



A S T R A N E T W O R K

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CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

Silence equals taboo

Women's rights in Poland, especially those concerning their own choices about their bodies and health have been very limited for over 20 years. Unfortunately, we observe continuous efforts aiming to completely restrict women's freedom to choose.

Many countries of the world face the dominant tendency to increase access to contraception and legal abortion, ensure reimbursement of contraceptives as well as enable sexuality education based on scientific and medical knowledge. Meanwhile, in Poland we experience backlash in women's rights advancement.

Our government begins to pay the Catholic Church back for its strong support during election campaign. According to a statement of Ministry of Education, qualified educators from non-governmental organizations will not be allowed to schools. Ironically, a recent study of the Institute for Educational Research about sexuality education confirmed the lack of basic knowledge among young people. The study also showed also that most parents appreciate presence of sexuality education classes in school.

So far Ministry of Health replaced the subsidised In Vitro Fertilisation programme with a "procreation" programme, based on natural methods of family planning. It will be developed by team of experts demonstrating anti-choice attitudes. We also expect changes in law regarding access to emergency contraception. Since January 2015, thanks to decision of the European Commission, emergency contraception (EllaOne) has been available over-the-counter in Poland. However, it is accessible only for girls over 15 years of age and it's quite expensive. One of the most burning issues is our abortion law. We have one of the most restrictive laws in the world and for some politicians and anti-choice activists it's still not enough. Every year there are attempts to ban access to abortion completely. Because of the right wing government and rising support for anti-abortion initiatives, this time they might succeed. As we know, anti-choice activists have started collecting signatures under citizens bill introducing further restrictions to abortion.

What can we do?

We should speak up about women's rights to make their own choices, about young people's right to comprehensive sexuality education and about access to modern contraception, which is guaranteed by Polish law. We should refer to our Constitution, especially to 47th article, which grants all citizens a right to legal protection of private and family life, honour and good reputation and the right to make decisions about personal life.

What we cannot do is to remain silent. Silence equals taboo and allows for stigmatization of women's rights defenders, sexuality educators and women who had an abortion or considered it. We will not stop our efforts to educate society and debunk existing myths on sexual and reproductive health.

Written by Krystyna Kacpura, Executive Director of the Federation for Women and Family Planning serving as ASTRA Secretariat

Source: www.federa.org.pl

REGIONAL UPDATES

Czech Republic approves European convention on violence against women

The Czech government approved the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Czech Republic is one of the last EU member

states not to ratify the Istanbul convention which defines various crimes connected with violence against women and domestic violence, such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and sterilisation, and demands their criminalisation. It also included measures to prevent such violence. It is the first international treaty dealing with violence against women in detail with the aim to achieve zero tolerance of these forms of discrimination and human rights violations.

"The ratification of the convention is in harmony with the foreign-political interests of the Czech Republic, it will help prevent and suppress gender-related violence against women and domestic violence and strengthen international cooperation in these areas," the Justice Ministry said in its report for the government.

The adoption of the convention will require some changes in Czech legal regulations, which the ministry will manage to submit to the government by the end of June, 2017. The document could be submitted to parliament for ratification by June 30, 2018.

The convention has been in effect since August 2014. It has been possible to sign it since 2011. So far, 39 members of the Council of Europe have joined it. Eight, including the Czech Republic, have not signed it yet, Out of the EU countries, Bulgaria and Latvia have not signed it either.

Source: [Prague Monitor](#)

Parliamentary hearing on maintaining the low rate of HIV infection in Macedonia

The Macedonian APPG, together with the Parliamentary Health Committee, co-organised a parliamentary hearing on HIV sustainability in the Macadonian Parliament. The full title of the event was: *Ensuring sustainability of the established HIV programs for key populations after the withdrawal of the Global Fund at the end of 2016 - Opportunities and Challenges*. The meeting discussed a government plan for transition from donor funding to funding from the national budget. Included in the plan are commitments to establish laws and policies ensuring sustainability of established prevention programs for HIV.

