



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

No 08-09 (156) 2016

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BURNING ISSUE

Nils Muižnieks: We must redouble our efforts to protect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Nils Muižnieks, has published a [Human Rights Comment on the need to protect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights](#), highlighting that access to sexual and reproductive rights is a precondition for the realisation of other human rights, including in the fields of education and employment. The [Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec\(2007\)17 on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#) calls on the governments of member states to take or reinforce the necessary measures to implement gender equality in practice, taking fully into account a number of principles and standards also in the field of "Health, including sexual and reproductive matters" (see paragraphs 41 to 45 of this Recommendation).

Mr. Muižnieks underlines in his statement that “access to sexual and reproductive rights is a precondition for the realisation of other human rights, including in the fields of education and employment. At the same time, impediments in access to sexual and reproductive health services are the result of violations of other human rights, not least the long-standing discrimination and harmful gender stereotyping against women that still need to be fully eradicated in Europe. I have expressed concern at the development in recent years of regressive trends and attempts to exert control over women’s bodies and sexuality which could further hamper women’s access to these rights and endanger progress achieved so far in the field of gender equality.”

In his statement, Mr. Muižnieks shows to the pivotal role of access to sexuality education for all boys and girls in schools as essential tool to guarantee women’s sexual and reproductive rights and as a full component of the rights to education and to health. He calls on CoE Member States to remove barriers in access to contraception, ensure women’s rights, dignity and autonomy in maternity health care and the urgent need to ensure access to safe and legal abortion. He expresses concern at a bill prepared in Poland introducing a total ban on abortion except to save a pregnant woman’s life and stressed that highly restrictive abortion laws are not associated with lower abortion rates. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also recently [recalled](#) that “the lawfulness of abortion does not have an effect on a woman’s need for an abortion, but only on her access to a safe abortion”.

The way forward in enhancing women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights

All member states of the Council of Europe should take the necessary steps to ensure women full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights including the following measures:

- States should ensure that sexual and reproductive health services, goods and facilities are available to all women throughout the country, physically and economically accessible, culturally appropriate, and of good quality in line with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [General Comment](#) No. 22 (2016) on the Right to sexual and reproductive health;
- All women, including adolescent girls, should have access to sexual and reproductive health information that is evidenced-based, non-discriminatory, and respectful of their dignity and autonomy. Mandatory, comprehensive sexuality education that is age-appropriate, evidence-based, scientifically accurate and non-judgmental should be taught in all schools;
- States should take all necessary measures to remove barriers in access to contraception for all women; giving them access to modern contraceptives, including emergency contraception and making them affordable by covering their costs under public health insurance mechanisms;
- States should put in place adequate safeguards, including oversight procedures and mechanisms, to ensure that women have access to appropriate and safe child birth procedures which are in line with adequate standards of care, respect women’s autonomy and the requirement of free, prior and informed consent;
- Where it is not already the case, states should make lawful, at a minimum, abortions performed to preserve the physical and mental health of women, or in cases of fatal foetal

abnormality, rape or incest. All states are strongly encouraged to decriminalise abortion within reasonable gestational limits. In addition, all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that access to safe and legal abortion as provided by law is fully implemented in practice by removing all existing barriers;

- States should protect all women and in particular Roma women, women belonging to minorities, migrant women in regular or irregular situations, women with disabilities, LBT women, poor women or rural women, and young or older women against multiple forms of discrimination in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Source: [Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Abortion rights and other rights under threat in Croatia

A new government came into power at the end of January 2016. Since then, Croatia has turned towards the far right with a noticeable rise in nationalism, ethnic intolerance towards the Serbian minority, and conservatism, with one of the main objectives being a ban on abortion. The new government also tried to stop a planned educational reform by introducing more conservative members into the expert group. Their vision for education consists of patriotic history, literature conveying traditional and Christian virtues, and conservative sexual education. However, the coalition between the two largest parties broken down several months ago, and new elections are expected later in the year.

