



Warsaw, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2014

Dear Ms. Iratxe Garcia Perez,

On behalf of ASTRA Network, Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights we would like to congratulate you being elected Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament. We wish you success in your work and hope that your term as a MEP and Chair of the FEMM Committee will be also beneficial to the EU's broader human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda.

ASTRA is a regional network of NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe currently encompassing 39 member organisations from 21 countries advocating in a collective voice for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Our aim is to raise awareness about women's health and reproductive choices and to build capacity, knowledge and experience of our members and supporters and to improve policy standards in this respect. In our work we pay special attention to young people and other underserved groups. ASTRA is also monitoring and reporting the status of implementation of gender-related policies on European Union level as well as advocating for the full realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights at UN level.

For a number of years ASTRA supported relevant activities of the European Parliament and provided support and advice to the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Our representatives take part in the Committee's meetings relevant to our mission and have co-organized several public hearings on sexual and reproductive health and rights with ASTRA representatives speaking about the regional issues related to women's health recent trends regarding sexual and reproductive rights in Central and Eastern Europe.

With this letter ASTRA would also like to remind you that in a number of European Union countries, including the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, reproductive health remains to be inadequately addressed by state policies and programs. Limited access to contraceptive services as well as comprehensive sexuality education often leads to undesired pregnancies and high numbers of abortions which are easily preventable if properly addressed in timely manner. Still many women are denied access to modern contraceptive methods because of financial inaccessibility and lack of political will. Restricted access to safe and legal abortion is leaving many women in vulnerable situations which threaten their life and health and also violates their

human rights. The current climate in the region is alarming with far right and anti-choice groups aiming to influence the lives of women and girls by restricting their abilities to make free and independent choices concerning their bodies and fertility.

We wish that you work with us towards strengthening gender equality and working towards realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We hope that you will support our aim to address the issue of access to reproductive rights and health of women – issues that strongly influence women’s input in economic growth and their share of labour market. Progress in the area of gender equality and full realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights will contribute to a society characterized by social cohesion, high employment and sustainable economic growth.

We hope that you take all our concerns into consideration during your term and we are looking forward to work with you. May we again express our very best congratulations and wishes of success in your work.

On behalf of ASTRA Network,

**Marta Szostak**

Network Coordinator



**Krystyna Kacpura**

Federation for Women and Family  
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## **ASTRA Network members**

Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association  
Armenia - Women's Rights Center  
Armenia - Society Without Violence  
Armenia - Women's Resource Center  
Azerbaijan - Center "Women and Modern World"  
Belarus - Women's Independent Democratic Movement of Belarus  
Bulgaria - Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association  
Bulgaria - Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation  
Bulgaria - Gender Education, Research and Technologies  
Bulgaria - Demetra Association  
Bulgaria - Gender Alternatives Foundation  
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo Open Center  
Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated)  
Croatia - CESI - Center for Education and Counseling of Woman  
Croatia - Women's Room  
Georgia – Real People, Real Visio  
Georgia – HERA XXI  
Georgia - Women's Center  
Hungary – PATENT  
Kazakhstan - The Legal Center for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim"  
Lithuania - Family Planning and Sexual Health Association  
Latvia - Latvia's Association for Family Planning And Sexual Health  
Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women  
Macedonia – Shelter Center  
Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women  
Macedonia - Health Education and Research Association  
Moldova – Family Planning Association  
Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Center  
Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning  
Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives  
Romania - A.L.E.G.  
Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health  
Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis  
Russia - Novogorod Gender Center  
Russia – Russian Association for Population and Development  
Slovakia – Pro Choice  
Tajikistan – Gender and Development  
Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning Ukraine - Charitable SALUS  
Foundation  
Uzbekistan - Future Generation