Source: [EPF](#)

Prayers in front of hospital in Vukovar, Croatia

The "[40 days for life](#)" initiative is very widespread in Croatia with its actions present in 21 cities throughout the country. The initiative operates through prayers and vigil, spreading anti-choice messages and cooperating within Christian communities. One of the cities in Croatia, Vukovar, only recently witnessed an episode when a city representative joined in the prayers in front of the County General Hospital where legal abortions are performed.

The Facebook page for the "40 days for life - Vukovar" initiative published a post about their first prayer session which was held on 11th of February, with an explanation that one of the city officials, Ana Živanović, participated in the event. To make sure if Živanović attended the case as a private person or as a staff member, the city mayor, Ivan Penava was approached. He claims that Ivana

Živanović participated in the prayer as a city official, because "the City of Vukovar is open to a number of initiatives and promotion of different ways of thinking." Asked whether praying in front of the hospitals is a violation of patient's right to privacy, Penava responded: "I never thought about that, and I'm not the one who should answer that kind of questions. If any other initiative came and asked us, we would have sent somebody from the City to attend. Everyone should be able to articulate their stance in a way that doesn't hurt or threaten anybody. The City is not in the position to make the final judgement and tell what's right and what's wrong, at least in this case."

The photographs from the Facebook post make it visible that the people who are praying are standing right next to the hospital, respectively only a couple of centimeters away from the hospital. The Assistant for Legal Affairs of the Vukovar Hospital, Ivana Azenić Dubravčić told us that the members of the initiative are not on the hospital grounds but on the public path. "They are standing in the open space. Nobody asked us for permission, nor we have discussed it. It's impossible to forbid someone to stand in front of the hospital." Furthermore, she explained, "The County General Hospital has four entrances and the initiative is standing in front of the clinic where abortions are not provided" (since that's an urologic clinic). Azenić Dubravčić said that: "If somebody has a problem with them, there is enough space to bypass them. I don't know what's their influence on an individual."

This hospital is a positive example in terms of providing abortions on demand, hence this whole situation is even more absurd. It seems like, by their acceptance of the situation, both the City of Vukovar and the County Hospital - tacitly approve this neoconservative march on women's rights.

Source: [Libela](#)

Tomb for the unborn children in Croatia

A tomb for the unborn children was built in Vinkovci in Croatia by a group which calls itself Bethlehem with strong focus on promoting anti-choice rhetoric and persuading women to abstain from abortion. As the [Croatian Radio-Television reports](#): "Their premise, on this stance, is to make it possible for every woman that loses her pregnancy, to have a place where she can bury the child. The project is cooperated with the General Hospital Vinkovci, and a similar one will be carried in the Capital of Croatia, the City of Zagreb." The problem with the tomb isn't the fact that women have a place to mourn, but the promotion of it as a "Tomb for the unborn children", where the general referral is not on the children who were wanted and lost, but to pregnancies that the women decided to terminate.

Source: [Libela](#)

17th Warsaw Manifa in support of the right to abortion

The 17th Warsaw Manifa (biggest feminist demonstration in Poland) will march through Warsaw on Sunday, March 6th with reproductive justice as main subject - this year's theme is "Abortion is pro-life". Federation for Women and Family Planning, Polish ASTRA member and the Network's

Secretariat, is taking part in preparations as member of the 8th March Women's Coalition, an informal collective of individuals.

The slogan of the 17th Warsaw Manifa demonstration brings rationality back into the debate about the right to termination of pregnancy in Poland. It turns public attention to who in fact is defending life and who is doing harm to others. It might seem absurd to some, but its explanation is very simple: the right to abortion saves lives indeed – the lives of women and children. No access to legal abortion forces women to turn to dangerous and expensive illegal abortion either in the underground in Poland or abroad. Women are in fact forced to terminate pregnancies without medical assistance, risking their lives and exposing their children to the risk of orphanhood.

