



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

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Table of contents:

- **Burning Issue**
- **Regional Updates**
- **Global Updates**
- **Upcoming Events**
- **Publications**

BURNING ISSUE

Statement of Feminist and Women's Organisations on the Very Limited and Concerning Results of the 56th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Last month the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 56) failed to adopt agreed conclusions on the basis of safeguarding "traditional values" at the expense of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. This lack of consensus among the states on their common policy and measures to protect women's rights shows that some states openly question the importance and need for gender equality promotion, and prioritise traditional values and practices, which are harmful to women. This is very alarming and causes a great concern about the future of women human rights' advancement. It raises a question whether the states will fulfill the commitments made through their agreement to the Beijing Platform for Action if the global human rights framework is being undermined by growing conservative forces already present at the level of United Nations. Feminist organizations and networks from all over the world prepared joint protest statement: "Together with our partner feminist and women's rights organisations, we say NO to any re-opening of negotiations on the already established international agreements on women's human rights and call on all governments to demonstrate their commitments to promote, protect and fulfill human rights and fundamental freedoms of women." Deadline to endorse the statement: April 5, 2012.

More: www.astra.org.pl or <http://www.apwld.org/wp-content/uploads/Womens-Statement-on-CSW-26-March-2012.pdf>

REGIONAL UPDATES

Anti-choice attempts to restrict access to abortion in Romania. The anti-choice groups partnered with the leading Government party and came up with a legal proposal for mandatory counseling and 5-day waiting period for women before abortion on request. It was introduced in the Parliament on March, 13. The first reading of the law is currently taking place in the Romanian Senate. The explanatory memorandum of this draft law states that such a legislative proposal comes to address the high rate of abortions in Romania (520 in 2009). Although the rate of abortions in Romania is still high, it has been constantly and significantly dropping from 3152.59 in 1990 to 480.28 in 2010. The draft law contains specific description of biased counseling that should include watching video/photo images of fetus, ultrasound of the fetus, video material on the development of the embryo, and being informed about “medical risks” of abortion such as sterility, post-abortion syndrome, etc. ASTRA member organization ECPI prepared information campaign to fight stereotypes regarding abortion services and is currently preparing campaign to mobilise international stakeholders to oppose the draft.

More: <http://www.ecpi.ro/avortul-prejudecati-si-realitate/?lang=en>

Annual report of the EP on the state of gender equality in the EU for 2011. The European Parliament adopted its annual report on equality between men and women in the EU in 2011. The Rapporteur concentrated on 5 issues: equal economic independence, equal pay, equality in decision-making, fight against sexual violence and gender equality beyond the Union. The article 47 of the report concentrated on access to reproductive health services (abortion, contraception and maternal health) and mentioned recent attempts to further restrict access to SRHR. Furthermore, the Rapporteur MEP Sophie In't Veld addressed the discrimination in Europe of single-person households and the problem of domestic violence.

The report is available here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2012-0041&language=EN>

The European rally for Abortion Rights. Pro-choice activists joined the European rally to protect abortion rights in Europe that took place in Brussels. Over the course of the last two years there has been growing opposition in various European countries such as Hungary, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom, Spain and Switzerland, resulting in various harmful acts of intimidation and attempts to revise abortion legislation. Religious beliefs combined with financial restrictions have also lead certain countries to reduce financial support for abortion services, therefore affecting the access of women and especially poor women to abortion. The participants and organizers of the rally promoted the Charter of the Platform for Abortion Rights that calls for access to abortion services.

To sign the Charter go to:

<http://www.abortionright.eu/index.php?lang=EN&PHPSESSID=5vppqpr2jm8trks2vs1aj9h103>

EU condemns female genital mutilation. Following the release of the new report on the 2008-2012 EU and UNICEF project on harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, Andris Piebalgs, the EU Commissioner for Development, made a strong statement against female genital cutting, calling it a violation of Human Rights. “I find it totally unacceptable that in the 21st century, this practice, which is a clear violation of Human Rights, is still taking place. That is why I

am so pleased to see that EU aid can make a real difference”. The project implemented by UNICEF received a total of EUR 3.9 million in EU funding over the period 2008-2012.

