



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

September 28 Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion - speak out against abortion stigma

September 28 Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion forms part of the campaign activities undertaken by [International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion](#), that aims to build an international movement to promote universal access to safe, legal abortion as a women's health and human rights issue. As part of the International Campaign Advisory Group, [Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights](#) leads the coordination of September 28 annual campaigning activities, conducted by Campaign and WGNRR members, as well as allies and partners around the world, including ASTRA Network. September 28 has been a regional campaign for decriminalisation of abortion in Latin America and Caribbean for nearly twenty years before being taken on by SRHR activists all over the world as a Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in 2011.

This year the focus of the September 28 Day was on addressing abortion stigma as one of the main obstacles towards ensuring the availability and accessibility of comprehensive abortion services. There were several ways to become involved, among them various online activities on social media (check hashtags #AbortionStigma and #September28), the September 28 Virtual Mural 2.0, distribution of the [September 28 Manifesto](#) and numerous happenings, street/awareness raising actions (for a full list by regions click [here](#)).

[The Federation for Women and Family Planning](#) (also serving as ASTRA Network Secretariat) held a pro-choice happening on September 28 in the area of Warsaw Old Town – “Women suffer in Silence”. About 150 people stood together in a group and held a sheet of white paper with a women’s face printed on it in front of their own faces (see photos from the action [here](#)). During this event women’s stories related to abortion in Polish context were read aloud by two actresses and informational materials (such as a leaflet about abortion and the Polish reality) were distributed among observers. The Federation has come together in a wider pro-choice coalition with other NGOs, such as the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Campaign Against Homophobia, and KARAT Coalition among others. The Federation for Women and Family Planning also contributed to the September 28 virtual mural by creating a [short film on abortion stigma](#).

Macedonian member organization, H.E.R.A., hosted a press conference on 28th September with an objective to promote the new national gender platform with special focus on abortion rights that has been recently created (see photos [here](#)). In the period of 29 September – 1 October a three day workshop took place and it focused on development of strategies for civil society advocacy in terms of preventing further restrictive amendments on Abortion Law.

[Russian Association for Population and Development](#) conducted a workshop on Reproductive Rights and International Instruments together with Center for Reproductive Rights for a group of lawyers and women’s rights activists on September 22/23.

Young volunteers and peer educators of Georgian [HERA XXI](#) prepared a photo session which reflects main problems and challenges in the field of safe abortion in Georgia. View the photo gallery [here](#).

Source: www.september28.org, [ASTRA Network](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Lithuanian Ministry of Health proposes waiting period for women wanting an abortion and plans to introduce medical abortion.

The Lithuanian minister of Health, Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, recently proposed introducing a mandatory waiting period of 72 hours before a woman can have an abortion. The motion says that within these 72 hours woman must be provided with information about alternative possibilities, undergo mandatory psychological counselling and receive any other help which might help her make the decision to keep the pregnancy. The woman would also receive information about family planning

methods. Additionally, the draft new bill on termination of pregnancy suggests allowing medical abortion. Before signing the document Šalaševičiūtė intends to hold public hearings.

Source: [DELFI \(in Lithuanian\)](#), [DELFI \(English\)](#)

Georgia introduces restriction in access to abortion

The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs along with the working group recently drafted an abortion protocol. The protocol on safe abortion was adopted in 2014 and was elaborated according to WHO 2012 standards. The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs has introduced new legal barriers in access to legal abortion by increasing the mandatory waiting period from 3 to 5 days (abortion is provided to the pregnant woman only if she had preliminary consultation and 5 days have passed between consultation and termination of pregnancy). This amendment is contrary to the recommendations of the World Health Organization which notes that “mandatory waiting periods can have the effect of delaying care, which can jeopardize women’s ability to access safe, legal abortion services and demeans women as competent decision-makers“. The [Georgian law on health care](#) (article 139) also states that: “During the interview, the priority shall be given to the protection of the life of the foetus. Making a decision about the abortion shall be the prerogative of the woman“. Additionally Georgia experiences issues with pre- and post-abortion care.

