



## Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

### CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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### **BURNING ISSUE**

#### **ICPD + 20 Process in European region ended with a strong reaffirmation of Cairo principles**

The Regional [UNECE](#) Conference: **Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century** on 1-2 July in Geneva, Switzerland concluded after a two day review of the achievements and remaining challenges of the ICPD Programme of Action Europe, Central Asia and North America. Discussions were oriented around the [UNECE Regional Report](#) which is based on the results from the Global Survey. The Conference was organized under three themes of Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development; Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the life course and Inequalities and Social Inclusion and Rights.

Over 40 civil society participants attended the conference and they also had an opportunity to apply for an intervention (for a full list of interventions click [here](#)). ASTRA Network Coordinator made an [intervention](#) on behalf of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, Polish member of ASTRA

serving as its Secretariat, on the discussion topic on “Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the life course”. She stated strongly that the current developments in Central and Eastern Europe are not in alignment with the ICPD PoA and several countries have made attempts, some even successful, to restrict access to safe and legal abortion.

The outcome document reflects the core issues of ICPD PoA but also underlines that the region has significantly changed over the past 20 years. It includes recognition that “policies in both low and high fertility countries should be based on the right of individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have the information and means to do so”. Low fertility and aging of the society is not considered to be a threat but a possibility and small populations can live prosperous, long and healthy lives. There was a strong support for human rights approach to sexual and reproductive health and participants called for “removal of all barriers preventing women and girls from access to safe abortion” as well as enable access to comprehensive sexuality education and youth friendly services. HIV and STI treatment and prevention should be part of health systems and, especially in Eastern Europe, needs more attention and funding. The outcome document also recognized criminalization of sex work as a public threat.

“There are three main messages coming out of the conference: the ICPD agenda is unfinished business in the region, there are new population dynamics that need to be addressed, and the principles developed in Cairo two decades ago remain highly relevant to tackle these challenges” said Werner Haug, UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

All conference all documentation, including the Chair's Summary, is available here: <http://eeca.unfpa.org/public/pid/14559>

Photos from the conference: [www.flickr.com/photos/98046700@N04/sets/72157634424409488](http://www.flickr.com/photos/98046700@N04/sets/72157634424409488)

Webcast with all sessions: <http://duniamedia.ch/icpd>

### **Civil Society meeting after the UNECE Regional Conference**

On 3-4 July ASTRA had the pleasure to co-host a Civil Society meeting “**ICPD Beyond 2014 – From Promise to Action, CSOs Defining the Way Forward**” which was organized by IPPF European Network in Geneva following the UNECE Regional Conference. European Women’s Lobby, a regional network, was the other co-host of this meeting. This collaboration across the region reinforced the ICPD Beyond 2014 process and the engagement of civil society within it. It was also an opportunity to provide space for dialogue and action for the CSO on how to advance the ICPD PoA and related issues in the region following the Review, and define strategies to address these challenges and priorities in the upcoming global discussions, such as the ICPD Beyond 2014 and post-2015 negotiations. The meeting gathered 70 participants from civil society organizations working in various themes such as Human Rights, HIV/AIDS, Sex work, youth organizations, SRHR amongst others from both national and regional level to broaden the level of support and strengthen advocacy power within the region. The meeting was organized around plenary sessions and working group sessions. Several ASTRA members were present at this meeting and brought their expertise and experience into the discussions and ensured that the unique reality of Central and Eastern Europe remains visible within the European region and within the ICPD+20 process.