Poland's abortion law is one of the most restrictive in Europe and even more restrictive in practice than on paper. Although the law allows termination of pregnancy under three conditions: in case of rape/incest, in case of a threat to the woman's health and in cases of fetal malformation. However, legal abortion is practically not accessible even for women whose conditions fall under these exceptions. Every year 5 million women worldwide are hospitalized due to complications resulting from illegal abortions. Around 220,000 children per year lose their mothers for the same reason.

Manifa demands access to abortion, contraception, sexuality education and respectful care during childbirth and miscarriage, and calls for genuine support for people with children. This is the way to really defend life - by granting people these rights.

The right to make informed decisions about one's fertility is a human right!

The organisers are expecting anti-choice demonstrations to take place at the time of this march. To show solidarity with us you are invited to take a photo with our slogan "Abortion is pro-life" or "Abortion saves lives" and post it on your Facebook or Twitter account along with hashtag #manifa2016

Source: www.manifa.org // [PK8M facebook fanpage](#) // [Manifa facebook event](#)

Armenian-Canadian cooperation on youth SRHR

Highlighting the importance of awareness of girls and young women on sexual and reproductive health issues, since the middle of January SWV have started cooperation with an Armenian-Canadian Medical Clinic called "Maple Leaves". According to the initial arrangement the scope of cooperation includes awareness raising sessions, provision of statistics and information on the main SRHR issues faced by young women in Armenia, and also medical consultations of a gynecologist for our beneficiaries.

On February 8th, in the frames of the above mentioned cooperation the first seminar-discussion for young women took place in Yerevan, which was facilitated by a gynecologist expert Lusine Hovsepyan from Maple Leaves. The main topics of the session covered vaginal issues, prevention of STIs, types of the hymen and virginity, breast care, masturbation, etc.

The participants, who were 18-25 years old young women, were given a chance to openly or privately ask questions to the doctor-specialist and were given an opportunity to use medical

consultations of a gynecologist using discounts. Due to this session and the safe space provided by SWV these women acquired answers to questions which, as was stated by them, they would not raise in elsewhere.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Do not abolish existing Gender Quota in the Electoral Law, increase it to 50%

On the initiative of Sarajevo Open Centre, Initiative for Monitoring BiH's European Integration, Women's Network of BiH, Initiative Women citizens for the constitutional reforms, Secure Network of BiH, Justice Network in BiH, Network for Building Peace BiH and Informal Coalition for Civil Dialogue are inviting:

DO NOT ABOLISH EXISTING GENDER QUOTA IN THE ELECTORAL LAW, INCREASE IT TO 50%

The public was informed about the last session of the parliamentary working group for changes of the electoral legislation in BiH. Unfortunately, one significant change concerning the issue of equal political participation of women and men has been hidden from the public. Proposal made by the working group is that the existing Article 4.19, paragraph 4 should be amended to:

Every candidate list submitted for direct elections includes candidates of male and female gender, who are equally represented. The equal representation of genders exists in case when one of the sexes is represented with minimum of 40% of the total number of candidates on the list, unless the list consists of three candidates, when there is equal representation in the case when one of sexes is represented by 1/3 of the total number of candidates.

This proposal clearly undermines the existing provision (gender quota) that envisioned participation of both gender of minimum 40%, not anywhere on the candidate lists, but with mandatory positioning of female candidates in the first three, five and eight places. The changes that were proposed during the meeting of the working group in Čapljina by Borjana Krišto, the vice president of HDZ BiH, and unanimously supported by other members of the working group: Lazar Prodanović, Halid Genjac, Ognjen Tadić, Vlado Rogić, Brako Perić, Ahmet Šantić and Josip Grubeša significantly undermines the existing rule. For example, the new proposal can allow for a candidate list of 20 people, of which the first twelve positions are taken by men and the last eight by women, which is a significant setback. Why these changes? Will the electoral process be improved and election fraud eliminated through this provision? Will the election process become more democratic?

