



## 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

##### PACE adopts progressive Resolution on MDGs

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly adopted unanimously a very progressive Resolution 1975 (2014) ***“Stepping up action against global inequalities: Europe’s contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process”*** which urges Member States to step up efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals. The resolution represents the position of the entire European continent, the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe and is very supportive of SRHR issues. Among the key actions to take is to promote “the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls”. The Rapporteur, Sir Alan Meale (UK, Labour) stressed that Europe’s contribution should consist first in stepping up efforts to reduce global and regional inequalities under the current MDG framework and urged Europe to take the lead in addressing the challenges such as gender inequality, high rates of violence against women and children and also the need to increase the efficiency of ODA.

In particular the Assembly called on CoE Members States to:

- para 8.3.1: to empower women and girls in all spheres of society;
- para 8.3.2: to promote the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, in particular with a view to avoiding unwanted pregnancies and further reducing maternal mortality;
- para 8.3.3: to step up the fight against violence towards women and girls in the most committed manner through prevention programmes and campaigns, including measures to protect victims;
- para 8.3.4: create equal opportunities for women and young people to access quality education and decent jobs.

An anti-choice amendment requesting to delete the word *sexual and reproductive "rights"* has been defeated at both Committee and Plenary level.

The Resolution can be viewed [here](#) or under this [link](#).

The debate and the speeches could be accessed [here](#).

Source: [PACE](#), [EPF](#)

## **REGIONAL UPDATES**

### **ASTRA and ASTRA Youth joint statement for the 2014 CPD**

ASTRA and ASTRA Youth submitted a joint written statement for the 47th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development. This year's CPD priority theme is *"Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development"*. In the statement ASTRA and ASTRA Youth call upon the Governments to move the discussion beyond maternal and reproductive health. It is time to recognize and guarantee the full package of sexual and reproductive health and rights as fundamental part of the reaffirmed and expanded Programme of Action.

You can access the statement [HERE](#).

### **ASTRA Letter to the Co-Chairs of the OWG**

ASTRA sent a [letter](#) to the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), Ambassadors of the UN Permanent Missions from Hungary, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi and Kenya, Mr. Macharia Kamau. This letter, signed by 36 non-governmental organizations from the Central and Eastern

Europe, aims to draw attention to sexual and reproductive health and rights and the urgent need of prioritizing and including these issues in the future Post-2015 development agenda

Source: [ASTRA Network](#)

### **Anti-choice billboards in Romania**

During the December holiday season in Romania anti-choice billboards prepared by the Pro Vita organization were made visible for public in 8 cities in the country, including Bucharest. The [billboard](#) demonstrated a tin soldier with a sad face and a message: "On Christmas day some toys will have fewer children to play with them. This year 150,000 babies were aborted in Romania." The poster had already been used by a Canadian NGO Right to Life as far back as in 1981. The source of the statistic regarding the number of abortions is unknown as there are no official statistics available. No information about the idea behind this campaign nor its source is provided.

Source: [International Campaign for Women's Rights to Safe Abortion](#)

### **Armenia reinforces struggle against sex-selective abortions**

The Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Armenia and the United Nations Population Fund jointly develop an action plan for prevention of abortions based on gender in Armenia. Psychological influence, "pressure" on the married couples will be among the target issues for the experts engaged in the action plan. In a conversation with "Armenpress" the Chief Specialist of the Mother and Child Health Protection Division of the Medical Aid Organization Department of the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Armenia, M. D. Gayane Avagyan stated: "*When the women turn to us for echoscopy, we try to invite their husbands as well, so that they could also see the child's image on the screen. In my opinion thus the abortion cases will be decreased. We must exercise psychological influence on the young Armenian couples by showing them that giving birth to a feminine child is also very important and the child's health is above all things.*"

Source: [Armenpress News Agency](#)

### **Silence over forced sterilization in Uzbekistan**

According to a [new report by journalist Natalia Antelava](#) every year tens of thousands of women of reproductive age throughout Uzbekistan are sterilized without their informed consent—and often even without their knowledge. Any woman who has had two or more children is at risk for sterilization; however women of lower socio-economic status and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected. The Government of Uzbekistan has been criticized by the international community for a long time for its poor human rights record, yet there is silence around this particular issue. The aim of the nationwide

sterilization program appears to be population control and efforts to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. While the international community cannot be held responsible for the forced sterilization program, its close cooperation with officials in the sphere of reproductive health and its reluctance to challenge the government's denials about forced sterilization have implicitly allowed the government to continue the practice.