Source: [Association HERA XXI](#),

Sex imbalance observed Montenegro

Data from Montenegro's Ministry of Health say some 100 girls are born for every 110 boys in Montenegro - while the usual world ratio is 100 to 102-104. This imbalance is attributed to the popularity of gender-selective abortion in a country that still has a wide spread preference for boys. Gender-selective abortion has been illegal in Montenegro since 2009 and the abuse of pre-natal determination of the sex of the fetus is treated as a criminal offence. In March, the Council of Europe called on Montenegro to educate health professionals and adopt strict guidelines in order to prevent selective abortions. Last year, the UN Population Fund ranked Montenegro among the countries with the largest imbalance between male and female births, alongside India, Albania, Azerbaijan and Armenia. While some Montenegrin officials firstly denied that sex-selective abortion was widespread, the government has now ordered a task force to consider the problem.

Source: [Balkan Insight](#)

Project on safe abortion in Georgia

Association HERA XXI runs the project entitled “Safe abortion is a Women’s Choice” supported by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU). The main goal of the project is to improve women’s access to safe abortion services by increasing awareness among politicians and decision makers; improving quality of abortion services; strengthening cooperation among NGO’s and

increasing awareness on sexual and reproductive rights among people in Georgia. HERA XXI ensures that safe abortion becomes an accessible and comprehensive reproductive service for all women in Georgia as part of basic health care.

Source: [Association HERA XXI](#)

Women at the centre of our efforts in the new European Parliament

On the eve of World Contraception day and marking the 20th anniversary of the ICPD and the UN Assembly Special Session in New York, the [European Parliamentary Working Group on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Development \(EPWG\)](#) hosted an event in the European Parliament “Putting Women at the centre of our efforts in the new European Parliament”. The event, held on 25th September, was attended by MEPs and their assistants, representatives from the UN, Civil Society, Academic Institutions and Permanent representations. Opening the event, MEP Sophie in ’t Veld, Co-chair EPWG warned of the need to step up efforts for sexual and reproductive health as we face a more conservative House after the 2014 elections. *“Sexual and reproductive health can no longer be treated as exclusively national issues. Obesity, Alzheimer’s or colon cancer are considered part of the EU’s public health strategy, so SRHR should be included as well. Themes such as safe and legal abortion, LGBTI rights, the fight against HIV/AIDS and women’s rights are human rights issues. They cannot be simply made a taboo by referring to religious or cultural traditions.”*

Meanwhile MEP Heidi Hautala, Co-chair EPWG stressed the threat posed by a new alliance of countries which is promoting “traditional values” for international law and the humanitarian world with the motivation of restricting women’s rights and universal access to sexual and reproductive health. Ms Hautala also discussed the post-2015 agenda discussions making a commitment to ask a question during the Commissioner-designate hearing on SRHR to support the work being done to ensure they are included in the coming Secretary General report due to be released in November. Baroness Jenny Tonge, Chair of the UK APPG and President of the European Parliamentary Forum emphasised that „No country will achieve economic growth without voluntary family planning. Investing in reproductive health care, including access to contraception, is the only way forward to attain sustainable development and economic growth”. The Director of the World Resources Institute Europe, Kitty van der Heijden, mentioned: „Sustainable development requires a balance of three pillars: Economy, Equity and Ecology. All three need to be in balance to achieve global human prosperity. If one dimension is not achieved, Sustainable Development cannot be realized.” She also stated it is morally right, economically sound and ecologically rational to put the ICPD agenda at the heart of sustainable development.

Source: [Marie Stopes International](#)

New EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers & Gender Equality from Czech Republic

The Czech Republic’s Minister for Regional Development Věra Jourová, whom the Czech government nominated for EU commissioner, will be heading the portfolio of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality. In his [‘Mission Letter’](#) to Věra Jourová, future Commission President Juncker mentioned

what is expected on the gender equality subject: “Ensuring that, within the scope of EU competences, discrimination is fought and gender equality promoted, including by exploring how to unblock negotiations on the Commission proposal for the Horizontal Anti-Discrimination Directive.”

Source: [Prague Post](#)

Belgrade Pride 2014

The LGBT community in Serbia held a march in Belgrade on Sunday 28 September. Participants were able to walk and celebrate along a two-kilometre stretch in the nation’s capital without incident. Reports say up to 1,500 people joined the pride event, which was flanked by several thousand anti-riot police. It was Serbia’s first gay pride parade since 2010 and has already been described as a “milestone” in the country's history.