Protests regarding the shift in focus of educational reform brought around 50,000 people all over Croatia into the streets to express their discontent with the government's vision on 1 June 2016, in contrast to the 7,000 who marched against abortion rights in May. But in January 2016, against the expectations of pro-choice campaigners, the Constitutional Court announced the start of a constitutional review of the law, which currently allows abortion until the 10th week of pregnancy.

In an investigation into access to abortion in hospitals in Croatia for the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence, Masenjka Bacic reported that even though abortion is legal in Croatia it feels increasingly forbidden. In 1990, on the eve of its independence, 46,679 legal abortions were carried out. Last year, according to official figures, there were 8,181, one of the lowest rates in Europe. In 2014, of 375 gynaecologists employed in Croatian hospitals where abortions can be carried out, 166 do so. Others refuse on religious grounds. 'Fake' abortion clinics advertising online with the aim of actually dissuading women from aborting continue to operate despite the fact that Croatia's public attorney for gender equality has reported such sites to the Interior Ministry.

Source: [International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion](#)

A draft seeking to liberalise Poland's abortion laws reached the Sejm

A draft seeking to liberalise Poland's abortion laws prepared by the "Save the Women" Legislative Initiative Committee reached the Sejm (lower house) on August 4th. The committee collected over 200,000 signatures under the draft. Under the "Save the Women" proposal women are entitled to have an abortion up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy. After that abortion would be permissible along the same rules as those in effect today. Additionally, in cases of severe and irreversible impairment of the foetus or an incurable disease, abortion would be permitted up to the 24th week. Abortion would be permissible up to the 18th week if the pregnancy is the result of a crime. The proposed changes have been initiated by the Polish Initiative Association founded by former United Left leader Barbara Nowacka and several NGOs, among them Federation for Women and Family Planning, serving as ASTRA Secretariat.

A citizen's anti-abortion bill completely banning abortion and making it punishable by a prison term reached the Sejm in July.

Under Poland's current abortion regulations, abortion is illegal except when the pregnancy poses a threat to the woman's health or life, if it results from a crime such as incest or rape, or when if there is a high probability that the foetus is severely and irreversibly deformed.

According to official Health Ministry statistics, fewer than 1,000 abortions are performed in Poland every year. In 2014, their official number stood at 977. Poland's NGOs believe that the number of abortions in Poland ranges from 80,000 to 190,000 annually.

Source: [PAP](#)

Problem of state-funded abortions discussed in Novosibirsk

A round table entitled "Abortion and its state funding as factors undermining the sovereignty of Russia and threatening its national security," was held on July 20 in Novosibirsk, reports "[Russian Public Line](#)." Representatives of traditional religious groups and anti-choice activists, doctors, and the teaching and parental communities took part in the work of the round table.

The round table was held to support the appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the State Duma on January 22, 2015 to remove abortion from the compulsory medical insurance system and the Statement of the Interreligious Council of Russia "On the Protection of Unborn Children" of June 2, 2016.

Participants in the meeting noted that Russia has one the biggest numbers of abortion procedures in the world - according to official statistics of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Health there were 746,736 abortions in 2015. However, according to independent expert evaluation, the real number reaches 5-8 million a year, as official statistics do not take into account abortions performed in private clinics.

Procedures for terminating pregnancy in state institution budgets are financed by funds from compulsory medical insurance. Only 3% of the total number of abortions are for medical or social

reasons. Members of the round table considered it unacceptable to pay for abortions in the absence of any medical reason at taxpayer expense.

According to the participants, the question of increasing the population is one of the survival of a sovereign state. Therefore the issue of abortions in Russia due to its prevalence acquires in terms of the demographic crisis the character of a national threat. Some of the participants called for a legal approach to protecting the lives of fetuses, implemented in the legislation of a number of states, expressed in the recognition of the human right to life and the protection of this right from the moment of a child's conception.

