



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

UN Women Beijing+20 Review in European region

A series of regional consultations in connection to the UN Women Beijing+20 review and events are currently being held throughout the year. The [regional Beijing+20 review for the European region](#) was convened by the UN Economic Commission for Europe on 6-7 November, 2014 in Geneva.

Prior to this event an [Beijing+20 NGO forum](#) was held on 3-5 November. 700 women from 350 NGOs representing 56 countries of the UN Economic Commission for Europe met in Geneva. The NGO Forum was convened by NGO Committee on the Status of Women. The first day was an opening day with an opening ceremony and two panel sessions which evaluated the current status of implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. The day ended with a call for transformation and a panel on women's rights being a power to create real change. The second day was the opportunity which participants could use to contribute with their recommendations to the 12 critical areas and

4 emerging issues of the Beijing Platform for Action. The recommendations of the NGO Forum are available [HERE](#).

These recommendation have been presented at the opening ceremony of the Beijing+20 intergovernmental review meeting which brought together high level representatives of countries of the UN Economic Commission for Europe region.

At the end of the Beijing+20 meeting the draft Chair's Summary was presented and the draft conclusions are available [HERE](#). This outcome was available online for comments and the final outcome is to be expected soon. It will feed into the global Beijing+20 Review to reach its peak at the 59th CSW in March 2015 in New York.

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 visibilty on international arena and the need to include its specifics in international discussions.

Source: [ASTRA Network](#)

European Parliament adopts strong report on post-2015 framework

The European Parliament adopted report on the [“EU and the global development framework after 2015”](#) on November 11th. The report, authored by Croatian centre-right MEP Davor Ivo Stier, plays a key role in establishing the European Parliament’s position for negotiations on the global development framework after 2015. It promotes the human rights-based approach and the central role of women and girls as important pillars in the post-2015 framework. It calls for an inclusion of ambitious targets related to the rights of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and stresses the need for universal access to health services, including family

planning. In addition, it promotes non-discrimination of the most vulnerable people in society, including LGBTI people, as well as research and innovation in responding to global health challenges.

According to the Parliament, development policy should pay particular attention to “the protection and respect of the rights of migrants and minorities, including LGBTI people and people living with HIV.” (par. 28) Furthermore, the Parliament prioritises “universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.” (par. 28, 58)

The report was adopted with a majority of 541 votes in favour, 96 votes against and 21 abstentions.

Access the report in [PDF HERE](#).

Source: [EPF](#)

Romania reviewed by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

On 20 – 21 November 2014 Romania was reviewed by the [UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (CESCR). It has been almost 20 years since its last review. CESCR assesses states’ compliance with their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which Romania had ratified. The NGOs met with several of the members of the CESCR in a pre-session meeting, and participated as observers in the public dialogue between the CESCR and the Romanian delegation. The concluding observations of the CESCR were issued on November 28th and are available [here](#). The CESCR issued strong recommendations on SRHR and also on the problem of conscientious objection (para. 22):

The Committee is concerned at the significant number of undesired teenage pregnancies and the high number of abortions in the State party, at the limited access to sexual and reproductive health education and services, especially in rural areas, and at the limited availability of contraceptives free of charge. As a result, the Committee is concerned that, although abortion is legal in the State party, women continue to have to resort to illegal and unsafe abortions. It further notes with concern that health professionals are increasingly invoking conscientious objection, thus hindering in practice access to safe abortion. Finally, the Committee expresses concern at cases of discrimination against women living with HIV/AIDS in access to sexual and reproductive health, as well as inadequacy of mother-to-child transmission prevention.

The Committee calls on the State party to adopt a national strategy on sexual and reproductive health and to intensify its efforts aimed at preventing undesired teenage pregnancies, including through the implementation of a comprehensive and mandatory programme on sexual and reproductive health in schools. The Committee also urges the State party to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion and contraception services and information, are available, accessible and affordable without discrimination, including to adolescents. It further recommends that all pregnant women and girls have access to specialized medical care, including measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives (ASTRA member), Amnesty International, the European Roma Rights Centre, Global Justice Institute, Romani CRISS and Society for Contraception and Sexual

Education published a joint statement (available [here](#)) in which they express their deep concern over discriminatory remarks by Romanian representatives at the time of the review who also neglected to answer questions related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Since 1994, Romania has repeatedly failed to submit reports for review by the Committee, which states parties to the ICESCR are required to submit every five years. No relevant Ministry representative joined the review sessions in Geneva to represent Romania before the Committee, and furthermore, the Romanian delegation failed to provide answers to several of the questions presented by the members of the CESCR.

Source: [Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives](#)

Concluding observations of CEDAW Committee on Poland available

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women published its Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Poland (CEDAW/C/POL/CO/7-8). The full text is available [here](#).

