

Voices from Countries where abortion is illegal in Europe

Strategies and Responses

Restrictive abortion laws

- Malta - not even to save a woman's life
- Ireland – only to save a woman's life
- Poland – limited circumstances
 - More restricted in practice than law
- Portugal – Very limited circumstances
- Slovakia – abuse of conscientious objection & medical abortion is illegal.
- Lithuania – limited access

Effects of restrictions

- Clandestine Abortions
- Women travelling throughout
 - We really don't where
 - But usually later
- Usually surgical abortion only
- More medical & risks for the women's health
- Infanticide, abandonment & Forced Parenthood
- Stigma & a reluctance to speak out

Voices of Advocates

- Successful awareness raising
 - Irish Journey
 - Polish Women's Stories
 - Prosecutions in Portugal
 - Clandestine abortions
- Pro-choice movement
 - Significant victories in relation to ethical arguments
 - Ireland - No significant opposition victories in 20 years

Pro-choice majorities

- Opinion Polls –
- Ireland complete reversal
 - In 1981 74% said abortion is always wrong
 - In 2005 only 35% say abortion is always wrong
- Poland – 65% pro-choice
- Lithuania - 72% in favour of a woman's right to choose
- Strong support for change in Portugal.

Shifts in Advocacy Strategies

- Both Pro-choice & Anti-choice voices are changing
- Anti-choice
 - Evil Stuff, Fear Stuff & Sweet Stuff
- Pro-choice
 - More Pro-active than re-active
 - From awareness raising to litigation
 - Women who had terminations are more involved

Voices of the Opposition - Evil Stuff

- Mostly pre-1990's but still used.
- Emphasis on God & Hell
- Religious symbols
- Main spokespersons religious leaders.
- Ex-communication.
- Pro-life day of prayer.



Fear Stuff – Voices to frighten

- Imported from the US Intimidation & Fear
 - Picket homes & clinics
 - Making life difficult for advocates
- Junk science
 - Medical effects of abortion
 - Breast cancer/traffic accidents
- Exploitation of clients
 - Rogue agencies

New opposition - Sweet Voices

- Use Human Rights & Feminist language/issues
 - A women's right to “better” options
 - No need for abortion if we improved childcare
 - Parallels with minority rights everywhere
- Focus on numbers rather than women's rights
- Rarely discuss contraception or religion
- Softer, less absolute words

Recognising sweet stuff

- Likely to call themselves
 - “Feminists for life” rather than “the Pro-life campaign”
- Likely to say
“abortion is bad for women and is a terribly damaging thing psychologically, spiritually and physically”.



Pro-choice voices in Ireland

- Campaign led by:
 - www.safeandlegal.ie
 - BODY (Youth abortion advocacy group)
- Reactive to Proactive
 - Engagement with civil society
 - Building a broad coalition
 - Women's NGO's
 - Medical NGO's
 - Social Inclusion focus



New language – New voices

- Referendum in Portugal
- Litigation Strategies
- Judicial review in Northern Ireland
- Human Rights Framework
 - D Vs Ireland, A, B & C Vs Ireland, Tysiac Vs Poland.
 - Right to Life
 - Right to Privacy
 - Freedom from inhumane & degrading treatment
 - Equality between men & women