Source: [Balkan Insight](#), [EU Observer](#)

Universal Periodic Review of Bulgaria and Croatia

In this current cycle of Universal Periodic Review two countries from Central and Eastern Europe region will be under review. The Federation for Women and Family Planning, being a part of the Sexual Rights Initiative, and local partners submitted two reports. The final submission on Bulgaria can be found [here](#), and the submission on Croatia can be accessed [here](#). The countries of CEE region which will undergo the Universal Periodic Review within the next 18 months are: Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Moldova.

Source: [Sexual Rights Initiative](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

UN General Assembly Special Session on ICPD

On September 22, the General Assembly convened a special session to assess the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and to renew political support for actions required for the full achievement of its goals and objectives, as mandated in GA resolution 65/234 on the follow-up to ICPD Beyond 2014. The meeting, which was convened under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Sam Kutesa of Uganda, comprised mostly of short government statements. There was no negotiated outcome. Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Estonia, Sweden, Cuba, Uruguay, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Iceland, Mozambique, and Australia, among others, firmly highlighted to centrality of sexual and reproductive health and rights to the ICPD agenda, many of them emphasizing the need to integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights,

comprehensive sexuality education, and other key priorities into the post-2015 development agenda. Government statements can be found [here](#).

The office of the President of the General Assembly closed the session by recalling the 47th Session of the CPD, the findings of the Beyond 2014 Operation Review, and the outcomes of the regional reviews, noting that the recommendations and findings from these processes have been captured in the Secretary General's [Index Report](#). The PGA's closing remarks recognized Members States' strong support for and reaffirmed commitment to the ICPD Program of Action, and that many States' emphasized the need to prioritize further implementation, with an emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment, life-long learning opportunities, inequalities, and access to sexual and reproductive health services. Importantly, the PGA also recognized that many States expressed support for integrating the forward-looking recommendations emanating from the regional reviews, the [Global Review Report](#) and the Secretary General's Index Report into the post-2015 development agenda. In response to the Points of Order raised by the Russian Federation, the US, and Senegal regarding the 30-35 Member States who did not have the opportunity to deliver their statements, the PGA's office instructed them to submit their statements in written form.

Source: [IWHC](#)

The report of the UN Open Working Group and the Post-2015 Stocktaking Events

The General Assembly adopted draft resolution [A/68/L.61](#), deciding that the proposals contained in the [Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals](#) "shall be the basis for the integration of the SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing fully that other inputs may also be considered in this intergovernmental negotiation process at the 69th session of the GA". Paragraph 13 of the Report lists the governments who expressed reservations or explanations of position on the final set of goals and targets. Several delegations, including Iran, Nigeria and Japan welcomed the Report while requesting that their reservations be annexed and officially included in the Report.

Also on September 10th, the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly, John Ashe, convened a [civil society post-2015 stocktaking event](#), during which civil society representatives articulated their views on the post-2015 and sustainable development discussions to date. A number of speakers highlighted the omission of sexual rights and comprehensive sexuality education in the final recommendations of the Open Working Group, and many also called for an inclusive post-2015 process that is accessible to Major Groups and civil society. Ambassador Ashe indicated that the event would feed into the Secretary General's Synthesis Report, and urged civil society to continue engaging in the post-2015 process over the next year. He also stated that the incoming President of the General Assembly for the 69th session will continue with similar interactive sessions, starting early next year, to ensure civil society participation.

Many governments, including Bolivia, on behalf of the G77 and China, and Malawi, on behalf of the Africa Group, made strong calls for the OWG Report to be the main basis for post-2015 negotiations. While they articulated elements they would like to see strengthened in post-2015 development agenda, including targets relating to means of implementation and financing, they cautioned against

unraveling the delicate consensus that had been reached in the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasized the primacy of the OWG's intergovernmental process. Others, including Norway and the UK, argued that 17 goals would be unmanageable and that Member States should aspire to improve upon the OWG outcome over the next year, including in the areas of human rights, rule of law, and gender equality. Switzerland, Israel, Norway, Finland, and the United Kingdom, among others, highlighted sexual and reproductive health and rights as a key priority that must be integrated into the post-2015 agenda. Nigeria delivered a statement, arguing that sexual and reproductive health and rights are irrelevant to development and the post-2015 agenda, and that the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity have no place in the United Nations. No other governments explicitly addressed SRHR in their statements. The President of the General Assembly's summary of the two-day stocktaking event can be found [here](#).

The Secretary General's Synthesis Report will be released by the end of this year, and negotiations on the September 2015 Summit outcome will begin in January 2015.