The Committee addressed sexual and reproductive health and rights of Polish women and girls. In the field of education it "remains concerned about the absence of mandatory comprehensive age appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health in school curricula" and recommends that the State party: "provide mandatory comprehensive age appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights to girls and boys, as part of the regular school curricula, including about responsible sexual behaviour, prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, taught by appropriately trained personnel".

The Committee was also concerned about the limited access to modern contraceptives, including the barriers adolescent girls may face accessing information and reproductive health services including contraception and recommended that Poland:

"(a) Enhance women's access to health care, in particular to sexual and reproductive health services, including amending the 1993 Act on family planning, human foetus protection and preconditions, to make the conditions for abortion less restrictive;

(b) Establish clear standards for a uniform and non-restrictive interpretation of the conditions for legal abortion so that women may access it without limitations due to the excessive use of the so-called "conscientious objection" clause by medical doctors and health institutions; and ensure effective remedies to contest refusals of abortion, within the revision of the Act on Patient Rights;

(c) Mandate, support and finance research, study and data collection, as previously recommended (CEDAW/C/POL/CO/6, para. 25), on the scope, causes and consequences of unsafe illegal abortion and its impact on women's health and life, to obtain evidence-based elements for a revision of the law;

(d) Ensure the accessibility and affordability of modern contraception by women and girls, including women in rural areas, through the reimbursement of modern and efficient methods of contraception by the public health system; and

(e) Ensure unimpeded access to reproductive health services and contraception for adolescent girls."

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

Europe's HIV response falls short in curbing epidemic

In 2013, more than 29 000 new diagnoses have been reported by the countries of the European Union and European Economic Area (EU/EEA), according to the latest HIV/AIDS surveillance data. Despite advances in medical treatment and HIV prevention options, the HIV epidemic in Europe shows no signs of slowing down.

Source: [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control](#)

Hungary police 'blaming victims' of sexual assault

Police in Hungary have been accused of victim blaming after releasing rape prevention advice that warns women of the risks of flirting. They had already faced heavy criticism for a rape awareness film that seemed to partly blame the victim. Safety advice from Vas county police on Tuesday said that flirting by young women could "elicit violence." Women's groups and civil rights organisations have condemned the statement. The safety advice was published to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Source: [BBC](#)

[SIGN THE PETITION ON AVAAZ](#)

Anti-choice and anti-gender-ism goes mainstream in Romania

From 1966 to 1989, abortion was banned and criminalized in communist Romania leaving generations of women dependent on rudimentary means of birth -control. Historians estimate that around 10,000 women lost their lives during the period due to botched abortions and abortion related complications. Under the said circumstances, few nationals believed it possible of an anti-choice movement to erupt and consolidate in Romania. However the impossible did turn into a reality and a stronger anti-choice movement is growing at a fast pace.

From the debut of the autumn of 2014, 27 anti-choice organizations began an intimidation campaign against a youth friendly sexuality education platform. The anti-choice movement mapped the youth sex educator's public appearances and filed complaints against such events with local authorities in a clear attempt to contain the dissemination of science based sexuality education. From smearing and intimidation tactics, what is now a Romanian anti-choice movement also employs more commonplace instruments for advancing its homophobic and anti-women messages. For example, the movement sent out several open letters during September and November addressed to the Romanian government where the main message has been against civil unions and against the

acknowledgement of same sex couples as couples. The homophobic messages set forth by organizations affiliated with Pro Vita International also consisted of anti-choice and anti-gender messages claiming that the new ideology of “gender-ism” is threatening national and Christian values as well endangering national birth rates. This approach is similar to other recent European wide initiatives working on the denigration of the term gender and its proponents such as women’s rights advocates, LGBTQI movement and sexuality educators. A late bloomer, the anti-choice movement in Romania is publishing and launching books with titles such as “The Global Sexual Revolution: Destroying freedom in the name of freedom”.

The links between anti-choice movement and mainstream politics are also becoming more apparent with politicians embracing anti-choice messages on the entire Romanian political spectrum. In the context of presidential elections, all major candidates when pushed on the issue of abortion responded that “the uncontrolled abortion” phenomenon needs to be limited or at best some candidates said that they do yet have a clear opinion. One candidate in particular, a woman and an independent backed by numerous civil society representatives wrote in her presidential program that her candidacy will take responsibility for the rights of the unborn. While a minor candidate in the presidential run-offs, such wide and unchallenged acceptance of anti-choice messages is a clear sign that women’s rights groups need to be on alert! Anti-choice movement is no longer a silent presence but a worrisome, mainstream adversary.