Among the outcomes of the event are holding an interreligious conference in Novosibirsk in November 2016 aimed at solving the demographic problem by reducing abortions and increasing the birthrate and population of Russia and supporting the appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the State Duma on January 22, 2015 to eliminate abortion from the compulsory medical insurance system.

Source: www.pravoslavie.ru/english/96083.htm

SALUS Foundation's Activities focused on internally displaced women in Ukraine

Since 2014 SALUS has been running the project "Crimea Wave" focused on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine. The project was designed to provide information, medical and social support to women from Crimea seeking the asylum in Lviv region (Western Ukraine) after the annexing Crimea by Russia. The project initially was supported by Feminist Review Trust. In August 2014 due to escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine more people left their homes (both from Crimea and Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine) looking for the safer place. The project was planned when Lviv region hosted 1444 displaced persons. Now there are officially registered over 10000 persons. The needs in medical services are still in big demand.

Unfortunately by now Ukraine counts over 1 million of IDPs because of the military conflict. The network of organizations providing different services and assistance to IDPs was created and our organization became a part of the network. The network and governmental institutions are interested in our experience and keep in touch with us by means of questionnaires, meetings.

SALUS cooperates with the "Crimea Wave" - NGO formed by IDPs inviting each other to different events, trainings and meetings. Women insisted the project was not about their bodies but more about care and support. There is still a big need and interest in informational materials.

Since April 2016 SALUS continues its activities such as: development and publication of the informational materials in Ukrainian and Tatar languages with helpful information and contacts; and providing medical examination and consulting women including those placed in rural villages (gynecologist, ultrasound, laboratory tests, urologist, dermatologist-venerologist, psychologist).

Source: [SALUS Foundation](http://www.salusfoundation.org)

Better protection of LGBTI persons through the amendments to the Anti-discrimination Law of BiH

By adopting the law on amendments to the Anti-discrimination Law of BiH at the July session of the House of People of the BiH's Parliamentary Assembly, Bosnia and Herzegovina has finally advanced its legal framework on anti-discrimination.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are explicitly covered by the Law, and the correct legal terminology in local language is used (seksualna orijentacija, rodni identitet). The Law also explicitly states "sex characteristics" as a prohibited ground of discrimination. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the first country in South-East Europe, which provides anti-discrimination protection for intersex people in all spheres of life. The Anti-discrimination Law of BiH now provides full protection from discrimination for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Newly adopted amendments to the Anti-discrimination Law also introduce other improvements such as: inclusion of age and disability on which grounds discrimination is also, from now on, explicitly prohibited; prohibition of discrimination based on the relation with a protected group/ground; improved definition of harassment and sexual harassment; clear definition of aggravated forms of discrimination; improved procedural aspects, related to urgent procedures; specific actions for protection of discrimination; judiciary jurisdictions and procedure deadlines; judicial security measures; burden of proof; third party participation; and collective lawsuits.

The Sarajevo Open Centre, as one of leading advocacy human rights organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has taken active participation in this process. We have prepared, published and promoted an analysis about the Alignment of the Anti-discrimination Law of BiH with EU acquis (in the beginning of 2015). In the summer of 2015, our working group prepared concrete amendments to the Anti-discrimination law of BiH, which we presented together with the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH. The amendments were also presented to Ms. Semiha Borovac, the Minister of the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and to the ministerial working group. In fall of 2015, we have been part of public consultations and in close contact with the ministerial staff.

We will continue to work on the promotion and presentation of the new amendments to the Law, focusing especially on the protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. At the end of this year, we will publish a commentary to the Law and in 2017; we will continue offering training to civil servants, judges and prosecutors.

