



## Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

### CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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### BURNING ISSUE

#### Further attempts to restrict access to abortion in Central and Eastern Europe

This month the civil society of Central and Eastern Europe witnessed how determined and effective can a government be if it wishes to influence women's rights in terms of limiting the basic right to legal and safe abortion. The Government of Macedonia has adopted a law which severely restricts abortion after ten weeks and places a number of humiliating administrative procedures on women seeking an abortion. Under the proposed changes, women seeking an abortion beyond the tenth week of pregnancy will have to file requests for abortions to the Health Ministry and moreover will be obliged to undergo a mandatory pre-abortion counseling and waiting period of three days after the pre-abortion counseling. The partner (husband) of the woman will be informed about the procedure and the doctor is also expected to submit a written confirmation. The process of passing this law was suspicious as it only took two weeks from the initial draft to adoption of the law. There have been no consultations with the civil society and the opposition parties were absent from the debate and vote. The international civil society came forward with a [letter](#) to the Macedonian Parliament.

In late May the Lithuanian Parliament secured the abortion ban bill, proposed by the Electoral Action of Poles, to go to the parliamentary Committees on Human Rights, Health Affairs and Legal Affairs for further considerations which will be held in Autumn. The proposed legislature is almost a copy of the existing Polish law on abortion and if passed it will severely limit women's free choice and access to

abortion services and contribute to women seeking abortion abroad as well as illegal and unsafe procedures in the country. To address this threat and support the pro-choice civil society and women's groups in Lithuania ASTRA sent a [letter to the Lithuanian Members of Parliament](#) to express its deepest concerns about this draft law .

Approximately at the same time the Council of Serbian Orthodox church announced its support towards the religious doctors' initiative for state to ban abortions, except in cases when it's performed for medical reasons. Serbian Health Minister, Slavica Đukić-Dejanović reacted to the position of the Church and stated that while "everyone was entitled to their opinion" - termination of pregnancy in Serbia was regulated by law, and the rules of the medical profession and there are currently no grounds for changing the current legislation.

Sources: [www.hera.org.mk](http://www.hera.org.mk)  
<http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/23490/45/>  
[www.astra.org.pl/repronews/136-lithuania-the-seimas-gives-its-initial-backing-to-a-proposed-abortion-ban-bill.html](http://www.astra.org.pl/repronews/136-lithuania-the-seimas-gives-its-initial-backing-to-a-proposed-abortion-ban-bill.html)  
[www.lithuaniantribune.com/39499/seimas-voted-in-favour-of-the-abortion-ban-bill-201339499](http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/39499/seimas-voted-in-favour-of-the-abortion-ban-bill-201339499)  
[www.thebalkansdaily.com/tag/serbian-orthodox-church-abortion-ban/](http://www.thebalkansdaily.com/tag/serbian-orthodox-church-abortion-ban/)  
[www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2013&mm=06&dd=05&nav\\_id=86515](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2013&mm=06&dd=05&nav_id=86515)

## REGIONAL UPDATES

### **Russian Duma passes ban on „homosexual propaganda”**

On June 11th, in an unanimous vote of 434-0, Russian Duma passed a law which makes it illegal to tell children gay people exist or that homosexuality is equal to heterosexuality. This new legislation imposes harsh fines and jail for the distribution of homosexual "propaganda" while foreigners could be arrested and immediately deported. Yelena Mizulina, head of the Russian State Duma's Committee for Family, Women, and Children, was the coauthor of the bill and claims that this bill to protect Russian children from information that rejects "traditional family values." On the day of the final reading of the bill police broke up clashes in front of the State Duma between gay-rights advocates and Christian activists. The legislation now faces a vote by the upper chamber of parliament, the Federation Council, and must be signed by President Vladimir Putin to go into force. European Parliament and European Council condemned Russia's new law and the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that these laws breach the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Russia.