Written by Irina Costache, Romania, [A.L.E.G.](#)

Poland elects its first openly gay mayor

Robert Biedron won the mayoral election in Slupsk. Robert Biedron, 38, already made history once in Poland by becoming the first openly gay parliamentarian in 2011. He now celebrates another first, becoming the country’s first openly gay mayor. This may be read as a sign of growing social acceptance for gay and lesbian people in Poland.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

Beginning on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25) and concluding on International Human Rights Day (December 10), the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign emphasizes that gender-based violence is a human rights violation. The theme, “*From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let’s Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!*” underlines diverse challenges and contributors to gender-based violence and the effects of militarism, economic and social rights violations, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, health, and political rights on our intersectional identities and experiences.

Various events and awareness raising campaigns are held throughout the world. To follow the conversation on Twitter use hashtag #16Days.

Source: <http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu>

Beyond 2015 Copenhagen CSO Conference

The Beyond 2015 Copenhagen CSO Conference took place on 13-14 November, 2014, in Copenhagen, Denmark. It was 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 brought together 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 was 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 engaging in CSO strategizing for the crucial and final year of the Post-2015 negotiations.

Source: [Beyond 2015](#)

YOUTH

12th International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development

ASTRA Youth participated in the **12th International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development**, which took place on 5-6 November in Berlin. This year's Dialogue was convened under the title: **ICPD and Beyond. Investing in Health and Rights**. The aim of the conference was to provide reflection on issues emerging from this year's UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) and identify major challenges regarding Post 2015 agenda. The event was organized by DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), IPPF in cooperation with other entities. The conference brought about a hundred participants – experts and activists on sexual and reproductive health and rights. ASTRA Youth was present there to secure the CEE perspective and bring up burning youth issues from the region at the discussions.

The day 1 of the conference opened with introductory speeches addressing the key challenges related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Afterwards, conference participants worked in groups under the theme: Taking stock of the ICPD review process and the first phase of post-2015 negotiations. Groups shared their experiences and knowledge on the Post-2015 process, identifying gains and losses, topics missing in SDGs proposal, lessons learnt for the future and red lines – the most important issues which must be protected. The result of workgroups was afterwards discussed at the information market. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development organized also a panel discussion: *Comprehensive Sexuality Education – What is the Problem?*, during which it was debated what comprehensive sexuality education means and what are main challenges

in its implementation. The 2nd day of the conference started with discussion on possible advocacy steps CSOs may undertake to involve further in Post-2015 process. It was also dedicated to interactive work in groups embracing the topic: *How to ensure that SRHR, with particular emphasis on young people, is part of the emerging development framework?*. Conference participants proposed their own workshop topics and developed them in specific groups later on. The Dialogue ended with reflections and mobilization to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights will be included in Post-2015 development framework.

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

Annual PETRI Advocacy Training in Bulgaria

ASTRA Youth participated at the Annual PETRI Advocacy Training, which took place from 20-22 November in Bulgaria, as the member of Regional Youth Leadership Group (RYLG) realizing the campaign 'Youth Voice: The future we want in Eastern Europe and Central Asia'.

The training brought over 50 youth activists from EECA region organizations, which implement the campaign on the national level. ASTRA Youth along with other members of RYLG worked on the briefs of UNFPA publications regarding child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and the latest regional supplement to SWOP 2014: Investing in Youth and presented the network's structure at the Y-PEER Regional Planning Meeting. The training was also an occasion to provide information on ASTRA Youth work and share experiences with youth networks from the region.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

PUBLICATIONS

Human Right to Comprehensive Sexuality Education – ASTRA Youth position paper

ASTRA Youth has published a new position paper '[Human Right to Comprehensive Sexuality](#)'. The paper introduces the definition of CSE and indicators of an effective CSE programme. It also provides the review of key international documents recognizing CSE as human right. The paper serves as a tool for advocacy for the implementation of CSE, providing international laws ensuring youth right to it.

State of the World Population 2014: The Power of 1.8 Billion

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has released the [State of the World Population 2014](#), this year's under the theme The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future.

The report shows young people as key to the economic and social development and explores the steps that need to be done to realize youth potential. It discusses the population of young people worldwide and the challenges that young people face when accessing health (including sexual and reproductive health), education and employment. The report provides also the review of youth policies and highlights the importance of inclusion of youth issues in the post-2015 agenda.

Along with the release of SWOP, the regional supplement: [Investing in Young People in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#) was published. The supplement provides the specifics of the region regarding the realization of young people's needs and rights.

[The global summary of the report](#)

Source: [UNFPA](#)

New factsheet published by the European Consortium for Emergency Contraception with the most up to date information on the legal status of different emergency contraception (EC) methods; age restrictions; prescribers and places of delivery; costs and reimbursement policies; and availability of data on estimated frequency of use in the EU countries.

Access the factsheet [HERE](#).

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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Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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