You may find relevant publications of Sarajevo Open Centre related to the Anti-discrimination Law of BiH here: [Proposed Amendments to the BiH Law on Prohibition of Discrimination](#) and here [Alignment of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination with the EU acquis- Expert Analysis on Alignment](#)

Source: [Sarajevo Open Centre](#)

Training on Domestic Violence for Obstetrician-Gynecologists in Armenia

Several trainings on domestic violence have been implemented in July and August by Women's Rights Center, Armenia. Participants of the trainings were teachers, psychologists, social workers from 2 regions (Gegharkunik, Shirak) of Armenia and Yerevan as well as representatives of Regional

Governments. It should be emphasized that one of the trainings' was for obstetrician-gynecologists. While coordinating the implementation of clinical research study "A randomized controlled trial to compare sublingual and buccal misoprostol regimens after mifepristone for termination of pregnancy 13-21 weeks LMP" at the Republican Institute of Reproductive Health, Perinatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology the organization revealed that there is a need to increase their information on the issue. Distinctive features of domestic violence, its types, causes and contributory factors, as well as legal mechanisms and supporting structures for protection of women victims of domestic violence as well as its negative impact of domestic violence on different society members, and especially on women's reproductive health was presented to the auditorium The necessity of collaboration and concerted actions between the structures to prevent domestic violence and assist victims was underlined by the trainers.

Participants suggested organizing such trainings more frequently. The training was conducted in the atmosphere of bilateral active discussions.

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

Georgian ministries taking action against sexual harassment

With the support of UN Women, four line ministries in Georgia plan to pilot an online course on sexual harassment for all staff. The hope is that the course, which focuses on building awareness, advocating prevention and creating empathy with victims, will in the future become mandatory for all public servants and break the silence surrounding sexual harassment in the workplace.

According to a [survey](#) conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, one in two women in the 28 EU countries has experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15. A Georgian [study](#) conducted by the Centre for Social Sciences found that sexual harassment is a sensitive issue in the country and that the understanding of what sexual harassment actually entails is generally low. Of the female and male respondents, 96% stated that they had never experienced sexual harassment, but when answering more detailed questions regarding the different forms of harassment, it was found that 38% of women and 8% of men had been victims of sexual harassment in the workplace at least once. Sexual harassment is a human rights violation and a form of sex-based discrimination, but it still remains a taboo subject that largely goes unreported.

Four ministries – the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Corrections, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees – have taken the lead to put in place an online sexual harassment course for all civil employees that aims to break the silence, counter the many myths surrounding sexual harassment, promote prevention and create the conditions for victims to file complaints and access support. With the support of UN Women, the interactive online course is being developed, the contents of which were piloted by UN Women with 18 representatives from almost all ministries on 5 July 2016.

Once the online training is ready (towards the end of 2016), it will be launched in the four pilot ministries, with the intention to make it mandatory for all civil servants. By substituting myths with facts, preventing sexual harassment, promoting empathy with victims and informing about the

actions one can take as a victim, a colleague or a manager, the hope is to contribute to a working environment free from sexual harassment.

Source: [UN Women Georgia](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

Make International Safe Abortion Day an Official UN day: Open Letter to the United Nations

UN agencies supporting women's rights have been asked on August 17th to send "a strong signal" to governments around the world by passing a resolution at this year's UN General Assembly in September to make International Safe Abortion Day an official UN day. An Open Letter was sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the heads of UN Women, UN Development Programme, World Health Organization, UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, UNAIDS, and UNESCO.

September 28 has been an international day of action in support of safe abortion since 1990, when the women's health movement in Latin America first launched a campaign on that date. Today, abortion rights advocates in every region of the world organise activities each year. "The date was defined as a day of struggle for abortion rights in a region where some of the most draconian laws criminalizing abortion were and still are on the books," said Sonia Corrêa, Co-Coordinator of the Sexuality and Policy Observatory, Sexuality Policy Watch, Brazil. "The choice of date was inspired by the abolition of slavery for children born to slave mothers in Brazil in 1871, when it was named the Day of the Free Womb."

