

PRESS RELEASE: ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENT, 12 December 2019

ABORTION WITHOUT BORDERS: INITIATIVE INFORMATION

A new initiative launched on 11th December 2019 to help those in Poland seeking a safe abortion, access one either in Poland or abroad. Abortion Without Borders is the result of collaboration between activist groups in four countries. As part of the initiative there is a helpline which links those in need to the required service provided by those who are behind the initiative. Kobiety W Sieci (Poland) is responsible for providing information on safe abortion – the group has more than 13 years of experience providing people in Poland with pregnancy options counselling, including unbiased, factual information about abortion. Any caller who wishes to obtain an abortion will be referred to wither the Abortion Dream Team (Poland), Women Help Women (global), Ciocia Basia (Germany), Abortion Network Amsterdam (The Netherlands) or Abortion Support Network (United Kingdom). These organisations will give information about safe medical abortion pills, internet sources for abortion pills and counseling, advice on abortion clinics, help arranging travel and accommodation, and/or funding towards the cost of abortion abroad.

Services Abortion Without Borders will provide:

- Pregnancy options counselling, including unbiased, factual information about abortion
- Information on reputable organisations offering safe early medical abortion pills
- Practical information about the least expensive way to arrange abortion and travel
- Information on clinics in Germany, The Netherlands, the UK and elsewhere for abortion beyond 12 weeks
- Financial assistance towards the cost of abortion and travel
- Free accommodation in volunteer homes or in paid accommodation
- Polish speaking volunteers (or ability to speak to service users with a translator) as well as translation services at clinics that do not have Polish speaking staff
- Other forms of support that are necessary and possible

Abortion Without Borders would like to stress that their activities are all legal.

- Giving information about abortion is legal
- Travelling abroad for abortion is legal
- Calling the helpline or receiving funding from Abortion Without Borders is legal
- Ordering early medical abortion pills online is not against the law
- Taking early medical abortion pills is not against the law
- There is no way in Polish law to criminalise a pregnant woman who ends a pregnancy

HELPLINE DETAILS FOR SERVICE USERS:

+48 222922597

www.aborcjabezgranic.pl

QUOTES

1. Justyna Wydrzyńska from **Kobiety w Sieci** in Poland said:

“The situation in Poland is not easy for anyone who needs an abortion. Since 2006, Kobiety w Sieci has been providing information online and via the phone to people who have been lost in their attempt to find clear, factual information about abortion and been with them during their medical abortions. This new project will enable us to reach more people, especially those who can't afford to pay for abortion.

The only person with the right to decide to continue or end a pregnancy is the person who is pregnant –not governments or churches or bad laws or policies.”

2. Karolina Więckiewicz from **Abortion Dream Team** said:

“We can't wait to expand on the work we have been doing in Poland for three years – in fact today is the three year anniversary of Abortion Dream Team. The legal limitations on abortion create the massive amount of stigma in which it is very difficult to look for reliable and trustworthy information. We have been trying to change that and “Abortion Without Borders” is going to be very helpful. In addition to helping people access abortions, we want to raise awareness of the fact that providing information about abortion, taking abortion pills, and traveling abroad for abortion is legal for people in Poland. No one can be criminalised for their own abortion and supporting others. We need this kind of empowerment and taking back control”.

3. Mara Clarke, **Abortion Support Network** said:

“ASN has been helping people cross borders for abortion care for more than 10 years and are thrilled to be expanding our services to Poland. While we initially set up to help people in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man, recent legislation has meant we've been able to expand to Malta and Gibraltar and, as of today, to Poland. We don't ask service users how they got pregnant or why they want abortions. We only ask about financial need. We stand with anyone in Poland who needs an abortion, not just with words, but with funding, because I can't afford an abortion should never be the only reason someone becomes a parent.”