Source: [IWHC](#)

Women Help Women: new pro-choice initiative

On 28th September, the Global Day of Action for Safe and Legal Abortion, the new non-profit initiative, Women Help Women, was announced. Women Help Women is a forum for feminist, collaborative activism focused on increasing access to contraception and abortion. WHW mobilise women to directly help other women. In response to the need of women worldwide who are looking for information and access to products on the Internet, Women Help Women has opened an online service, where women can request oral contraceptive pills, emergency contraception, female and male condoms, and medical abortion. Women will receive these products at their homes, along with expert counseling, information and support in multiple languages. This individualized service is linked to advocacy efforts locally, regionally, and internationally to expand access to reproductive health information and services online and in communities. All pro-choice, human rights and feminist organizations are invited to partner with WHW and endorse the initiative.

Source: www.womenhelp.org

New UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein of Jordan is the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, succeeding Navi Pillay of South Africa whose term lasts until the end of August. "I am going to be the first High Commissioner from the Asian continent and from the Muslim and Arab worlds," Prince Zeid said after the 193-member body approved his appointment by consensus in June 2014. Headquartered in Geneva, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the UN Charter and in international human rights laws and treaties.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)

UN Human Rights Council in support of SOGIE

The United Nations Human Rights Council approved a resolution condemning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and called it an important step forward toward progress for equality and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals. The Human Rights Council resolution—led by Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay—followed a resolution in 2011 on the same topic led by South Africa and asks the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to gather and publish information on how best to overcome discrimination and violence. The resolution passed with the support of 25 countries voting in favor (including Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania and Macedonia); 14 opposed (including the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates), and 7 abstained.

Source: [The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission](#)

YOUTH

UN Secretary-General's Index Report emphasizing adolescents and youth issues

The UN Secretary-General's index report "Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development" summarizes the discussion from this year's CPD and recognizes the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights in achieving sustainable development. The key themes regarding adolescents and youth highlight the importance of protection of youth human rights, investment in young people including access to education, ensuring health and employment. States in their statements provided a linkage between ensuring universal access to education and reduction of unemployment among adolescents, especially those disadvantaged. It was also stressed that comprehensive sexuality education, provided accordingly with evolving youth capacities is a crucial element of the general education that enables young people to make healthy and responsible choices in the future. Expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for young people was also acknowledged. States pointed out that there is an urgent need to ensure resources which will enable to develop youth-friendly, accessible and high-quality sexual and reproductive health services. The report is available on the [United Nations Official Documents](#).

Factsheet on youth in Eastern Europe and Central Asia by UNFPA

A new factsheet by UNFPA EECARO (Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office) focuses on key youth issues in the region: unemployment and poverty, sexual and reproductive health and gender inequalities. Because of intensive political, economic and social transformations in the region, young people are facing new opportunities, as well as challenges. Sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in the region is neglected, as a result of which there is an observed increase of HIV infections and high rate of teen births. The region also struggles with the problem of persistent early and forced marriages and gender-based violence. The publication provides the information on those

issues and UNFPA's regional work and priorities aiming to fulfill young people's potential. The factsheet is accessible [HERE](#).

Source: [UNFPA](#)

UNICEF report on violence against children

The UNICEF report 'Hidden in Plain Sight' gathers data on violence against children from 190 countries, including Central and Eastern Europe region. It reflects on physical violence and homicide rates, examines sexual violence (also among adolescents), explores most common forms of violence against children. It also shows the rate of peer violence and studies attitudes and social norms relating to the issue. The report reveals that homicide took lives of 95,000 children and adolescents in 2012 and about 6 in 10 children worldwide (between the age of 2 and 14) experience physical violence. Entering adolescence makes children more vulnerable to experience violence in peer groups and intimate relationships. Almost 20% teens aged 13-15 in Macedonia were victims of physical attacks, whereas the rate of peer perpetrators is also high – across Europe a third of teenagers admitted being bullies. In all CEE countries less than 1% of girls reported being a victim of sexual violence, most frequently between ages 15-19 when victimized for the first time. The report reveals the stigmatization of violence survivors, as nearly half of all adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence admitted that they never told anyone about it. The whole report is accessible [here](#).