Source: [www.rferl.org/content/russia-homosexuality-law-duma-protest/25013537.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-homosexuality-law-duma-protest/25013537.html)  
<http://thenewcivilrightsmovement.com/russia-poised-to-pass-bill-making-it-illegal-to-tell-children-gay-people-exist/politics/2013/06/11/68483>  
[www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/european-parliament-condemns-russias-federal-censorship-law/](http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/european-parliament-condemns-russias-federal-censorship-law/)

### **Lithuanian MPs wish to criticize LGBT community**

A group of Lithuanian MPs have proposed a law stating that criticism of homosexuality and claims that homosexuals should change their sexual orientation is not to be interpreted as discrimination or hate speech. According to the MPs, the amendment to the Penal Code would protect the constitutional right of citizens to hold and freely express their convictions.

Source: [www.15min.lt/en/article/politics/group-of-lithuanian-mps-propose-that-public-criticism-of-homosexuality-not-be-seen-as-discrimination-526-344270](http://www.15min.lt/en/article/politics/group-of-lithuanian-mps-propose-that-public-criticism-of-homosexuality-not-be-seen-as-discrimination-526-344270)

### **Romanian UPR at the Human Right's Council**

ASTRA representatives delivered two statements during the Human Rights Council session framework of the Universal Periodic Review on Romania.

Source: <http://www.astra.org.pl/repronews/142-romanian-upr-at-the-hrd.html>

### **5th Congress of Women in Poland**

In mid June the 5th Congress of Women took place in Warsaw. Currently, the Congress of Women is a social in movement, which is comprised of socially and politically involved Polish women as well as individuals. Federation for Women and Family Planning, Polish ASTRA member, organized a panel on "Women's Health and Sexuality Throughout Life Cycle" which involved experts from the field of sexuality, sexual and reproductive health rights, health workers, journalists and activists.

Source: [www.federa.org.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1187:federation-at-the-5th-polish-congress-of-women&catid=78:news&Itemid=114](http://www.federa.org.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1187:federation-at-the-5th-polish-congress-of-women&catid=78:news&Itemid=114)  
[www.kongreskobiet.pl/en-EN/](http://www.kongreskobiet.pl/en-EN/)

### **FEMM on SRHR issues**

The EU Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) discussed the [draft report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#). The issue of the draft report is broad and it covers contraception, unwanted pregnancies and abortion, sexuality education, violence, maternal mortality, STIs prevention and treatment and official development assistance. The report will be voted by the FEMM Committee on the 18th of September 2013.

Source:

[www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/home.html;jsessionid=A915B7403CA19395E6FFA5D29C0008CA.node2](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/home.html;jsessionid=A915B7403CA19395E6FFA5D29C0008CA.node2)

## EU adopts ground-breaking global LGBTI policy

The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union consisting of 27 ministers adopted [Guidelines To Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex \(LGBTI\) Persons](#). The Guidelines will instruct EU diplomats around the globe to defend the human rights of LGBTI people. The Council of the European Union, the body that represents the 27 national governments in the EU, had already adopted a non-binding toolkit to promote LGBT people's human rights in June 2010. Three years later, foreign affairs ministers have upgraded the document to these new Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons. This document is the first ever EU policy document explicitly referring to intersex people.

Source: [www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/eu-foreign-affairs-ministers-adopt-lgbti-guidelines/](http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/eu-foreign-affairs-ministers-adopt-lgbti-guidelines/)

[www.ilga-europe.org/home/news/for\\_media/media\\_releases/protection\\_of\\_lgbti\\_human\\_rights\\_officially\\_part\\_of\\_eu\\_foreign\\_policy](http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/news/for_media/media_releases/protection_of_lgbti_human_rights_officially_part_of_eu_foreign_policy)

