



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

WWW.ASTRA.ORG.PL

## **CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

**No 04 (152) 2016**

### **Table of contents:**

- Burning Issue
- Regional Updates
- Global Updates
- Youth
- Upcoming Events
- Publications
- Call for Action
- Member Profile - this month features Gender Alternatives Foundation from Bulgaria

### **BURNING ISSUE**

**Poland is once again facing a real threat to the reproductive rights of women and girls.**

The currently ruling conservative party, Law and Justice, aims to redesign Polish democracy and to reestablish the “traditional” and “Catholic” values and also gain more independence from the European Union. The Catholic Church in Poland is very powerful and has many supporters within today’s Government. It does also of course oppose IVF, emergency contraception, sexuality education, abortion and sees its main enemy in the word “gender”. The anti-choice community, with great support from the Catholic and conservative groups, is currently very strong as the current government consists mainly of politicians with conservative attitudes.

The “Stop Abortion” civic committee has almost succeeded in submitting a **draft law introducing a complete ban on abortion and a new category into the criminal code – “prenatal murder”, which will introduce penalty of 3 to 5 years in prison for women, doctors and anyone helping a woman to perform an abortion.** If abortion is unintentional the penalty will be up to 3 years. The Court will have the possibility to drop charges. In the rationale, the authors of the draft law quote the teachings of Polish Pope, John Paul II, refer to the Polish constitution which grants legal protection to all human beings (it doesn't however clarify when human life begins) and also selectively quote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally they also propose to replace the term “human fetus” with “conceived child” where possible. The draft law doesn't at all refer to the protection of woman's life, health and wellbeing.

This anti-choice initiative is currently waiting for the decision of the Marshall of the Sejm on whether it will be registered. The deadline for decision is Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup>. If successful, the “Stop Abortion” committee will then have 3 months to collect 100 000 signatures to ensure that the law will be debated in the Polish Sejm.

Only recently Polish Prime Minister, Beata Szydło, said that she supports this initiative and “hopes for a reasonable voice on behalf of the episcopate to ensure a substantive discussion”. On Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the statement of the Polish episcopate was read aloud in all churches in Poland. The signatories of this document state that life begins from the moment of conception and ends with natural death. They called upon all people, Parliamentarians and policy makers to ensure legal protection of unborn children.

Only recently we have faced the first step towards limiting women's reproductive rights **as the Polish Ministry of Health will reinstate the prescription requirement for emergency contraception** (ellaOne) in about three months. “Concern for women's well-being, especially that of the youngest women” is the rationale for this move. In 2015, thanks to the European Commission ruling, this emergency contraception pill became available over the counter for all women above 15 years of age.

A series of protest are planned in April throughout the country, please follow ASTRA's [website](#) and [facebook](#) page for regular updates.

### **Show solidarity with Polish women!**

ASTRA is initiating a call to action on behalf of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, Polish ASTRA member and host of ASTRA Secretariat.

The non-governmental and apolitical coalition “Odzyskać Wybór” (Reclaiming Choice) was launched few days ago, with the Federation and many other women's organization as core initiators. A big protest in front of the Polish Parliament is planned for this Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup> ([Facebook event](#)).

**To show SOLIDARITY with Polish women we call everyone interested to join our call to action and submit a PHOTO of yourself with a coat hanger and holding paper with “Solidarity with Polish women” written on it. We also encourage you to use the hashtag #ODZYSKACWYBOR which**

**translates to “reclaiming choice”. You are also welcome to send photos on behalf of organizations or as individuals.**

Why coat hangers? To bring attention to the fact that these were the tool used by desperate women wishing to perform abortion when it was banned. They are also used as a strong symbol during the protests in Poland at the moment.

All photos will be shared via social media in Poland and internationally.

**Please submit the photos to [federa@astra.org.pl](mailto:federa@astra.org.pl) or post directly to [ASTRA’s Facebook event](#).**

## **REGIONAL UPDATES**

### **“Sexism steals our chances” - March for equal rights in Chisinau**

A Feminist March entitled “Sexism steals our chances” took place in the capital city of Chisinau, Republic of Moldova on March 8, 2016. It was organized for the second time by the Group of Feminist Initiatives of Moldova. The event aimed at promoting the equality of chances and at sensitizing the population to gender discrimination. In a press conference held at the eve of the march the event organizers said that they are trying to reduce the combative spirit of the holiday of March 8 and to use this occasion to problematize the real situation of women in Moldova. The Group members made public statistical data about the situation of women and men in Moldova. The purpose of the march was also to draw attention to the high degree of sexism manifested in the public space and its harmful effects.

