



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

We won't keep quiet! Solidarity statement with Slovakia

As part of the international campaign of 16 days of activism against violence against women civil society in Slovakia gathered at a protest and march across Bratislava to voice its demands and protest against structural gender based violence, especially any steps limiting access to abortion. The march was called *Nebudeme ticho!* (We won't keep quiet!) and was organised by *Možnosť Volby* (ASTRA member organisation), *ASPEKT*, *Bratislava bez náckov* and *Povstanie pokračuje*.

In May 2018, the far-right political party in the Parliament proposed an amendment to the abortion law. According to the new law, abortion would be accessible only in three cases: if woman's life is in danger; if pregnancy was a result of crime and in cases of foetal damage. Only women with Slovak citizenship would be allowed to get abortion in Slovakia under the proposed law. The amendment was supported by the Catholic Church and some conservative politicians. The law did not get a second reading but not because of the content but because of the fascist political party itself. Other parties did not want to be associated with this group. However, as a result of this discussion an agreement among conservative politicians came about – they promised to prepare a new law, the one that would connect politicians in the coalition and opposition in the Parliament. In September, there was another law put forward – the content and consequences would be the same as in the first

case, just explanation and language of the law had been changed. The discourse moved from creating an image of “irresponsible women who go to abortion to protect their career and decadent lifestyle” to the concept of “protection” – conservative politicians were about to protect women from abortions. The negative consequences for women, however, would be the same, language was the only shift. In both cases, the inspiration for them was the Polish abortion law that was often discussed in the media. The second draft law did not make it to the first reading in the Parliament because of technical details (there must be 6 months-period between the readings of the two laws regarding the same issue). This situation means that in February/March 2019 the period of 6 months will be over and a new draft law can be expected.

[ASTRA solidarity statement with Slovakia is available online.](#)

[Photos from the protest](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Poland: UN experts say Government must not roll back women’s rights

Poland is at a critical juncture with regard to its record on women’s rights. It must refrain from rolling back women’s rights, particularly in the areas of family and culture, as well as sexual and reproductive health, and undertake further steps to fully achieve gender equality, said UN human rights experts from the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

Poland was one of the first countries in Europe to grant women voting rights in 1918, and historically has had an active and vibrant women’s movement, but the rise of religious conservatism questions some of the gains women have fought for, notably in the area of reproductive and sexual rights, the experts said after a 10-day visit.

“Poland has established a legal and institutional framework on anti-discrimination and has instituted measures to secure greater participation of women in political, as well as social and economic life. It has also developed a number of measures of social protection and has been undertaking efforts to improve child care services,” said Ivana Radačić and Melissa Upreti, from the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice. Additionally, they said, Poland has been building a legislative framework to effectively address gender-based violence against women.

“However, we have observed some serious challenges to women’s rights. Gender equality does not seem to be a priority for the Government at the moment, and there are no national strategies and plans on gender equality and women’s empowerment,” the independent experts added, noting that the understanding of equality seems to be limited to equal treatment in law.

Addressing women’s structural disadvantage requires adoption of specific measures, including temporary special measures, the experts said. It also requires the State to effectively tackle gender-based violence against women, where certain retrogressions have been observed, such as cutting of funds to women’s rights organisations.

The experts also reported that gender equality cannot be fully achieved without respecting women's reproductive rights. In Poland, however, access to reproductive healthcare services, has become even more restrictive, and there are serious gaps in sexuality and human rights education.

The increasing attacks on gender equality efforts were another issue of concern. "While the traditional roles of women in the family are being actively promoted through laws and policies, advocates for gender equality are increasingly being characterised as 'anti-family,'" the experts said.

"The concept of 'gender ideology' is being used also to undermine and stigmatise women human rights defenders, whose space is increasingly shrinking. However, we are encouraged to see that this has also resulted in increased activism of women at the grassroots level. Women human rights defenders play a critical role in securing gender equality and their work should be fully acknowledged, supported and encouraged."

The Working Group will present its report on the visit to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2019.

The UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice was created by the Human Rights Council in 2011 to identify, promote and exchange views, in consultation with States and other actors, on good practices related to the elimination of laws that discriminate against women. The Group is also tasked with developing a dialogue with States and other actors on laws that have a discriminatory impact where women are concerned. The Working Group is comprised of five independent experts: the Current Chair: Ivana Radačić (Croatia), Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Elizabeth Broderick (Australia), Meskerem Geset Techane (Ethiopia) and Melissa Upreti (Nepal).

Source: [OHCHR](#)

Poland and Hungary attempted to erase LGBTQI people in EU Council conclusions

Actions by Poland and Hungary towards LGBTQI people prevented the full adoption of pioneering [EU Council Conclusions](#) on "Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation". The two countries torpedoed a joint statement by EU employment and social affairs ministers intended to promote gender equity in the digital era because of objections to a reference to LGBTQI, the initialism intended to cover the fullest panorama of gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning individuals.

