

## Italian parliament approves bill to criminalise surrogacy abroad

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📷 Demonstrators gather in Rome wearing placards that say 'We are families, not criminals'.

Photograph: Simona Granati/Corbis/Getty

The Italian parliament has approved a bill criminalising people who go abroad to have children via surrogacy, a measure described as “a disgrace”.

The bill, passed in the chamber of deputies with 166 votes in support and 109 against, is aimed only at Italians and envisages fines of up to €1m (£856,690) and jail terms of up to two years for those who break it.

Surrogacy is already illegal in Italy, while IVF is only available for heterosexual couples. Extending the ban to include surrogacy overseas was a flagship policy of Brothers of Italy, the party led by the prime minister, **Giorgia Meloni**, and also her far-right counterpart and coalition partner, the League.

The measure needs approval in the Italian senate before being passed into law.

Eugenia Roccella, the families minister who took part in a flashmob demonstration outside parliament supporting the bill, said: “Today is important as it puts **Italy** at the forefront of the defence of women and children at an international level. We hope this vote will open a global debate on this practice in order to arrive at its abolition.”

The vast majority of Italians who seek surrogacy abroad are believed to be heterosexual, with many undertaking the practice in secret. However, Meloni’s government has **come down hard on same-sex parents**, including forcing local authorities to stop registering their children.

Her government has been criticised for working on policies that are easier to adopt rather than tackling bigger issues facing Italy.

“It is evident to everyone that this legal disgrace is a great weapon of mass distraction, deployed at a time when Italy is burning in the south and undergoing unprecedented storms in the north,” said Alessandro Zan, a deputy with the centre-left Democratic party.

Riccardo Magi, the leader of the small leftwing party Più Europa, said the measure puts Italy “at odds with other sovereign countries” as “no European citizen can be convicted of an action that is not a crime either in the country where it is committed or under international treaties.”

Italy’s LGBTQ+ community had feared that rights attained so far would be eroded by a Meloni government, which took power in October.

A common feature of the rabble-rousing pre-election speeches given by Meloni, a self-described “Christian mother”, was the reiteration of her view that a child should only be raised by heterosexual parents. She has also spoken out against “gender ideology” and “LGBT lobbies”.