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl), [www.ippfen.org](http://www.ippfen.org)

## REGIONAL UPDATES

### **Draft bill banning abortion in case of fetal malformation is back in the Polish Parliament**

Civic bill proposing to ban abortion in case of fetal malformation has made its way back to the Polish Parliament. The civic bill collected over 400 000 signatures of support. The Parliament will now have 90 days to work on the draft legislative bill proposed by the "Stop Abortion" civic initiative. The future developments are difficult to assess as two years ago the draft bill banning abortion totally was not rejected in the first reading but in the second and with slight difference in voting. The restrictive legislature has many supporters in the conservative wing of the ruling party, the Civic Platform. The current law allows abortion in three cases only; in case of rape/incest, in case of a threat to the woman's health and in cases of fetal malformation. According to official numbers from the Ministry of Health there were 669 abortion and none resulting from or any other crime in year 2011. This figure, in a country of over 38 million inhabitants, illustrates how difficult it is to access a legal abortion in practice. The Polish Government constantly ignores the harmful effects of current legislation. According to results of a study conducted by a Polish public opinion research institute, at least one-quarter, possibly up to one-third of women in Poland, have had an abortion at least once. This adds up to 4,1 million to 5,8 million women who undergo illegal abortions or travel abroad.

Source: [www.federa.org.pl/english/1201-bill-on-total-abortion-is-back-in-the-polish-parliament](http://www.federa.org.pl/english/1201-bill-on-total-abortion-is-back-in-the-polish-parliament)

### **PACE condemns the new law on abortion in Macedonia**

On 27 June, 20 Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe tabled a Written Declaration "The new Abortion Law of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia violates international standards" where they expressed grave concern about this recent legislative development. They criticized the urgency of the procedure as well as failure of the law to correspond to any international or European standards. Finally Members urged Macedonian authorities to "ensure that international standards based on sound science, medicine and human rights serve as primary guidance in this area of legislation".

[Read PACE's statement online.](#)

Source: [www.epfweb.org](http://www.epfweb.org)

### **Baltic Pride marched in Vilnius for the first time**

On July 27th the [Baltic Pride](#) took place in Vilnius and marched on the city's main avenue despite the mayor's repeated attempts to seal it off in a distant street. Despite minor incidents, the Pride was less controversial than the very first one which was held in 2010. Several Members of the European Parliament, including Ulrike Lunacek, Sophie in 't Veld and Cecilia Wikström attended this event.

Source: [www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/successful-baltic-pride-marches-in-vilnius-city-centre-for-first-time](http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/successful-baltic-pride-marches-in-vilnius-city-centre-for-first-time)

## **Hate speech against women's rights groups in Armenia**

Following the adoption of the law number 57 on "Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women" by the Armenian Parliament in May 2013, a heated debate started around the concept of "gender" and "equality" and various women's rights groups and organizations are under attack. Read the statement from [Women's Resource Center](#) online.

Source: [AWID, Witch hunt on women's rights activists in Armenia](#)

## **EP DEVE Committee in favor of SRHR in development policy**

Early in July Members of the European Parliament's Development Committee were called to vote on an opinion on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for the [Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality \(FEMM\)](#). The vote passed with a three-quarter majority. The opinion was authored by a British Member of the European Parliament Michael Cashman who stated that "Today's vote is an affirmation of where the parliament stands and its support for a really progressive set of policies". The opinion insists on the fact that universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is a fundamental human right, urges the European Commission to maintain SRHR in the development priorities of the EU and calls for a specific line on SRHR under the Development Cooperation Instrument thematic lines, as well as sufficient funding for the broad SRHR agenda in all appropriate instruments. Moreover it urges the EU to ensure that population dynamics and inclusive and sustainable development linkages, and SRHR are a priority in shaping the post-2015 global development framework and calls on the Member States to ensure the integration of the ICPD+20, Beijing+20 and Rio+20 processes within the post-2015 framework. It also calls on the EU and its Member States to keep their commitments to the full and effective implementation of the ICPD PoA and the outcomes of their review conferences. This opinion will be voted in the FEMM committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September and in the plenary in October together with the draft report, which covers contraception, unwanted pregnancies and abortion, sexuality education, violence, maternal mortality, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and official development assistance.

To download the text of the opinion click [here](#).

Read the article "Michael Cashman: Take a 'blitzkrieg' approach to SRHR" [here](#).

FEMM Draft Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights – click [here](#).