See the EC Press Release: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/216&>

Experts meet to discuss the unmet need for family planning. Countdown 2015 Europe hosted an expert meeting entitled “International Dialogue on Family Planning and Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the Future of European Development Cooperation”. The event brought together representatives from 16 EU Member States. Civil servants, technical experts, social entrepreneurs, and key European donors gathered to discuss family planning as key to addressing development challenges. Much of the discussion centred on the EC Communication: “The Agenda for Change”, and the EU development policy. The participants agreed on the urgency and importance for the EC to deepen its definitions of “inclusive growth” and “sustainable development” in order to ensure that they capture a “rights-based approach” to development, including the right to voluntary family planning.

To read more about Countdown 2015 Europe, visit: <http://www.countdown2015europe.org/>

MEPs condemned homophobic and transphobic censorship laws in Russia. On February, 9 St. Petersburg lawmakers approved at the crucial second reading a bill introducing fines for advocating gay and lesbian relationships in front of children and promoting pedophilia. Examined since November 2011, the bill echoes similar legislation in Lithuania (which the European Parliament condemned with two resolutions in September 2009 and January 2011), and developing legislation in Ukraine. The Russian states of Arkhangelsk, Ryazan and Kostroma already adopted similar regional laws. Conservative lawmakers argue that banning such “propaganda” will prevent children from becoming lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

More: <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/>

European Parliament stands up for same-sex families’ free movement. The European Parliament adopted its annual report on EU citizenship, in which it laments that same-sex couples and their families still face disproportionate obstacles when moving within the European union. In the EU Citizenship Report 2010: Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens’ rights, the European Parliament “reiterates its previous calls for Member States to ensure freedom of movement for all EU citizens and their families, without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or nationality”. Specifically, the Parliament reminds Member States that they must implement the rights granted under the Free Movement Directive (2004/38/EC), not only to married heterosexual couples, but also to registered partners and same-sex spouses. Currently, several Member States discriminate against same-sex couples who want to move or travel to their territory, despite the EU law asking that they be treated the same way as different-sex couples.

Source: <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/european-parliament-stands-up-for-same-sex-families-free-movement/>

Albanian Minister calls for homophobic violence, admonished by Prime Minister. Albania’s Deputy Defense Minister recently called for homophobic violence against Albanian citizens planning to organise the country’s first LGBT pride march in spring. He was swiftly rebuked by the Prime Minister. On 24th March Mr Ekrem Spahiu, Deputy Defense Minister, told the press: “My only commentary on this gay parade is that they should be beaten with batons”. The party he heads, the Legality Movement Party, supported him by stating that homosexuality was a “vice, misfortune and a curse”. These reactions came after organisations working for the human rights of lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender people announced they would hold the first pride march on 17th May, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

More: <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/albanian-minister-calls-for-homophobic-violence-admonished-by-prime-minister/>

GLOBAL UPDATES

Former presidents of Finland and Mozambique to co-chair High-Level Task Force for Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Former president of Finland Tarja Halonen met with the Executive Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin to discuss the establishment of a High-Level Task Force for Promoting SRHR, whose main objective is to position SRHR on the top of political agenda. President Halonen, together with the former president of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, will co-chair the High-Level Task Force. The High-Level Task Force will hold its first meeting in June 2012 during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio+20.

To read the press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Finland, visit: <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=244434&nodeid=15316&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

ICPD Global Survey. As mandated by the UN General Assembly, UNFPA – in cooperation with all relevant organizations of the UN system, relevant international organizations, institutions and experts – is currently conducting a Global Review of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action. The results of the Review will provide a robust report of what works and where gaps remain in how humanity can best focus efforts and move faster to a world where everyone enjoys a better quality of life with dignity. In line with UNFPA's commitment to the effective and significant inclusion of all stakeholders, the ICPD Beyond 2014 Secretariat is currently sharing a draft of the Global Survey with civil society and youth. A second draft, which reflects CSO and Youth inputs will be shared with Member States by mid-April, so that the final version can go to Countries by the agreed timeline of early June.

