



## Prescribing emergency contraceptive pills is never a crime

The European Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ECEC) expresses its full support for Dr. Jarosław Górnicki and for all healthcare professionals who ensure that women can access contraception when needed.

Since 2017, Dr. Górnicki has prescribed emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) in accordance with national regulations to women in Poland seeking to prevent pregnancy. He is now under review by the Ministry of Health and the Medical Council due to the number of prescriptions issued.<sup>1</sup> There are no clinical reasons whatsoever to restrict the number of prescriptions provided to women.

ECEC is not aware of any other country, where ECPs remain prescription-only, that has initiated proceedings against healthcare providers for prescribing them, nor of any case in which the number of prescriptions has been questioned.

Dr. Górnicki's professional practice has been instrumental in improving timely access to ECPs—ensuring their availability, affordability, quality, and acceptability, while safeguarding privacy, confidentiality, and non-discrimination in service provision.

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<sup>1</sup> Fundacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny - ["JAROSŁAW GÓRNICKI – A DOCTOR STANDING UP FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS"](#) (accessed October 8, 2025).

## Background information

### About emergency contraceptive pills

Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) can reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse by delaying or inhibiting ovulation. They have no effect on an established pregnancy and are most effective when taken as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse, and within five days at the latest. Timely access to treatment is critical to ensure the effectiveness of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs). According to ECEC data<sup>2</sup>:

- ECPs containing levonorgestrel (LNG) are approved in at least 146 countries, and those with ulipristal acetate (UPA) in 75.
- At least 85 countries allow LNG ECPs and 56 allow UPA ECPs to be sold or dispensed without a prescription, in line with WHO recommendations.
- Recent policy changes have expanded non-prescription access in Japan (2025), Argentina, Honduras (2023), and Costa Rica (2019).
- In several countries—including Argentina, the United States, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, and Malta—ECPs are available directly from pharmacy shelves.
- In Belgium, British Columbia, England, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Scotland, and Wales, ECPs are provided free of charge directly from pharmacies.

### The situation in Poland

Within the European Union, Poland and Hungary are the only countries that still require a prescription for ECPs. In 2015, following a European Medicines Agency (EMA) review<sup>3</sup>, the European Commission recommended that ECPs containing ulipristal acetate be made available without prescription throughout the EU<sup>4</sup>. While this decision was not legally binding, all Member States except Poland and Hungary aligned with it.

- Poland reinstated the prescription requirement in July 2017.<sup>5</sup>
- Hungary maintained prescription-only status in February 2015.<sup>6</sup>

This policy stands in contrast to EU-wide guidance and international health standards.

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<sup>2</sup> See *EC pills database* and *EC in the world* at <https://www.ec-ec.org>.

<sup>3</sup> European Medicines Agency. EMA recommends availability of ellaOne emergency contraceptive without prescription. November 21, 2014. <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/ema-recommends-availability-ellaone-emergency-contraceptive-without-prescription> (accessed October 8, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission. Commission Implementing Decision of 7 January 2015 amending the marketing authorisation granted by Decision C(2009)4049 for “ellaOne – ulipristal acetate”, a medicinal product for human use. [http://ec.europa.eu/health/documents/community-register/2015/20150107130448/dec\\_130448\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/documents/community-register/2015/20150107130448/dec_130448_en.pdf) (accessed October 8, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> European Consortium for Emergency Contraception – “[EC pills back to prescription in Poland](#)” (accessed October 8, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> ECEC – “[EC pills to remain prescription-only in Hungary](#)” (accessed October 8, 2025).

## International guidance

The World Health Organization (WHO) strongly recommends that emergency contraceptive pills be available without a prescription. ECPs are safe and effective for all women, including those who cannot use ongoing hormonal contraception. There are no medical conditions that make ECPs unsafe for any user.<sup>7,8</sup>

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) affirms that ECPs are safe, self-diagnosable, and appropriate for over-the-counter access. No medical examination, testing, or routine follow-up is required. Prescription barriers and age restrictions delay access and undermine effectiveness. ECPs meet all international criteria for OTC status: they are safe, well-tolerated, non-addictive, and even safer than many over-the-counter medications such as aspirin.<sup>9</sup>

## About ECEC

The European Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ECEC) works to expand knowledge of and access to EC. ECEC monitors global EC availability, generates and disseminates evidence, supports national advocacy, and promotes high-quality, rights-based EC services.

ECEC does not promote the use of emergency contraception over other methods. Our objective is to ensure that EC information and services are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable, and of high quality, provided in a non-discriminatory manner that protects users' privacy and confidentiality.

ECEC acknowledges the Polish Medical Council's commitment to evidence-based and rights-based medical practice and offers its technical expertise to support informed decision-making on this matter.

ECEC is hosted by the East European Institute for Reproductive Health (1 Moldovei St, 540493 Tirgu Mures, Romania). Visit our website to learn more and contact us to join our online community: [www.ec-ec.org](http://www.ec-ec.org).

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<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization. WHO recommendations on self-care interventions. Making over-the-counter emergency contraceptive pills available without a prescription. Geneva: WHO; 2024. <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/c2a3ccf0-35a9-4d26-a9a7-c78e45482bf7/content> (accessed October 8, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> WHO - Emergency contraceptive pills. In: Family planning: a global handbook for providers, fourth edition. [Geneva]: World Health Organization; [Baltimore (MD)]: John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; [Washington (DC)]: United States Agency for International Development; 2022. <https://fphandbook.org/who-can-use-emergency-contraceptive-pills> (accessed October 8, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and International Consortium for Emergency Contraception (ICEC). Medical and Service Delivery Guidance: Emergency Contraception, 4th ed.; 2018. [https://www.ec-ec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICEC-guides\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ec-ec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICEC-guides_FINAL.pdf) (accessed October 8, 2025).