

# Sex education in Poland compared with selected European Union countries

The media talk a lot about sex education in Polish schools. Some of them claim the Polish educational system did not implement sex education for pupils, which can have negative consequences for the young people and the whole society. Often, we can hear ideas to introduce here Swedish sex education programs. Meanwhile, we do compare Poland to Western European countries and we can observe:

- the lowest number of teenage pregnancies per 1000 girls
- the lowest number of teenage abortions per 1000 girls
- the lowest total number of abortions per 1000 inhabitants
- the lowest rates of HIV infection and AIDS per 100 000 inhabitants.

## Types of sex education: A, B and C

In previous discussions, with very few exceptions, the definition of sex education was not given. In the literature of the subject and, in the practice of educational agencies (eg. in the USA) we can show the classification and the corresponding definitions of 3 types of sex education, given by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

**Type A** - abstinence-only education, chastity education,

**Type B** - biological sex education,

**Type C** - comprehensive sex education (comprising both types above mentioned).

This classification was used, among others, in the American system of Education by President George Bush Jr. and by the European Council. President G. Bush Jr. supported and financed only type A sex education, and the European Committee of Social Affairs, unambiguously acknowledged in 2009 that the Croatian government pursuing A sex education in the schools, performs educational tasks in a proper way.

## Types of sex education carried out in selected countries of the European Union

Three European countries were taken to compare the results of sex education: Germany, Sweden and Great Britain. Those countries have been promoting Type B sex education for many years and Sweden is often taken as an example to be followed.

## Polish model of sex education Type A - Family Life Education

Family Life Education introduced to the Polish system in 1998 can be identified to the type A sex education.

Changes in the program made on 23th December 2008 (Regulation of the Minister of Education) did not change the general assumptions of A sex education.

## Polish education and sex education compared with selected European Union countries

Official figures from Eurostat - European State Statistical Office (for 2008) are summarized in Table 1 and visualized in diagrams.

