



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

UN Warns Croatia about Abortion, Contraception and Sexuality Education

“Croatia has a good chance to become an inclusive society, but should avoid a selective approach which discriminates against certain groups and favours others”, said the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health Dainius Puras, [reports Index.hr](http://reports.index.hr) on December 6, 2016, during his official visit to Croatia. “Croatia has made efforts to set up a system for respecting the right to health”, said Puras urging the Croatian government to continue to go forward without implementing regressive measures. “The existing deficiencies must be removed, but it seems that the political will is there.” During his nine-day visit, he noted that, despite the problems stemming from the war, transition and the financial crisis, Croatia has strengthened its health policies and services in order to achieve a sustainable health system.

For the rights to sexual and reproductive health, Puras expressed his concern about regressive measures that impede access to safe abortion and contraception, undermine comprehensive sex education

appropriate to age, and favour the rights of the family at the expense of women's rights and children's rights. "The right to sexual and reproductive health is a human right and therefore regressive measures that hinder its realization are human rights violations according to international regulations", said Puras. "I appeal to all stakeholders in Croatia to oppose any attack on universal principles of human rights", he said. "When applied in a systematic way, human rights provide a solid foundation for the successful realization of the right to health and other rights of all people in Croatia", he added.

Puras visited Croatia at the invitation of the government. He met with senior government officials, members of Parliament, representatives of the Constitutional Court, international organizations and civil society organizations, among them [CESI](#) – ASTRA member from Zagreb. The UN Special Rapporteur will present a full report on his visit to Croatia at the next session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2017.

Source: [Total Croatia News](#)

"In the name of the family" NGO unsatisfied with the work of the UN's Special Rapporteur

Željka Markić, the president of the "In the name of the family" NGO wrote a letter to the Prime Minister Plenković and the UN in which she criticizes the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Dainius Pūras, saying that his way of work during his time in Croatia is nothing but unprofessional and tendentious. "Among other things, we consider his work was performed beyond his capacity, he did not respect the institutions of the Republic of Croatia, and that wishes to impose certain forms of values that are not in harmony with democratically expressed will of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia" says the commentary of the NGO. "In the name of the family" stated that Puras, aside his mandate and powers, was dealing with the evaluation of the contraception use, comprehensive sexuality education and "restrictive measures" that are disrupting abortion accessibility and can, all together, result in a decrease of human rights. "The Special Rappertour focused on a number of ideological topics during his press conference and those topic are not in the centre of health nor within his mandate, like contraception, abortion, the definition of marriage, sexuality education. It seems that he is working from a position of a leftist-liberal non-governmental organization, that is working exclusively on their ideological themes, and not from the position of the Special Rapporteur for Health of the Human Rights Council" is what stands in the Markić's press release. The organization is stressing that by this press release, Pūras has sent a message to the Government of the Republic of Croatia and its citizens about the need to fulfil the particular agenda of the left-liberal organizations, and by that, he devalues the Republic of Croatia and its democratic institutions, while the general standards of health protection, which apply to every citizen of the country, have stayed in the background. A letter of dissatisfaction has been sent to various officials, such as the President of the Parliament, Božo Petrov, the Minister of Foreign and European affairs, Davor Ivo Stier, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeida Ra'ada Al Husseina and the Chairman of the UN Human Rights Council, Choi Kyong-lima.

Source: [N1](#) (translation by Marinella Matejčić)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Russian Government includes abortion in the list of services requiring additional medical license

Russian Government has included the termination of pregnancy in the list of services for which it is necessary to obtain additional medical license. The new rules will come into force a year later. Until now, abortions were included in the list of types of obstetric and gynecological care. Abortion itself will remain state funded despite the numerous attempts to remove it. The Russian Ministry of Health stated that such a ruling would discriminate women and lead to underground abortions.

Source: [Riaami.ru](http://ria.ru)

Law on Assisted Reproduction approved by the Lithuanian Parliament

In June, after long years of discussions and considerations Lithuanian Parliament approved progressive law on Assisted Reproduction. It indicates that freezing of embryos, selection of embryos and donation of reproductive cells are allowed and progressive methods are introduced.

