



April 09, 2020

### **Letter of Solidarity with Polish people**

*ASTRA, Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, stands in solidarity with Polish people that are currently facing a possibility of introducing both a total ban on abortion and criminalisation of comprehensive sexuality education in the country. We are already concerned with the state of reproductive and sexual health and rights in Poland and the civic draft bills to be discussed in Polish Sejm next week might worsen the situation on an unprecedented scale. We are also deeply concerned about Polish Government's decision to discuss both bills during COVID-19 outbreak what deprives citizens of opportunity to publicly demonstrate their disagreement for introduction of the bans.*

Earlier this week, we have learned of Polish Government's plans to discuss two civic draft bills that would introduce a total ban on abortion and criminalise sexuality education. Given that the country already has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe and the worst access to contraception among European countries, as well as does not include sexuality education in the obligatory school curricula, the news signal the radical fundamentalists growth in power in Poland.

We say no to such blatant violations of human rights. Forcing pregnant persons to carry a malformed fetus to term is internationally recognised as torture and denial of medical care violates numerous international acts and legal sentences. Stripping youth from access to comprehensive sexuality education is a proof of ignorance regarding its role in lowering the rate of sexually transmitted diseases and of teenage pregnancy, as well as reducing sexual and gender-based violence.

We are deeply concerned with the development of the situation and urge Polish Parliament to dismiss the bills. It is high time for Polish authorities to recognise Polish citizens right to self-agency over their bodies and provide full access to high-quality education, especially given numerous protests regarding reproductive care services since the widely-known Black Protest in 2016.

We would also like to express full support for our Polish member organisations in this challenging time – Federation for Women and Family Planning and PONTON Group of Sex Educators – who are fighting relentlessly to stop the bans.

Polish people will never stand alone. The international community is by your side.

In solidarity,

ASTRA Network

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; BOCS Foundation; 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; Poland – PONTON Group of Sex Educators; 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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