

Lithuania scraps IVF restrictions after presidential veto

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Lithuania's lawmakers on Wednesday abandoned restrictions on in-vitro fertilisation, after the Baltic EU member's president vetoed a law backed by the influential Catholic Church.

The new version of the legislation, which introduces state funding for IVF treatment for the first time, makes it legal to freeze embryos and screen them for genetic disorders before implantation.

The amendments, tabled by President Dalia Grybauskaite, also overturn a ban on using [donor sperm](#) and eggs during [fertility treatment](#).

"It is a very positive decision. Fifty thousand [infertile couples](#) will be entitled to the modern treatment just like in other EU states," presidential advisor Lina Antanaviciene told AFP, after parliament approved the amendment by 53 votes in favour to 40 against with four abstentions.

IVF treatment consists of fertilising an egg outside a woman's body to produce an embryo that can then be implanted in her womb.

Socially conservative lawmakers in the predominantly Catholic nation of three million people argue that embryos must be protected like human beings and have a right to life.

Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox bishops had in July denounced the freezing of embryos and their destruction, saying it was "incompatible

with the principle of respect for human life".

Until now, IVF was regulated by a vague health ministry decree and available only in private clinics for around 2,000 euros (\$2,200).

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