Unfortunately, political situation in Lithuania has changed after elections of the Parliament in October, 2016. Newly elected chairman of Health Committee of the Parliament submitted conservative changes to the law on Assisted Reproduction. According to them, freezing and selection of embryos and donation of reproductive cells would be prohibited.

Women's and human rights NGOs, medical organizations and society reacted to the actions of parliamentarians and arranged the protest near the Parliament. Media put a lot of attention to this issue. Therefore, changes to the law were not approved yet. Some parliamentarians declared that the proposals of the anti-choice parliamentarians must be evaluated by independent experts by March.

Source: [Lithuanian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association](http://lithuanianfamilyplanning.org)

Insured couples to receive free in vitro fertilisation in Moldova

Insured couples will receive a free in vitro fertilisation (IVF), according to legislative changes adopted in the final reading on December 22nd by the Parliament. The new provisions will allow couples in which both partners are sure to benefit from an in vitro fertilization covered by compulsory health insurance. The proposed amendments provide possibility to couples which do not have sufficient financial resources, but are otherwise fit medically to benefit from assisted human reproduction services. However, the project involves increasing the attractiveness of compulsory medical insurance and taxpayers' rights on access to in vitro fertilization service.

According to estimates, Moldova has about 140 thousands of couples which suffer from some form of infertility. At the same time, over the past few years it has been a tendency of continuous reduction of total fertility rate of population.

Source: [Moldpres](http://moldpres.md)

Reproductive Health Issues that Impact Women During Pregnancy, Childbirth and Postpartum. Eastern Europe and Central Asia Caucus Statement

To mark Human Rights Day, December 10, the Croatian NGO Roda / [RODA - Roditelji u akciji](#) launched the *Reproductive Health Issues that Impact Women During Pregnancy, Childbirth and Postpartum*. Eastern Europe and Central Asia Caucus Consensus Statement. It was developed as the result of the regional caucus at the Women Deliver Conference in May 2016. The caucus was attended by almost 30 organizations and networks from our region, the EU and around the world. Access the consensus statement [HERE](#).

Source: [RODA - Roditelji u akciji](#)

More HIV positive people will be able to receive treatment in Ukraine

On December 21st the Ukrainian Superior Council adopted the second reading of the state budget for 2017. A record 5.9 billion UAH is allocated for the procurement of drugs for patients with HIV, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and other diseases. It is an absolute and unconditional victory of NGOs dealing with people living with HIV. In 2017 the government funding for the HIV programme was increased by 132%. This means that additional 34 000 HIV-positive women and men will be able to receive treatment.

The united efforts of Ukrainian NGOs, patient organizations, government agencies, international partners, and private foundations have given concrete results. The most important role in lobbying had the All Ukrainian network of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Source: [SALUS Charitable Foundation](#)

U.N. Human Rights Committee Concerned by Poland's Restrictive Abortion Law

Women in Poland may face risks to their health and lives as a result of the country's highly restrictive abortion law—according to a [report](#) released today by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (U.N. Committee). The U.N. Committee expressed serious concerns about the high number of women in Poland seeking unsafe abortions, which could put their health and lives at risk, because of the country's restrictive abortion law. The committee also stressed its concern regarding the serious barriers that women who seek access to abortion encounter, including the lengths women are forced to travel to access services.

The Center for Reproductive Rights submitted a [report](#) with local Polish human rights organizations, including the [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#), to the U.N. Committee earlier this year to bring attention to serious reproductive rights violations stemming from Poland's restrictive abortion law.

“For far too long women in Poland have faced insurmountable barriers when they need an abortion,” said Leah Hoctor, regional director for Europe at the Center for Reproductive Rights. “Today’s

response from the United Nations Human Rights Committee confirms the need for Polish lawmakers to take serious legal and practical measures to improve women's access to reproductive health services. It's time for the Polish government to amend its laws so women can receive the medical services they deserve with dignity."

In its recommendations, the U.N. Committee warned Poland not to adopt any new abortion law in the future that would further restrict women's already very limited access to abortion services.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

From ASTRA Members

Pro-choice advocacy in Macedonia – event to promote the Declaration to Change the Law on Termination of Pregnancy

Having in mind the limitations imposed by the legal framework and risks faced by women in exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights to make decisions concerning child conception, on the eve of the parliamentary elections on 11 December, HERA together with the other members of Platform for Gender Equality has asked all parties to pledge their commitment to the adoption of a new Law on Termination of Pregnancy and ensuring true protection of the health of women and their reproductive rights.

