



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

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## **CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights No 05 (184) 2019**

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### **BURNING ISSUE**

#### **World Congress of Families took place in Verona, Italy**

On the 29th – 31st of March, the World Congress of Families took place in Verona, a city in Northern Italy. WFC is a US coalition that focuses on Christian and far-right values – this year they collaborated with the Italian government, among other formal and informal involved parties. This global gathering of right-wing extremists has a clear agenda of ‘restoring the natural order’ which includes forcing women through pregnancies, banning contraception care, bullying people to remain married, and attacking LGBTQIA+ rights. One of the speakers was Matteo Salvini, Italy’s deputy prime minister and leader of a political party called League – a far-right partner in the country’s coalition government.

In his speech, Salvini pledged not to change Italy’s abortion law, known as Law 194. He also stressed that the country needs to reverse its problem of shrinking population: “Italians need to start bringing children into the world. A country that doesn’t make babies is a country that dies.”

The self-declared goal of the congress was to “restore the natural order”. Speakers openly condemned women’s rights activists to whom the speakers referred as “radical feminists”. They also strongly opposed abortion, which was named “murder” and “a crime”, as well as same-sex relationships.

The Five Star Movement (M5S), the League’s coalition partner, officially distanced itself from the Congress, although one of its senators, Tiziana Drago, rebelled and spoke at the event despite a party order.

Outside the Gran Guardia Palace, where the event was held an estimated 20,000 protesters gathered. The crowd consisted mostly of activists and members of womens rights and LGBTQIA+ organisations, including activists from Poland, Croatia and other Eastern-European countries.

Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

## REGIONAL UPDATES

### **Birthrate, family and country: Viktor Orban wants women back in the home**

When it comes to power, what does the far right do to women? In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s racist, nationalist, extremist discourse goes hand in hand with the desire to keep women pregnant. In Poland, where the ultra-conservative Law and Justice party has been in power since 2015, the government is tirelessly trying, with the support of the Catholic Church, to prevent women from having access to abortion and contraception. “In these two countries, the role of women as individuals is slowly disappearing from public policies and being replaced by ‘the family’,” warns Andrea Pető, professor at the Central European University of Budapest.

“The Hungarian government is using two topics to campaign: its anti-immigration stance and the family,” says Dóra Papp, an activist and director of the petitions platform of aHang (The Voice). Last year, the government declared that 2018 would be the “year of families”.

Source: [International Campaign for Womens Right to Safe Abortion](#)

### **Improving contraceptive care in Tajikistan**

Young people are often denied care in societies where sex is taboo and parents can control their children’s access to medical providers. These challenges are amplified in conservative contexts where women and girls are made to feel uncomfortable when talking about contraception. The Tajikistan Family Planning Association (TFPA) has pioneered a phone application - [available free of charge](#) - that allows young people to gain crucial knowledge about modern contraception and sexually transmitted infections/HIV and connects them with health care providers. Through its innovative app, TFPA has created a safe space for young people to access stigma-free care, and to explore methods of sexual and reproductive self-care. This app has changed attitudes towards people living with STIs/HIV and inspired young people to have open and honest conversations about sexual and reproductive health care with their peers.

Source: [IPPF](#)

## FROM ASTRA MEMBERS

### **A new projects fighting human trafficking in Kazakhstan**

On April 1, 2019, NGO “Sana Sezim” launched the Project “Together against human trafficking through capacity building of CSOs!” funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The 36-month Project aims to expand access to justice for trafficking victims (namely, victims of sexual exploitation) by building the institutional capacity of civil society organizations and the judicial system to combat trafficking in persons in Kazakhstan. In this connection, a network of organizations from 11 regions (Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Aktobe, Aktau, Kyzylorda, Kostanay, Karaganda, Petropavlovsk, Shymkent, Taraz, Ust-Kamenogorsk) was created, which will conduct information campaigns, as well as provide legal and social assistance to victims of human trafficking (11 lawyers will work).

Within the framework of the Project, trainings are planned for representatives of public organizations/lawyers in Shymkent, summer camps for volunteers from 11 regions of Kazakhstan, the release of information material (guidelines for state bodies, NGOs, booklets, journals), as well as analysis of legislation on human trafficking and development of recommendations for the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan are planned.

We will inform you about further implementation of the project.

Source: [Sana Sezim](#)

### **Inclusion of migrant women through socio-labour interventions**

The project "No Gaps - Transnational methodology for socio-labor intervention with young women asylum seekers and refugees" (2018-2-ESO2-KA205-011654) is an important opportunity to improve the lives of migrant women in the EU through socio-labour interventions. The main objective of the project is to create, through a transnational strategic partnership, an integral and replicable methodology of intervention for professionals working with young migrant women, asylum-seekers and refugees. The partners are working to design a training curriculum defining and developing the knowledge, skills and competences needed so that the professionals in the field can implement strategies for migrant womens empowerment. This methodology will focus on techniques that inform women how to protect their rights and how to be competitive on the labour market.

An innovative database with good practices at national and European level is also being designed. The database will allow professionals to track the latest tendencies and/or projects when it comes to working on migrant issues, with focus on women and girls.

The project is funded under the Erasmus+ program. The partnership consortium consists of five EU organizations – Guarani NGO (ES), Solidaridad sin Fronteras (ES), KEK IEKEP (GR), BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH (AT), Gender Alternatives Foundation (BG).