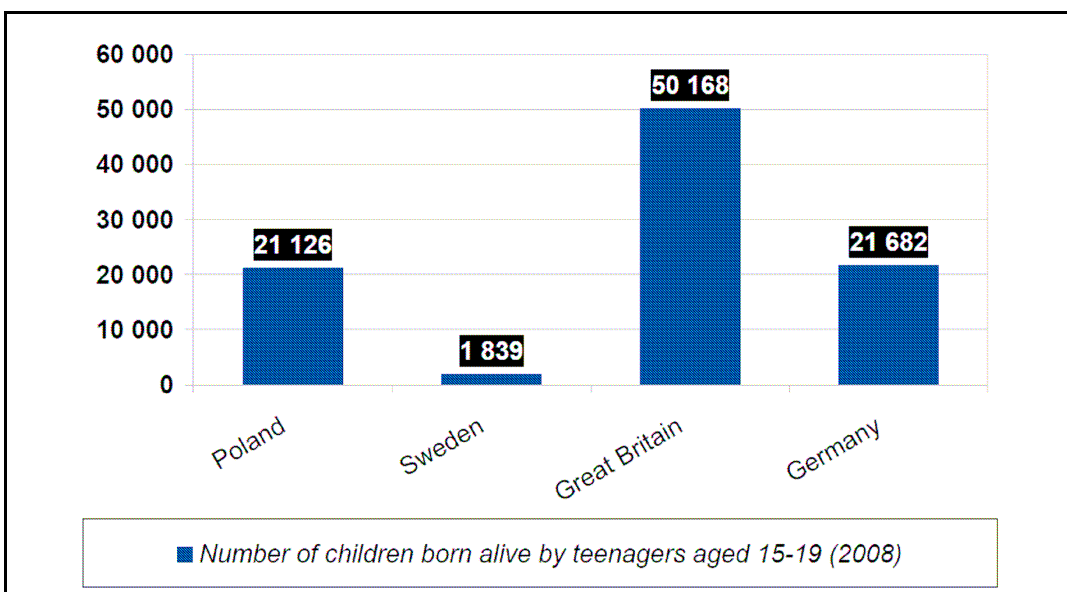
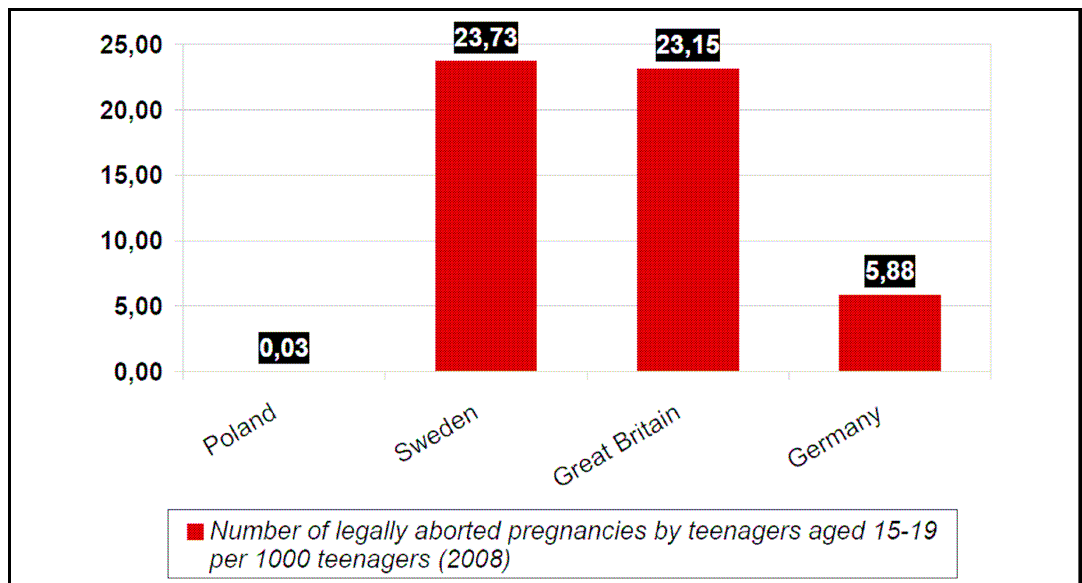
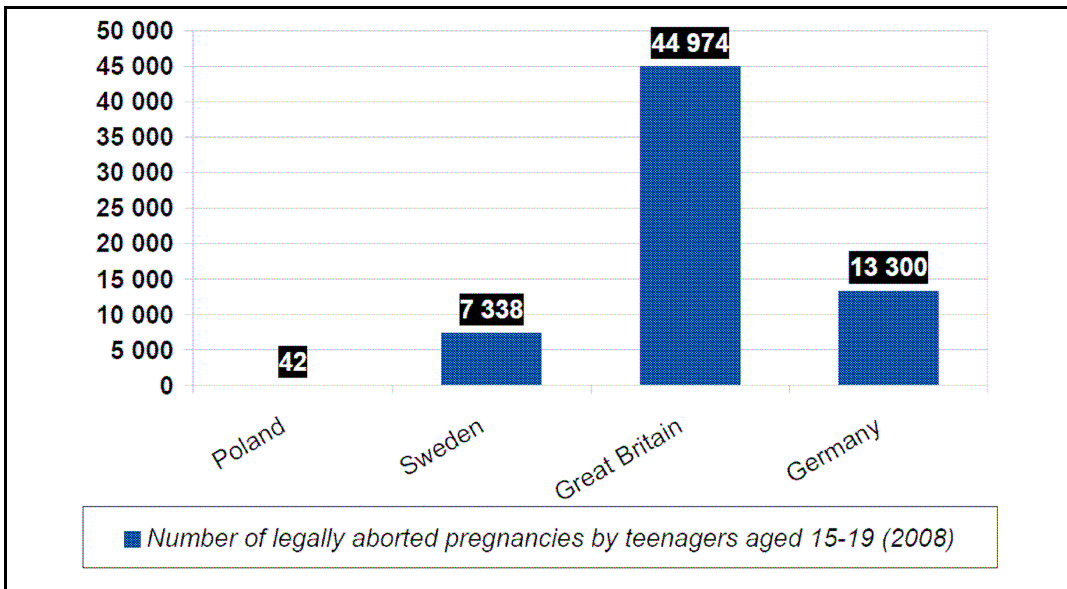
**Data sources:**a) for the rows 1-5: EUROSTAT -<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>b) for the rows 6-7: HIV/AIDS Surveillance in Europe 2009, WHO, p. 25 (HIV) and 51 - AIDS[http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/101129\\_SUR\\_HIV\\_2009.pdf](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/101129_SUR_HIV_2009.pdf)**Table 1 Live births, abortions and HIV / AIDS in general and among adolescents in selected European countries in 2008**