We, civil society organizations, which are actively working to build a better and more democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina, clearly raise our voice against this attempt to place women in a disadvantageous position in political life. We call upon all members of the working group, the political parties, representatives and delegates of BiH Parliamentary Assembly as well as the representatives of the international community that they do not violate the existing, already ineffective measures for equal participation of women and men through amendments to the Election Law of BiH, but to initiate changes which will introduce an electoral quota of 50% instead, and an

obligation of alternate positioning of candidates (zipper system). Article 4.19, paragraph (4) should be amended and be defined as follows:

Each candidate list has an equal number of male and female candidates that are positioned alternately on the entire list.

With the introduction of such a provision, Bosnia and Herzegovina would make a significant step towards the advancement of gender equality in political life. The current level of representation of women is 20% on average at all levels of government, and if there is no improvement of legislation, we will need at least another 20 years to increase the number of women to minimum level of 40%. As women make up more than 50% of the population, the level of their participation should adequately be reflected in political life. Therefore, equal participation of women in electoral lists should be legally guaranteed. Finally, let us show that Bosnia and Herzegovina can be a good example for many other countries in South East and Eastern Europe, instead of becoming the object of criticism and example of bad practice.

Source: [Sarajevo Open Centre](#)

Women's March on the occasion of March 8th in Vilnius

On March 8th Family Planning and Sexual Health Association together with other non-governmental women's organizations of Lithuania will march together on the main streets of Vilnius in support of women's rights and to demand the implementation of various national and international obligations connected to the elimination of violence against women and discrimination, to ensure equal salaries and to start legislative changes in regard to sexual reproductive health and rights.

Women will march to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and will give a document with recommendations for sustainable gender-equal policy to the Parliament. Non-governmental organizations, public bodies, professional unions, various social movements and anyone interested and supportive of women's rights are welcome to join. This is the first women's march since 1990 when Lithuania became an independent country.

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

One Billion Rising events across the region

For the fourth year, globally One Billion Rising activists are planning their rising events, artistic uprisings, panel discussions, press conference, town halls, movies, articles, gatherings, poetry, art, posters, actions, and protests to take place on and about 14 February. With the theme – ONE BILLION RISING: Rise for REVOLUTION 2016, this year's campaign escalated the collective actions of activists worldwide, and amplify their call for systemic changes towards ending violence against women and girls once and for all.

Numerous countries of the Central and Eastern European region actively participated in the celebrations, among the participating countries were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Poland, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Macedonia.

In Armenia the flash mob initiated by Society Without Violence with the support and participation of other feminist activists encouraged women to start a revolution in their relationships and become more independent, active and stand for their own rights. The event took place in Yerevan city center, where the activists marched and danced raising the awareness of the passers-by on gender based violence and inviting more people to join them. They also distributed Valentine's postcards with empowering messages for women. The posters of the event addressed messages, such as: "My body is not your property" or "No one can limit your freedom" etc. Some of the participant activists were recruited from the regions of Armenia as a result of awareness raising trainings held by SWV. Thus, except from raising the awareness of the public, the event also strongly activated many young women who have recently joined the women's rights activism due to the efforts of SWV.

Source: [One Billion Rising](#), [Society Without Violence](#)

Inter-regional workshops with the aim of supporting response to gender-based violence

United Nations Population Fund Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (UNFPA EECARO) and the Gender Human Rights and Culture Branch, Technical Division, UNFPA HQ, in partnership with East European Institute for Reproductive Health (EEIRH) is undertaking a series of inter-regional workshops with the aim of supporting the multi-sectorial, coordinated response to gender-based violence (GBV). Its overall goal is to strengthen the Country Offices' capacity for comprehensive response to and prevention of GBV through: technical assistance for existing models of responses to GBV applied by different countries, and support to the Country Offices to contextualize the approaches.