The Open Letter was written by the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion, a network of almost 1,800 groups and individuals from 115 countries. It was signed by 430 international, regional and national organizations, groups and individuals from 73 countries around the world, representing thousands of people. It calls on the UN Secretary-General and UN agencies to acknowledge that making abortion safe is in line with a growing number of inter-governmental agreements, starting with the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action in 1994, the Beijing Women's Conference Platform for Action in 1995, the Latin American Convención de Belém do Pará in 1996, the African Maputo Protocol of 2005, and most recently the call for the decriminalisation of abortion across Africa by the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). These agreements and commitments all recognise that unsafe abortion is a serious public health problem and a violation of women's human rights that needs to be alleviated.

The Open Letter points out that women are still suffering and dying from complications of unsafe abortion in many global South countries. Deaths from unsafe abortion worldwide were estimated at 43,684 in 2013, accounting for 14.9% of all maternal deaths. Since the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, in fact, almost 1 million women have died from unsafe abortions, almost all of which were avoidable.

Marge Berer, who coordinated this initiative on behalf of the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion, said: "Safe abortion is an essential health service for women. Would anyone today deliberately withhold effective HIV treatment or safe contraception from people who need

them? Why, then, is it still acceptable that safe abortion is being withheld from so many women and girls with unwanted pregnancies?"

[OPEN LETTER](#): Full text with signatories

Source: [International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion](#), [PRESS RELEASE](#)

The Prevention Gap report by UNAIDS reveals concerning trends in new HIV infections among adults

[The Prevention gap report](#) shows that while significant progress is being made in stopping new HIV infections among children (new HIV infections have declined by more than 70% among children since 2001 and are continuing to decline), the decline in new HIV infections among adults has stalled. The report shows that HIV prevention urgently needs to be scaled up among this age group.

The report shows that an estimated 1.9 million adults have become infected with HIV every year for at least the past five years and that new HIV infections among adults are rising in some regions. The Prevention gap report gives the clear message that HIV prevention efforts need to be increased in order to stay on the Fast-Track to ending AIDS by 2030.

According to the report **Eastern Europe and central Asia saw a 57% increase in annual new HIV infections between 2010 and 2015.**

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, **51% of new HIV infections occur among people who inject drugs. More than 80% of the region's new HIV infections in 2015 were in the Russian Federation.** The epidemic is concentrated predominantly among key populations and their sexual partners, in particular people who inject drugs, who accounted for more than half of new HIV infections in 2015. However there is very low coverage of prevention programmes, in particular harm-reduction interventions among people who inject drugs.

UNAIDS urges countries to take a location and population approach to HIV programming efforts following five prevention pillars, to be delivered comprehensively and in combination: Programmes for young women and adolescent girls and their male partners in high-prevalence locations; Key population services in all countries; Strengthened national condom programmes; Voluntary medical male circumcision in priority countries; PrEP for population groups at higher risk of HIV infection.

Source: [UNAIDS Press Release](#)

UN Human Rights Council votes for independent expert on LGBT discrimination

In a 23 against 18 vote (6 abstentions), the United Nations Human Rights council voted in favour of a resolution condemning violence discrimination against people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution establishes the new position of an independent expert, whose role it will be to assess the implementation of existing international human rights instruments regarding LGBT people. The expert will furthermore identify best practices and gaps in terms of protection. The expert will engage in dialogue with states and other institutions on how to improve

the situation and is mandated to report annually on the situation around the world. The resolution builds upon two previous resolutions, adopted by the Council in [2011](#) and [2014](#).

[Ulrike Lunacek MEP](#), Co-President of the LGBTI Intergroup, reacted: “This is a truly historic resolution. The Human Rights Council has taken a fundamental step forward by reaffirming one of the United Nations’ key principles—that everyone is equal in dignity and rights.”

“At the same time it acknowledges that LGBT people across the world continue suffer from (state-sponsored) discrimination and violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I believe that the independent expert can play a key role in addressing this.”

Source: [European Parliament’s Intergroup on LGBT Rights](#)

YOUTH

Youth advocates’ involvement at the International AIDS Conference 2016

The International AIDS Conference took place from 18 to 22 July 2016 in Durban, South Africa. It was the premier gathering for those working in the field of HIV, as well as policy makers, persons living with HIV and other individuals committed to ending the pandemic. The conference provided an opportunity to evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learnt and collectively chart a course forward.

