

Polish govt wants to limit access to morning after pill

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Poland's conservative government said Wednesday it wants to restrict access to the morning-after pill in the devoutly Catholic country, which already has one of the EU's most restrictive abortion laws.

"Birth control pills are all prescription only and we thought there shouldn't be an exception," government spokesman Rafal Bochenek told news channel TVN24.

The Law and Justice (PiS) government adopted a draft law on Tuesday—Valentine's Day—to this end but it still needs to be approved by parliament.

The [morning-after pill](#) has been available over the counter in Poland since 2015 in accordance with European law.

"This bill limits women's reproductive rights," said Katarzyna Labeledz from the pro-choice Federation for Women and Family Planning.

She said there is the risk that it will defeat the purpose of the pill, which needs to be taken without delay to be effective.

"We fear that this is yet another restrictive measure and that there will be more to come," Labeledz told AFP.

The conservatives, who have been in power since November 2015, have already cut state funding for in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), which involves

fertilising an egg outside a woman's body to produce an embryo that can then be implanted into her womb.

Last year, the PiS also tried to tighten the already restrictive abortion law but buckled under pressure from tens of thousands of black-clad women who protested nationwide.

The parliament wound up rejecting the controversial bill that would have allowed abortions only if the woman's life was at risk and increased the maximum jail term for practitioners from two years to five.

Passed in 1993, the current legislation bans all abortions unless there was rape or incest, the pregnancy poses a health risk to the mother or the foetus is severely deformed.

Home to 38 million people, Poland sees fewer than 2,000 legal abortions a year, but women's groups estimate that another 100,000 to 150,000 procedures are performed illegally or abroad.

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