Having failed to achieve unanimity, and facing a revolt from EU countries that said they would no longer tolerate the actions of Warsaw and Budapest, Austria adopted the text with the reference to LGBTQI included. But in EU jargon it was classified as "presidential conclusions" which do not carry the legal weight of formal Council conclusions. It was an outcome that left no one particularly happy and highlighted the widening rift on questions of fundamental values that has divided Poland and Hungary from the rest of the bloc.

Both countries are facing so-called [Article 7 disciplinary proceedings](#) for allegedly violating EU democratic norms. The European Commission is seeking to [sanction Poland](#) because of controversial changes to the country's judicial system, while the European Parliament has [brought Hungary up on charges](#) of undermining judicial independence, freedom of expression, and the rights of minorities.

The Parliament also cited public corruption and maltreatment of migrants and refugees in its case against Hungary.

The Polish and Hungarian governments have rejected those charges, and insisted that their positions largely reflect the values of their conservative societies. But repeated efforts by the two governments to water down language that would protect at-risk groups has infuriated other EU countries who see Warsaw and Budapest advocating flagrant discrimination against minorities and indefensible disregard for fundamental human rights.

Source: [Politico](#)

EuroNGOs becomes Inspire

Following to a two-year transition process, EuroNGOs, the European NGOs for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Population and Development, is changing its name to Inspire. This two-year transition resulted in a redefinition of the scope and ambition of the network.

EuroNGOs' 37 members agreed that EuroNGOs should evolve into an SRHR partnership where European organisations - civil society organisations and networks, academic networks, NGOs and foundations - that work on SRHR domestically and internationally can coordinate, strategise and take action together. The SRHR partnership would build on its original membership and would expand it to be as inclusive as possible, in terms of the kinds of organisations that can join, and the thematic and geographic scope of its work.

Inspire will continue to foster virtual and physical spaces for SRHR actors and advocates to exchange and share information and creates alliances with other members of civil society that have an interest in the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights. EuroNGOs is becoming Inspire because its partnership aims to do more than connect key actors and want to be a catalyst for action and progress for the SRHR sector. The Inspire partnership want to inspire change and progress, but also be inspired by good practices and examples around it.

In January 2019, the www.eurongos.org website will be adapted to this name change and logo change as well. For now, the website address and contact e-mails remain the same.

Source: [Inspire](#)

RESOURCES

Delivering contraceptive services in humanitarian settings - new tool for front-line health care workers

WHO has launched a new tool intended for front-line health care providers to help women initiate contraception in humanitarian and emergency settings.

According to a recent report by the UN refugee agency UNHCR, across the globe there are an estimated 68.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 25.4 million refugees. Women in these situations may find themselves at much greater risk of an unintended pregnancy. Informed family planning choices is a basic human right and allows both women and couples to take control of their reproductive health choices and more so family size, and more so during hardships and chaos. This tool is now available to download both as a PDF from this page and also as an App. It is expected that the App will be of particular and timely use to those working in humanitarian and emergency settings.

The tool, [“Contraceptive delivery tool for humanitarian settings”](#) provides guidance regarding “who” can use contraceptive methods and “how” to use these methods safely and effectively. It also includes a checklist for users on how to be reasonably certain that a woman is not pregnant, as well as a clear graphic that compares the effectiveness of different contraceptive methods. The management of missed pills is also covered and information on the provision of emergency contraception is also included. As women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence in humanitarian and emergency settings, a section has also been included on how to approach the provision of care to women who may have been subjected to it.

The information in the tool draws upon recommendations from the “Medical eligibility criteria for contraceptive use, 5th edition, 2015” and the Selected practice recommendations for contraceptive use, 3rd edition, 2016, with the exception of several adaptations pertinent to humanitarian settings.

In addition to the medical eligibility criteria, the tool draws upon recommendations from the Selected practice recommendations for contraceptive use, 3rd edition, 2016. It includes considerations for initiating a contraceptive method; a checklist on how to be reasonably certain that a woman is not pregnant; as well as information on the effectiveness of methods and the management of missed pills. It also provides some guidance on how to respond to a woman who may have been subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

New FEMM study on sexual and reproductive health rights and the implication of conscientious objection

This study was commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee. It aims to provide a comparative overview of the situation in the European Union, with particular focus on six selected Member States, in terms of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare goods (such as medicines) and

services (such as abortion and family planning), from both legal and practical perspectives. The study looks at the extent to which conscientious objection affects access to sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR). The study will contribute to formulating a clear framework for the improvement of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare goods and services in the EU.

[Access the study in PDF here](#)

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Source: [European Parliament Think Tank](#)

Revised Inter-Agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG) is pleased to share the revised Inter-Agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings. The Field Manual, which has guided the field of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in crisis settings since its first iteration in 1999, underwent a two-and-a-half-year revision process.

In addition to technical updates, the revised Field Manual now more explicitly identifies the fundamental principles that both undergird the manual and ideally serve as the foundation for all SRH work in humanitarian settings. These principles are 1) work in respectful partnership 2) advance human rights and reproductive rights 3) ensure technical, human rights, and financial accountability; and 4) share information and results. Importantly, the revised manual now includes specific examples of how to operationalize these principles in humanitarian settings.