To mark this occasion, on December 2nd, the Platform for Gender Equality is hosting public event organized with the purpose of presenting the Declaration to Change the Law on Termination of Pregnancy and the political parties that have signed the Declaration. The event will gather representatives of political parties and civic organizations with the aim of initiating discussion concerning the future steps of the parties to ensure effective protection of the reproductive rights of women in Macedonia.

Source: [H.E.R.A.](#)

Declaration for the Law of Termination of Pregnancy – Early parliamentary elections 2016

In light of the early parliamentary election in 2016 held on 11 December, H.E.R.A. together with the Gender Equality Platform (GEP) drafted a declaration for the Law of Termination of Pregnancy expected to be signed by political parties participating in the election. The objective of the Declaration was, that once political parties were elected to be in the parliament (either government or opposition) they will lobby for changes to be made to the current restrictive abortion law. Bearing in mind that in 2013, the abortion law was changed to restrict women, to freely and safely access abortion, the declaration enabled women's organizations to build allies that will advocate for changes within the parliament. Furthermore, by signing the declaration, political parties are expected that post-election, they will jointly work with the GEP and use the knowledge and expertise of GEP to support changes to the current law or draft a new law in consultation with GEP, civil society and experts in the field. In total 11 political parties signed the Declaration and they are: Demokratski sojuz, Levica, LDP, NSDP,

Dostoinstvo, VMRO-NP, Obedineti za Makedonija, PCER, DOM, SDSM and Liberalna Partija. The ruling conservative Coalition VMRO-DPMNE and DUI did not signed the declaration although they were contacted several times.

On 2 December, the Platform for Gender Equality hosted a public event organized with the purpose of presenting the Declaration to Change the Law on Termination of Pregnancy and the political parties that have signed the Declaration. The event gathered representatives of political parties that signed the Declaration and representatives of civic organizations with the aim of initiation discussion concerning the future steps of the parties to ensure effective protection of the reproductive rights of women in Macedonia.

Source: [H.E.R.A.](#)

World Aids Day in Kutaisi, Georgia

On December 1, World AIDS Day, a number of events were organized by NCDC (National Center for Disease Control and Public Health), GHRN (Georgian Harm Reduction Network), AIDS Center in Georgia and local NGOs working on Human rights, SRHR and health issues, throughout the country. Free testing and counseling in the city centers, info sessions at the universities, a forum, a conference and media campaigns. Associations Hera XXI and PAPA group together with other NGOs: “New Way”, “Education, Training and Employment Centre”, “Tanadgoma”, Medical faculty and Student self-government of Kutaisi State University, planned and co-organized several events in Kutaisi. The overall aim of the events was to raise the public’s awareness on HIV/AIDS and decrease stigmatizing attitudes and discrimination of people living with HIV.

During the day free HIV-testing and counseling were performed by a mobile team in front of the Kutaisi State University building. A rally aiming to reduce stigmatizing attitudes towards and discrimination of HIV-positive people was held in the afternoon with volunteers distributing materials on HIV/Aids related issues. An additional film screening of of the Egyptian film “Asmaa” (2011) was organized and followed by a media campaign in which various community leaders, medical personnel and civil society representatives participated in TV programs and discussed the aims of the events and current discourse in terms of HIV/AIDS. During the day HERA organized also a media campaign. Two local TV shows, one radio and online media covered the activities in Kutaisi. HERA XXI joined the social media campaign. Some participants uploaded their messages about combating stigma, inequality and discrimination using the hash tag: **#ვემხრობიმიდსისდამარცხებას!** (Hands up for HIV!)

