



## WHO'S MORE PRO-CHOICE: EUROPE OR AMERICA?

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American Progressives look to Western Europe as the model of what America should be. So, here's an area of European social policy that Progressives will definitely want to examine more closely: Europe's attitude toward...abortion.

It happens to be much more restrictive than that of the United States. That's right. Western Europeans—as progressive and secular as they are—have a much more conservative attitude about abortion than American Progressives do.

Here is what Emily Matchar wrote in *The Atlantic* magazine in 2013: “I assumed that Western Europe would be the land of abortion on demand...But as it turns out, abortion laws in Europe are both more restrictive and more complicated than that. Waiting periods, decried by American pro-choicers as...unreasonably burdensome, are common...”

In Germany, for example, nearly all abortions are illegal after 12 weeks. And there is a three-day waiting period and mandatory counseling before a woman is allowed to have an abortion, even during the permitted first 12 weeks. That's more restrictive than Texas.

In the U.S., abortions are legal in every state before a pregnancy has reached its 20th week. After that some restrictions do kick in. 11 states prohibit abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy. 20 states prohibit abortions at the point of viability, which is when a baby can survive outside the womb. Those states usually recognize that as being between 23-25 weeks...3 states prohibit abortion after the 28th week...And 7 states plus Washington, D.C. allow abortions to be performed at any point in a pregnancy—even if the mother could safely give birth to a viable and healthy baby.

But in Belgium, like Germany, abortions are permissible only until the 12th week. After that an abortion is permitted only if the woman's life is in danger. Furthermore, any woman getting an abortion must wait six days after her first medical consultation before an abortion can be performed.

Denmark is similar: After 12 weeks all sorts of restrictions apply. Pregnant women in Finland also have until the 12th week of pregnancy to get an unrestricted abortion, and during those first 12 weeks, a woman must provide a compelling reason for ending her pregnancy.

In France, too, abortion on demand is legal only up to 12 weeks, after which it becomes much more difficult. Socialist Sweden allows abortions until the 18th week of pregnancy, and bans most after the 22nd week. In that four week “gray” period, a woman can get an abortion, but only if it is approved by the National Board of Health and Welfare. In the Netherlands, before

having an abortion a woman has to wait five days and attend a counseling session in which she must be informed of the different options available to her, including taking the pregnancy to term and giving her baby up for adoption. A minor under the age of 18 cannot have an abortion at any time unless she has the consent of her parents.

And in Norway in 2014, a major controversy erupted after it was revealed that, since 2001, 17 babies had been aborted after 22 weeks, the legal cut off point in that country. That wouldn't merit a paragraph in a local U.S. newspaper, let alone start a media firestorm.

So why is it that abortion laws in the United States are so extreme relative to those in Europe? Why is it that progressive politicians in the United States work tirelessly to fight back any restrictions on abortion, even partial-birth abortion. That's the procedure during which a fully viable baby is almost completely delivered, except for the head, before being killed. And why is it that what is unacceptable to socially enlightened Europeans is fully acceptable to American progressives?

Europeans seem to recognize that abortion is a complex moral issue; that ending a life after a certain point in a pregnancy does not reflect well on a society. Why is it so hard for American Progressives to recognize the same?

I'm Elisha Krauss for Prager University.