



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9 to 20 March 2015. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world will attend the session.

The main focus of the session will be on the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), including current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission will undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) in 1995. The review ([Beijing+20](#)) will also include the outcomes of the [23rd special session of the General Assembly](#), the first five-year assessment conducted after the adoption of the Platform for Action, which highlighted further actions and initiatives.

The session will also address opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda.

The outcome of this year's CSW will be a political declaration which is already being negotiated by Member States. The draft as of 20th January is available [here](#). The Women's Rights Caucus, which ASTRA is a part of, is working on the language and advocates for a progressive and inclusive document.

Several ASTRA members will attend the session. Polish ASTRA member, the Federation for Women and Family Planning prepared written statement for 59th CSW – it is available [online](#).

On Sunday March 8th in commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action all are invited to join the march for gender equality on International Women's Day – more details and route [here](#).

List of NGO parallel events is available [here](#).

Source: [UN Women](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Polish Sejm Say Yes to Anti-Violence Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was signed by Poland in December 2012. Since then there have been attempts to adopt an Act to ratify the Convention. For 2 years it could not have been done in the parliament due to the strong opposition movement. Recently after a long time the Convention first left the joint parliamentary committees that for a long time were blocking the approval for it to be read at the general debate. On February 5th the MPs from the committees decided that it should be further proceeded in the plenary. On the 6th of February the parliament decided that all the amendments proposed at the stage of committees' work have to be rejected and decided to adopt the Act on ratification in the first reading. Still it requires the signature by the President who, to a huge disappointment continues having doubts about its accordance with the Constitution. That might result in sending the Act to the Constitutional Court which would delay the ratification by at least several months.

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

Read more here: [Liberties.eu](#)

Hungarian Government Obstructs Access to Morning-After Pill

Three Hungarian NGOs are seeking answers from the state health authority after it decided against granting over-the-counter access to a morning-after pill out of concern for women's health. The Hungarian Women's Lobby, PATENT Association, ASTRA member, and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union have sent an open letter to the State Secretariat for Healthcare, questioning its determination that making the ellaOne morning-after pill available without a prescription would harm women.

Although the European Medicines Agency and the European Commission have voiced their support for making the ellaOne pill available without prescription, the recent [announcement](#) by the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources makes clear that the pill will remain a prescription-only medicine due to concerns related to "patient safety."

EllaOne is a morning-after pill that may be effective in preventing unwanted pregnancies for up to 120 hours (5 days) after intercourse. It is important to point out, however, that best results occur when it is taken within the first 24 hours. Understandably, effectiveness is best ensured by making the pill readily available. The patient safety hazard referenced in the ministerial communiqué was refuted in the course of the European licensing procedure as a necessary step for approval. The pill was licensed by the EU in 2009 and can be safely used without a prescription, with its benefits and risks having been [widely publicized](#) since it came to market. It is worth considering how to best ensure women's health, safety and the promotion of their potential future pregnancy: by an emergency pill taken in a timely manner, or, in its absence or as a consequence of its delayed effect, by the artificial termination of an unwanted pregnancy?

Finally, the NGOs remind the government of a 2013 recommendation by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that Hungary "ensure appropriate accessibility to family planning services and affordable contraceptive methods, including emergency contraceptive products, for all women [...] and eliminate the prescription-only accessibility of emergency contraceptives."

The three organizations condemn the decision of the Hungarian government. The pill can be accessed without a prescription in 22 of 28 EU member states. Following the recommendation of the Commission, even Poland, which has very strict abortion laws, announced that it would remove the need for prescription. It seems Hungary is again swimming against the current, and putting the safety and health of Hungarian women at risk.

Source: Liberties.eu

Conference on abortion rights in the European Parliament

On February 5th, the European Parliament (EP) hosted a joint conference entitled [‘All of us! Mobilizing for abortion rights’](#). This event was a joint initiative from the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE) and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens). During her opening speech, Member of European Parliament (MEP) Iratxe Garcia Perez (S&D, Spain), Chair of the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FemM), noted how important this debate is in the context of attacks to human rights and women rights. MEP Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/ EFA, Austria), Vice President of the European Parliament, reminded the audience that abortion rights are a matter of health and not ideology; as such, the right of access to legal and safe abortion is part of freedom of choice and should be legal everywhere. Similarly, MEP Marie Arena (S&D, France) recalled the need to continue advocating for these rights as they are a matter of life, and even if these do not fall under EU competency.