Source: [EuroNGOs](#), [FEMM](#)

## **European Institute for Gender Equality Institute (EIGE) launches European Network on Gender Equality (EuroGender).**

EuroGender was established following up on EIGE's mission to become the European knowledge centre on gender equality issues, by making available to its key partners access to data, knowledge, expertise and tools from the selected areas of gender equality. EuroGender seeks to serve as

interactive space for sharing information about upcoming events, disseminating resources and engaging in debates. Apart from posting updates and finding most recent information on gender equality related topics posted by experts from all over the world, the platform will also enable to organize online discussions that will allow building relationship with stakeholders via online interaction and get their perspective on respective topics. The list of 7 online discussions planned for Fall 2013 is available [here](#). The official launch of the platform is planned to October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Source: <http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu>

## GLOBAL UPDATES

### ICPD Conference on Human Rights

[The ICPD International Conference on Human Rights](#) took place in Noordwijk in the Netherlands on July 7-10 and gathered a group of 300 representatives of government, parliaments and civil society groups from 130 countries. This three day conference was designed to identify achievements, barriers and best practices in relation to achieving the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action. Hosted by the Government of the Netherlands and delivered in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the event was the second thematic conference after the [Bali Global Youth Forum](#) held in December last year. Conference sessions were structured around themes including women's autonomy and reproductive rights, sexual health and well-being and human rights and gender-based discrimination and violence. Among the key speakers one could find Nafis Sadik, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General and His Special Envoy for HIV/Aids in Asia, who boldly underlined in her speech that the ICPD PoA consensus does not address the rights of the woman who needs an abortion where it is not legal and that "illegal abortion is unsafe almost by definition".

In the closing session Chair of the conference, Marijke Wijnroks shared reflections, key messages and recommendations that emerged from various discussion throughout the event. She highlighted gains that had been made in reducing maternal mortality; increasing girls' access to education; improving access to contraception; and the introduction of laws to outlaw child marriage and expand access to safe abortion. Achieving gender equality, elimination of violence against women including sexual violence, empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups along with the engagement of men and boys to fight for equality and end violence, were highlighted as key issues that had been woven through discussions. Strong message came from the delegates who claimed that rights related to sexuality and reproduction are universal human rights regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, religion, political, other opinion, or any other status. Access to information, education and participation free from violence was emphasized as foundational to the exercise of rights and the role of NGOs, human rights defenders and service providers in supporting this access was picked up as requiring protection and support. The Chair stated that culture, religion or tradition could not be used as a justification for human rights violations. Serious barriers in access to comprehensive sexuality education and to sexual and reproductive health services, in particular adolescents, were highlighted and "grave

concerns were voiced about discrimination, violence and human rights violations against LGBTQI individuals. Calls were raised to treat all human beings with respect”.

One of the identified facilitators in progress towards the goals of ICPD and the achievement of universal human rights was accountability. The role of existing international agreements, court judgements and human rights frameworks and the potential of partnership with Parliamentarians were also identified as important facilitators in changing policy.

The final outcome document of the conference is yet to come. Findings of the discussions will inform the UN Secretary-General’s report to the 47th Commission on Population and Development in April 2014 and the General Assembly special session later that year.

As a key follow-up to the Conference, [The Hague Civil Society Call to Action on Human Rights and ICPD Beyond 2014](#) was developed by conference participants.

[Read news release from conference](#)

[Background papers that set out the purpose and focus of the ICPD International Conference on Human Rights](#)

[Read reflections from the conference by ASTRA Youth](#)

Source: [ASTRA Network](#), [www.icpdbeyond2014.com](http://www.icpdbeyond2014.com), <http://humanrights.icpdbeyond2014.org>

### **Montevideo Consensus Urges Countries to Change Abortion Laws**

The Regional Population Conference took place in the Latin America and Caribbean region within the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review Process on August 12-15 and ended with a strong affirmation for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The [Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development](#) calls on “states to consider amending their laws, regulations, strategies and public policies relating to the voluntary termination of pregnancy in order to protect the lives and health of women and adolescent girls, to improve their quality of life and to reduce the number of abortions”. It also recognizes that reproductive rights and sexual rights are separate concepts and thus enables the ICPD Programme of Action agenda to move beyond its initial frames. Moreover it underlines that “a secular state is one of the elements fundamental to the full exercise of human rights”.