As part of the initiative, from 29 February – 1 March and 3 – 4 March 2016, two inter-regional training workshops were organized in Istanbul.

The overall objective of the workshops was to strengthen the capacities of professionals from key sectors and UNFPA country office staff to enhance the effectiveness of multi-sectorial response to GBV.

Source: [East European Institute for Reproductive Health](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

How Anne of Green Gables Became An Icon Of The Abortion Debate

An anonymous abortion rights group in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in Canada is making a push for local abortion access by appropriating a toughened-up image of Anne Shirley from the classic Canadian children's series Anne of Green Gables.

The posters feature an outlaw, bandana-adorned version of the braid-haired redhead, and are showing up on mailboxes and phone poles with hashtags like [#reproductivejustice](#), [#supportislandwomen](#), and [#accessnow](#), sparking debate on both sides of the abortion issue over whether Anne Shirley would've been pro-choice or not. Others are being tweeted, sometimes with quotes from the books, which were written by [L. M. Montgomery](#), who was born on Prince Edward Island in 1874 and set the series there.

Use of the hashtag #HeyWade is meant to address Premier Wade MacLauchlan. According to National Post, one social media user tweeting the images, whose name also appears on some posters, [@iamkarats](#), may refer to Anne's nickname, "Carrots."

A statement from the group said "that the character Karats had seen how the lack of abortion services on the Island had affected women, particularly those with low incomes who can't afford to travel to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick to have the procedure," which they call discriminatory.

Source: [Vocativ](#)

YOUTH

Sexuality education in Moldova

Sexuality education in Moldova remains a challenging issue, as being provided either within Civic Education or Biology lessons as optional aspect of the curriculum. Several years ago, the curriculum included a separate 'Life Skills' subject but it was suspended due to insistence from religious organizations.

The Ministry of Education has published two editions of Civic Education textbooks for 9th and 10th graders, which explicitly promote abstinence-only approach. Pupils in the 9th grade discuss sexual relationships under the theme 'Passions and emotions. Abstinence and its importance to healthy and safe lifestyle'. Due to textbooks, when sex is practiced improperly it can lead to STIs, unwanted pregnancies, emotional and even physical problems resulting from HIV infection. Therefore, authors of textbooks recommend sexual activity starting after marriage as the best solution to family harmony and happy relationships. According to Natalia Cojuhari, assistant representative of United Nations Population Fund in Moldova, although the law on reproductive health (adopted in 2012) stipulates that sex education be made compulsory in schools and in other institutions where there are young people, this is not fully implemented and remains an optional subject as in Romania, Cyprus, Lithuania and Poland.

The statistics regarding sexual and reproductive health in Moldova are alarming – annually, about 70 children are born by girls under 15 years of age. On the other hand, rates of abortions remain high, as between 2010 and 2013, there were 60 thousand registered abortions and out of them, 10,6% were among adolescents aged 15-19. Unofficially, the doctors argue that numbers may be higher as not all abortions are registered and those done in private clinics are not recorded in official statistics.

Source: [Timpul](#)

Rising rates of teen births in Latvia

The rising rates of teen births have been observed in Latvia. Due to hospital data, Riga Maternity Hospital registered that 300 school-aged girls gave birth over the past five years and almost 50 only last year. Many of minor mothers have not completed primary school yet.

The main reason for school-aged girls becoming mothers is lack of quality information on sexuality and various stakeholders such as politicians, parents, physicians and social services should be involved to find a solution. Riga Social Service claims that to reduce the number of teen births, health education should be introduced as a separate subject. However, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, students are already overloaded and health education is integrated within other subjects.

Source: [Skaties](#)

Moral education guidelines in Latvia

The National Curriculum Development Centre (SECC) is developing moral education guidelines, including the virtues to be taught to children at Latvian schools. The list of virtues includes solidarity, dignity, justice, honesty among others; moderation and courage have been added recently. Guidance developers hope that the document will help teachers to bring up children, but teachers remain skeptical.