During the first panel dedicated to ‘Abortion rights under threats’, Irene Donadio, representing the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network, described specific European examples where access to reproductive rights are at stake, while Neil Datta, Secretary General, European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, explained approaches and nature of the existing anti-choice movement in Europe. In order to ensure these threats are overcome, MEP Heidi Hautala (Greens, Finland), co-chair of the European Parliament Working Group on Reproductive Health HIV/AIDS and Development, defended the need of including sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU position for post 2015 agenda. The second panel of the event was dedicated to the topic ‘Mobilizing All of us!’ and capitalised on past and existing mobilisation efforts defending freedom of choice in Ireland, Spain and France.

To conclude the event, Viviane Teitelbaum, President of European Women ‘s Lobby, presented a joint declaration from MEP Iratxe Garcia Perez, MEP Marie Arena, MEP Sophie in’t Veld (ALDE, Netherlands), MEP Ernest Urtasun (Green, Spain) and MEP Malin Bjork (GUE, Sweden) entitled **‘#ALLOfUS Mobilizing for abortion rights’**. This Declaration calling for access to abortion rights and for support from the EU to SRHR is open to all MEPs who wish to endorse the cause.

Source: [DSW](#) [nEUws]

European Commission launches Communication on Global Partnership for the post-2015 development agenda

On February 5th, the European Commission launched its Communication entitled ‘A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015’, which addresses financing and non-financing means to implement the new development agenda. This position builds on several earlier EU contributions to the post-2015 process.

During the presentation to the media, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, emphasised the need to make this a universal and inclusive partnership, which should be based on human rights and gender equality. He added that ‘addressing inequality and social exclusion, in particular among the most vulnerable, including women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities remains essential, including through the use of tools such as gender and age markers’. The Communication will serve as the Commission’s basis for ongoing international debates, such as the High-level Thematic Debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda that took place in New York, on February 9th and 10th. This will now be followed by a report of the European Parliament and Council conclusions, both expected in May.

To read the EC Communication, please click [here](#).

To read the EC press release, please click [here](#).

To read the EU statement to the High-level Thematic Debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda, please click [here](#).

Source: [DSW](#) [nEUws]

GLOBAL UPDATES

2nd session of Post-2015 negotiations

The second session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda took place in the UN on 17 -20 February 2015. The meeting was open to all member states of the United Nations as well as the representatives of the civil society and NGOs. The main topic of this session was the Political Declaration of the post - 2015 development agenda and the [elements paper](#), which has already been drafted and commented on by the Womens Major Group. It proposed a set of [recommendations](#) and reintroduced several key issues into the document as stronger focus on the Sustainable Development Goals is needed. The declaration must prioritize human rights, gender equality and the full realization of women's and girl's human rights, ending inequalities, and achieving environmental sustainability, peaceful societies, accountability and justice through a profound transformation of the current neoliberal economic model of development. Numerous member states (including a declaration backed by 40 states) spoke about the need to achieve gender equality in the next 15 years as well as about the role of women as active agents in sustainable development. The next zero draft of the Political Declaration is to be released by 20th of May.

Source: [NGOs Beyond 2014](#), [ASTRA Network](#)

YOUTH

ASTRA Youth opens the call for new members!

ASTRA Youth, the network acting for youth SRHR in Central and Eastern Europe and Balkan countries, seeks new members - young activists who want to stand for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. We welcome all NGO's and individuals from Central and Eastern Europe and Balkan countries to join ASTRA Youth.

Find more information on how to apply and the membership application [here](#).