More than 100 young people from around the world participated in the Pre-Conference event and AIDS Conference and had an opportunity to voice the importance of youth involvement in the HIV prevention movement. Youth advocates developed the AIDS 2016 Youth Outcome Statement, in which they call governments to ensure comprehensive sexuality education in formal and non-formal settings, integrate human rights principles in all laws and policies, as well as to ensure youth involvement in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The statement can be found [here](#).

Source: [EECA Youth Voice](#)

Gender equality event in Armenia

On July 27th 2016, Society Without Violence NGO (SWV) organized its annual public event in Artik, Shirak region titled “I am the master of my life”. The event was dedicated to empower women, especially adolescent girls, and boys, and give them the necessary knowledge about women’s human rights and gender equality.

One important message of the annual public event was to inform the residents of Artik about sexual and reproductive health rights, and their indivisibility from women’s human rights in general. More than 50 mostly young girls and boys participated in the event held in “Gagarin Park”, and joined in the organized games and social theater, all aimed at highlighting and breaking gender stereotypes, and empowering young girls and women.

Through the event, the women and girls of Artik were informed by means of posters and slogans such as “I am setting my own limits”, “My body is not your property”, and “My body my right”, that any decision related to women’s bodies, or decisions affecting their bodily integrity is only theirs to make. The achievement of the event did not stop there however. Young boys were also involved, and were sensitized to the issues of gender inequality and women’s bodily integrity. Moreover, the participants were informed about the significance of making sexual and reproductive health services available, accessible, and acceptable and of the highest quality attainable to all women and girls, specifically in rural areas.

Source: [SWV](#)

Campaign on youth SRHR in Croatia

CESI has noticed, through the work with the youth, that they do want to learn about SRHR but do not have the opportunity in the existing school curriculum. Attitudes of young people towards socially sensitive topics, like abortion rights or emergency contraception are often based on distortions and incomplete information.

Youth who participated in a series of discussions organized by CESI say: "We believe that we know some things, but we do not, and we are afraid to ask." "I'm interested in the topic and read an interesting article on SRHR. I do have some kind of attitude towards it, but new information always helps me to build the attitudes up a bit."

Therefore, CESI has launched the campaign "My thing, my choice - it's time to find out more", which aims to inform and encourage the youth to think about different aspects of sexuality, reproductive and sexual rights and health.

CESI wishes to make it easier for youth to learn about SRHR and to make it possible for them to exercise their rights in full scope in a responsible way. Furthermore, the project aims to put in perspective, for the target group, what goes under the umbrella of sexual and reproductive rights. The idea is to share various multimedia materials on the Facebook page and animate the youth to think through and talk about facts and figures that shape their everyday life and potential choices.

Source: [CESI](#)

Sexual and reproductive health of young people in Macedonia

Only 1.6 % of young women aged 15 to 19 claim they use oral contraception, while only 34.8% of young people used a condom during their last sexual intercourse. The rates of teenage pregnancy and abortions in this age group are several times higher than in the EU. It is estimated that in Macedonia there’s an increasing tendency in the number of people infected with sexually transmitted infections among young people, especially chlamydia and HPV. A growing number of young couples faces infertility, often caused by untreated sexually transmitted infections. The situation regarding violence and intolerance among young people is worrying. Access to appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health and sexuality within the existing curricula is

insufficient. These are some of the conclusions reached by a working group composed of expert representatives of 23 ministries, health, educational and social institutions and civil society organizations in Macedonia.

Drashko Kostovski, the Program Director at H.E.R.A., claims that the information young people receive is often outdated, irrelevant and often inaccurate. In a recent research only 13% of students said they learned about condoms and barely 2% on oral contraception.