The initiative of 'moral education' has begun with the booklet developed by Papardes zieds, which mentioned homosexual relationships. Part of Latvian MPs regarded this as an attack on morality and marriage. Last year, the Saeima supported the moral education amendment, which obliges schools to provide moral education that meets the values protected by the Constitution, especially marriage and family. Although guidelines are not supposed to define marriage or discuss sexuality, the virtues mentioned in the guidelines such as temperance, apply to sexuality as well.

The Latvian Association of Schoolmasters vice president, Aija Melle, claims that these guidelines pose a threat of censorship. The current version of the guidelines will be shared for review and it is planned that the government will approve them by 1st July.

Source: [LSM.LV](#)

Valentine's Day street event in Poland

On 14th February 2016, Ponton Group of Sex Educators organized their Valentine's Day street event for the tenth time. This year's theme was 'Infect with Love, Not HIV'. Ponton volunteers distributed leaflets and brochures on prevention of HIV/AIDS along with condoms and balloons.

Young people and adults participating in the event were encouraged to take part in the quiz and check their knowledge of sexuality, including physiology, pregnancy, modern contraception, HIV/AIDS prevention and transmission, sexual violence, sexting. There was also a possibility to take a photo with a special speech bubble, including participant's recommendation on sexuality education.

The recommendations included calling for education on sexual violence, STIs, contraception, conscious consent and satisfying relationships.

Photos from the event are accessible [here](#).

Source: [Ponton Group of Sex Educators](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

60th session of Commission on the Status of Women

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world will attend the session. The priority theme is: *Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development* and the review theme is *the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls*.

See CSW60 Brochure [here](#).

Source: [UN Women](#)

49th session of Commission on Population and Development

The sixtieth session of the Commission on Population and Development will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 15 April, 2016. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world will attend the session. The priority theme is: *Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda*.

Source: [UN DESA Population Division](#)

12th Conference of the International Federation of Professional Abortion and Contraception Associates

The international bi-annual conference for health care professionals working in the field of abortion care and contraception will take place in Lisboa, Portugal on 14-15 October 2016. The theme for this event is "Improving women's journeys through abortion".

Access the conference flyer [here](#).

Source: [FIAPAC](#)

Call for Applications - Eastern Europe Regional Youth Advocacy Workshop on Global Citizenship Education

The United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (UNSG GEFI) will organize an Eastern Europe Regional Advocacy Workshop on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) for young people from 3 to 6 May 2016 in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova. Organized in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Moldova, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Peer to Peer Education Network, Y-PEER Moldova, the workshop aims to build the capacity of dynamic youth leaders from Eastern Europe to advocate for global citizenship education.

On 25 September 2015, world leaders gathered at the UN Summit for Sustainable Development and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This workshop will provide participants with a global platform to discuss with other young leaders how to ensure the successful achievement of the development goals for a more equal, just, prosperous and peaceful world by integrating concepts of GCED into practices at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Attending participants will be asked to identify specific aspects of GCED and advocacy, reflecting on the global challenges and newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Working both individually and in groups, the young people will expand on these topics, devising advocacy goals and strategies for use locally, nationally and regionally. Participants will also engage in information sessions and workshops at the training to support them in this task, on areas such as 'Advocacy tools to build strategies', and 'Bottom-up planning for advocacy campaigns'.

Approximately 40 participants, between the ages of 18 and 24, will be selected on the basis of their past/ongoing engagement and future commitment in educating youth at the local and national levels around GCED. Participants must have a minimum of two years' experience in youth advocacy activities, an understanding of GCED issues and priorities, and a proven record of influencing change at the local or national levels.

