



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

CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

No 11 (136) 2014

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BURNING ISSUE

Anti-choice rise in Central and Eastern Europe

The recent weeks in the Central and Eastern Europe region have been a tough period for defenders of women's human rights. ASTRA is observing a growing trend of pushing the limit in women's reproductive rights towards a more and more conservative corner. The demographic crisis is one of the areas which raise the most concern within the policy makers and governments. Only recently Polish media were aroused by the information that the Polish population is shrinking rapidly, such news is nothing new in the region as the facts are indisputable – the European, including the Central and Eastern European population, is aging very rapidly. Additionally the conservative narratives become more popular in the times of political crises such as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Despite the numerous recommendations of various UN treaty bodies to many countries of the Central and Eastern region the reality of women doesn't change for better. This may have its source

in the poor accountability mechanisms and the lack of strong civil society recognition. Many anti-choice moves arise within conservative groups with support of the Church and anti-choice groups from other Western countries, very often turning to the mechanism of petitions and appeals. Sometimes, as in the case of Macedonia and Lithuania, the government itself initiates actions which constitute a threat to women's human rights.

Below you will find collected news from the region on the various anti-choice initiatives. In the last two months several countries of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced legislative changes / or planned legislative changes which will / could dramatically hamper women's reproductive rights.

Latvia

With help from liberal parliamentarians and of the mobilised civil society the initiative to introduce compulsory consultations with two doctors for women wishing to perform an abortion was luckily stopped in Latvia. However, there are attempts to prolong the waiting period from 3 to 5 days. The Parliamentary elections have just taken place in Latvia – the new Parliament will be composed of mainly social democratic party “Harmony”, liberal-conservative “Unity”, the Greens and a national party. Most likely all votes on issues related to SRHR will depend on individual preferences of MPs.

Similarly as in Poland the fear of comprehensive sexuality education has grown to initiatives which aim to protect young people from any forms of sexualisation as the initiators claim the concept of gender, LGBTQI issues and information on sexual and reproductive health have only one goal and that is to encourage young people to have sex with disregard to the family. The proposal was submitted by seven parliamentarians and was voted to be put into further development within a committee. Moreover the third initiative aims to collect signatures for referendum on changes in the Law on Child Protection which would introduce protection of children from sexuality education (initiated after the Estrella report in the European Parliament). Signatures are being collected in churches and within faith communities.

Source: [Papardes Zieds](#)

Macedonia

Macedonia's Constitutional Court has rejected a challenge to the changed law on terminations, adopted in September 2013, saying the changes do not prohibit abortion but only regulate the procedures. Several NGOs, among them ASTRA member H.E.R.A., had submitted complaints to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the new requirements put undue physical, administrative and time-related pressure on pregnant women. The changes oblige women to file requests for abortions, attend counselling, inform “spouses” of their intention and meet a gynaecologist. The change to the law further prohibits women from having a second abortion within a year. One of the judges said that the new Law is not against the Constitution and that Republic of Macedonia has specific power of attorney to protect the children and the motherhood “I am against the abortion. For me the abortion is not exclusive right of the mother. It concerns the father, the broader family and the society itself. We should protect the unborn children, which life starts from conception”. H.E.R.A. held a press conference on the issue and published an NGO reaction to this Court statement - read it [HERE](#).

For more details go to [Balkan Insight](#).

Croatia

A growing number of Croatian hospitals are refusing to perform abortions, even though they are legal, because doctors refuse to conduct them for reasons of conscience. Media in Croatia have reported that one of the main hospitals in Zagreb, the Hospital of "Sveti Duh", ("Holy Spirit") has stopped performing abortions even though terminations are within the law. Apparently, this clinic, which conducted 529 abortions as recently as 2013, is the fifth hospital in Croatia that has stopped performing abortions recently. Others are in the towns of Nasice, Vinkovci, Knin and Požega, while in the biggest hospital in Split - the second city in Croatia - only one doctor now performs abortions. According to the research by the media, the problem is not the hospitals but the doctors. Reports say doctors are refusing to undertake the work for reasons of conscience. Some 66% of doctors in Zagreb refuse this work, apparently. In Split, 95% of medics have refused to take part in abortions for the same reasons of conscience. Abortion in Croatia is regulated on the basis of a law from 1978, which says abortions can be performed up until the 10th week of pregnancy. However, doctors have a discretionary right not to perform abortions if they maintain that life starts at the moment of conception. As a result, no sanctions may be taken against hospitals or doctors who decline to provide abortion services.

