

# Germany to soften 'advertising' ban on abortions

BERLIN – Germany's coalition government agreed in principle Tuesday to soften a Nazi-era law that bars medical doctors from advertising abortion services.

Gynecologists, hospitals and public health services will now be allowed to share essential information about where and how women can terminate unwanted pregnancies.

The bill is expected to be approved by Chancellor Angela Merkel's Cabinet on Feb. 6 and then pass both houses of parliament.

German law allows abortions but effectively discourages them through various hurdles, including the law in question, article 219a, which dates to May 1933, shortly after Adolf Hitler assumed full powers of Nazi Germany.

Last year gynecologist Kristina Haenel was fined €6,000 (\$6,800) for breaking the law by publishing information on abortion services on her website.

The case revived an emotional debate in the coalition government led by Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats (CDU).

Junior partners the Social Democrats (SPD) wanted the article scrapped, a demand backed by leftist opposition parties the Greens and Die Linke.

In the end the ruling parties reached a compromise that many read as a defeat for the SPD.

Health Minister Jens Spahn of the CDU said women needed access to crucial information but added that abortions should not be advertised because they are "not a medical procedure like any other."

Andrea Nahles, the SPD leader, nonetheless welcomed the agreement, tweeting that "women are finally getting the information they need."

The draft bill seen by AFP would allow federal health authorities and the German Medical Association to publish nationwide lists of doctors who perform abortions.

In other changes, the age limit for women entitled to free contraceptives would be raised from 20 to 22 years, and training on performing abortions will be expanded for medical students.

Greens Party co-chief Annalena Baerbock criticized the compromise deal, arguing that it signals lingering “distrust” of a woman’s ability to choose.

Linke party lawmaker Cornelia Moehring similarly charged that, by refusing to scrap the article outright, the government was continuing to treat abortion as “a grubby issue” and a “taboo subject.”

Germany, despite being a leading voice for women’s rights in the 1970s, imposes tight restrictions on abortion, permitting it only under strictly regulated circumstances.

It is left out of universities’ course books for student doctors and kept unavailable in swathes of the country.

A woman who wants to abort within the first trimester is required to attend a consultation at a registered centre.

The aim of the interview is to “incite the woman to continue the pregnancy,” according to the rules, even if in the end she has the final say.

Excluding special circumstances such as a pregnancy that threatens the life of the mother, or one arising from rape, abortion is not a procedure that is reimbursable by health insurance.

In some regions, including in the predominantly Catholic state of Bavaria, it may be necessary to travel 100 kilometers to find a doctor who performs the procedure.

Germany records an average of 100,000 abortions for 790,000 births, about half the rate of neighboring France.

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Source: [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/01/29/world/social-issues-world/germany-soften-advertising-ban-abortions/#.XFef\\_lxKiUk](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/01/29/world/social-issues-world/germany-soften-advertising-ban-abortions/#.XFef_lxKiUk)

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