2015 was a year rich in sexist statements launched in public by a number of public figures such as Dorin Chirtoaca, mayor of Chisinau Mihai Ghimpu, leader of the Liberal Party, Marian Lupu, leader of the Democratic Party, Valeriu Munteanu, Minister of Environment, etc. "Sexism refers to stereotypes, prejudices and gender discrimination. It sexism when men and women are perceived, treated and judged based on gender stereotypes such as: women are hysterical, men do not cry, politics is only for men, women should be housewives etc. In a patriarchal society like the one in Moldova, women are most often affected by sexism and humiliated by sexist statements. We believe that public space should be safe and comfortable for everyone and everything. Discussions and debates must take place without sexist statements, and those that do them must be held accountable," the organizers said.

The event was attended and supported by the famous "Femen" activist Yana Zhdanova, who had been subjected to persecution in the Ukraine, and was forced to settle in France. March participants, among whom were representatives of the Family Planning Association of Moldova, moved along the central boulevard of the capital "Stefan cel Mare". The event concluded with a theatrical presentation of scenes, which were submitted to sexist statements made by some Moldovan politicians in 2015.

Source: [Family Planning Association of Moldova](#)

## **Debates on Sexuality Education vs March for Life in Romania**

March in Romania was devoted to both heated debates on the introduction of sexuality education in schools as well as the annual march for life organized by Students for Life. The pro-choice activists did not counteract the march, but rather focused on constructive debates organized and hosted by the ministries of education and health.

The theme of this year's March for Life was "For life, for woman, for the family", inspired from the Washington march and it was organized in 110 cities across the country, plus 30 cities in the Republic of Moldova. The march in Bucharest was attended by 2,700 people, while all the activities along the 'month for life' were allegedly attended by 70,000 people. The main messages rehashed by the media were: "22 million abortions in 60 years" (in reference to the total population a few years ago) and "Romania ranks first in the EU in the number of abortions". In conclusion, this type of march and related activities are organized by young people, they choose positive messages and gather larger numbers of people, including artists as ambassadors.

Overall, the debate at the Ministry of Education was a positive one that took note of participants' suggestions, with the promise to be followed by other such targeted meetings. The debates at the Ministry of Health, on the other hand, were marked by anti-choice presence that attempted to destabilize the purpose of the meetings. Nevertheless, the position held by the Ministry of Health is firm and supportive of making "health education" a compulsory subject in schools, but it will not be possible for a couple of years because of lack of trained personnel. Again, the ASTRA member representing the Gender Coalition stressed the paramount importance of maintaining sexuality education in the health education optional subject, sought a commitment from the ministry representatives, and assured them of the full support and expertise of the specialized NGOs.

Written by Daniela Draghici, member of the Society for Feminist Analyses – AnA, part of the Romanian Gender Coalition, for full article click [here](#).

## **EP wants the sexual and reproductive health and rights of female refugees protected**

The European Parliament adopted a report on the situation of women refugees in the EU which calls for the protection of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The resolution, authored by Mary Honeyball MEP, urges the European Commission and member states to guarantee full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to safe abortion. Parliament adopted the text by 388 votes (150 against, 159 abstentions).

Roughly 57 per cent of refugees now arriving to Europe are women and children, a trend which has been evident since the beginning of 2016. Many are making the journey to Europe alone as they seek to join husbands and family members who have already arrived on the continent. By the time female refugees reach Europe, many will have already endured months if not years of exposure to violence, rape and sexual exploitation. These dangers are abundant while they remain in their war ravaged countries and on their journey to Europe. Numerous sources report that women are often forced into transactional sex by smugglers in exchange for travel documents. Access to contraception is extremely limited during conflict and on the refugee trail and the number of pregnant refugees arriving in Europe is roughly double the average amount of pregnancies in a regular population. The

report says it is essential that reception centers in Europe are properly equipped and staffed to deal with the needs of these refugees.