Anti-choice movements are strengthening in Croatia, with some civic initiatives and some conservative parties advocating an all-out ban on abortion. The most influential civic initiative, "In the Name of the Family", along with its partner, "Grozđ", seek a total prohibition of abortion, contraception and assisted reproduction. At a number of places in Croatia, groups of hardline Catholics have started performing public prayers in front of clinics where abortions do occur. All these groups enjoy the broad support of the country's powerful Catholic Church, which is against abortion for doctrinal reasons. In response to the media reports, the Croatian Health Ministry said that every clinical centre is obliged to assemble a team of doctors that perform abortion, since women have a right to access these operations. According to some medical experts, abortions are increasingly being conducted illegally in private clinics, while some are classified under other operations.

Source: [Balkan Insight](#)

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, where abortion is available on demand without restrictions, the anti-choice groups are trying to influence this situation in various ways. Recently new anti-choice organization "Choice for life" sent an open letter to Bulgarian President, several Ministries and other officials. The undersigned "insist that the state institutions introduce clear policies to limit abortion and its consequences related to demographic crisis and supporting the life of unborn children and their parents." Among these proposed measures are: presenting pictures and videos of abortions to adolescents as part of their education; establishing a register of abortions performed in the country (which would include personal data of the woman); enabling women who do not wish to have an abortion but also do not want to keep the child to be able to choose future parents for the child; prolong the waiting period to give the woman a chance to change her mind. There is not much public interest in debating these proposals yet the representatives received a response from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Most likely this NGO, alongside other, is linked with the anti-choice movement from Europe and USA, funding may also be involved.

Source: [Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association](#)

Lithuania

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

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](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

EuroNGOs international conference

The EuroNGOs annual conference was held in Madrid, Spain, on 30-31 October. It was hosted by EuroNGOs Spanish member - the Federación de Planificación Familiar Estatal (FPFE). It gathered the sexual and reproductive health and rights community, and its partners, among it several ASTRA representatives. This event took place a month after the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, where the official post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations were launched, to spread ideas, analyse information, share intelligence and promote strategic thinking to support the SRHR community to influence the post-2015 negotiations; promote alliance building and international coordination, clarify positions and seek common ground to support the SRHR community advocacy work until September 2015 and mobilize organizations and individuals.

During the conference the Central and Eastern European region had been mentioned and discussed several times. This happened especially in the context of the rising opposition towards SRHR in the region, European Union and the West-East divide, the worrying influence of Russia on neighbouring countries in regard to anti-LGBT propaganda and laws hampering the works of national NGOs. Additionally several voices from the region have raised the issue of CEE visibility on international arena and the need to include its specifics in international discussions.

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

Romanian issue with sexual violence

The recent The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report on the state of violence against women in the EU shows that at least 6% of Romanian women have suffered an act of sexual violence after the age of 15. In net numbers, over 600,000 women have been at some point in their life, victims of sexual violence. State authorities and the public opinion minimize the magnitude of the problem with much fewer cases a year undergoing prosecution. On average, no more than 450 cases of sexual violence a year, end up with a definitive court sentence involving jail time for the offender. Meanwhile, numerous women go through the thorny road of rape survival without any specialized help or support, as there are simply no such services available for victims.