The 2018 Field Manual includes an expanded Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) –a set of priority sexual and reproductive health interventions that are to be undertaken at the outset of an emergency, ideally within the first 48 hours. Among other changes, the revised MISP now includes an objective on preventing unintended pregnancy and the objective relating to planning for the transition to comprehensive SRH services has been further developed and includes specific reference to health system building blocks, which is intended to strengthen and expedite the transition from the MISP to comprehensive services. Finally, the 2018 MISP Objectives are accompanied by an additional note on the importance of ensuring that safe abortion care, to the full extent of the law, is available in health centers and facilities.

Another significant change is the inclusion of a new logistics chapter. This chapter maps the key stakeholders and processes that are essential to effective SRH supply chains; provides recommendations on transitioning from emergency to ongoing supply chains; outlines key steps including forecasting, procurement, transportation, and last-mile distribution; and identifies staff

roles and responsibilities for effective supply chain management. The inclusion of this chapter responds directly to feedback from users in the field.

The 2018 Field Manual is the result of a collaborative process that included hundreds of individuals from dozens of agencies and organizations working in humanitarian settings at global, regional, and local levels. The end-users of this manual - SRH coordinators and health program managers - were consulted as a first step in the process and were kept in mind throughout the development of this resource. It was intended to provide technical updates, clarity, and support, and to highlight challenges and key considerations. Nuances of language, attention to inclusivity, feasibility in a variety of resource-constrained settings, and even the graphic design, have been considered at length, always with an eye toward clarity, conciseness, and usability at the field-level. While there are many issues that are decidedly not black and white – as is the nature of the complex settings where we work – IAWG has endeavored to produce a manual that will be above all a useful resource to our colleagues on the front lines.

The revised Field Manual is available [here](#)

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The Guidelines by Women Enabled International and the United Nations Population Fund offer practical and concrete guidance on the provision of inclusive and accessible services related to gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women and young persons with disabilities. With over sixty examples of good practices and input from experts from around the world, the Guidelines bring together in one document resources on how to provide quality GBV and SRHR services to both women and young persons with and without disabilities. While the primary audience is GBV- and SRHR-related service providers, the guidelines are a valuable resource for all stakeholders – including those in government, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations – involved in designing, developing, implementing or advocating for services for people with disabilities. The recommendations are aimed at all settings, including low-, middle- and high-resource settings, as well as humanitarian emergency settings.

They make recommendations such as: “The essential principle that should guide all quality rights-based services for women and young persons with disabilities is: When in doubt, ask the person with the disability. In fact, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires such consultation in the development and implementation of legislation and policies... [as] Women and young persons with disabilities are the experts on their own needs, the barriers they experience, and the accommodations they require for equal access to services.”

[Access the publication here](#)

Source: [Women Enabled](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

CREA reConference 2019

In 2011, more than 300 feminists, artists, activists, allies and policy makers came together at [CREA's](#) landmark Count Me In! conference to address violence against marginalized women. Over three days, Count Me In! surfaced the myriad of issues facing trans and lesbian women, women with disabilities, and sex workers in South Asia. Eight years later, against the backdrop of a rapidly-changing socio-political landscape, CREA is proud to announce its second global conference - reconference.

The 2019 reconference will take place in Kathmandu, Nepal on April 10-12. It will address today's most challenging socio-political issues and their intersections with feminism, art and technology. A global gathering over three days, reconference is a commitment to building inclusive feminist visions of justice. Among themes to be found at the event are abortion, disability, sex work and environmental justice.

Last date to apply is 11th January 2019, selected applications will be announced on 25 January 2019.

[Apply here](#)

CREA expands sexual and reproductive freedoms and advances human rights of all women, girls and trans people. Founded in 2000, CREA is a feminist human rights organization based in the Global South and led by Southern feminists that works at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels.

Source: <https://reconference.creaworld.org>

UN Commission on the Status of Women 2019

The 2019 CSW will take place from 11th to 22nd March 2019 with the priority theme of *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. Full information about NGO participation can be found [here](#).

- CSW63 registration for NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will be open online via the United Nations Indico registration system from 9 October 2018 to 27 January 2019.
- Sign up for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC to express interest in delivering an oral statement during the general discussion will be open online from 24 January to 18 February 2019. The link to the sign-up form will be posted [here](#) on 24 January 2019.
- Sign up for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC wishing to express interest in intervening from the floor during an interactive panel will be open online from 24 January until 18 February 2019. The link to the sign-up form will be posted [here](#) on 24 January 2019.

Commission on Population and Development fifty-second session

52nd session of the UN CPD will take place on April 1-5, 2019 in New York with the theme of *Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The appointed Chairperson is H.E. Mr. Courtenay Rattray, designate (Jamaica) - Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) and Vice-Chairpersons are as follows: Ms. Yuliana Angelova (Bulgaria) - Eastern-European Group; Mr. René Lauer (Luxembourg) - Western European and Others Group (WEOG); Mr. Saidu Nallo, designate (Sierra Leone) - African Group; TBD () - Asia-Pacific Group.

Information for NGOs is available [here](#).

Source: [UN](#)

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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