

Changing attitudes towards abortion

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Abortion has been commonly practised for a long time throughout most of the world either in legal or illegal conditions, but it is a subject that arouses passion and controversy, because abortion implies at least two important questions, namely sex and life, sometimes mixed with religion and ethics. Over the last few years, we observed changes in the world of abortion, including laws, personal and professional attitudes. In fact social needs modify the attitudes of the authorities and people. In many countries where the performance of abortions is illegal, statistics indicate that large numbers are being carried out, most of them illegally, but authorities are indifferent, ignore or tolerate it or even unofficially license clinics for the abortion. In some other countries where abortion is technically legal, access to authorized facilities and personnel may be limited, or resources to pay for the abortion may be lacking, resulting in further more illegal abortions. So we have to speak about two categories of abortion, the legal one, opposed to illegal one, and the safe one opposed to the unsafe one. The laws are however changing, becoming even more liberal, even if in certain nations there are attempts to come back in the field of the right of women to decide. Practices are changing and becoming different from the law. Basic ideas are changing, because in a large number of European countries we are moving from a culture of the abortion to a culture of contraception and prevention of abortion, through the effort of governments, women, professionals and ONGs. Certainly the most important steps have been moved in the different way to perform an abortion: e.g. the medical abortion, with the use of mifepristone and misoprostol. And finally there is a change in the way to support women through a human and complete counselling, including the attention to follow up services offering a choice of contraceptive methods to help the women looking forward to avoiding another unwanted pregnancy.

Conclusions: There are some objections at different levels, but attitudes are changing in a positive way throughout Europe, offering good quality of services, good facilities, well trained providers, and more open mind.