The Russian legislation on abortions and choice of women in case of unintended pregnancy

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Subject of research – the choice of modern Russians at approach of unintended pregnancy in the conditions of toughening of the Russian legislation on abortions. In recent years in Russia the increasing urgency is got by the questions connected with availability of induced abortions. Discussion of the problem of abortions mentions the most different groups of the population, from confessional associations and clubs of interests to professional communities and legislature. The fact of activization of attention to this problem as abortions in Russia were legally allowed in 1920 is remarkable. Since then admission procedure to artificial interruption of pregnancy repeatedly changed, but after its essential simplification in 1955 the majority of women began to consider abortion as the most acceptable way of regulation of number and frequency of births. At the end of the Soviet period each Russian woman during the life-span conducted approx. 4 abortions, and from 3 pregnancies only one came to an end with childbirth. Apart from the highest mortality rates among men this factor promoted the depopulation in the early nineties. At legitimacy of abortions the only way of control there was a list of medical and social indications to artificial abortion which number was reduced in process of introduction in practice effective methods of treatment of the diseases which are earlier interfering motherhood, on the one hand, and improvement of a socioeconomic situation in the country and the health care in particular, on another. Appreciable decrease in total number of abortions to 1,1 million in 2011 was not taken into account, on contrary the tendency to further toughening of the state legislation concerning abortions on request and shortening the list of social indications for the late abortion (till 22 weeks of pregnancy) to the only one ground - rape, were introduced in 2011-2012.

The theoretical approach is based on comparison of compliance of the directions and methods of state regulation of abortions in Russia with reaction of Russians to these actions. The result is expressed in dynamics of number of the abortions, received according to official statistics. Hypothesis: while the directions of state regulation correspond to needs of women, the result corresponds to the purposes. For example, in the early twenties the woman wanted to regulate number of births, but at weak traditional contraception it was possible only by means of abortions, and official permission of abortions promoted preservation of life and health of women themselves. Essential restriction of availability of abortions in the 1930-50th contradicted individual needs of women therefore the number of criminal abortions and, as a result, maternal mortality grew. In the 1950-90th in the country...
certain «abortive» traditions were created, abortions were easily available, there was made more than 4.5 million in the late eighties, but due to the decrease in birth rate the consequences of abortions connected with frequent postabortion complications and infertility began to cause alarm. The fight against abortions and the active development of modern contraception which is much more mild to the reproductive function began. Since the beginning of 1990 the Russian market was opened for both the modern abortive and contraceptive technologies, it coincides with the new tendency of restriction of abortions. Than more than modern abortive and contraceptive technologies took root into practice at the public health care system, subjects were become more rigid by the official legislation on abortions. This tendency, in principle, remains, as led to expected result – in 2011 it is made slightly more than 1 million abortions, but among conservative circles there were offers on an absolute prohibition of abortions. For clarification of opinions of women the sociological survey were carried out, the major question was under what conditions the woman will terminate an unwanted pregnancy and how they will react to expected restricting measures of the state.

**Data, Research methods and Expected results** are based on conclusions from researches, carried out by the order and with participation of RAPD: «The WHO Strategic Assessment of Policy, Programs and Services in Abortions and Contraception in the Russian Federation» (2009, 22 focus-groups+549 respondents in three Regions), and «The Attitudes of Russian Women in making the decision on the childbirth» (2011, 1007 respondents in seven Federal Districts). «Strategic Assessment…» showed that among the reasons of a high frequency of artificial abortions in Russia (except social and economic) other reasons are revealed: insufficient knowledge of the population about their reproductive rights and health, the low level of knowledge and use of the modern methods of contraception, some regional barriers for the abortion services and restriction of access to treatment and prevention of abortion complications. «The Attitudes…» paid special attention including to conditionality of a reproductive choice religious components. 2/3 respondents had children, consisted in the actual marriage, have the finished higher education, ¾ worked and received the income, almost all called themselves religious (90% from them considered to be orthodox). Thus, it is possible to consider opinions of interviewed women typical for urban population of the country, and taking into account that 74% of Russians live in the cities – and for all population of the country. 51% of interviewees only did not agree with any legislative restrictions concerning the access to abortion. This has given us the evidence that each second woman from a selected group agrees with such restrictions, and does not consider her own reproductive autonomy as a basic integral human right. Women were ready to give the right to decide about their
own body to someone else (state or spouse). And finally 41% - almost a half confirmed their willingness to go through mandatory psychological pre-abortion counseling. This fact is highlighting that a woman somehow is afraid to make her own decision when making reproductive choice. Russian woman is not empowered enough to make her own decisions about her own body. 71% of all women interviewed confirmed that financial support from the government may affect positively and change her intentions to terminate unwanted pregnancy. This figure indicates not only the hard financial conditions which women live in, more than that it highlights the lack of the possibility for making active choice by women about their own life.

The younger, less educated and less provided women agree with a ban on abortion on request much more often, support "convincing" anti-abortive measures, for example, listening of palpitation of an embryo and consultation of the psychologist before receiving permission to abortion, but also 44% among them will terminate unwanted pregnancy if it contradicts vital plans.

For unwanted pregnancy protection the Russians use traditional, not modern methods of contraception, the man's condom (84% know about it and 45% apply) and hormonal contraceptive tablets (68% know and only 30% apply) are used by limited number of women. Nearly 2/3 women are informed on existence of postkoital contraception and less than 1% use it.

The main motive of interruption of pregnancy is the «lack of money» – 71% of respondents called it the main reason. Motives following on the importance: «social disorder» - 48%, «absence of the reliable partner» – 46%, «uncertainty in the future» - 45%.

Among married more than among unmarried there are those who called the main reason to keep undesirable pregnancy «if religious beliefs don't allow to make abortion» – 24% against 14%. Among orthodox respondents who visit church at least once in 3-6 months more than among those who doesn't remember when was in church last time, those who called the main reason «if religious beliefs don't allow to make abortion» - 24% against 13%. Among religious, not (generally Moslems, and also Buddhists and representatives of heterodox Christian faiths) it was less than orthodox respondents of those who called the main reason «if financial situation allow» – 26% against 60-61%. Among atheists it is less, than among other respondents, those who called the main reason «with state support» – 18% against 32-34%. Only the minority of respondents (17%) in a situation of abortions restrictions will refuse to do abortion. The majority ones (67%) will go for an abortion in any situation; 37% will address for abortion informally, 20% will make abortion by means of pharmaceutical or traditional home remedies, 10% will travel for an abortion to other country where it is authorized. Another 3% «I
will make it anyway», «it is better to make before restrictions», «I will submit a request to the court», «I will not contradict the law», «I will pass all this and I will make abortion», «I will be compelled to pass all this», «I will agree with conditions», «it is necessary to give birth».

**Conclusion.** The problem with abortions in the modern Russia is a problem of termination of unforeseen, casual, unwanted pregnancy. Thanks to medical education, development of contraceptive culture, revival of some confessional traditions abortion practically ceased to be the means of individual birth rate control, and became a compulsory measure. In the restrictive abortive legislation is ambiguously perceived by women who are ready to treat unforeseen pregnancy as to desired under condition of improvement of the financial position and support from the father of future child. Therefore the economic measures directed on improvement of financial position of the pregnant woman, moral preparation of men for inadvertent paternity aren't less important, than modern possibilities of the pregnancy termination (for example, wide availability of medical abortion).