

Restrictions on abortion in Luxembourg to be relaxed



Abortions can be legally carried out in Luxembourg under certain conditions, a new law debated on Thursday confirmed.

Under the amendments, women will have unfettered discretion to decide whether they are “in distress”, a condition under which abortion is permitted. Under the previous law only a doctor could determine this.

In order to have an abortion, women will have to undergo a second, mandatory consultation to assess her psycho-social condition. Patients will be offered a range of support and alternatives. The patient may choose in which clinic this will take place.

In order to ensure that patients have given the procedure full consideration, they are requested to observe a reflection period of three to seven days before an abortion is carried out.

Underage patients will no longer require prior approval of their parents or guardians in order to get an abortion. They must, however, be accompanied by an adult they trust to

meetings and the final procedure.

The law amendment permits abortions to be carried out in a doctor's surgery and not just clinics. If an abortion is sought after the twelfth week of pregnancy, the procedure can only be carried out if two doctors certify that there is a danger to the mother and unborn child. Finally, if a doctor does not want to or cannot perform an abortion, they must refer their patient to another medical practitioner, under the current reform.

Thursday's debate to reform Luxembourg's 1978 law on voluntary termination of pregnancy was constructive but it did not pass without opposition.

ADR Deputy Fernand Kartheiser radically opposed the changes. He said: "We are for the protection of life from the beginning. A man and a woman are responsible when they decide to have an intimate relationship and when they create life."

CSV Deputy Marie-Josée Frank also opposed the changes, in particular the sovereign judgment of the woman.

Luxembourg Justice Minister François Biltgen summed up the challenges faced when debating the reform.

"We could hide behind the 1978 Act and not change anything, but we have deliberately chosen to confront the social reality while knowing full well that this would create a controversy. The hardest part was finding a balance between respect for the freedoms of women and the obligations of the State."

Reporting by Charline Lebrun