Source: [UNICEF](#)

Resources on young people from AIDS 2014 Conference

UNAIDS collected all the resources regarding young people and adolescents launched at AIDS 2014 International Conference. The publications are related to conference sessions devoted to youth: prevention, testing and treatment, social change and advocacy. They explore evidence and experiences of successful HIV prevention programmes, challenges faced in various communities and by activists in AIDS response. Access the resources [here](#).

Source: [ACT2015](#)

Polish parliament rejects the legislative proposal banning sexuality education

The legislative proposal aiming to introduce penalties for provision of sexuality education was rejected by Polish Parliament early September. The proposal was prepared by Polish anti-choice organization 'Pro-Foundation'. It collected 250 thousand signatures and was proposed to Polish parliament as citizens legislative initiative. The proposal aimed to introduce changes to Polish Criminal Code (regarding the age of consent). Persons who would publicly popularize sexual activity of adolescents below the age of consent or enable them means to do so, would be punished with fine or 2-year imprisonment. Polish NGOs working in the area of sexuality education stated that the

project was detrimental and advocated for its rejection. The first reading and voting on the proposal took place early September. 264 parliamentarians from centre and left-wing parties appealed to reject the project in the first reading, whereas 169 right-wing deputies voted in favor of further works on the project in parliamentary commissions and 6 deputies abstained from voting.

Source: [Polish Press Agency](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Beyond 2015 Copenhagen CSO Conference

The Beyond 2015 Copenhagen CSO Conference will take place on 13-14 November, 2014, in Copenhagen, Denmark. It will be a key moment for global civil society to take stock of progress on the creation of the new Post-2015 framework and influencing the final stage of negotiations, raising the ambition and ensuring that governments are committed to an ambitious, transformative agenda which tackles the key issues of our time; inequality, environmental sustainability, poverty eradication, human rights, peace and security and participation. This conference will bring approx. 200 civil society representatives to Copenhagen with the objective of taking stock of the Post-2015 agenda and the global goals for sustainable development. The conference is an important opportunity for jointly discussing the outcome of the 69th session of the UNGA, influencing the final UNSG Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and to engage in CSO strategizing for the crucial and final year of the Post-2015 negotiations. Addressing the social, economic and environmental aspects of inequality will be a specific theme for the conference.

To find out more click [HERE](#).

Source: [Beyond 2015](#)

The Regional Ministerial Consultation on “Monitoring and Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – The Regional Dimension” for UNECE region is scheduled for 15-16 September 2014 in Geneva. The event is chaired by the Government of Switzerland and organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia. To view the draft agenda click [here](#).

Source: [UNECE](#)

High-level Stocktaking Event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The General Assembly High-level Stocktaking Event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be held over a two-day period (11 and 12 September 2014) and will consist of consecutive, interactive, multi-stakeholder presentations and roundtables. The outcome of the event will be a President’s

Summary to be presented to the Secretary-General as an input to his synthesis report, transmitted to the President of the 69th session of the General Assembly, and made available to Member States and other stakeholders. The subjects to be addressed at this session are:

1. key messages from all the high-level events/ thematic debates, and interactive dialogue/briefings on the Post-2015 development agenda convened by the President of the General Assembly in 2014,
2. the outcomes of the post-Rio+20 processes, including the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF), the Structured Dialogues on a Technology Facilitation Mechanism, as well as updates on the High-Level Political Forum,
3. the critical internal processes and events that have an impact on the design of the post-2015 development agenda, such as the 2014 substantive session of ECOSOC, including the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum, the 2014 High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC, as well as the first session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly,
4. the critical external processes and events that have an impact on the design and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda,

In advance of the 11-12 September High-level Event, the PGA will host an interactive meeting with civil society on 26 August at UN Headquarters.

Access the concept note [here](#).

Source: [United Nations](#)

Special Session of the General Assembly on the Follow-Up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD

An 8-hour Special Session to Follow Up on the Programme of Action from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is being organized on September 22 to coincide with the high-level segment of the general debate at the UN General Assembly. The General Assembly has urged all Member and observer States and observers to be represented at the highest political level, including Heads of State or Government. Member States will have opportunity to recommit themselves to the ICPD Programme of Action. Civil society is expected to be involved in this meeting, based on regional representation.

Source: <http://post2015.iisd.org/events/>

69th Session of the UN General Assembly

The 69th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 69) will convene at UN Headquarters on Tuesday, 16 September 2014 and will last until October 1st. The General Debate will open on Wednesday, 24 September 2014. To access more information click [here](#).