4. Zuzanna Dziuban, **Ciocia Basia** said:

“We are thrilled that we are able to work together, across borders, to provide this service to people who very much need it, even as we hate the fact that the laws in Poland and other countries in Europe make the existence of abortion funds necessary. We want to speak very openly about abortion because we know not speaking about abortion makes things even harder for people who are already vulnerable for reasons including immigration status, domestic partner abuse, and more.”

5. A spokesperson from **Abortion Network Amsterdam** said:

“We are doing this because we know making abortion against the law doesn't stop abortion. It just makes abortion stigma and causes people to be afraid to ask for help. This exposes people to those who might seek to take advantage of them. We are working with abortion providers in England, the Netherlands, Germany and elsewhere to ensure that there are enough appointments to accommodate those travelling abroad. Travelling abroad for abortion is not a new thing – it has been happening around the world forever. As has the practice of people joining together to help those who need abortion care.”

6. Kinga Jelinska, **Women Help Women** said:

Abortion Without Borders is about solidarity, radical empathy and practical help. The groups work together across borders to make sure people in Poland have access to abortion. They promote knowledge how to access abortion pills (mifepristone and misoprostol), give information about safe abortion methods based on the recommendations of the World Health Organization. The initiatives also provides funding to travel abroad, translation, kindness and support throughout the process. The Women Help Women foundation facilitates access to abortion pills and information how to do an abortion safely at home to people in Poland and globally.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. **The abortion law in Poland. Abortion in Poland** is illegal except in cases of rape, when the woman's life or any form of health is in jeopardy, or if the fetus is irreparably damaged. However, it is usually very hard to find an abortion provider who will perform an abortion, even under these circumstances.
2. **Kobiety w Sieci** believes a person must have reliable information on how to perform an abortion in a country safe for their health. For thirteen years, Kobiety w Sieci has been providing people in Poland with pregnancy options counselling, including unbiased, factual information about abortion and going forward will be the first port of call for anyone seeking assistance from Abortion Without Borders. <https://www.maszwybor.net>
3. **Abortion Dream Team** are an informal initiative aimed at breaking the stigma that exists around abortion in Poland. We talk about abortion as a normal part of life, without taboo, drama, distortion or fear. We travel around abortion to talk about safe abortion with pills and other methods of terminating pregnancy, because we feel this is both important and necessary. <http://aborcyjnydreamteam.pl>
4. **Abortion Support Network (ASN)** is a volunteer-driven charity that provides financial assistance, non-judgmental information and accommodation to those from Poland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Malta, Gibraltar and the Isle of Man forced to travel and pay for abortions abroad. While other organisations campaign for much needed law reform, ASN provides the thing needed most immediately: money. www.asn.org.uk
5. **Abortion Network Amsterdam (ANA)** provides practical support for people who don't have access to legal abortion in their country of origin or those, whose access to abortion is limited to 12 weeks. We help them have abortions in the Netherlands by arranging accommodation, appointments, transportation, translation and, when needed, by offering financial support. <https://anamsterdam.noblogs.org/>
6. **Ciocia Basia** is an activist group created to help people from countries where abortion is still illegal. Our mission is to enable them the access to safe abortion in Berlin. We facilitate contact and appointments with confidential, non-judgemental counsellors and medical professionals. We translate from Polish to German and provide free accommodation in volunteers' homes. Moreover, we offer financial support for people who cannot afford to pay for their travel costs and medical procedures. <https://www.facebook.com/ciociabasiaberlin/>
7. **Women Help Women** is an international activist non-profit organization working on access to abortion. We are feminist activists, trained counsellors, medical professionals, and researchers based across 4 continents who have a strong focus on supporting self-managed abortion, especially in places where abortion is restricted by laws, stigma and lack of access. Our projects include (a) a global telehealth service that provides information, support and abortion pills to women around the world and (b) partnerships with local feminist groups around the world to support increased access to abortion pills. <https://womenhelp.org/>

This document is an edited version of an original press release sent by Mara Clarke, Abortion Support Network.

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