Source: [Open Society Foundations](#)

### **Cyprus decriminalizes homosexuality**

On Monday January 27 the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality Bill passed the Parliament of the northern part of Cyprus. The northern part of Cyprus was the last territory in Europe where homosexuality was still a crime. Moreover, the bill strengthens the protection of LGBT people by including a ban on hate speech against LGBT people. Furthermore, the bill bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the provision of public services.

Source: [The European Parliament Intergroup on LGBT Rights](#)

### **The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on sex-selective abortions**

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights published his position on the issue of sex-selective abortions. He shows to the skewed ratios at birth which have been observed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia but also in some countries of the Balkan region. He points to the ultrasound technology as a very needed and important medical equipment but also the fastest way of learning the sex of the foetus. He shows to several international human rights bodies who have taken a stand on sex-selection, such as the CEDAW Committee, the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in Beijing and The Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine. The European Court of Human Rights case law does not yet provide guidance on sex-selective abortion.

He shows to the complexity of the issue and calls sex-selective abortions “highly problematic from the standpoint of the principle of equality between men and women. Irrespective of one’s choice to view the problem either as violence against the foetus or the woman, sex-selective abortion is a clear case of discrimination with strong elements of physical and psychological violence.”

He puts forward a few action points for governments and international community to engage in and calls for a strong mobilisation to eliminate such practices. The Commissioner also calls for criminalisation of sex-selective abortions.

Source: [The Council of Europe Commissioner’s Human Rights Comments](#)

### **CONCORD puts gender and development in the spotlight at European Parliament**

In the context of the current discussions underway on the Post-2015 Framework the CONCORD Gender working group – which encompasses organizations working on gender-related issues in both development and humanitarian settings – is organising a series of gender and development lunches at

the European Parliament. The first meeting took place on January 29 at the European Parliament and was hosted by Mr. Mikael Gustafsson, MEP – the Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) – and Ms. Edite Estrella, MEP – Vice chair of the FEMM Committee. It brought together representatives of the European Parliament, civil society, the EU institutions and EU Member States representatives who deliberated upon the current debate on the post-2015 development framework. CONCORD called upon the European Union to play an active lead role to secure post-2015 goals and targets in key areas such as gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights. In particular, a stand-alone, top-level goal on gender, as well as gender mainstreaming throughout the framework should be ensured. The goal should include targets addressing the root causes of gender inequalities that were left out in the MDG - framework. In addition, CONCORD highlights the centrality of granting SRHR universally in the context of the post-2015 framework.

Source: [CONCORD](#)

## GLOBAL UPDATES

### **Report Of The Expert Group Meeting On Structural And Policy Constraints In Achieving The MDGs For Women And Girls**

The post-2015 framework must be designed in a way that prioritizes the reduction of disparities and structural inequalities, using key human rights principles, says a new report by feminist experts ahead of the next CSW meeting in March 2014. In accordance with its multi-year program of work (2010-2014), the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2014 will consider the 'challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls' as its priority theme. Nearing the 2015 target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 58th session of CSW will provide an opportunity to better understand the achievements and challenges in implementing the MDGs for women and girls and will contribute to an acceleration of progress on the MDGs. It can also inform the ongoing debate about the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 20-year review of both the Beijing Platform for Action, and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. In order to contribute to a deeper understanding of progress and limitations in the achievement of the MDGs, to take stock of current research, and to assist the Commission in its deliberations, UN Women, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), convened an expert group meeting (EGM) on 'Structural and policy constraints in achieving the MDGs for women and girls' from 21 to 24 October, 2013 in Mexico City, Mexico. The outcome report reflects the discussion and analysis of key achievements, challenges and policy priorities identified at the EGM and provides recommendations to accelerate achievement of the MDGs for women and girls, and to inform the debate about the post-2015 development agenda. It also builds on individual papers prepared by the experts on specific issues for the meeting. It serves to provide inputs for the reports of the Secretary-General to the CSW and will be widely disseminated in preparation for the fifty-eighth session of CSW.