[Applications](#) in English must be submitted by midnight of Sunday, 13 March 2016 (EST), and successful applicants will be notified on 25 March 2016 (EST). Travel and local expenses will be covered for all successful applicants. This Workshop is supported by Educate A Child (EAC). Find the application [HERE](#).

Source: [EECA Youth Voice](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Paper on the 20th anniversary of Beijing Platform for Action

The European Parliament's study "Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Post-2015 Development Agenda" states that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action remains "slow, uneven and limited", while the process is under-resourced and suffers from a lack of political will. Educational success, reflected in the increasing number of women in tertiary education and the fact that in Europe they now account for more than 50% of higher education students, does not

translate in other areas. Generation after generation of feminists succeed each other but progress has been stalled. This has inevitably led to frustration. This has not been the only reason for disappointment, however. With Beijing growing into an institutionalized process, it has become increasingly difficult for newcomers in the feminist movements and civil society organisations to join the discussions, shape the political process and put forward their claims.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, asserts that the active participation of non- governmental organisations is a critical element in its work. Yet becoming part of the circle of accredited NGOs is an extremely selective process, with the result that the majority of feminist voices are lost.

View the full paper by Judit Tánczos, FEPS Policy Advisor [HERE](#).

State of the World's Girls 2015 - The Unfinished Business of Girls' Rights

There have been important changes in the lives of adolescent girls and their access to education since the millennium, but the world still has a long way to go in the struggle for gender equality. The 2015 State of the World's Girls report brings together 14 prominent contributors who hail progress made in realising girls' rights, but lament the fact that girls still face huge challenges.

Access the report [here](#).

Source: [Plan International](#)

Factsheet on access to modern contraceptives in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

IPPF has released the factsheet '[Access to modern contraceptive choice in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#)', which presents data and trends in the contraceptives' usage in the region. The factsheet highlights major factors which influence contraceptive behaviours, demand and access such as lack of commitment by policymakers, widespread misinformation on modern contraception, barriers limiting access to family planning and limited range of modern methods. It also explains the role of donors to enable women in the region to access modern contraceptives.

Source: [IPPF](#)

Call for Papers

Submissions for the November issue of Reproductive Health Matters Journal opens 15th of March focusing on "[Sexuality, sexual and reproductive health in later life](#)". This issue will shine a spotlight on people over 50 years of age, inviting research, policy analysis and examples of practical actions that address the effects of ageing on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health.

For more information please visit [Reproductive Health Matters Journal](#)

Member Profile

Family Planning and Sexual Health Association

[Family Planning and Sexual Health Association](#) from Vilnius, Lithuania (FPSHA) is a non-governmental organization, which advocates for sexual reproductive health and rights of Lithuanian population. It was founded in 1995. FPSHA unites different members: physicians, social workers, midwives, teachers, journalists, politicians, students.

The vision of FPSHA is that SRHR are respected and enjoyed as a natural and inseparable part of everyday life for all. Therefore, FPSHA mission is to enable and empower society to respect SRHR as a part of human rights. FPSHA organizes seminars, training courses and conferences, publishes informational material, carries out projects and programmes, and cooperates with local and international organizations.

FPSHA especially focuses on young people needs: provides comprehensive SRHR information and evidence based sexuality education for youth, seeks to improve the access to reproductive health services and contraception. FPSHA has Youth Group which represents progressive Lithuanian youngsters and advocates for their SRHR.

[Visit Family Planning and Sexual Health Association on Facebook!](#)



Team of the Family Planning and Sexual Health Association

ASTRA Network Members: Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association; Armenia - Society Without Violence; Armenia - Women's Resource Center; Armenia - Women's Rights 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.; Croatia – CESI; Croatia - Women's Room; Georgia – HERA XXI; Georgia – Real People, Real Vision; 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 – H.E.R.A.; Macedonia – Shelter Center; Moldova – Family Planning Association; Moldova - Reproductive Health Training Center; Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning; Romania - A.L.E.G.; Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis; Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health; 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

Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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