Source: [www.ipsnews.net/2013/08/montevideo-consensus-urges-states-to-change-abortion-laws](http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/08/montevideo-consensus-urges-states-to-change-abortion-laws)

## **Youth**

### **Youth voices in the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review Process**

**UNECE Youth Call to Action** was developed at the Regional Youth Forum for UNECE region in Istanbul, which took place in Istanbul, on May 30-31<sup>st</sup> 2013. The document reaffirms and builds upon the Bali Declaration and identifies the new and emerging issues that young people from the UNECE region face in relation to advancing the ICPD Programme of Action. UNECE Youth Call to Action calls

for the full integration of a rights-based approach to the ICPD Beyond 2014 and Post-2015 Development Agendas. Full text is available [here](#).

The document was presented at the **UNECE Regional Conference** “Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century” held in Geneva, on July 1-2<sup>nd</sup> 2013, in which there were 15 youth delegates chosen from participants of the Regional Youth Forum for UNECE region held earlier in Istanbul. ASTRA Youth representatives were selected and represented the voice of the region’s young people, ASTRA Youth had also the possibility to have an [intervention](#) in the session on Inequalities and Social Inclusion and Rights. The youth delegation was given dedicated time in order to present the outcomes of the Regional Youth Forum, along with the input gathered from the online platform and the national consultations. Youth representatives also delivered strong and inspiring interventions at the plenary sessions. They can be watched online [here](#).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Consideration of the Universal Periodic Review** will take place on September 20<sup>th</sup> for Russia and Azerbaijan at the 24<sup>th</sup> UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Federation for Women and Family Planning will speak on behalf of ASTRA Network and Sexual Rights Initiative.

Two side events are planned for the time of the HRC session:

September 10<sup>th</sup> - *Maternal Mortality: Implementation and Accountability*  
Date and venue: 13h00-15h00, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room XXIV

September 17<sup>th</sup> - *Decriminalization of abortion*  
Date and venue: 10h00-12h00, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room XXI

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl), [www.acpd.ca](http://www.acpd.ca)

The **ICPD Beyond 2014 Expert Meeting on Women's Health - Rights, Empowerment and Social Determinants** will be held in Mexico City from 30th September to 2nd October.

Source: [www.ngosbeyond2014.org](http://www.ngosbeyond2014.org), [www.icpdbeyond2014.com/key-events](http://www.icpdbeyond2014.com/key-events)

**Post 2015 UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs.** Negotiations for the Outcome Document for the UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs continue. The process for NGO/CSO participation in the Special Event is now closed and the CSO consultation will be held on 22 September. The [Special Event towards achieving the MDGs](#) will be held on 25 September 2013. It will be broadcasted live and archived on video at <http://webtv.un.org>.

Source: [www.ngosbeyond2014.org](http://www.ngosbeyond2014.org)

**Regional UNECE meeting on Post-2015 Development Agenda** organized by UNECE, UNDP and the Government of Turkey entitled *"Inclusive and Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Europe and Central Asia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda"* will take place in Istanbul, on 6-8 November 2013. The main objective of this event is to provide a discussion platform with participation of representatives from different countries and institutions to identify regional priorities for the post-2015 UN development agenda and discuss how these priorities can become part of a coherent global framework. The event also aims to review regional experiences and lessons learned from the MDGs and ways to improve regional cooperation among countries and development actors, strengthen inclusive development throughout the region, enhance UN system support to Member States, and create new partnerships.

To register click [here](#) and to access the draft programme click [here](#).

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

## **Call for Action**

### **Medical abortion in Hungary.**

ASTRA member organisation from Hungary, [PATENT Association of People Challenging Patriarchy](#), has produced a film about medical abortion. The abortion pill is no longer available as of September 2012 and the pro-choice activists are currently advocating for its reinstatement. Watch the film [HERE](#) (to see English subtitles click on "captions") and sign the online petition [HERE](#).