[Access the report here.](#)

Source: [AWID](#)

## **Abortion backlash in Spain triggers protest across Europe**

The new draft law on abortion introduced in December last year and proposed by the Spanish Government would restrict women's right to abortion, only allowing the procedure in cases of rape and when there is a serious threat to health. Protests and rallies have taken place across Europe, also in Central and Eastern Europe. The pro-choice and feminist civil society mobilized and demonstrated against these sexual and reproductive rights violations in [Romania](#) and [Macedonia](#), among the participants and organizers were numerous members of ASTRA.

Source: ASTRA Network members

## **7th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive Health and Rights**

The 7th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (APCRSHR) took place in the Philippines on January 21-24. The theme for the conference was *Examining achievements, good practices and challenges: Towards a strategic positioning of SRHR for all*.

Visit the official website for more information: [www.7apcrshrmanila.org](http://www.7apcrshrmanila.org)

## **YOUTH**

### **World Conference on Youth 2014 – Call For Youth Delegates**

World Conference on Youth 2014 *“Mainstreaming Youth in the Post 2015 Development Agenda”* will take place from 6 to 10 May, 2014 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Conference aims at producing a joint outcome document between states and youth, called *“Colombo Action Plan”*. The Conference is expected to bring together 1500 participants, half of them young people, and 150 of them will come from marginalised backgrounds. The pre-conference process is led by an independent international youth task force which represents major global youth organisations and regional platforms ensuring regional and gender balance.

Application process is open to anyone between 18 and 30 years old. The international youth delegates will be selected according to several criteria.

More information and online application form available at the event's [website](#).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women**

On March 10-21 the 58<sup>th</sup> CSW session will take place in New York. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and non-governmental organizations from all regions of the world attend the session to discuss its priority theme of *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls* and the review theme of *Access and participation of women*

*and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.*

There is still time to submit a request to make an [oral statement](#) during the session, deadline is February 19.

For more information and the documentation please go the CSW website at [UN Women](#).

### **Open Working Group sessions**

The OWG will conduct one more sessions in 2014 before they start the formal and decision making sessions which will define a set of future Sustainable Development Goals. The OWG will convene for its eight and final session (OWG 8) from 3-7 February 2014. The OWG meeting are open for Major Groups in Consultative Status with ECOSOC. To register click [here](#).

Source: [UN Sustainable Development](#)

### **11th Conference of the International Federation of Professional Abortion and Contraception Associates**

The international bi-annual conference of FIAPAC for health care professionals working in the field of abortion care and contraception, will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia on October 3-4, 2014. For more information visit the official website: [www.fiapac.org](http://www.fiapac.org)

### **PUBLICATIONS**

The European Commission published the ***EU Gender Equality Law - Update 2013*** and provides a general overview of gender equality law at the EU level. Access the publication [here](#).

New resource from World Health Organization - ***Clinical Handbook for Safe Abortion Care***. It is a companion document to the *2012 Safe abortion: Technical policy guidance for health system* and is oriented to providers. It outlines numerous clinical aspects of abortion care, the online version can be accessed [here](#).

The **annual UN Women** report 2012-2013 is now available online [here](#).

### **CALL TO ACTION**

Stop the draft bill to change the law on abortion in Spain and sign petitions on [Avaaz](#) and [Change](#).

**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 – 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.

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