Source: [Post 2015 Policy & Practice](#)

UN Women Beijing+20 review events

A series of regional consultations in connection to the UN Women Beijing+20 review and events will be held throughout the year. The [regional Beijing+20 review for the European region](#) will be convened by the UN Economic Commission for Europe on 6-7 November, 2014 in Geneva. Prior to this event an [Beijing+20 NGO forum](#) will be held on 3-5 November.

Women Deliver 2016, the 4th Global Conference will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 17-19 May 2016. For more information go to the official website: www.wd2016.org

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

First Global Forum on Youth Policies

United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth together with UNDP, UNESCO and the Council of Europe organize a First Global Forum on Youth Policies on 28-30 October in Baku, Azerbaijan. The meeting will be hosted by Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The aim of the Forum is to gather policymakers, civil society organisations, youth advocates, parliamentarians and UN agencies. The forum will provide participants with an opportunity to assess the state of youth policy, in particular 20 years after the adoption of the World Programme for Youth. The organizers would like to provide the platform for identifying and producing a set of principles and commitments to effective youth policies.

More information on the conference can be found at: <http://www.youthpolicyforum.org/>

International Day of the Girl Child

11 October marks the International Day of the Girl Child, established in 2011 by the United Nations. This year's theme is 'Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence', to highlight the importance of investment and empowerment of girls and necessity to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence towards girls. More information on the event and key messages related to the IDGC may be found [here](#).

Source: [UNICEF](#)

PUBLICATIONS

ASTRA brief for Post+2015 Women's Coalition

In connection to the 69th UNGASS and the ongoing Post-2015 process ASTRA produced a brief on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Central and Eastern Europe for the Post-2015 Women's Coalition. The brief can be accessed [here](#).

Source: [ASTRA Network](#)

Abortion Worldwide: 20 Years of Reform and World's Abortion Laws poster

An updated version of the [World's Abortion Laws poster](#), one of the [Center for Reproductive Rights'](#) signature publications and a powerful tool to visually compare the legal status of abortion across the globe and advocate for greater change is now available. The abortion map is being relaunched this year in commemoration of the 20 year anniversary of the adoption of the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action. Please also visit our interactive version of The World's Abortion Laws map, available at www.worldabortionlaws.com. This innovative resource makes the abortion laws of more than 50 key countries easily available online, and provides links to helpful advocacy tools for abortion law reform and more information about the Center's work on the implementation and reform of abortion laws.

In addition to the World's Abortion Laws map another publication has been prepared – the [Abortion Worldwide: 20 Years of Reform](#), a new publication tracking changes to abortion laws since ICPD. Since this important milestone, more than 30 countries have liberalized their abortion laws, vastly expanding women's right to access safe and legal abortion services.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

Conscientious Objection and Reproductive Rights: International Human Rights Standards

The Center for Reproductive Rights' new publication [Conscientious Objection and Reproductive Rights: International Human Rights Standards](#) describes the rules of International Human Rights Law regarding conscientious objection. The toolkit analyzes the applicable human rights standards to this objection when exercised in the provision of health services. The publication consists of fact sheets which are divided into three sections that analyze different human rights standards from the point of view of the Universal, the Inter-American, and the European human rights systems. Each of these three sections examines the provisions related to the right to freedom of conscience, as well as the existing standards regarding conscientious objection to compulsory military service, and the standards that apply to conscientious objection to reproductive health services. In situations where the exercise of conscientious objection varies significantly with respect to the human rights of third parties – especially for women's rights – the regulation of conscientious objection should also vary. The international instruments analyzed indicate that it is possible to set limits on conscientious

objection, and that this may have a negative effect on the protection of the rights and freedom of others.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

Updated version of Center for Reproductive Rights toolkit "Whose Right to Life?: Women's Rights and Prenatal Protections under Human Rights and Comparative Law."

The right to life is a fundamental human right, central to the enjoyment of all other human rights. International human rights law recognizes this basic right begins at birth, and international and regional human rights bodies, as well as courts worldwide, have clearly established that any prenatal protections must be consistent with women's human rights. An emerging trend to extend a right to life before birth, and in particular from conception, poses a significant threat to women's human rights, in theory and in practice. These efforts, often rooted in ideological and religious motivations, are part of a deliberate attempt to deny women the full range of reproductive health services that are essential to safeguarding women's fundamental rights to life, health, dignity, equality, and autonomy, among others. These attempts to grant a right to life before birth—and therefore recognize prenatal legal personhood—seek to bestow rights on a zygote, embryo, or fetus that would be equal or superior to the rights of women. In many cases, these measures aim to outlaw any procedure that terminates a pregnancy. In other cases, these attempts have sought to justify restrictions on access to in vitro fertilization and contraception. Across the board, these strategies attempt to deny women the ability to make autonomous decisions regarding their fertility with complete disregard for women's basic human rights. There are a number of steps that States can and should take to promote a legitimate interest in prenatal life while respecting women's fundamental rights.

