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