### **September 28: CALL FOR ACTION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE!**

September 28 Day of Action, NGOs, international organizations, individuals and other stakeholders from all over world mobilize on or around this day and prepare actions that call to end the stigma against abortion and demand for women's right to control their bodies without putting their lives, health and freedom at risk. International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion provides an opportunity to make our voices heard and unite activists under one goal and one mission. The Central and Eastern European region is currently experiencing further attempts to restrict access to abortion. The recent months have proven that we cannot take what we have for granted and the strong pro-natalist voices are starting to influence more and more countries and their legislation on abortion (Macedonia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia). The CEE region has long been silent and time has come to make ourselves visible and heard. This call to action is aimed at ALL activists from Central and Eastern Europe region, as well Central Asia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, who believe that woman's right to a free choice – the right to abortion – is a human right and must be respected, protected and granted.

As one of the regional inputs ASTRA proposes the idea to develop common messages which can be unique to our region and address the developments of the past months. If you would like to



contribute or/and already have a few ideas in mind please write to ASTRA Network at [federa@astra.org.pl](mailto:federa@astra.org.pl).

Last year's campaign had action and activities in 51 countries around the world and this year's aim is for more than 75 countries, because the power is in numbers. You will also hear about the 28 September Day of Action from many other international networks, as we are all working in coordination to make the International Campaign more powerful, particularly taking into consideration, including in Europe, the recent attacks on abortion legislation.

To make things more easily do-able, there is a suggested a number of activities one could conduct on/around September 28 and a number of networks have advanced slogans you could incorporate in your planned activities. Groups all over the world decide on their own activities and slogans and we, too, should come up with our own events as part of this movement. Whatever you do, please make sure you send details to the International Campaign [[safeabortionwomensright@icma.md](mailto:safeabortionwomensright@icma.md)] to post on the listserve to and thus expand the circle of activists and examples of visible activities.

For more information visit the Campaign's official website here: [www.safeabortionwomensright.org](http://www.safeabortionwomensright.org)  
Endorse the Campaign here: [www.safeabortionwomensright.org/stay-connected](http://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/stay-connected)

[Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights](#) runs the [www.september28.org](http://www.september28.org) campaign website which collects actions and voices of support for the September 28 Global Day of Action. All activists are invited to participate in the [virtual mural](#) as well submit their activities and actions to the virtual database. Join the WGNRR event for September 28 on [Facebook](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES**

The latest issue of the European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health [ENTRE NOUS](#) includes an article by Krystyna Kacpura, Executive Director of the [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#), serving as ASTRA Secretariat (pages 18-19). The article discusses the expert position of ASTRA as the premier network on women's SRHR in the Central and Eastern Europe region.

Johanna Westeson from the [Center for Reproductive Rights](#) authored a column in the International Journal on Gynecology and Obstetrics on the approach of the European Court of Human Rights to abortion, in its recent decisions ABC v Ireland, RR v Poland, and P&S v Poland. You can access the article [ONLINE](#).

The World Health Organisation released its [2013 Update on Priority Medicines for Europe and the World](#). The report, produced with the financial assistance of the European Union, identifies priorities for medicines development for 2014 to 2020. It recommends strengthening the capacity of women but also doctors and pharmacists to take informed decisions, especially in relation to contraception (including emergency contraception) and improving knowledge and attitudes towards contraception.

ASTRA Network members: Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association, Armenia - Women's Rights Center, Armenia - Society Without Violence, Armenia - Women's Resource 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, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), Croatia - CESI - Center for Education and Counseling of Woman, Croatia - Women's Room, Georgia - Women's Center, Georgia – Hera XXI, 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 – Shelter Center, Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women, Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Center, Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning, Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - A.L.E.G., Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health, Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis, Russia - Novogorod Gender Center, Slovakia – Pro Choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation, Uzbekistan – Future Generation.

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