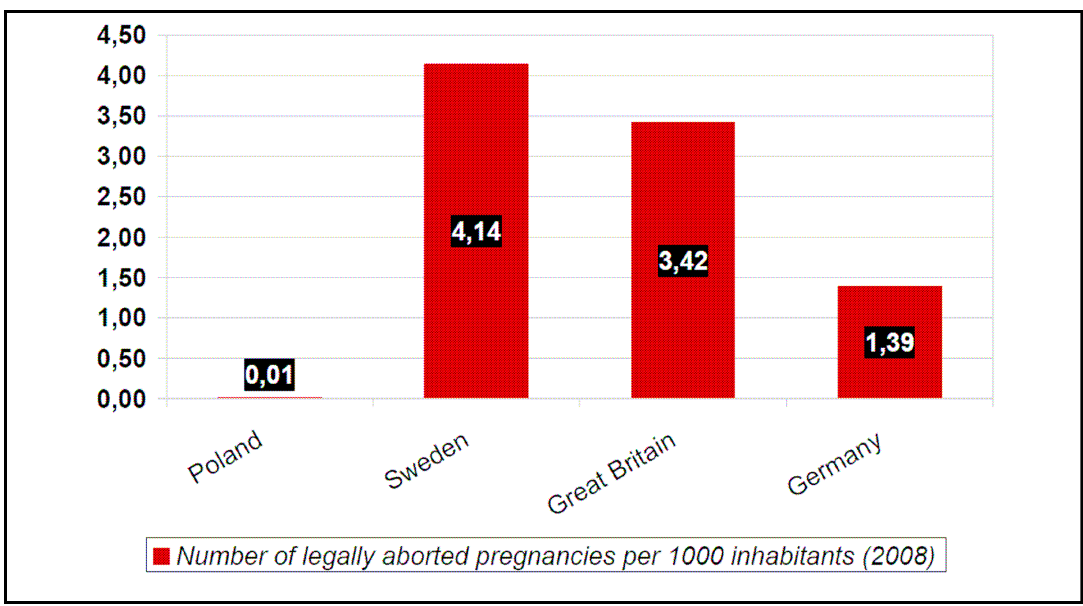
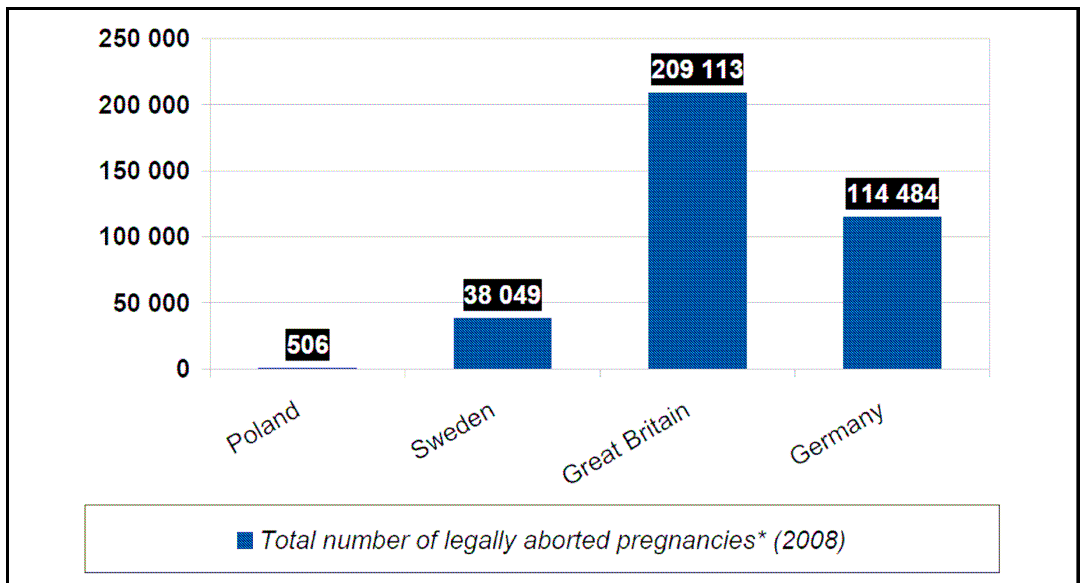
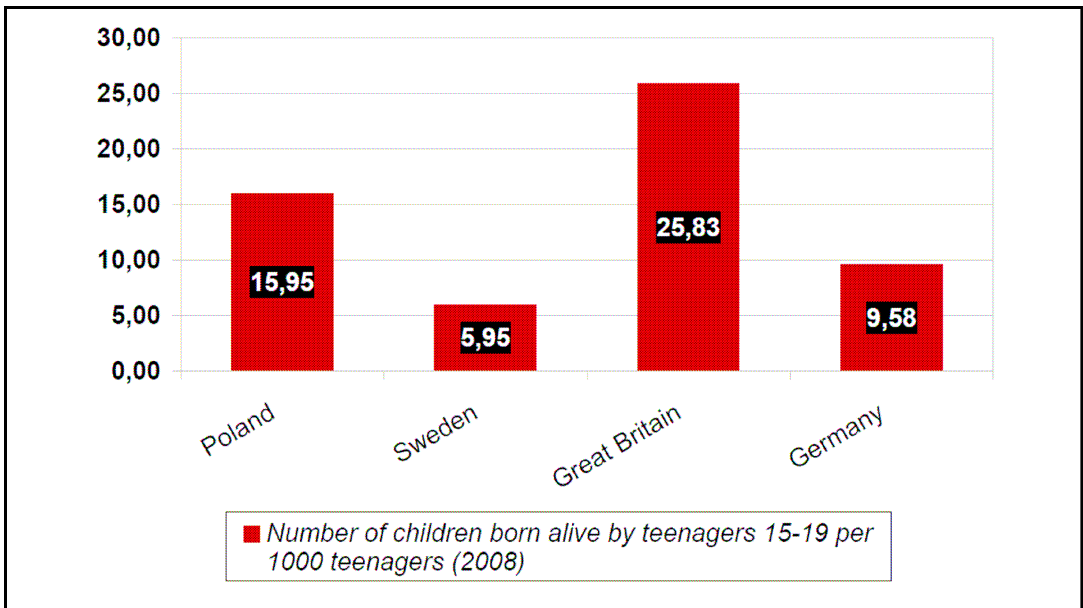
	Specification	Poland	Sweden	Great Britain	Germany
1	Total population	38 115 641	9 182 927	61 191 951	82 217 837
2	Number of teenagers (15-19)	1 324 231	309 280	1 942 500	2 263 821
3	Number of children born alive by teenagers aged 15-19	21 126	1 839	50 168	21 682
4	4 Total number of legally aborted pregnancies*	506	38 049	209 113	114 484
5	Number of legally aborted pregnancies by teenagers aged 15-19	42	7 338	44 974	13 300
6	Number of diagnosed cases of HIV infection	753	383	7 386	2 843
7	Number of diagnosed cases of AIDS	159	73**	729	486
8	Number of diagnosed cases of HIV and AIDS	912	456	8 115	3 329
9	The number of diagnosed cases of HIV and AIDS per 100 000 inhabitants	2,39	4,97	13,26	4,05
10	Number of children born alive by teenagers 15-19 per 1000 teenagers	15,95	5,95	25,83	9,58
11	Number of legally aborted pregnancies per 1000 inhabitants	0,01	4,14	3,42	1,39
12	Number of legally aborted pregnancies by teenagers aged 15-19 per 1000 teenagers	0,03	23,73	23,15	5,88