Source: [Gender Alternatives Foundation](#)

### **News from Armenia**

In the framework of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Program, the Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights Advocacy Network is active since 2017, with the goal of

promoting the reproductive health and rights of women in different groups. A group of experts and human rights activists representing women's reproductive health and rights issues and needs in different groups. The group is currently working on a training manual for healthcare providers that will provide obstetrician-gynecologists and therapists with the appropriate knowledge in order to develop sensitive approach while providing services to different groups of women.

Source: [Women's Resource Center](#)

### **Access to sexual education obstructed in Georgia**

On March 26, 2019 Parliament of Georgia approved the amendments in the Code on the Rights of the Child on the parliament joint committees first hearing. The Bill worked out by 21 MPs was introduced by Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee. According to the adopted version of the code, sexual education in public schools is accessible for children only with the consent from parents. Association HERA XXI considers that proposed amendments deteriorate internationally recognized standards of Children Rights. In order to advocate accessible sexual education in Public Schools of Georgia, Association HERA XXI prepared the statement and disseminated recommendation for the parliament. HERA XXI reflected positions of international organizations such as a deep regarding absence of sexual and reproductive health education in public schools of Georgia expressed by Committee on the Rights of Child. The statement highlights the fact that Georgian legislative system does not regulate the field of sexual and reproductive health education with the specific organic law. For the above mentioned reasons, association HERA XXI considers that it is of a preeminent importance to harmonize the Code on the Rights of the Child with internationally recognized standards, as well as work out separate organic law on Sexuality Education. Within these regards, Association closely collaborated with national Coalition for Children and Youth as well.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

## **RESOURCES**

### **A new annual report from Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters**

Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters, an international journal covering topics linked to SRHR, has published a new annual report. This year's document is a celebratory one – it is SRHM's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of existence.

Quoting the report:

*A decision was taken that from 2019, Reproductive Health Matters (RHM) would become Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters (SRHM), continuing to build on 25 years of evidence, gender-equality and rightsbased research, policy, political analysis and advocacy on SRHR. Our name represents our vision: a world in which sexual and reproductive health and rights are recognized as fundamental human rights and matters of social justice; and in which the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of people are fully respected, protected and fulfilled, regardless of age, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, geographical residence, race, colour, language, social status or other social, political or personal attributes. Giving visibility to "sexual" in the name of our journal and*

*organisation is a political act, emphasising the comprehensive meaning of SRHR as an integral part of a global health, development and human rights agenda. We do it consciously and deliberately, in recognition of the fragility of the gains made in this area, and the urgent and ongoing need to continue to recognise and advance those rights. Reproductive Health Matters has covered a huge range of topics over the 25 years of its existence; it has focused on topics such as contraception, abortion, maternal health, infertility, sexual health, HIV, women's health policies, adolescents' SRHR, disability, criminalisation, health systems, privatisation and integration of services, male circumcision, cosmetic surgery, and many more. As early as 1998, RHM focused an entire journal issue on "Sexuality", and looking through that issue twenty years later, it is striking how all the papers are still entirely relevant in 2019.*

The document can be accessed [online](#).

### **A new annual report from European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights**

A new annual report from ECCHR was published under the title "Enforcing human rights through legal means". It is a perfect source if you are looking for informations about working for human rights in politically challenging environment.

The report states:

*It is not easy to be confronted on a daily basis with the problems and the violence in our world and not to despair. There are indeed many setbacks. Apart from the states that have been violating human rights for a long time – like Russia, China, Turkey or the Philippines – now European states are flagrantly violating the rights of those most vulnerable, the migrants, those who are trying to escape from war and unbearable economic situations in their home regions. (...) But in any case, human rights are much too important to simply leave to lawyers. They concern all of us – in the best Kantian sense that human rights violations committed in other places against other people should be felt here by us. And also in the best Marxian sense that there needs to be a new "Internationale" that fights for human rights. (...) In order to be able to undertake meaningful work in these times, we of course still need material support and other kinds of assistance and we thank all of those who fund or support us in one way or another. We call on everyone not to feel like mere observers, but to actively join the fight.*

The document can be accessed via [ECCHR's website](#).

### **All about power – a publication from CREA's reconference**

In the beginning of April, a conference held by CREA took place in Kathmandu, Nepal. The event managed to bring together topics of abortion, gender equality, environmental justice, sex work, sports, disability and more. The final outcome of the conference has been summed up in a recently published activist handbook. "All about power", as it is called, is a booklet about power, it's understanding and importance in working for sustainable development. Over 50 pages written for and by activists. The publication can be found [here](#).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **New online course for Russian speakers**

On 15 May a new online course "Sustainable Development Goals for NGOs" will be launched. The course, designed as a 3-week long training on sustainable development for representatives of NGOs, civil society activists and all those who wish to discover together what the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are. To find out how all of the above will be useful in the work and promotion of civil society organizations click on the link below (informations available in Russian only):

[https://www.openshkola.org/feed/new\\_sdg\\_mooc](https://www.openshkola.org/feed/new_sdg_mooc)

### **Women Deliver Global Conference in Vancouver, Canada**

This year's Women Deliver Global Conference is almost here. The conference on gender equality and womens rights will be held in Vancouver, Canada on **3-6 June 2019**. The organisers have prepared the possibility to take part virtually, if one cannot come to Canada.

There are many amazing workshops planned for the conference. If you wish to know more about midwifery, mental health, self-managed abortion, male engagement in family planning and reproductive health and much more – go to the conference's [website](#).

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 - Novgorod 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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