Valentine's Day events in CEE

Ukraine - Women's Health and Family Planning

On February 14th on the occasion of Valentine's Day volunteers of Charitable Foundation "Women's Health and Family Planning" encouraged everyone to participate in creating 'The Biggest Valentine Card in Ukraine that unites the world.' Almost 800 participants have signed specially designed postcards, which were merged into one big heart. Besides writing wishes on Valentine, young participants of the event were invited to participate in contests where they could answer questions and get sweet prizes. At the same time, older participants of the event received Fund's booklets on reproductive health and sexual education of their children. The campaign took place within the project "Providing teens with a comprehensive information on SRHR through a network of volunteer peer and media" that is implemented by Foundation "Women's Health and Family Planning",

supported by IPPF. Project goal is to attract attention of young people to information that will help to build a harmonious relationship, save their health, including reproductive, and help to plan their future. So during the event teens and young people received information materials on reliable sources about sexual and reproductive health and rights, including youth Internet portal teenslive.info, created by the Foundation with the support of UNESCO and helpline on family planning and reproductive health.

Source: [Teenslive](http://teenslive.info)

Georgia - Association HERA XXI

On February 14th, Association “HERA-XXI” organized the event and conducted two non-formal educational sessions among two different women age groups. The event was conducted for the internally displaced persons, living in the vicinity of the Tbilisi Sea. Association “HERA-XXI” representatives informed the participants about the organization’s free reproductive health services and distributed condoms, informational brochures, heart-shaped gifts and kites. Girls aged 15-19 had the opportunity to discuss the issues such as: early marriage, family planning and the importance of Reproductive Health & Rights education. In addition the film “Когда девочка взрослеет” (When the girl grows up) was shown.

Source: Association HERA XXI

Poland - Ponton Group of Sex Educators

On 14th February, Ponton Group of Sex Educators organized their Valentine’s Day street event for the ninth time. The theme was ‘Infect with love, not HIV’ to increase youth awareness about the importance of HIV prevention. During the event Ponton volunteers distributed leaflets and brochures on sexual and reproductive health, along with condoms and balloons. Participants of the event could also take part in a quiz on HIV/AIDS and take a photo in a heart prepared for the event.

Source: Ponton Group of Sex Educators

All In against Adolescent AIDS

UNAIDS along with UNICEF and other partners have launched a new platform All In, which aims to support driving changes in the policies regarding adolescents. The All In focuses on four key action areas: empowerment of young people as actors of change, improving data gathering on HIV/AIDS, promotion of innovative approaches to services for adolescents, and prioritization of adolescent HIV in political agendas. The platform’s goal is to unite various stakeholders in order to accelerate reduction in AIDS-related deaths and HIV infections among adolescents by 2020.

Source: UNAIDS

UPCOMING EVENTS

48th session on the UN Commission on Population and Development

The 48th session of the Commission on Population and Development will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 13 – 17 April 2015. The main theme for this year's session is *"Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda"*.

Deadlines: NGO registration: 31 March 2015; NGO oral statements: 10 April 2015; Registration for side events: 6 April 2015

Source: [UN Population Division](#)

Conference on Human Rights in Childbirth

The first regional Human Rights in Childbirth conference in Eastern Europe is organized by Human Rights in Childbirth, an international NGO, and RODA, a Croatian parents' rights organization. It will be held in Zagreb, Croatia, April 16-17.

In recent decades, the global community has come to recognize that maternity care is a human rights issue, and to identify preventable maternal mortality as a violation of women's human rights. More recently, international organizations have started to acknowledge the other human rights at stake in childbirth, including the rights to autonomy, privacy, and physical integrity. In September 2014, the World Health Organization called for the prevention and elimination of disrespect and abuse in childbirth, identifying violations like discriminatory and non-consented treatment as undermining women's human rights. Birthing women's human rights are systematically disregarded in many hospitals throughout Central and Eastern Europe. This has created an environment of impunity in the medical field and has led to the costly over-medicalization of the birth process. The goal for the Eastern European conference is to convene activists, lawyers, practitioners and others from the region to share local strategies and successes and to strategize on regional advocacy efforts for securing rights in childbirth.

Human Rights in Childbirth (HRiC) is an international NGO, based in The Hague, that researches and promotes the recognition of fundamental human rights in maternity care systems and practices. HRiC builds networks of legal advocates and consumer activists working at the local level for the realization of women's human rights around pregnancy and childbirth.

Source and more information: [Human Rights in Childbirth](#)

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

New toolkit on accountability

New toolkit *“Accountability for the post-2015 framework. A set of core resources for SRHR advocates worldwide”* is dedicated to all those that want to address the accountability deficit of global development policies as a matter of urgent priority. It is a collection of selected resources that aim to provide knowledge on accountability and access to information on current discussions to support advocacy activities around the “follow up and review” component of the post-2015 agenda, which will be negotiated on 18-22 May. This publication was developed on the basis of the discussions, ideas and experts’ presentations, that emerged from the [“Accountability for the post-2015 development framework: untapping civil society potential”](#) workshop (29 October 2014, Madrid).

