



## 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 Poland

The anti-choice civic bill which aims to ban all abortions in case of fetal malformation was subject of first reading in the Polish Parliament on 26th of September. The civic bill collected over 400 000 signatures of support and was proposed by the "Stop Abortion" initiative. The draft bill was debated in the Polish Sejm on Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> and was subject to vote on Friday 27<sup>th</sup>. Polish Sejm rejected the civic bill. 421 MPs voted in total. 233 voted for rejecting the bill in first reading, 182 voted against and 6 abstained from voting. The leftist parties (Palikot Movement and Democratic Left Alliance) were fully supportive of the pro-choice agenda. Several MPs, including the Vice Marshall of the Sejm, made very strong statements despite extreme and hostile opposition from the right.

Two years ago a bill banning all abortions was passed on its first reading and was only rejected in the second reading by a small majority of votes. The restrictive law has many supporters in the conservative wing of the ruling party, the Civic Platform. The current law allows abortion only in

three cases: in case of rape/incest, in case of a threat to the woman's health and in cases of fetal malformation. According to official numbers from the Ministry of Health, there were 669 abortions in 2011, none resulting from rape or any other crime. This figure, in a country of over 38 million inhabitants, illustrates how difficult it is to access a legal abortion in practice. The Polish Government constantly ignores the harmful effects of the current legislation.

Polish ASTRA member, [The Federation for Women and Family Planning](#), has come forward with a call to action "NO to further restrictions in the anti-abortion law" which has been circulated in the media and endorsed by several feminist, human rights and other civil society organizations. The Federation organised a press conference on 24<sup>th</sup> of September as well as was involved in facilitating short training session for left-wing party members in order to provide these MPs with pro-choice arguments. The ruling party MPs were also approached. The feminist and pro-choice allies organized a protest against the draft law in front of the Polish Sejm on September 25<sup>th</sup> (photos available [here](#)) which was supported by several media and [online activities](#). Additionally, activists reached out to politicians directly, presenting arguments for maintaining the present legislation as well as sending emails to MPs. The debate and vote in the Parliament gained a lot of media attention and coverage with wide presence of the pro-choice and anti-choice community on TV and radio.

ASTRA Network sent a [letter of support](#), endorsed by several ASTRA member organizations and the Center for Reproductive Rights, to the Marshal of the Polish Sejm (lower chamber of Polish Parliament), Mrs. Ewa Kopacz.

Source: [www.federa.org.pl](http://www.federa.org.pl)

## REGIONAL UPDATES

### FEMM Committee in favour of SRHR

For the first time in decade sexual and reproductive health and rights are back on the European Parliament's agenda. The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament has voted overwhelmingly in favour of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Report. It represents a very progressive position on SRHR issues and includes major implications for EU policy. *"This report comes at a very important timing. The current political and economic context threatens the respect of the SRHR. Due to the current financial crisis and economic downturn and the related cuts in the public budgets there is a tendency among Member States to accelerate the privatisation of health services and decrease access to and quality level of health services. Additionally, very conservative positions regarding SRHR have arisen all around Europe. Given these attacks, it is more critical than ever that the European Parliament stands up for sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and provides a useful summary of the current state of play of SRHR at the European level"*, said rapporteur Edite Estrela (S&D, PT).

The final vote will take place in the European Parliament on 22 October, 2013.

To read the Draft report click [HERE](#).

Source: [EP Press Release](#)

**Consideration of the Universal Periodic Review for Russian Federation and Azerbaijan** took place on September 20<sup>th</sup> at the 24<sup>th</sup>. The Federation for Women and Family Planning spoke on behalf of ASTRA Network and Sexual Rights Initiative and also participated in two side events: *Maternal Mortality: Implementation and Accountability* and *Decriminalization of abortion*. Access the UPR statements [here](#).

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl), [www.acpd.ca](http://www.acpd.ca)

**Decriminalization of abortion** - side event at the 24th UN Human Rights Council in Geneva September was held as part of the September 28 Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion. Representative of ASTRA's Polish member, Federation for Women and Family Planning, was a panelist and spoke about abortion and recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe. To read her statement online click [HERE](#). To access more information on this event click [HERE](#).

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl)

**Anti-choice campaign in Macedonia.** A nation wide anti-choice campaign has been present in the country for some time now and is supported and produced by the Macedonian Government. Two months ago the liberal law on abortion changed into a more restrictive one - despite opposition from civil society, international pro-choice activists and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Macedonian NGO [H.E.R.A.](#) submitted a petition to the Constitutional Court regarding the law on abortion. Watch the campaign [online](#).

Source: [H.E.R.A.](#)

## GLOBAL UPDATES

### September 28: Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion

On September 28 Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion, coordinated by the [Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights](#), NGOs, international organizations, individuals and other stakeholders from all over world mobilized on or around this day and prepare actions that call to end the stigma against abortion and demand for women's right to control their bodies without putting their lives, health and freedom at risk.

View the September 28 [live feed](#), read and endorse the [MANIFESTO](#) and see the [virtual mural](#) with contributions from all over the world.

Source and more information: [Press Release](#), [www.september28.org](http://www.september28.org)

### **ICPD+20 Asia Pacific Population Conference**

Convened by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Population Conference (APPC) took place in Bangkok from 16-20 September 2013. The event brought together over 400 participants from Asia-Pacific member states, civil society and United Nations in order to assess progress made since Cairo, identify most burning issues and emerging challenges as well as achieve the renewal of the political commitments to the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. It ended with historic success as the region overwhelmingly voted to adopt, support and promote progressive language on sexual and reproductive rights, comprehensive sexuality education, the first time it has been mentioned in such a document, and the need to address discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The content of the outcome document (available [here](#)) is so crucial because it will have a decisive role in determining the regional population and development agenda for the next decade. It also forms the regional contribution towards the global ICPD Beyond 2014 review process. More information can be found [here](#).

