Germany to allow hospital births under false name

The German cabinet has agreed a bill allowing women going through unwanted pregnancies to give birth in hospital under a false name.

The draft law is aimed at reducing unsafe births and giving mothers an alternative to abandoning unwanted newborns in so-called baby boxes.

Children would still be able to learn their mother's identity after turning 16, according to the bill.

The number of babies left in hatches has been on the rise across Europe.

Critics say the practice deprives the children of their identity and encourages mothers to give birth unsafely outside hospitals.

Last year, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child warned that it "contravenes the right of the child to be known and cared for by his or her parents".

Nearly 1,000 German children were born anonymously or placed in a baby box between 1999 and 2010, according to official figures.
Under the new confidential birth draft law, mothers giving birth in hospital would be able to provide a false name on the birth certificate.

The baby would then be given up for adoption.

Their personal data would be sealed in an envelope and stored in a central agency for 16 years - at which point the child would have the opportunity to find out the mother's identity.

Germany's minister for family affairs, Kristina Schroeder, said she hoped the proposal would eventually make baby boxes superfluous.

The proposal would become law in May 2014 if passed by parliament.

More Europe stories

Clashes at Istanbul park protest
[news/world-europe-22732139]
Dozens of people are arrested after Turkish police use tear gas and water cannon against protesters occupying a park in central Istanbul.

Russia urged not to arm Syria troops
[news/world-middle-east-22734537]

Eurozone unemployment at new record
[news/business-22727373]