This [updated toolkit](#), which includes recent court decisions and interpretive guidance from human rights bodies, analyzes how States can meet their international human rights obligations as they seek to protect the value of prenatal life. The toolkit sets forth international and comparative legal standards for interpreting right to life protections. It also identifies how relevant human rights, public health, and scientific evidence supports legal protections to guarantee women's rights as a crucial step in protecting the right to life and ensuring the health and well-being of women and their children.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

Lessons From the First Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

New publication ["Lessons From the First Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review: From Commitment to Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights"](#) was developed by UNFPA and based on research and analysis conducted by Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD) on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative. The report examines the role the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism can play in advancing the realization of human rights related to sexuality and gender at the global, regional and country levels.

Included among the key findings of the report:

- 26% of all recommendations and voluntary commitments made during the first cycle of the UPR pertained to SRHR (5,720).
- The largest proportion of SRHR-related recommendations pertain to human rights instruments, gender equality, GBV and women's human rights. Fewer recommendations have been made on contraception (including family planning), early pregnancy, sex work, and sexuality education.
- States from the Western Europe and Others Group and Latin America and the Caribbean have made the most recommendations related to SRHR while the African region has made the fewest.
- The 10 top States making SRHR related recommendations are Spain, Canada, Norway, Slovenia, Brazil, Argentina, France, Mexico, Netherlands, and Algeria.

While drawing on the SRI's [UPR Sexual Rights Database](#), the report assesses the attention the UPR has given to these issues during its first cycle and identifies ways to enhance this level of attention through all stages of the UPR process by multiple stakeholders. The report is currently available in English and was officially launched in Geneva on 31 October during the 20th UPR session.

Source: [Sexual Rights Initiative](#)

Young people's engagement in accountability for the post-2015 agenda

Plan International released a report 'Young people's engagement in strengthening accountability for the post-2015 agenda'. The report states that young people must be perceived as key stakeholders participating in creating frameworks regarding youth rights . It provides guides, which enable to develop an effective accountability process involving young people on the local, national and international level. The report is accessible [here](#).

Source: [Plan International](#)

Call to Action

Petition to the European Parliament: Please Guarantee Access to Safe and Legal Abortion for Every Woman in the European Union.

On the occasion of the September 28 Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion, European civil society organizations working on human rights launched a petition directed to the European Parliament to guarantee the respect of human rights standards on the issue.

International human rights law recognizes that obtaining a safe and legal abortion is crucial to women's and girls' effective enjoyment and exercise of their human rights, including, among others,

the rights to life, non-discrimination, equality, health and privacy. UN treaty bodies have frequently expressed concern about the relationship between restrictive abortion laws, clandestine and unsafe abortions, and high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. In cases of restrictive laws, the central problem is the difficulty of obtaining abortions even when women are legally entitled to undergo the procedure. According to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, once the state adopts statutory regulations allowing abortion in some situations, it must not structure its legal framework in a way that would limit real possibilities to access it. UN treaty bodies have also affirmed that where abortion is legal, states must ensure that it is available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality. Both the Court of Human Rights and UN treaty bodies have also found that restrictive abortion laws can constitute inhuman and degrading treatment. However, in several EU countries, women are facing or will soon face important challenges to accessing safe and legal abortions according to the mentioned human rights standards. Some of these countries are Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Ireland, Greece, Spain and Italy.

The signature under this petition will be used to ask the FEMM (Women's Rights and Gender Equality) Committee to produce an opinion favourable to a European Parliament resolution that guarantees that human rights standards related to the access to safe and legal abortion are respected by all member states. In particular, member states should guarantee accessible and affordable access to contraceptives and support services for women, and in cases when abortion is the chosen option by a woman, that she gets timely and effective access to the procedure in a safe and professional way.

Sign the petition [here](#)

Source: [European Liberties Platform](#)

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

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