The adoption of the report was warmly welcomed by MEPs Heidi Hautala (Greens/EFA) and Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE), co-chairs of the European Parliament Working Group on Reproductive Health HIV/AIDS and Development (EPWG). "As has been recently highlighted by UNHCR, the EU and its member states have been failing to address the specific needs of female refugees within our borders," commented Heidi Hautala. "This report draws attention to female refugees and describes the very practical steps the EU and its member states can take to ensure their rights and health." "The deficiencies of the EU in handling this refugee crisis are manifold, but nowhere has our response been more lacking than in how we have neglected female refugees," added Sophie In 't Veld. "The adoption of this report represents an emphatic message to member states that women and girl refugees must be protected."

Source: [www.epwg.org](http://www.epwg.org)

## **GLOBAL UPDATES**

### **60th session of Commission on the Status of Women**

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took 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 attended the session and debated the priority theme was: Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development.

ASTRA was present at the CSW session and took active part in the works of the Women's Rights Caucus. Young women gathered at the CSW came forward with a "[Young Feminist Caucus Statement](#)". ASTRA Network's statement is available [here](#).

The outcome of the Commission's consideration of the priority theme takes the form of agreed conclusions, negotiated by all States, the document of the 60<sup>th</sup> CSW is available [here](#).

Source: [UN Women](#)

### **UN Experts: Right to sexual and reproductive health indivisible from other human rights**

The right to sexual and reproductive health is not only an integral part of the general right to health but fundamentally linked to the enjoyment of many other human rights, including the rights to education, work and equality, as well as the rights to life, privacy and freedom from torture, and individual autonomy, UN experts have said in an authoritative new legal commentary. Yet, the experts from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) note, "the full enjoyment of the right to sexual and reproductive health remains a distant goal for millions of people, especially for women and girls, throughout the world."

The commentary, adopted by CESCR's 18 independent members, highlights the numerous legal, procedural, practical and social barriers people face in accessing sexual and reproductive health care and information, and the resulting human rights violations. "For example, lack of emergency obstetric care services or denial of abortion often lead to maternal mortality and morbidity, which in turn constitutes a violation of the right to life or security, and in certain circumstances, can amount to torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," the experts say in their commentary.

The experts' guidelines, known as a General Comment, concern Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which refers to the right to the highest attainable standard of health. The General Comment codifies the Committee's views on this issue to give States that have ratified the Covenant a clear understanding of their obligations and to highlight to government officials, legal practitioners, as well as civil society, where policy, laws and programme may be failing and how they can be improved.

The General Comment details the importance of sexual and reproductive health for men and boys, but also highlights how the issues are indispensable for women's right to make meaningful and autonomous decisions about their lives and health. It notes that gender-based stereotypes play a role in fuelling violations of the right to sexual and reproductive health, including assumptions and expectations of women as men's subordinates and of women's role as only caregivers and mothers. The General Comment also pays special attention to other groups of individuals who may face particular challenges and multiple forms of discrimination.

The General Comment details the obligations of States regarding sexual and reproductive health, including:

- An obligation to repeal, eliminate laws, policies and practices that criminalise, obstruct or undermine an individual's or a particular group's access to health facilities, services, goods and information;
- An obligation to ensure all have access to comprehensive education and information that is non-discriminatory, evidence-based and takes into account the evolving capacities of children and adolescents;
- An obligation to ensure universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health care, including maternal health care, contraceptive information and services, safe abortion care; prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infertility, reproductive cancers, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

The General Comment states that ideologically based policies or practices, such as the refusal to provide services based on conscience, must not prevent people from getting care, and that an adequate number of health care providers willing and able to provide such services should be available at all times in both public and private facilities.

[Download the text of General Comment No.22](#)

Source: [United Nations Human Rights](#)

## **New UN Secretary General from Eastern Europe in 2016**

This year the new Secretary General is to be elected and as this position customarily rotates between regions Eastern Europe is next on the list. The United Nations formally kicked off the race for the next secretary general on December 15th last year and the UN's 193 members were encouraged to consider putting forward a woman for the top job that has been held by a man for the past 70 years. U.N. Secretary - General Ban Ki-moon, a former South Korean foreign minister, is due to step down at the end of 2016 after serving two five-year terms.