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

“Accessibility to high-quality family planning services and realization of women’s rights” in Georgia

On Tuesday, 20th of December, Association HERA XXI held a conference on the accessibility to high-quality family-planning services and the realization of women’s rights. During the conference the research “Assessment of Abortion Services and Readiness” which was conducted by HERA XXI during 2015-2016 was presented. The main goal of the research was to assess accessibility to abortion services in Georgia. The research included analyze of the quality of family-planning services, abortion

services, and the realization of women's reproductive health and rights. The study was carried out throughout the whole country and included 100 medical institutions, health-providers as well as care-takers. The result of the study indicated lack of quality of care in abortion services in Georgia and that many women had insufficient knowledge about contraceptive-methods.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Evaluation Report of the Education Component of the Armenian National Program to Combat Gender Based Violence

In December the Society Without Violence presented the findings of the "Monitoring and Evaluation Report of the Education Component of the Armenian National Program to Combat Gender Based Violence, 2011-2015 Strategic Program" to an audience which included representatives from CSOs, NGOs, and the state. The research was initiated by "Society Without Violence" NGO and conducted by and independent expert and ethnographer in the framework of "Integration of Gender and Gender Based Violence Subject into Educational Curriculum in frames of National 2011-2015 Strategic Plan" project. The project was implemented with the financial support of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF). The report summarizes the monitoring results of the education component of the "National Strategic Programs to Combat Gender Violence" and the plans of action thereof for the period between November 2014 and September 2016.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Strategy to Realize and Protect the Human Rights of LGBTI People in Armenia

Within the context of the "Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia" EU-funded project, Society Without Violence NGO (SWV), together with its partners PINK Armenia and Heinrich Boell Foundation, organized the presentation of the "*Realizing The Human Rights of LGBTI People in Armenia: A Comprehensive Strategy*" document to a large audience, which included local CSOs and NGOs, international organizations, such as the United Nations, and state representatives. The document presents a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy to combat discrimination and abuses faced by LGBTI people in Armenia. The strategy was developed based on two landmark studies by SWV and PINK Armenia on the situation of LGBTI people in Armenia. It is based around working groups that will each tackle a set of related problem. One the problems the strategy aims to tackle is SRHR related issues faced by LGBTI people in medical institutions.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Empowering Women and Girls with Disabilities in Moldova to Exercise their Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Sexual and reproductive rights are fundamental human rights that are already recognized in international, regional and national legal frameworks, standards and agreements. Persons with disabilities must be able to enjoy all sexual and reproductive rights guaranteed by international legal instruments and national policies. By ratifying the UN human rights conventions, especially the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Republic of Moldova has assumed the responsibility to ensure their enactment and guarantee the observance of the rights of people with disability – including sexual and reproductive rights.

To be able to identify the problems faced by women and girls with disabilities in Moldova in exercising their sexual and reproductive rights, [Reproductive Health Training Center conducted a situation analyses](#). Its results show that women and girls with disabilities from Moldova (about 50% from total of 183,9 thousands person with disabilities) are often subject to stigma, discrimination and forced to make decisions regarding their private life, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, couple relationships and childbearing. They are vulnerable because of lack of knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, limited access to related health services and evidence based information. Almost all women believe sexual and reproductive rights include the right to decide whether to have children or not, including with whom and when, the right to be informed about methods of contraception and their utilization, the right to information and education, as well as the right to access sexual and reproductive health services. *“All women have the right to family life, have the right to be mothers, and disability should not be a reason depriving us from this right.”* says one of the interviewed women with special needs, aged 28. The conviction of all women is that they can have a family and give birth to children, and locomotor problems should not be a barrier in achieving these rights. *“Family planning is a right and it would be correct that young people healthy and also with disability should be informed about the importance of contraception, planning a pregnancy with all necessary medical checkups, excluding afflictions by treating diseases so as to have a healthy body and a healthy family.”* believes a 42-year-old interviewed woman with special needs.

To empower women and girls with disabilities in Moldova to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, as first step, the Reproductive Health Training Center organized in November national course “Strengthen the capacities of intermediaries in developing and implementation of programs related to sexual and reproductive health and rights of disabled women”. It brought together 20 intermediaries representing local NGOs working with disabled women, staff working in institutions for persons with disabilities, representatives of primary health care medicine and social assistance. Participants gained knowledge, communication tools and skills in approaching the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights of persons with disabilities and develop related programs for their beneficiaries. Another important course outcome is the creation of a network of organizations trained in sexual and reproductive rights of disabled women and RHTC is acting as a secretariat of the network.