The publication is available [here](#).

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

AWID Publication on Sex Workers and Economic Power

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) has launched a new publication: Sex Workers Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women’s Rights and Justice: Post 2012 AWID International Forum Innovation Seed Grants, available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

Source: [AWID](#)

Youth act for safe abortion: A training guide for future health professionals

Ipas has published a guide for future health professionals who want to learn about and engage in abortion issues. The guide contains practical information and tools for facilitators to effectively conduct workshops on abortion.

The guide is accessible [here](#).

Source: [Ipas](#)

CALL TO ACTION

Online survey on abortion access in European Union states

Participate in this online survey mapping abortion access in Europe and information about women's experiences. The point of this research is to provide an overview of European abortion law, accessibility, current activism, and opportunities for activism – both political and practical.

Access the survey [HERE](#).

Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20

The present report is a synthesis of the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/2015/3) on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The report provides a review of national-level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective, as mandated in the Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18.

The first section of the report provides an overview of 20 years of implementation of the Platform for Action. The following sections highlight the trends and priorities in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern, concluding with an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation. The synthesis report concludes with an analysis of the lessons learned and priorities for accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action and the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context.

Access the report [here](#).

Source: [UN Women](#)

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Reaching the “Moveable Middle”

In many European countries, the promise of significant progress on LGBTI rights and sexual reproductive rights coexists with considerable threats and attacks on these very same rights. As historically marginalized groups become more visible and increasingly demand equality, it has simultaneously generated a public backlash against these groups. Such negative public sentiment has been effectively exploited and oftentimes led by those strongly opposed to international human rights standards. While it was initially thought that integration into the European Union would translate into sustained support for human rights values in all EU countries, this has not been the

reality. Increasingly, European human rights defenders and civil society claim that as activists they need to be prepared to meet these new challenges and opportunities using innovative messages and mobilization techniques. Accordingly, the goals of this call for proposals are the following:

- Reach the “moveable middle,” i.e., those who are natural human rights allies but who are not actively engaged on issues related to LGBTI or SRR.
- Reach out to “unusual allies” and “unusual suspects,” i.e., those opinion leaders who may not be naturally sympathetic to these rights but who may be persuaded by the right messages and messengers.
- Develop innovative methodologies, strategies, and tactics to mobilize and build the strength of the human rights movement, specifically the LGBTI and SRR constituencies.

The call for proposals is based on findings that emerged from a comprehensive needs assessment conducted with LGBTI and SRR activists in Europe. This is a multi-donor initiative being jointly supported by the Open Society Initiative for Europe, the Open Society Human Rights Initiative, and the Arcus Foundation. Civil society organizations active in Europe (Council of Europe countries) are eligible to apply. Coalitions of NGOs are also encouraged to apply. Applications for stand-alone trainings and conferences, service provision, or individual academic study/research/travel are not eligible. Deadline is March 6th.

Source and more information: [Open Society Foundations](#)

Fund for Gender Equality issues call for proposals

UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality announces its third [Call for Proposals](#). This year the Fund welcomes submissions from women-led civil society organizations with innovative, high-impact, and multi-stakeholder women’s rights and gender equality programmes that help jumpstart progress towards the [Post-2015 Development Agenda](#). The Fund will grant applications in the areas of:

- Women’s economic empowerment: Can include efforts to expand women’s equal opportunities to access and control economic resources, promote women’s sustainable entrepreneurship, access to decent work and equal pay, and shared responsibility within the household.
- Women’s political empowerment: Can include efforts to promote women’s full and effective leadership and political participation at all levels of decision-making and in all spheres of life, or initiatives to help design, enforce and implement new and existing gender equality laws and policies, or to shift social norms and practices toward greater respect for and enjoyment of women’s equal rights.

Interested applicants are encouraged to read the carefully and start preparing for the [online application process](#), open from 9 March to 5 April 2015.

Source: [UN Women](#)

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 - Novgorod 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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