“Breaking the silence on sexual violence: strengthening NGO capacity to bring sexual violence on the public agenda” is a Romanian based project, financed through the EEA Grants, gathering together 9 NGOs advocating for women’s rights: A.L.E.G, E-romnja, IESR, Artemis, Transcena, Front, Centrul Filia, Center Partnership for Equality, AnA Society and Sensiblu Foundation as collaborator and Stigamot as an external partner. This extended partnership aims to speak up together with victims of sexual abuse in order to de-stigmatize the experience and sensitize authorities to provide the adequate support need by victims.

Source: [Adevarul.ro](#)

Polish NGO Coalition for CEDAW

13 organizations from Poland created a CEDAW Coalition to prepare an alternative report to the governmental report on the realization of the CEDAW Convention in 2011. The governmental report was not released until 2014. In 2013 the organizations were invited to the consultations on the governmental report but not many suggestions were taken into consideration and incorporated into the final version. Poland was reviewed by the Committee at its 59th Session, on the 22nd of October. The representation of the CEDAW Coalition (6 persons) was present in Geneva at the session. There was an oral statement delivered at the informal session with NGOs prior to the dialogue with the Polish government. The Coalition focused on three main topics – gender stereotypes and disadvantages groups of women, reproductive health and rights and institutional mechanisms for non-discrimination and equality.

The Coalition also issued strong and specific recommendations, especially in the field of reproductive health and rights., calling for mandatory sexuality education, financing wide range of contraceptives as well as liberalizing abortion law and ensuring that at least the existing provisions are properly implemented. In regard to that the statement focused also on the conscientious objection and criminalization of illegal abortion as factors that especially limit women's access to reproductive health services. There was also a briefing with the Committee members organized a day before the dialogue with the government. The members had a chance to ask detailed questions about the situation in Poland and clarify what was not understood from both reports and the statement. They were very interested in the topics of family law, labour market, reproductive rights, stereotypes and the way government includes that issue in its policies. The questions referred also to the role of the Catholic church and its influence on government. The Committee Members were also very concerned about the lack of budget for the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment.

During the interactive dialogue between the CEDAW Committee Members and the government there was no chance for any intervention by civil society. A lot of important issues were raised by the Committee in regard to sexual and reproductive rights. They fell into the scope of articles 10 (on education) and 12 (on health) of the CEDAW convention. On the occasion of the article 10 the questions about sexuality education were raised – most importantly about the fact that it is taught as a part of family life classes and is conducted by not professionally trained teachers. Additionally the Committee asked why adolescents are thought about only natural methods of birth control and why abstinence is being promoted in such a strong way. It was also a concern to the members why youth are not taught about their health and good relationships.

The intervention under article 12 was very strong. The Committee Member responsible for this article made a remarkable speech with a diagnosis of the situation in Poland. She was astonished by the government's negligence of the fact that so many women terminate their pregnancies daily and there is no action regarding that, no data about the scale and consequences for women's health, no recognition of the causes and the influence of the law and no solutions. There were questions about liberalization of the law and about actions towards better implementation of the existing provisions. There was also a question about contraceptives and reasons for lack of sufficient financing from the state budget as well as means to solve the issue of abuse of conscientious objection which is defined as one of the biggest obstacles on the way to execute a woman's right for legal abortion. The Committee also reminded the government about its concluding observations from 2007 when it stated clearly that those issues should be acknowledged and taken care of. Special attention was paid to the fact that the government did not perform any study to realize what the actual consequences of the restrictive law are.

Not surprisingly the government avoided answering the questions that might reveal its negligence and inaction. From what was said one might think that the situation in the field of sexuality education in Poland is almost perfect and that the government does everything possible to ensure that women have access to legal abortion. This obviously is not true.

Poland is now awaiting the Committee's concluding observations that are expected on the 7th of November.

Source: [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#)

Human Rights Watch on Abortion and the ‘Conscience Clause’ in Poland

Written by Hillary Margolis

Poland is one of a select few countries in Europe where access to abortion remains extremely limited: it’s a crime to terminate a pregnancy except in cases of risk to the mother’s life or health, severe fetal abnormality, or rape. In Europe, only Ireland and Malta have more restrictive laws.