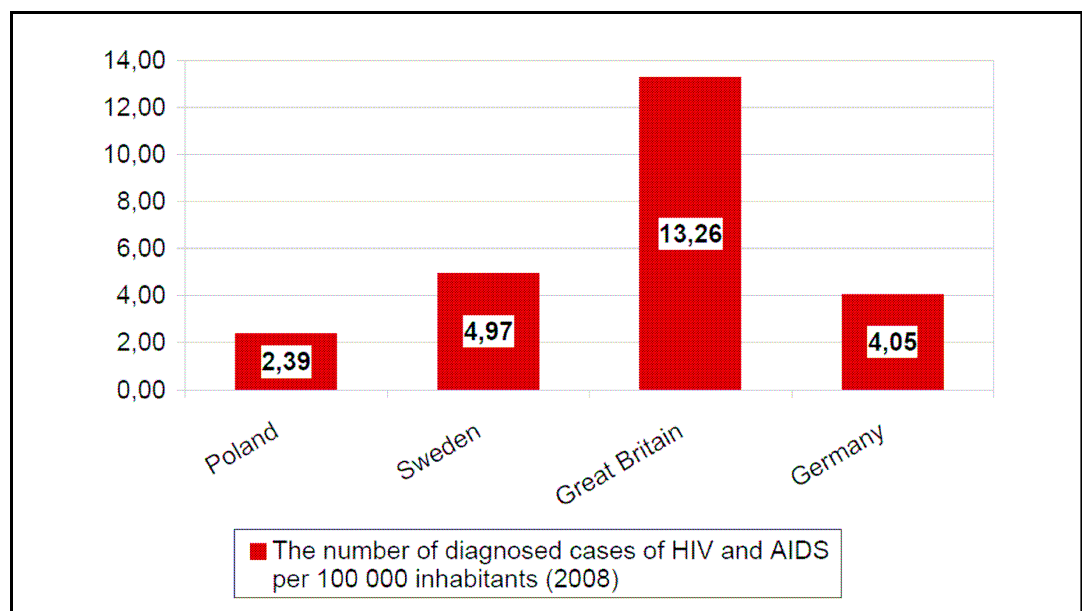
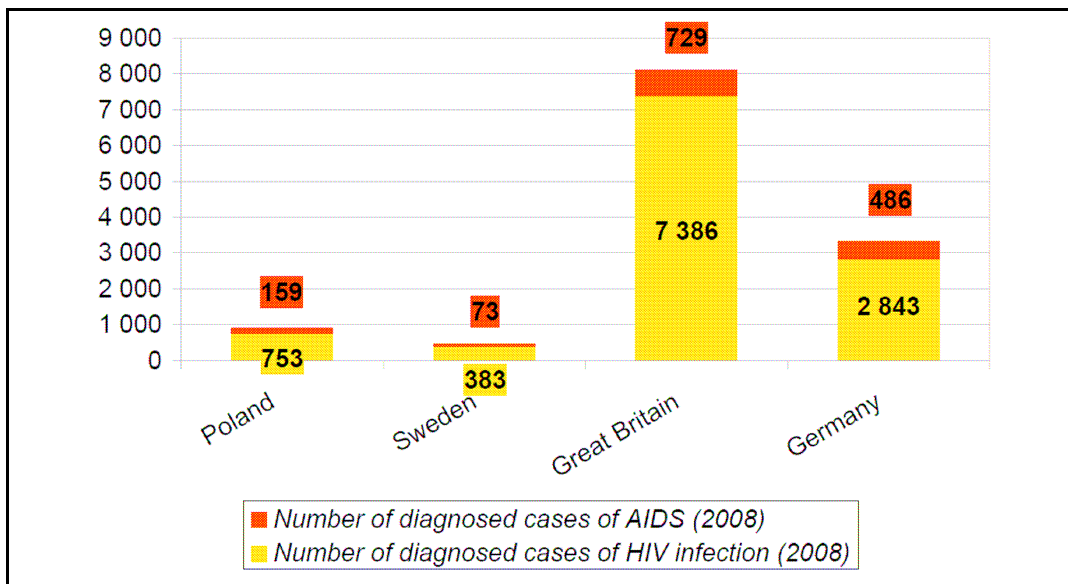
\* The figures in the table refer to the year 2008, and thus reflect the situation of the protection of unborn children in Poland according to the Act of 7 January 1993, which allows abortion only in three exceptional situations. On the contrary, in Germany, Sweden and Great Britain law allows abortion on demand. In 1997, Poland came back to the legalization of abortion on demand and recorded 3047 abortions in this year.

At present, the total amount of so-called “abortion underground” in Poland is estimated to be about 10 thousands cases.

\*\*Data for the year 2007







## Conclusions

Family Life Education, which is Type A sex education, implemented in the Polish educational system, brings much better results than Type B sex education in Germany, Sweden and Great Britain.

Cited figures show that the mass distribution of contraceptives in schools does not eliminate the problem of unplanned pregnancies and teenage abortions.

Having in mind the positive results of Type A sex education in Poland, we'd like to emphasize the need of further improvement of this system by:

- improving the quality of teaching, educational programmes and teaching aids
- enhancing skills of sex education teachers
- improving collaboration between parents and teachers
- reducing the negative impact of media on teenagers.

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