The position of Secretary-General is one of great importance that requires the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. The current list of candidates can be found [here](#). Among them are 3 female candidates: Prof. Dr. sc. Vesna Pusić from Croatia, Ms. Irina Bokova from Bulgaria and Ms. Natalia Gherman from Moldova.

Source: [Non-Governmental Liaison Service](#)

## **Prince Edward Island in Canada to start providing abortions**

The Canadian province of Prince Edward Island (PEI) appears to have caved in to pressure to provide abortions, as a result of a threatened lawsuit, due to be tabled in court on 4 April, a suit they might have lost. "Based on legal advice that current policies regarding access to in-province abortion services would likely be in violation of the Canadian [Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), government determined that the most responsible approach is to revise the policy rather than embark on a long and costly court case," Premier and Minister of Justice Wade MacLauchlan said in a statement. "We recognize that Islanders, including Members of the Legislative Assembly, have strong personal beliefs on this issue; we also recognize our obligation to provide timely and professional health care, without discrimination."

The province has said the new reproductive health centre, which will also offer counselling and other reproductive health services, will be up and running by the end of this year. "Public policy must be reassessed and revised to ensure it stands the test of time," PEI's Status of Women Minister Paula Bigger said in a statement. "The decision we're announcing today means that we will offer timely access to frontline services that align with women's equality rights."

This announcement is a victory for [Abortion Access Now PEI](#), which had announced in January its plans to sue the provincial government over the lack of access. "It's amazing. It's very, very good news," said Ann Wheatley, co-chair of the group. "It's really a testament to all the amazing work, the hard work, that activists for the last 30 years have been putting into this." Access varies between provinces, but PEI has been the only province where women cannot get an abortion at all. The province only recently began to cover some of the cost of abortions PEI residents obtained in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the news Thursday. "The Government of Canada reaffirms its belief that a woman should have access to reproductive health services, no matter where they live in our country," [he said in a statement](#). It is also welcome news for the [Women's Legal Education and](#)

[Action Fund](#), which was helping with the lawsuit. Health Minister Jane Philpott [has admitted abortion access is “patchy”](#) and [said she wants to improve access to reproductive care](#) in Canada, and she’s talking to provincial health ministers about how to do that. Health PEI is expected to develop plans for a women’s reproductive health centre somewhere on the Island. According to Joyce Arthur, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, several doctors had earlier submitted a cost-saving business plan to Health PEI to provide abortions on the Island. Perhaps this application will now stand a chance.

Source: [International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion](#)

## YOUTH

### **CSW60: Every Woman Every Child's high-level event**

During this year's 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Every Woman Every Child office of the Secretary-General has organized the high-level event "The Roadmap to Realizing Rights: Every Woman Every Child's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health" with co-organization of UN Women. The event focused on implementation of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health with its 3 thematic pillars: Survive, Thrive and Transform. Keynote address was provided by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

ASTRA Youth member and representative of Croatia at CSW60, Marinella Matejcic, has delivered a speech during the panel discussion as a participant of Women Young Leaders Program.

Her speech is available [here](#).

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#)

### **Youth for Gender Equality Forum**

Youth for Gender Equality Forum 2016 was held on 2nd - 4th of March in European Parliament, in Brussels, organized by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. Only 20 young people from Europe and 5 beyond Europe were invited to participate in this event, but lots of messages had been and will be shared with those, who couldn’t attend. It was an interactive and inspiring initiative to promote dialogue, exchange, learning and networking for people engaged in promoting gender equality in their daily lives.

The main topics that were discussed during the Forum were refugee crisis, economic independence, SRHR, comprehensive sexuality education, abortion legislation and stigma, gender-based violence, LGBTI rights, the rise of anti-gender and anti-feminist movement.

Despite the fact that the EU has adopted numerous texts to ensure equal opportunities and treatment for men and women and to combat all forms of discrimination based on sex, insufficient progress has been made and many inequalities still persist.