The United Nations has taken Poland to task for its abortion laws and practices, and is likely to do so again today. After a visit in 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health called for the government to remove barriers to safe abortion. A UN expert body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, also criticized Poland’s abortion record in 2007. At a meeting today with Polish officials, this committee will undoubtedly focus on the lack of progress on access to safe, legal abortion.

Local groups in Poland note that women seeking abortion face stigma, intimidation, and misinformation from healthcare providers and clergy. Poland’s “conscience clause” under article 39 of the Doctor and Dentist Professions Act is a particular concern. Medical personnel may decline to perform abortion on the grounds that it conflicts with their personal values or beliefs. The law states that personnel must refer a woman to an alternate doctor or facility where she has a real possibility of obtaining services, but local women’s groups report that such referrals are often not made.

The conscience clause seems to be gaining ground: in May 2014, 3,000 people, mainly medical professionals, signed a “Declaration of Faith” asserting the “primacy” of religious over state law and saying they consider abortion and other reproductive services to be against their faith. Poland’s Catholic bishops endorsed the declaration. Donald Tusk, then-prime minister, reminded Polish medical practitioners that the obligation to provide comprehensive health care supersedes individual beliefs.

Such comments are welcome but insufficient. Poland’s new prime minister, Ewa Kopacz, should act quickly to safeguard women’s access to safe and legal abortion, even with the “conscience clause” in force. The state should ensure availability of doctors who do not invoke the conscience clause, and monitor referrals to other providers by those who are unwilling to perform abortions. The government should also institute a clear and rapid appeals process for women denied abortion, as mandated by the European Court of Human Rights. “Conscientious objection” should not mean the evisceration of women’s human rights.

Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)

Estonia introduces civil partnerships

On October 9th Estonia became the first former Soviet republic to pass gender-neutral civil partnership bill, giving same-sex couples the same rights as opposite-sex couples. Estonian Parliament voted 40 against 38 to pass the bill into law.

Source: [Estonian Public Broadcasting](#)

Kyrgyzstan Moves to Adopt Russia-Style Anti-Gay Law

Lawmakers in Kyrgyzstan have voted overwhelmingly to adopt a tougher version of Russia's so-called "gay propaganda" law. The Kyrgyz version mandates jail terms for gay-rights activists and others, including journalists, who create "a positive attitude toward non-traditional sexual relations." The vaguely worded bill passed its first reading on October 15 with a vote of 79 to 7, AKIpress reported (the 120-seat legislature is rarely full). During a meeting last week to discuss the bill, one lawmaker said the draft is not tough enough and proposed to increase sentences from up to one year to three. If it passes two more readings, the bill will go to President Almazbek Atambayev – a staunch Russia ally – for his signature.

Source: Eurasia.net

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.

GLOBAL UPDATES

UNGA President Appoints Co-Facilitators for Post-2015 Negotiations

17 October 2014: The President of the UN General Assembly informed UN Member States that he has appointed David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of **Ireland**, and Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of **Kenya**, as co-facilitators "to lead open, inclusive, and transparent consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, including the organization and modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations and the remaining issues related to the Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda."

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charlie Flanagan said, "I discussed the possibility of this appointment during my recent visit to the UN in New York and made it clear that the Irish Government would be strongly supportive. This significant new role will build on Ireland's important work on international development during our EU Presidency in 2013, and on the MDGs at the United Nations. I know that Ambassador Donoghue and his team will take on the challenge with great commitment, and they will have the strong support of the Department and Ireland's entire diplomatic network."

Among the elements of the new development agenda are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The post-2015 development agenda is expected to be adopted during a Summit of world leaders in New York in September 2015. [[Press Release, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland](#)] [[UNGA President's Letter](#)]

YOUTH

International Day of the Girl Child 2014: Ending the Cycle of Violence

11 October marks the International Day of the Girl Child, adopted at the United Nations General Assembly with resolution [66/170](#) in 2011, to raise awareness of the girls' situation worldwide and recognize the need for empowerment and investment in girls. This year the topic of the IDGC is **Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence**, to emphasize the need for prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against girls. On the eve of the event, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and Plan International organized an interdisciplinary discussion on violence against girls, involving key stakeholders and civil society actors. ASTRA Youth on the occasion of IDGC published a comment about SRHR as a way to prevent violence against adolescent girls, which is accessible [here](#).