More actions need to be undertaken. Thus, RHTC is going to discuss with the governmental institutions and other counterparts about situation analyses results, sensitize community and mass media, develop a network of peer educators in sexual and reproductive health and rights among disabled women, and advocate for improvement of related policies and programs.

All activities are organized due to financial support of the Embassy of Finland in Bucharest, within the project „All Equal, All Healthy: Empowering Women and Girls with Disabilities in Moldova to Exercise their Sexual and Reproductive Rights” carried out by Reproductive Health Training Center in the July 2016 – June 2017 interval.

Source: [Reproductive Health Training Center](#)

European Parliament

EP adopts progressive Resolution on Rights of Women in the Eastern Partnership States

On 13 December, the European Parliament adopted its Resolution on Rights of Women in the Eastern Partnership States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (2016/2060(INI)). The Resolution contains very good SRHR language, namely the below paragraphs:

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of September 1995, and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (Cairo Conference) of September 1994, as well as the outcomes of their review conferences,
- I. whereas women and men in EaP countries often **face difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and rights (SRHR), and serious barriers still exist** for poor women, migrants, ethnic minorities and those who live in rural areas; whereas fewer than 50 per cent of women in EaP countries use modern methods of contraceptive, and **in some countries even fewer than 20 per cent**, the main reasons being poor counseling, high costs, and lack of choice and unreliable supply of contraceptives;
- T. whereas prenatal care and skilled birth attendance at delivery, with backup emergency, obstetric care and essential supplies in place are crucial in **reducing maternal mortality**; whereas EaP countries are still **lagging behind in reaching all women**, especially those in the poorest, most remote areas and those belonging to marginalised groups such as national minorities, migrants and women with disabilities;
- 36. Encourages the EaP countries to sign **and ratify the Istanbul Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women as soon as possible, since none of the countries concerned have ratified it, and calls on the authorities to put in place and strictly monitor the effective implementation of national strategies to combat violence against women;
- 37. Calls for the application of the Beijing Platform for Action to education and health as basic human rights, including **access to voluntary family planning, the full range of reproductive and sexual health services, including contraception, safe and legal abortion, and sex education**;
- 38. Underlines that the risk of dying from **cervical cancer is 10 times higher in EaP countries** than in Western Europe, that it is the most common form of cancer among women of 15-44 years of age and that it therefore has far-reaching effects on the fabric of society; calls for nationally organised screening and vaccination programmes to combat these trends;

- 53. Urges the inclusion of women's rights and gender equality issues on the agendas of regular political and human rights dialogues with the EaP partners, together with proposed actions.

See the entire resolution [HERE](#).

EP confirms family planning and SRHR at the core of development policies and human rights

On December 16, the European Parliament adopted its annual report on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter 2015. The Parliament 'emphasises the fact that universal respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to the relevant services contribute to reducing infant and maternal mortality; points out that family planning, maternal health, easy access to contraception and safe abortion, and the full range of sexual and reproductive health services are important elements in saving women's lives, as well as in reducing infant and maternal mortality; highlights the need to place these policies at the core of development cooperation with third countries [...]'.

To access final EP report click [HERE](#).

GLOBAL UPDATES

Possible impact of a Trump Presidency on Global SRHR

With the election of Donald Trump as the next President of the United States, questions are being raised on what this could mean for women's rights worldwide. While the views of President-elect Trump may be somewhat ambiguous, the views on SRHR of people close to him are very clear.

For example, Vice-President-elect Mike Pence is staunchly anti-choice and does not believe in the utility of contraception. In addition, Donald Trump has appointed two figures to his Transition team who are leaders in the anti-choice and anti-LGBT movements. They are Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn who led the Congressional inquiry into the spurious allegations against Planned Parenthood in 2015 and Martin Blackwell of the Family Research Council, a group designated as a 'hate-group' by the Southern Poverty Law Center for its positions on LGBT people.

