

German MPs call for under-18 ban on cosmetic surgery

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Plastic surgery could be outlawed for under 18-year-olds unless medically necessary under a proposal by lawmakers from Germany's ruling party, according to a document seen by AFP Thursday.

The politicians argue that going under the knife for breast enlargement or nose operations should be off the cards for minors, a draft position paper states.

"Even with a proper explanation, it is not guaranteed that the young person is aware of the full implication of the decision" to undergo plastic surgery, the lawmakers argue in their paper.

Behind the bid are officials dealing with health matters from Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union.

They want the proposed ban, revealed earlier by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, to be wrapped into new patient-protection legislation. It is due for discussion at a Friday gathering of party leaders.

The move was generally welcomed by medical associations.

"We support a ban on cosmetic surgery on children and young people," vice president of the German Medical Association, Martina Wenker, told AFP.

The German Society of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (DGPRAC) also basically gave the move the thumbs up but warned of the need for certain caveats.

"With a sweeping ban there's the danger that patients for whom interventions are necessary for psychological reasons slip through the net," a spokeswoman said.

The DGPRAC cites figures from 2011 showing that around 1.2 percent of plastic surgeries were on under 18-year-olds, mostly for ears that stick out, followed by enlarged male breasts and nose jobs.

The politicians also call for a multi-million-euro compensation fund to be set up for victims of botched operations to allow them to receive help before the end of any legal proceedings.

And they want a clear definition of cosmetic surgery to protect patients from unqualified practitioners.

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