## ICPD+20 Review Process in Europe

The current ICPD + 20 process is aiming to review the implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) agreed by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. In the region comprising Europe, North America, Central Asia and Israel, the [UN Economic Commission for Europe](#) has coordinated the conduct of global survey on ICPD PoA implementation in its Member States. Based on the results and available data UNECE is preparing a report which will assess the progress made and identify good practices and constraints in implementing ICPD PoA in the region. This report will be launched at the Regional Conference [“Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century”](#) on 1-2 July which will mark the culmination of the review process in this region. It will play a very important role in the global ICPD Review Process and in the negotiations about the future post-2015 development framework. Prior to this conference a series of thematic meetings, co-organized by UNFPA and UNECE, are held across the region. The **“Inequalities, social inclusion and right”** thematic meeting was held in Belgrad on 15-16 April. The **“Families, sexual and reproductive health over the life course”** meeting took place in Bucharest on 25-26 April.

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl), [www.unece.org](http://www.unece.org), <http://icpdbeyond2014.org>

## GLOBAL UPDATES

The 4th meeting of the intergovernmental **Open Working Group** on sustainable development goals was convened on 17-19 June 2013. The theme for the meeting included employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture and Health, Population Dynamics

Source: <http://ngosbeyond2014.org/articles/2013/6/23/open-working-group-opens-interactive-exchange-of-views-on-he.html>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ICPD+20 Review Process

**UNECE Regional Conference “[Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century](#)”** will be held on 1-2 July, 2013 in Geneva. The event will bring together high-level experts, officials, youth and civil society representatives to discuss the outcomes of the national surveys and expert meetings, and build consensus around regional priorities for the future. The outcome of the European Population Forum will feed into the global ICPD Beyond 2014 review, and will inform discussions on the development agenda for the time after the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015.

**The ICPD Beyond 2014 Thematic Conference on Human Rights**, co-hosted by the Government of the Netherlands, UNFPA and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will provide an opportunity to assess the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action through an examination of the nexus between human rights, equality, equity and population and development, including in the key areas of gender, empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. It will be held in the Hague, Netherlands, on July 7-10.

Source: <http://humanrights.icpdbeyond2014.org/>

## PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

### **WHO report highlights violence against women as a global health problem of epidemic proportions’**

Physical or sexual violence is a public health problem that affects more than one third of all women globally, according to a new report released by WHO in partnership with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council. The report, [Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence](#), represents the first systematic study of global data on the prevalence of violence against women both by partners and non-partners. Some 35% of all women will experience either intimate partner or non-partner violence. The study finds that intimate partner violence is the most common type of violence against women, affecting 30% of women worldwide. The study highlights the need for all sectors to engage in eliminating tolerance for violence against women and better support for women who experience it. New WHO guidelines, launched with the report, aim to help countries improve their health sectors capacity to respond to violence against women. One of the report’s key findings on the health impacts of violence is about unwanted pregnancy and abortion. The report found that women experiencing physical and/or sexual partner violence are twice as likely to have an abortion than women who do not experience this violence.

Source:

[www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence\\_against\\_women\\_20130620/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/index.html)

[The Barometer of Women’s Access to Modern Contraceptive Choice](#) developed by International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN) provides a policy and status overview on women’s access to modern contraceptive choice across ten EU member states (Bulgaria, Czech

Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden). This report reveals inequalities in access to contraceptive choice in those countries and calls for coherent policies on sexual and reproductive health and rights. It also highlights large gaps in the national policies analyzed and urges policy makers to ensure that a comprehensive SRHR policy framework is established. Additionally the report found that there is an insufficient level of awareness and education around all modern contraceptive methods, with only 50% of the countries surveyed making sexuality education mandatory in schools.

Source:

[www.ippfen.org/en/Resources/Publications/Barometer+on+Women+access+to+Modern+Contraceptive++Choice.htm](http://www.ippfen.org/en/Resources/Publications/Barometer+on+Women+access+to+Modern+Contraceptive++Choice.htm)

**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, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), Croatia - CESI - Center for Education and Counseling of Woman, Croatia - Women's Room, Georgia - Women's Center, Georgia – Hera XXI, 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 – Shelter Center, 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, Slovakia – Pro Choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation, Uzbekistan – Future Generation.

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