



Increasing access
Reducing need
Promoting rights

IPPF works towards a universal recognition of a woman's right to choose and have access to safe abortion, and a reduction in the incidence of unsafe abortion. As a service to IPPF staff, volunteers, and sympathizers, we share with you recent news and evidence related to the abortion issue.

[Italy] Abortion law: yes to public debate but no change to Act 194

Source: AGI Agenzia Italia. <http://www.agi.it/italy/news/200801021808-pol-ren0062-art.html>
2 January 2008. (Shortened and slightly modified by Marcel Vekemans.)

'Our law on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy - the Minister of Health clarified in a memo - has had the effect of practically halving the number of abortions from 1982 to today, reducing them by 45 per cent, and wiping out back-street abortions with its extremely high rate of maternal mortality. A law which has as its primary objective social care of maternity and the prevention of abortions through a network of family consultations. It is an objective that we shall continue to pursue in terms of policies promoting women's health. We have put aside earmarked specific funds for interventions for the reorganization of the consultations, in cooperation with the Ministry for the Family'.

Note (Marcel Vekemans): This statement, made by the Italian Minister of Health in January 2008, is a simple, straightforward kind of reality check. The abortion law was liberalized in 1978, unsafe abortion almost disappeared, and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for the Family collaborate on the law's implementation. Notably, the Minister discusses abortion as a matter of health and family rather than as a matter for Church, police, judiciary, or countering anti-choice lobbies. Indeed, the problems related to abortion should be solved by the pregnant woman and her physician, in the frame of a liberal law. In Canada there is even no special law concerning abortion: the medical practice guidelines suffice.

The Minister's declaration also reminds us that a liberal law does generally not lead to an increase in the number of abortions performed. The contrary is true, as shown in Italy (and in many other countries) where the figures have decreased significantly since 1982. This does not mean that in our opinion the Italian abortion law is ideal: even there pro-choice persons can propose improvements to allow women full autonomy in their decisions. IPPF supports access to safe abortion without restriction as to reason.

One wonders why in countries where abortion related mortality and morbidity are huge the governments do not liberalize their laws as in Italy, or remove abortion from legislation altogether in the Canadian way, where abortion is regulated through medical deontology. Maybe it is because these countries are governed more by Churches than by democratic governments, and because men still think they must govern women. We remain optimistic that change will occur.

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For more information see www.fiapac.org .

FIAPAC is a recognized international non-profit organization of health professionals working in the field of abortion and contraception. The members of FIAPAC are doctors, nurses, counselors, lawyers and other activists in the field.

Marcel Vekemans, MD, Ob/Gyn,
IPPF Central Office, London, UK
Technical Knowledge and Support: Abortion
4 Newham's Row, London SE1 3UZ, UK
For more information, please write to

abortionteam@ippf.org

Fax +44 20 7939 8300

Tel +44 20 7939 8200

To subscribe: AbortionAbstracts-subscribe@IPPF.ORG

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