ASTRA Youth member from Lithuania, Family Planning and Sexual Health Association representative attended the Forum and was actively involved in all discussions together with young people and MEPs. She has joined creation of the strategy for equal Europe and participated in the workshop 'The rise of anti-gender and anti-feminist movements is our fight!' Lots of inspiration and motivation spread through participants, still there's lots of work to do to make EU equal.

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#)

### **Is there sexuality education in Armenia?**

One of the most pressing SRHR issues in Armenia is the lack of comprehensive sexual education in schools. There are around half a million adolescents and youth live in Armenia, and it is very crucial that every one of them is properly educated and aware of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Article 5 of the RA Law on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights refers to the adolescents' right to acquire sexuality education. Article 5.2 of the same law states: "Adolescents' sexual education in secondary schools and in other educational institutions should be carried out by professionally trained persons in close cooperation with families, health services, non-governmental organizations and the public". Despite the fact that sexual education is enshrined in this legal document as a right of adolescents, it is de facto poorly implemented in Armenia.

Some small sections of sexual education are covered in the frames of several school subjects, such as "Biology"(8th grade), few classes called "Healthy Lifestyle" incorporated in the Physical Education subject, and classes called "Safe Activities" included in "Preliminary military preparedness" subject. Despite the number of hours devoted to sexual education in the frames of the above mentioned subjects, it still does not amount to a comprehensive sexual education, as it does not properly cover all aspects of SRHR issues and is taught by teachers, who do not have relevant knowledge and experience. There are various reasons why the Ministry of Education does not undertake steps to incorporate sexual education in the school curriculum, and considering the Armenian context, one of them is as simple as the word "sex", which is avoided to be used especially in the school context and for the adolescents. As Anush Alexanyan, the expert of National Institute of Education states, the main section of sexual education is incorporated in the "Healthy lifestyle" classes: according to the curriculum the students at 8th and 9th grades and the high school students should spend 14 hours on these classes, which mainly contain information on maturation, hygiene, value of life, sexual violence, relationships, contraceptives and sexually transmitted infections(STIs). Yet, looking at the topics covered by this subject, it is obvious that there is no full reference to sexuality, sexual rights and reproductive rights.

Excerpt of the article written by Lusine Kosakyan, [Society Without Violence](#)

Full article is available [here](#)

## **Mobile health information service "HY hub" - a revolution in sex education of young people in Moldova**

On February 26, 2016 a mobile application "HY hub" (Health Youth hub) was launched in Chisinau, Moldova. HY hub application was made in the framework of the "Health in the off-line regime" project funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Moldova Grants Program . The tool was developed by the Society of Andrology and Sexual Health of Moldova (SASSM) in close collaboration with the Family Planning Association of Moldova (SPFM) in partnership with the State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu", NGO "Sound Principles", "Dental Fala" SRL, "BAYER SRL" and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Moldova.

Being an innovative and creative idea, the mobile application "HY hub" is the first of its kind and is aimed to streamline the information and education of young people with regards to their health by combining the accessibility of digital technologies among young people with practical and useful tools available anytime and anywhere.

The new application is designed for young people aged 16-30. It contains the latest and most accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning, HIV/AIDS, healthy lifestyle, as well as on healthy nutrition and physical activity. The team of specialists involved in the development of this app intended to create a reliable source of current and correct information available for young people. All the information is structured and accessible depending on their needs, interests, age, gender, etc. Thus, by certain filters, the youth can get results and information on the most common problems or questions they face. The application is accessible in offline mode and offers different tools including practical ones for calculating the fertile period, assessment of the method of contraception, etc. In addition, by means of the option Quiz Time, the users will be able to test their general knowledge about health and/or ask questions anonymously.

The launching event was attended by Youth and Sports Minister Victor Zubcu, Vice President of the Parliamentary Commission for Social Protection, Health and Family Dr. Valentina Stratan, Dr. Boris Gilca, advisor to the Vice Prime Minister of Moldova, experts, students and residents, representatives of the media.

HY hub application was launched in beta test version (a pilot project). It will be adjusted according to the needs of the public. HY hub is designed for iOS and Android operating systems. At this stage, it can be downloaded from Google Play platform and will shortly be available on the App Store platform.