To get involved and share your feedback no later than **4 April** please visit: <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/global-survey/>

Global Parliamentarians to Review ICPD. Since the International Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD was organized by AFPPD in Cairo, there has been a global parliamentary movement on ICPD issues. The parliamentary advocacy, since then, has been in the forefront of mobilizing parliamentarians on population, development, reproductive and maternal health, including gender issues. In 2012, when the world has seen the Seven Billionth Child and will review ICPD mandate in 2014, parliamentarians around the world will assemble in Istanbul to make an assessment of the population, development, reproductive and maternal health, gender and related issues on 24-25 May 2012. This is all possible with the strong support from UNFPA at all levels. The Istanbul conference will be organized by the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) in cooperation with AFPPD.

Source: <http://icpdbeyond2014.org>

UPCOMING EVENTS

How much does abortion cost? Economic dimension of sexual and reproductive rights and health in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. ASTRA Network panel during the AWID

2012 Forum in Istanbul, Turkey. April, 19; 2:30PM - 4:00PM, Cibali III room at the Halic Congress Center in Istanbul.

"Is sexuality education too expensive? Youth sexual and reproductive health and rights in Central and Eastern Europe" - ASTRA Youth session during the **AWID Forum** in Istanbul, Turkey. Saturday, 21st of April, from 2.30 PM to 4.00 PM in the Cibali III room at the Halic Congress Center in Istanbul.

Unsafe abortions within the European Union. The European Parliament Working Group on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Development has invited Dr. Gilda Sedgh from the Guttmacher Institute to present her report on unsafe abortions that was published in *The Lancet*. Furthermore, Dr. Gunilla Kleiverda, gynaecologist and president of 'Women on Waves', will address the audience. 25th of April, European Parliament, Brussels.

More: <http://www.epwg.org/>

PUBLICATIONS

Whose Right to Life?: Women's Rights and Prenatal Protections under Human Rights and Comparative Law. The Center for Reproductive Rights is happy to announce the publication of a new resource. The toolkit examines international standards and national court precedents to demonstrate that human rights law does not recognize a right to life before birth. It examines the legal and human rights implications of recognizing an embryo or fetus as a rights holder, and proposes how states can legitimately promote an interest in prenatal life without undermining women's rights.

This publication can be found on the CRR's website at:

<http://reproductiverights.org/en/document/whose-right-to-life-womens-rights-and-prenatal-protections-under-human-rights-and-compariti>.

New Website on the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. An exciting website has been launched recently on the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. The website aims to encourage greater engagement with the Optional Protocol by providing the central hub of material for women, advocates, academics, lawyers, students, NGOs and others. The website brings together in an accessible format all of the Optional Protocol decisions and inquiry findings. It lists them by country, subject matter, decision type and year.

To see what materials are available on the website and to 'follow' to receive notifications about new developments, see: <http://opcedaw.wordpress.com/>. The site is also linked to Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/OPCEDAW>

Sexuality Education in the EU. "Sex education" in a broader social context. This briefing has been produced following a request of MEP Sophie In't Veld's Office. It was an initiative in the framework of an action to advocate for increased access to sexuality education in Europe.

Available at:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2012/120262/LDM_BRI\(2012\)120262_REV2_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2012/120262/LDM_BRI(2012)120262_REV2_EN.pdf)

Equity in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions in Countdown to 2015: a retrospective review of survey data from 54 countries. Countdown to 2015 tracks the progress towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5, with particular emphasis on within-country inequalities. The new study assesses how inequalities in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions vary by intervention and country.

To read the article go to: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)60113-5/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)60113-5/fulltext)

Sexual Rights & The Universal Periodic Review. A toolkit for advocates. The UPR is a relatively new and unique process of the UN Human Rights Council where each of the 193 Member States of the UN is reviewed on its entire human rights record every four and a half years. The Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) have developed a toolkit to help you shine an international spotlight on human rights violations related to sexual and reproductive health and rights in your country through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process of the United Nations (UN).

Accessible at: http://issuu.com/ippfresources/docs/universalperiodicreview_toolkit_2012

Guidelines for Debate (GPD) talk about the background of the principle of gender perspective and explain that gender mainstreaming goes beyond designing policies and programs aimed at women, and also propose a series of activities where "gender" is used as an analytical tool to promote initiatives that improve the living conditions of all people and promote equal access to opportunities, taking into account the impact of the relation between genders.

English link available here: <http://www.espolea.org/2/post/2012/03/gpd-qu-es-la-perspectiva-de-gnero.html>

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