

Public Hearing : Abortion Tourism of the Polish Women

Date : 26th August, 2010

On 26th of August 2010 at the Polish parliament a civil hearing on “**Abortion Tourism of the Polish Women**” took place. It was organized by the Federation for Women and Family Planning together with Marek Balicki, a member of parliament. During the first part of the hearing we listened to the speeches given by the guests from abroad: doctor Christian Fiala and Krystyna Waniek from Gynmed Clinic in Vienna, Austria, doctor Olga Loeber from Mildred Rutgers Huis in Arnhem, Holland, doctor Janusz Rudziński from Prenzlau Clinic in Germany and Ann Furedi from British organization for reproductive health BPAS. During the second part there was a panel discussion of the representatives of the academic and non government environments.

At the beginning MP **Marek Balicki** emphasized that for 17 years, since the antiabortion law has been in effect, the rights and dignities of Polish women are violated. The president of the Federation **Wanda Nowicka** explained that for several years she has been informed about the Polish women terminating their pregnancies in the foreign clinics. Recently, this practice has grown stronger and the clinics in Austria or England have run the Polish language websites for Polish women who want to have an abortion legally. She added that the binding law does not solve the problem of the unwanted pregnancies but it leads to the illegal abortion practices which threaten the women’s health. We want, she said, that the hearing makes the politicians aware of the necessity to stop the hypocrisy and to change the present antiabortion law in Poland. Then, doctor **Christian Fiala** confirmed that with every year more and more Polish women come to his clinic to have an abortion, on average **it is 200 women**, however, he added, the other Austrian clinics where the abortion is performed also have patients from Poland. He emphasized that making the abortion illegal always leads to the birth of thriving backstreet abortion industry and does not stimulate the birth rate increase. He added that it is impossible to change the unwanted pregnancy into the awaited one and the only effective method to prevent the abortions is prevention i.e. contraception. Then, **Katarzyna Waniek** said that Polish women go to the foreign gynecological clinics because they want to feel safe and be treated with dignity by the clinic’s staff. In the Gynmed clinic woman stays 2 days, she has to talk to psychologist and all the information concerning the abortion treatment are accessible in Polish language. **Janusz Rudziński** presented the German abortion statistics. According to them in 2009 in Germany 110 694 abortions were performed, including 108 238 abortions up to 14th week of pregnancy, 2219 abortions between 14th and 24th week of pregnancy and 237 abortions after 24th week of pregnancy. In Germany the abortion on demand is legal up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, later it can be made for medical reasons. Moreover, before the abortion treatment a woman has to talk to psychologist. He said that from 2,3 years he has observed an increase in a number of Polish patients in the German gynecological clinics. When he had worked in the Schwedt’s Clinic (1995-2007) annually 100-120 Polish women had the abortion, **nowadays at Prenzlau Clinic the number on average is 350 but this year it has already exceeded 400 abortions** (data from August 2010). In Germany a woman has to pay for the abortion and the prices vary according to a hospital. **At Prenzlau clinic a patient has to pay 410 euros**. He added that most of his clinic’s Polish patients are between 18 and 48 years old, well-educated and well off, who got pregnant because the contraception had failed. Doctor **Olga Loeber** said that helping a woman to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is an act of respect for her as a human being. She

said that according to the statistics annually 80-100 Polish women terminate their pregnancies at the Dutch clinics. She emphasized that these data do not include the Polish women who stay in Holland permanently or for a long time. Taking them into consideration **in her clinic the Polish women account for 10% of all the patients and in the other clinics as many as 20 – 30% women who have the abortions come from Poland.** Ann Furedi stressed that any law is able to stop a women to terminate her unwanted pregnancy. Next, she talked about the British official statistics which show that annually only 20 women from Poland come to UK to have an abortion. However, she said, the statistics do not include the Polish women who stay in UK longer than 6 months. In that case they have the British medical insurance and the abortions they undergo are not registered as the abortion for foreigners. It should not be forgotten that nowadays in England thousands of Polish women work or study and **according to Furedi’s data in BPAS clinics one third of the patients who have an abortion come from Poland, however in the other clinics their number sometimes is as high as 50% of all the patients.** She added that the Polish women have an access to information and counseling in Polish language and everybody who has the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) does not have to pay for the abortion treatment. According to Ann Furedi **a number of Polish women who terminate their pregnancies in UK oscillates around a few thousand annually.**

During the second part of the hearing the participants of a panel discussion talked about the reasons and consequences of the binding antiabortion law. They emphasized that the atmosphere of taboo and evil around an abortion in Poland is a result of negative attitude of the doctors and the Church towards the issue. Summing up Marek Balicki said that the only way to change the mentioned law and to solve the problem of illegal abortion and abortion tourism is to guarantee a secularism of our state.

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Final Financial Report

Budgetary Item	Spent in EUR
Brochure “Contemporary Women’s Hell...”	
1. Cost of reprinting 700 copies (EUR 2,14/copy)	1,500