To find out more about the global celebration of IDGC, visit the UNICEF website [here](#).

Launch of the campaign 'Youth voice- future we want In Eastern Europe and Central Asia'

The regional campaign focused on youth engagement in Post-2015 agenda **'Youth voice- future we want In Eastern Europe and Central Asia'** has been launched early October. The goal of the campaign is to ensure that issues concerning young people are recognized in the future development agenda, which can be done only with meaningful youth participation. Young advocates from the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia are encouraged to mobilize and advocate for the realization of youth priorities related to the Post-2015 development framework . The campaign will also aim to provide comprehensive information on youth in the EECA region and enable the improvement of skills needed for effective advocacy actions. The campaign is coordinated by Regional Youth Leadership Group composed of several youth regional networks/institutions – in a close collaboration with the Youth Cluster in UNFPA EECARO and UNFPA Country Offices. ASTRA Youth is one of the organizations coordinating the campaign.

More information on the initiative can be found at the campaign's Facebook page: [EECA Youth Voice](#)

Call for applications to the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV

The Global Network of Young People Living with HIV Y+ calls for applications for the member of the Steering Committee. Y+ seeks young people living with HIV, who are passionate about making a difference in their community, country, region and globally. The members will be selected from individuals and organization representatives from six world regions: African Region, Latin America, Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Europe and North America. Applications are due by 13 November.

More information on the application process is available [here](#).

Source: [GNP+](#)

Anti-choice boycott of sexuality education platform in Romania

Sexuality education platform 'Sexul versus Barza (Sex versus Stork)' created by a feminist activist in Romania, is being under anti-choice and homophobic attack. The platform consists of videos available online for young people, who seek comprehensive information on sexuality. The project includes provision of sexuality education lessons for high-school students and teachers. The creator of the project, Adriana Radu along with other entities supporting her work such as women's rights organizations, the SRHR community, the network of libraries (a key collaborator of the project) have been the target of systematic smearing campaigns coordinated by anti-choice groups. In a number of locations where Sex versus Stork was scheduled for public appearances, a network of 27 anti-choice, homophobic organizations headed by Pro-Vita Romania filed official complaints with local authorities blaming the project and its supporters for corrupting minors, exposing under-aged children to sexually explicit content and for promoting homosexuality. The allegations are of course false and ill-intended, yet to our much surprise, the response of local authorities has been more inclined to side with anti human rights groups and to boycott the project rather than to assess the complaint in a rational manner.

Source: [ALEG](#)

First Global Forum on Youth Policy

From 28-30 October in Baku, Azerbaijan there was held the first Global Forum on Youth Policies. The Forum was convened by Azerbaijani Ministry of Youth and Sports in cooperation with UN SG's Envoy on Youth, UNDP, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The Forum brought about 700 young people from governments, youth networks, research and development communities. The goal of the Forum was to revive the commitment on youth policies set out in 1995 in World Programme of Action on Youth (WPAY). The debates held during the Forum covered youth issues from employment, security to health and education. The discussions regarded the main achievements and challenges on youth policies on the national, regional and international level.

After the Forum the **Baku Commitment to Youth Policies** was published. This outcome documents contains 8 key guiding principles on what youth policies should be like to meaningfully include youth needs. The document involves also 10 commitments to be made to ensure the implementation of youth policies. These commitments ensure establishing a Global Initiative on Youth Policies, strengthening the cooperation between young people and governments and ensuring meaningful youth participation in creating frameworks concerning them.

The Commitment is accessible [here](#). More information on the Forum can be found [here](#).

