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Ireland

“Say Yes to Repeal”

- News from around the world -

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On 25 May, the long-awaited and campaigned-for referendum on changing Ireland's very restrictive abortion law – encapsulated in the 8th amendment to the constitution – will finally be held. The very broad-based Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th launched a tabloid campaign newspaper on 1 May. We publish their press release below.

On May Day 2018 (Tuesday, May 1st), the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th launches a special edition referendum newspaper. The 20-page tabloid carries articles by Prof Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, Judge Catherine McGuinness, Prof Veronica O'Keane, Deputies Brid Smith (PBP), Clare Daly (Ind4Change) and Louise O'Reilly (Sinn Fein), Parents Together for Yes, Catholics for Choice, Dr Peter Boylan and, most importantly, unions including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Unite the Union, Mandate, CWU Ireland, Connect, and SIPTU. We see our publication as a significant resource for repeal canvassers and campaigners and for unsure voters who want more information to help them decide on May 25th.

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Yes Repeal is [here](#).

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Therese Caherty, Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th, says: "The 8th Amendment affects us all, women and men. The trade union movement stands for equality and solidarity. We believe that we cannot create an equal society if women's right to healthcare is restricted.Â

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"In the pages of our newspaper, you can read how the 8th has criminalised and tortured women and girls.Â While the capacity for compassion and care is commendable and defines us as human, trade unionists want a health system that doesn't rely on ability to pay and doesn't treat women as second class citizens.

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"Women living in Ireland must be able to make decisions about their ownÂ bodies. But we cannot exercise that right until the 8th Amendment goes."

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Steve Fitzpatrick, general secretary, CWU Ireland, says: "The CWU's support for a Yes vote on May 25th is based on recognising the need for access to a safe medical procedure for all women in Ireland and is reinforced by the acceptance of a multitude of reasons why a woman may need access to abortion services.

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"To provide abortions services in the Republic of Ireland will not change the moral basis on which a decision to continue or not with a pregnancy is made. It will simply allow women the choice to safely access a medical procedure which is available to millions of women elsewhere around the world."

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Taryn Trainor, regional and equality officer, Unite the Union, says: "Unite has long had a pro-choice position.Â Our members know that a woman's right to make decisions regarding her body is a workplace issue and a trade union issue.Â We are proud to have sponsored this newspaper which will be distributed around the country.Â In the run-up to May 25th, voters are being assaulted by emotive and misleading imagery.Â This newspaper offers facts – and in particular, it outlines the facts as they affect working women and trade union members.

“Say Yes to Repeal”

Professor Veronica O’Keane, Trinity College Dublin and Tallaght Hospital, says: “The current situation where nine women a day undertake the gruelling journey to the UK and at least three women a day criminalise themselves by taking pills to end pregnancies has to end. Repealing the 8th Amendment and putting in place civilised abortion care for women in Ireland is the only way to end this unnecessary suffering.

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“The 8th Amendment also means that some women get left behind, and these are the most vulnerable women in society – those with mental illnesses, with intellectual disability, those who do not have passports and who have migrant status. Women or children who have been subjected to domestic violence and are pregnant frequently do not have the material or the psychological resources to travel, and do not have a voice.

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“We all want to live in a caring society because we are all vulnerable sometimes, and women who have a crisis pregnancy are very vulnerable. For all of the women who travel and those who cannot travel, for the women who have the Irish version of backstreet, medically unsupervised abortion, we need to vote Yes.”

John Douglas, general secretary, Mandate: “The removal of the 8th Amendment is the only compassionate way to ensure women can get the care they desperately need during a crisis pregnancy. Whatever your opinion about the circumstances when access to abortion should be available, the Constitution should not be used to regulate and control women’s bodies.”

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David Joyce, Irish Congress of Trade Unions: “Congress believes that repeal is necessary in order to achieve a more compassionate Ireland, one in which restrictions on women’s healthcare are removed from the Constitution and one which empowers our elected representatives to legislate for the introduction of a regulated, comprehensive and quality healthcare service that is safe for women and girls.”

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Ailbhe Smyth, Together for Yes co-director, says: “I warmly welcome the May Day publication of the very informative Yes Repeal Referendum Special, produced by members of Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th. It is hugely significant for our campaign and will have national impact.

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“The paper will be available to workers all over the country, raising awareness and starting conversations in workplaces across Ireland. We know that talking about abortion can be a tough challenge, but we also know that telling stories and explaining facts is a powerful way of bringing people together from all backgrounds and perspectives to work towards one common goal, a resounding YES vote on May 25th . Repealing the 8th Amendment matters for all of us, women and men.”

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