The conference was preceded by a Civil Society Consultation “Advances, challenges and ways forward: Asia Pacific CSO forum on ICPD beyond 2014 “ which was attended by 120 regional and national organizations. Participants came forward with a [Civil Society Statement](#).

Source: [UNESCAP](#), <http://ngosbeyond2014.org>

**Post 2015 UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs.** The [Special Event towards achieving the MDGs](#) was held on 25 September 2013. It was organized around opening and closing plenary meetings and four high-level multi-stakeholder roundtable session. To view some of the official statements click [here](#) and to read the press release click [here](#). The outcome document of the meeting can be accessed [here](#).

Source: [www.eurongos.org](http://www.eurongos.org), <http://ngosbeyond2014.org>

**A Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.** More than half of the Member States endorsed a high level declaration toward eliminating sexual violence at the UN General Assembly in New York. The declaration, launched on the sidelines of the UNGA, was endorsed by 113 countries and contains a set of practical and political commitments to end the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war, which terrorises and destroys communities during conflict. Read the declaration online [here](#).

Source: [www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/2013/09/ga-sexual-violence-in-conflict](http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/2013/09/ga-sexual-violence-in-conflict)

**Pope Francis on abortion and contraception.** Six months into his papacy Pope Francis said in an [exclusive interview](#) that he believes that the Catholic Church has grown too “obsessed” with social issues such as abortion, birth control and gay marriage and the Church should find a “new balance” on the moral teachings it prioritises.

Source: <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2013/09/19/2650521/pope-francis-catholic-church/>

## Youth

### ICPD beyond 2014 Review Process in Asia Pacific

Over 120 civil society representatives from across Asia and the Pacific gathered in Bangkok on September 12-13 to participate in the Civil Society Consultation “Advances, challenges and ways forward: Asia Pacific CSO forum on ICPD beyond 2014”. It was attended by 120 regional and national organizations, 30% of the delegates were youth. Since Armenia and Georgia both belong not only into the Eastern European and Central Asia region, but also to the Asia Pacific region, two ASTRA Youth members from these countries also participated in the meeting. The event took place prior to the Sixth Asia Pacific Population Conference (APPC) in order to advocate for Advances, Challenges and Ways Forward on ICPD Beyond 2014. Participants coming from various organizations representing women's issues, human rights, sexual and reproductive health, ageing, women's rights, ageing, youth, development and LGBT from East, South, South East, the Pacific and Oceania engaged in discussions around presentations on the key findings from the regional findings from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Global Survey and the resulting priority policy areas. The key themes that occurred, included access to SR health services; youth; ageing; gender equality and strengthening accountability mechanisms. It was noted that progress on the ICPD Programme of Action has been inconsistent and unequal across the region. The delegates talked about burning issues and possible solutions as well as shared evidence based practices of successful SRHR advocacies. They also developed a joint, visionary CSO Statement, in order to transfer the CSO voice on what needs to be done to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all individuals in the region into the 6<sup>th</sup> APPC. The document can be accessed [here](#). Prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> APPC also Asia-Pacific Youth and Adolescent Regional Call to Action was developed, which focuses on the following areas: Education, SRHR of Youth and Adolescents, Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Access to Safe and Legal Abortion and Migration. It can be read [here](#).

Source: [www.astra.org.pl/youth](http://www.astra.org.pl/youth), <http://ngosbeyond2014.org>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The **ICPD Beyond 2014 Expert Meeting on Women's Health - Rights, Empowerment and Social Determinants** will be held in Mexico City from 30th September to 2nd October.

Source: [www.ngosbeyond2014.org](http://www.ngosbeyond2014.org), [www.icpdbeyond2014.com/key-events](http://www.icpdbeyond2014.com/key-events)

**Regional UNECE meeting on Post-2015 Development Agenda** organized by UNECE, UNDP and the Government of Turkey entitled "*Inclusive and Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Europe and Central Asia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*" will take place in Istanbul, on 6-8 November 2013. The main objective of this event is to provide a discussion platform with participation of representatives from different countries and institutions to identify regional priorities for the post-2015 UN development agenda and discuss how these priorities can become part of a coherent global framework. The event also aims to review regional experiences and lessons learned from the MDGs and ways to improve regional cooperation among countries and development actors, strengthen inclusive development throughout the region, enhance UN system support to Member States, and create new partnerships.

To register click [here](#) and to access the draft programme click [here](#).

Source: [EuroNGOs](http://EuroNGOs)

**EuroNGOs Conference** "Next Steps: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights on the post-2015 agenda" and Annual General Meeting will take place in Berlin on October 24-25 and will be preceded by a workshop on CPD 2014 on October 23.

Source: [www.eurongos.org](http://www.eurongos.org)

## Call for Action

**Catholics for Choice: Why am I pro-choice?** The new CFC initiative aims to collect personal stories on why someone is pro-choice. To contribute with your own story submit your essay online [here](#). For more information go to <http://catholicsforchoice.org/prochoice-essays>.

**Our Bodies. Our Rights** campaign by The Global Fund for Women. Individual persons are asked to input and provide answers to various questions related to SRHR. There is a new question per week to be answered – share your story online here: [www.globalfundforwomen.org/our-bodies-our-rights](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/our-bodies-our-rights)

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 - 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 - 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, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation, Uzbekistan – Future Generation.

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