Source: [Youth Policy Forum](#)

Publications

UN System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) report

The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has launched the first report of the UN System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP). Action Plan aims to advance the coherence of UN activities related to youth development. It provides guidance to the whole work of UN system regarding young people's issues. The report describes five thematic areas and goals of Youth-SWAP: employment and entrepreneurship; protection of rights and civic engagement; political inclusion; education (including comprehensive sexuality education); and health and explains which UN agendas are responsible for the implementation of these goals. The report also identifies the achievements and challenges related to activities focused on youth development on the global, regional and national level.

The report is available [here](#).

Source: [UN Youth-Swap](#)

Post-2015 made simple: Shaping the future of sexual and reproductive health and rights

IPPF prepared a brief '**Post-2015 made simple: Shaping the future of sexual and reproductive health and rights**' explaining the Post-2015 framework and its importance to civil society. It explores the next steps and advocacy opportunities in which civil society organizations can engage and studies the achievements and challenges relating to the Post-2015 process.

The publication is accessible: [here](#).

Source: [IPPF](#)

ACT!2015 Advocacy strategy toolkit

ACT!2015, a collaborative initiative of PACT and UNAIDS, released the advocacy strategy toolkit devoted to the national advocacy in the post-2015 agenda in the area of HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The toolkit explains the post-2015 process, identifies the key events and advocacy opportunities. It serves as a step-by-step guidance on how to prepare an effective advocacy plan, implement it, evaluate and plan next future activities.

The toolkit is accessible [here](#).

Source: [UNAIDS](#)

European Youth Advocacy Handbook

YouAct published a toolkit 'European Youth Advocacy Handbook', aimed at providing youth knowledge and tools for advocacy activities on the European level, with focus on the European Parliament. The publication provides comprehensive information on European Parliament and

explores the ways of engagement in advocacy. It also includes case studies of successful advocacy activities. The handbook was prepared as a part of European Dialogue for Youth Rights project.

The handbook may be downloaded [here](#).

Source: [YouAct](#)

Interactive tool on youth access to sexual and reproductive health services

IPPF in partnership with Guttmacher Institute prepared '**Demistifying Data visualization tool**', aimed to support advocacy activities regarding sexual and reproductive health. It gathers the data from surveys conducted in 30 countries and shows the challenges of young people while trying to access sexual and reproductive health services. The data highlights the rate of sexual activity among young people; contraceptive knowledge, use and need and opinions of the implementation of sexuality education. Information provided on some of Eastern Europe states (Ukraine, Moldova and Albania) proves the unmet need for contraception in these countries: on average over ¼ of adolescent girls aged 15-19 do not have their need for contraception realized. At the same time, the necessity of comprehensive sexuality education is observed, as the level of comprehensive knowledge on HIV/AIDS is worryingly low – it fluctuates from 22 to 44% among girls and boys aged 15-24.

The data tool is accessible [here](#).

Source: [IPPF](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

The 12th International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development

The 12th International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development will be held in Berlin at the beginning of November. This year's Dialogue will be convened under the title: **ICPD and Beyond. Investing in Health and Rights**. The conference is to provide reflection on issues emerging from this year's UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) and identify major challenges regarding Post 2015 agenda. In particular, the Dialogue will focus on realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and their inclusion in the future frameworks.

More information on the conference and the programme can be found [here](#).

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](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Abortion Law in Transnational Perspective: Cases and Controversies offers a fresh look at significant transnational legal developments in recent years, examining key judicial decisions, constitutional texts, and regulatory reforms of abortion law in order to envision ways ahead. The publication includes chapter “Women’s Rights in the Abortion Decision of the Slovak Constitutional Court” by Adriana Lamačková.

Source: [reprohealthlaw](#)

The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 benchmarks national gender gaps of 142 countries on economic, political, education- and health-based criteria. This year is the 9th edition of the Index, allowing for time-series analysis on the changing patterns of gender equality around the world and comparisons between and within countries. The rankings are designed to create greater awareness among a global audience of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them. The methodology and quantitative analysis behind the rankings are intended to serve as a basis for designing effective measures for reducing gender gaps.

[Read the report online](#)

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

Prepared by Marta Szostak

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