Based on such appointments, we can deduce that a future Trump administration would likely take a similarly hostile position on women's rights and SRHR as previous Republican administrations under Presidents Bush (Junior), Bush (Senior) and Reagan. If this assumption is correct, here is what is likely to happen:

- By the end of January 2016, the US might stop funding IPPF by President Trump signing what is known as the 'Global Gag Rule' (GGR). The GGR (also known as the 'Mexico City Policy' because it was first signed into law by President Reagan in Mexico City in 1984) prevents any US funding from going to any organization that is involved in any abortion-related activity, even if financially supported by other donors. Any abortion-related activity can include

referrals and information about abortion and not necessarily involve providing abortion services. In addition, within a few months, funding to UNFPA is likely to be cut.

- Moreover, the US will likely develop an aggressive and proactive diplomatic strategy against SRHR and women's rights by trying to undermine SRHR language in UN settings. The first cases where this may happen are the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2017 and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in April 2017 and any other UN settings where these issues may appear.
- All in all, there is likely to be an increase in the dissemination of anti-choice initiatives coming from the US to the rest of the world. Eight years ago it came in the form of 'abstinence-only' education for HIV/AIDS prevention and was generously funded by USAID through religious groups.
- And to conclude, there is likely to be a retreat of USAID from global efforts to improve SRHR in developing countries, both in its bilateral aid as well as in its multi-lateral aid. In addition to cutting UNFPA funding, the involvement of the US in FP2020 and the Ouagadougou Partnership (which both aim to provide family planning in developing countries) will be uncertain.

See articles on the above:

- [The Cut: Lisa Ryan, Woman Leading Planned Parenthood 'Witch Hunt' Joins Trump's Transition Team](#)
- [America Blog: John Aravosis, Trump picks anti-LGBT hate group to run domestic policy transition](#)
- [The Washington Post: Lindsey Bever, How a major hate-watch group is preparing for President Trump's America](#)

See the following articles on likely impact on women's health:

- [The Guardian: Karen McVeigh, US aid for women's sexual health worldwide under threat](#)
- [RESURJ: Statement on US Election Result: Solidarity in Human Rights and Justice for all](#)
- [Shannon Kowalski from International Women's Helath Coalition: What Does President Trump Mean for Sexual and Reproductive Rights at the UN?](#)
- [Craig Lasher from PAI: Is the past a prologue for international family planning funding in a Trump administration?](#)

Prepared by Neil Datta, [European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development](#)

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

U.N. General Assembly Adopts Resolution to End Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Worldwide

On December 19 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating child, early and forced marriage globally with a new resolution that calls on states to strengthen laws and policies to protect women and girls from this harmful practice.

Over 100 states sponsored the UNGA resolution which identifies gender inequality among the root causes of child, early and forced marriage. The resolution calls on all states to enact and enforce laws requiring a minimum age for marriage and ensure access to justice for women and girls who are at risk or have been subjected to this harmful practice. The resolution also urges states to respect, promote, and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women and those girls subjected to child, early and forced marriage.

This is the second resolution from the U.N. General Assembly calling on governments to take substantive legal and policy measures to prevent and eradicate child, early, and forced marriage. The resolution follows the 2015 global commitment to eradicate child, early, and forced marriage as part of the [Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development](#) and a Human Rights Council [resolution](#) in 2015.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

YOUTH

Youth in Power – Developing a Youth Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

ASTRA Youth is a partner in the “Youth in Power – Developing a Youth Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” project with You Act, Y-Safe and Y-PEER covering Council of Europe and Central Asia countries. The strategy meeting took place in Kiev, Ukraine on December 3-6 and was preceded by developing and translating into national languages the [online survey](#) collecting youth views on SRHR (the study was available in 9 languages in total: English, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian). The youth strategy is currently under development and will conclude by March 2017.

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#)

More backward steps in Polish “Sexuality Education” classes

In October, The Ministry of Education published the names of experts who will be responsible for the new core curriculum in schools. The new expert for Education for Family Life (polish abstinence-only sexuality education) is prof. Urszula Dudziak from the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University. She is against any methods of contraception. In her opinion birth control pills lead to hedonism, instrumental treatment of human beings, sex addiction, sense of injustice and hurt, coldness, tendency to treason and it is a sign of immaturity. The Ministry of Education prepared the new curriculum in Biology and Preparation for Family Life. Knowledge about contraception will be presented in medical, psychological and moral aspects. It means that adolescents will learn that sex is appropriate only within (heterosexual) marriage and only natural methods of family planning are moral and safe. Moreover she proposed to run screenings of the teachers of Preparation for Family Life to make sure that they are capable of the position and can serve as role models for students whilst presenting a strict moral attitude (preferably married, not divorced) and far from secular views.

