

# Bishops concerned by government proposal for med students

VILNIUS, Lithuania – Lithuania's bishops said they are "gravely concerned" over a Ministry of Health draft document that would oblige would-be obstetricians and gynecologists to learn how to perform abortions up to 22 weeks of pregnancy, sterilization and in vitro fertilization procedures.

Noting that these doctors are to welcome a "new life into the world," the Lithuanian bishops said they fear that making such practices obligatory "will make the practice of an obstetrician-gynecologist inaccessible to many young (people) who would otherwise choose to serve the human life in its most sensible prenatal period."

"Such a compulsion debases the practice of an obstetrician-gynecologist on the whole," said the bishops in an Aug. 1 letter to the Ministry of Health.

The bishops expressed concern that such a medical norm would contradict the principle of a doctor's freedom of conscience, which currently is protected by law.

The bishops said that in their experience they know some doctors, who are not able to resist "the order to kill" due to pressure from colleagues and employers, choose to emigrate from Lithuania to a country where a doctor's freedom of conscience is respected.

The bishops also quoted the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of the United Kingdom, which reported that medical students have chosen not to become obstetricians and gynecologists because of the requirement to learn the procedure.