

Incest Law Should Be Scrapped, Says Top Government Committee

Laws prohibiting incest between siblings in Germany should be removed, according to a top government committee, which says it is “not appropriate for a criminal law to preserve a social taboo.”

“The fundamental right of adult siblings to sexual self-determination is to be weighed more heavily than the abstract idea of protection of the family,” stated the German Ethics Council.

The Council released a statement containing its recommendation after examining the high-profile case of a man jailed for incest in 2008.

Patrick Stuebing, who was adopted as an infant, met his sister, Susan Karolewski, when he was in his 20s and she was 16.

The couple have four children together, two of whom are disabled. Karolewski has retained custody of their youngest child, but the other three have been taken into care.

Stuebing was sentenced to more than three years in prison and has since failed in appeals to the Federal Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights to have the guilty verdict overturned.

Responding to the Ethics Council, a spokeswoman for Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, Elisabeth Winkelmeier-Becker, said that the abolition of the law against incest would send the wrong signal.

“Abolishing criminal punishment against incestuous actions

within a family would go completely against protecting the undisturbed development of children," she added.

Stephan Mayer, interior policy spokesman of the CDU parliamentary group in the Bundestag described the recommendation as "scandalous."

"The Ethics Council must wonder if it is still up to its name and order with this immoral advance. The decision of the committee is absolutely unacceptable."

In a statement, the German Ethics Council, maintained: "Neither the fear of negative consequences for the family, nor the possibility of the birth of children from such incestuous relationships can justify a criminal prohibition."

Incest remains illegal in the U.K. and most European countries.