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

Youth forum on SRHR in Georgia

On Friday, 9th of December, HERA XXI's young activists participated in the Youth Forum organized by United Nations Population Fund in Georgia and European Youth Parliament of Georgia. The forum was held in the framework of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

The forum underlined the importance of reproductive health and rights in individuals lives as well as in country's development process. The speakers noted that it is important for young people to have sufficient information about the issues. This will help them to make better decisions and plan their future better. The presenters also discussed early marriages in Georgia, the importance of informal education in general and also the role of fathers in childcare.

During the Forum young people had the chance to work on topics such as early marriage, informal education, fathers' involvement and young people's needs. These themes were discussed in the context of reproductive health and rights. Participants produced suggestions on how to reach the discussed SRHRS goals and developed an outcome document which will be sent to the applicable Georgian ministries to advance young people's voices.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The sixty-first session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) with priority theme of "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 13 to 24 March 2017. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world are invited to attend the session.

Source: [UN Women](#)

50th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development

The 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 3 to 7 April 2017. The priority theme of the Session is "Changing population age structures and sustainable development." Online pre-registration will run from November 2016 to March 2017. Please visit the website of the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs for more information on NGO participation in the Session of the Commission [here](#).

Source: [UNFPA](#)

PUBLICATIONS

ASTRA Network statement on rising threats to SRHR in CEE region

New publication by ASTRA Network alerts the international community on the worrying situation in Central and Eastern European region in regard to women's and girls' Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights - access it here: bit.ly/2h1YEEI

Demography in the EU: changes in the “traditional” family

“Even though the world’s population has been rising constantly and the demographic change has been faster and more universal than ever before in human history, Europe’s population has been ageing. All EU Member States exhibit increasing life expectancy and decreasing fertility rates, while the problem of sustaining the working age population and by consequence economic growth becomes more prominent. Pension systems have fewer workers-contributors and expenses for medical care and elderly care also increase and cannot be sustained. New family arrangements, delayed union formation (marriage or cohabitation) between members of different or the same sex, postponement of childbearing, rising divorce rates and higher numbers of children born out of wedlock, as well as ideas and attitudes of European citizens have also been undergoing transformation. Traditional family is no longer the dominant form.”

[Direct Link to Full 44-Page 2016 Report](#)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for Youth

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promotes women’s and girls’ equal rights. CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women, and is one of the key international agreements that guides the work of UN Women in achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. CEDAW for Youth is a youth-friendly version of CEDAW, that was authored by a young woman and young man.

This resource explains why CEDAW is important to youth, describes CEDAW’s impact in advancing gender equality and human rights for women and girls around the world, and summarizes the articles of CEDAW, including the specific forms of discrimination that must be ended and how CEDAW is implemented and monitored.

View online/download: [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\) for Youth](#), [Brief: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\) for Youth](#)

Source: [UN Women](#)

MEMBER OF THE MONTH

Woman Health & Family Planning, Ukraine

"Woman Health & Family Planning" Charity Foundation / WHFP is a non-government organization located in Kiev, Ukraine. It has been consistently and actively working for 20 years in the field of reproductive health strengthening and protection of reproductive rights of Ukrainian people, effectively conducting preventive work, implementing public information campaigns, advocacy events, researches, as well as trainings for medical professionals. WHFP works for the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Ukraine through advocacy, information, education, and development of activists' and volunteers' network.

WHFP has been member of ASTRA Network from the very start of the network and we remain convinced that ASTRA activities and presence is extremely important and increases the visibility of our region on the global level. Participation in the ASRTA advocacy events gives to WHFP an opportunity to present the situation of SRHR on the country level. ASTRA also provides a great opportunity to share experience and networking, that plays an important role in strengthening ASTRA members' capacity in advocacy in SRHR.

Website: <http://womanhealth.org.ua/en>



WHFP Team with Board Members and volunteers

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

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