

Ireland to hold referendum on lifting abortion ban in 2018

September 26 2017

Ireland's prime minister says the country will hold a referendum on lifting its constitutional ban on abortion in May or June.

Leo Varadkar told lawmakers on Tuesday that the government has agreed an "indicative timeline" for the vote on the Eighth Amendment to the Irish constitution.

The 1983 amendment commits authorities to defend equally the right to life of the mother and [unborn child](#), giving largely Roman Catholic Ireland the strictest abortion ban in Europe. Abortion is legal only in rare cases where the mother's life is in danger.

Several thousand Irishwomen travel each year for abortions in neighboring Britain.

Ireland's parliament still has to approve a bill authorizing the [referendum](#).

Varadkar also announced plans for referendums on issues including Ireland's blasphemy law and its restrictive divorce laws.

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Citation: Ireland to hold referendum on lifting abortion ban in 2018 (2017, September 26) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-09-ireland-referendum-abortion.html>

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