Source: [Family Planning Association of Moldova](#)

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **49<sup>th</sup> 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](#)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **New publication by AWID on religious fundamentalism and women's rights**

New research paper by AWID examines the relationship between development initiatives, the growth of religious fundamentalisms, and the state of women’s rights. Key insights for addressing the problem:

- Religious fundamentalisms are gaining ground within communities, political systems, international arenas with devastating effects for ordinary people, and for women in particular. There is an urgent need to act.
- Development actors are in a position to take a strong role in this. The collective capacity of development actors to recognize and collaboratively address religious fundamentalisms is vital for advancing social, economic, and gender justice and the human rights of all people in sustainable development
- Women’s bodies are the first sites of control of nascent fundamentalisms, so those in development must take cues from the analysis of women’s movements
- A sustainable, women’s-rights-focused response to religious fundamentalisms requires addressing the structural drivers of fundamentalisms— neoliberal economic policies, the arms trade, political marginalization, and shrinking democratic spaces
- It is vital to promote intersectional feminist understandings of power and privilege, and to apply these to questions of religion and culture. Development actors can promote positive inclusive identities to counteract the bounded, othering identities fostered by fundamentalists.

- By prioritising progressive partners for their activities, development actors can avoid giving resources or legitimacy to religious fundamentalists.
- Women’s organizations already have knowledge and strategies to counter fundamentalisms-- development actors should build on this, and invest in cross-issue coalitions to help them reach new heights.

[Access the publication in PDF](#)

Source: [AWID](#)

### **UNESCO report of sexuality education**

New UNESCO report examining CSE status in 48 countries across the world, ‘Emerging Evidence, Lessons and Practice in Comprehensive Sexuality Education - A Global Review 2015’ proves that Comprehensive Sexuality Education leads to improved sexual and reproductive health, resulting in the reduction of sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and unintended pregnancy. It not only promotes gender equality and equitable social norms, but has a positive impact on safer sexual behaviours, delaying sexual debut and increasing condom use.

[Access the report in PDF](#)

Source: [UNESCO](#)

### **Call for Action**

[Reproductive Health Matters](#) is now accepting papers for its November issue on "[Sexuality, sexual and reproductive health in later life](#)". This issue will shine a spotlight on people over 50, inviting research, policy analysis and examples of practical actions that address the effects of ageing on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health.

For further information please visit: <http://www.rhmjournal.org.uk/journal/call-papers>

## **MEMBER PROFILE**

### **Gender Alternatives Foundation, Bulgaria**

Gender Alternatives Foundation (GAF) is a non-profit organization, established in 2011, based in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Our mission is to work towards promotion, protection and empowerment of women and girls in all spheres of public and private life so that they realize their potential in a just and unbiased society. Through our guiding principle, we strive to address a number of structural inequalities which are layered in social organization and mindset, and present the building blocks of gender-based discrimination and violence.

The main objectives of the GAF are:

- Supporting women and girls in difficult social and economic situation, victims of violence and discrimination, those in need for protection and help for their social integration;
- Promoting and protecting the Universal and European standards for human rights and taking up initiatives for bringing Bulgarian legislation in conformity with these standards;
- Working with young people to secure meaningful youth participation;
- Raising public awareness and understanding on gender-based violence and discrimination;
- Networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practices.

Gender Alternatives Foundation's team highly values its membership status in the ASTRA Network. Being part of this incredible network opens for us opportunities for professional growth and exchange of experience in the sexual and reproductive health and rights sphere. Working together with diverse, yet like-minded professionals allows us to stand united in the protection and promotion of the fundamental human rights and to spread the voice of the most marginalized groups of our communities.



GAF Team: a network of 8 lawyers, 2 psychologists, a social worker, 2 philologists and an accountant.

Website: [www.genderalternatives.org](http://www.genderalternatives.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Gender.Alternatives.Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/Gender.Alternatives.Foundation)

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](#)

ASTRA Secretariat  
Federation for Women and Family Planning  
Nowolipie 13/15, 00-150 Warsaw, Poland  
ph/fax 48.22.635 9395, [federa@astra.org.pl](mailto:federa@astra.org.pl)  
[www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl)

Follow ASTRA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)