Only 12.8 % of the population uses modern contraception, making Macedonia one of the countries with the lowest use of modern contraception in Europe. Data shows that in 2008, 6.7% of all births were among the women under the age of 19, while the specific fertility rate in the age group 15-19 was 20.1 in 2008. The number of registered live births to mothers aged 15 years is on the rise, as in 2009 it was 33 while in 2008 it was 24.

Source: [Nova Makedonija](#) [mkd]

New IPPF resource hub on comprehensive sexuality education

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) has launched an online resource hub dedicated for youth advocates. The hub is divided into three categories: 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education', 'Service Delivery' and 'Advocacy and Changing Minds'. The hub serves as the repository of IPPF publications and toolkits focused on specific issues and aims to strengthen the cooperation and knowledge sharing between youth advocates and young people.

The resource is accessible [here](#).

Source: [IPPF](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

13th AWID International Forum

The AWID Forum, held once every four years, is taking place in Bahia, Brazil on September 8 – 11 under the theme of *Feminist Futures: Building Collective Power for Rights and Justice*. 2,000 participants from a broad diversity of movements and sectors will collectively strategize for feminist futures: from women's rights and feminist movements (including special attention to Brazilian women's rights activists), to peace, economic justice, environmental, and human rights movements, among others. Traditionally underrepresented or marginalized communities will have a strong presence at the Forum, some of them are: Young feminist activists; Black and Afro-descendant women; Indigenous women; Sex workers; Women with disabilities; Trans and Intersex activists; and migrant activists.

Source: [AWID 2016 Forum](#)

2016 EuroNGOs Conference

In the past few years, the SRHR community has heavily engaged in the post-2015 process, which culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main aim of this year's EuroNGOs conference is to ensure that the SRHR community is ready to effectively engage in the implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs, and strategically use them to advance our advocacy on SRHR in a global perspective. There will be panels with high-level speakers, global development experts and SRHR advocates as well as interactive discussions and workshops.

The 2016 EuroNGOs Conference "A Strong Start - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the 2030 Agenda" is hosted by [Le Planning Familial](#) and will take place in Paris on 4-5 October. Registration is already open with deadline of August 31st.

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

Movements, Borders, Rights? Feminist perspectives on global issues in Europe

EWL invites to be part of an international conference on 24-25 October 2016 in Brussels that seeks a feminist analysis of worldwide developments. Europe seems deeply affected as economic and political power is reconfiguring on a global scale. The recent Brexit is an expression of the deep divide in many countries, with right-wing populism on the rise. Years of austerity and market liberalisation politics have increased the social and economic precarity and feelings of insecurity.

This international conference will be a space for civil society, women's rights experts, activists and policy makers to deepen and broaden their understanding of the current situation in Europe from a feminist perspective in an international exchange with women's human rights activists from the Global South who have been dealing with similar challenges for a long time

Source: [European Women's Lobby](#)

PUBLICATIONS

The Moral Case for Abortion – new book by Ann Furedi

Ann Furedi's [The Moral Case for Abortion](#) takes a fresh look at the moral side of the abortion debate, setting out the ethical arguments for a woman's right to choose. A leading pro-choice advocate and chief executive of BPAS, Furedi draws on decades of experience with the UK's pro-choice organizations to outline why moral consideration is crucial to the abortion issue.

Today, protests against abortion are shaped by a bipolar narrative of right and wrong, of good and evil. Furedi argues that the pragmatic, practical case for a woman's right to choose abortion is compelling – but it is not the whole story. Abortion has never been simply an issue about individual health or social benefit, and this focus leaves us with a hopelessly tangled muddle of the personal and the political which satisfies no one. She argues that morality is inextricably linked to the abortion

issue and brings the focus back to ethics in an attempt to resolve one of the world's most polarizing debates.

Drawing on the traditions of sociological thinking and moral philosophy, Furedi asserts that true respect for human life and regard for individual conscience demand that we respect a woman's right to decide. She argues that to prevent a woman from making her own choice to continue or end her pregnancy is to undermine her autonomy, integrity and agency—which are the essence of her humanity.

Source: [Palgrave](#)

New issue of Reproductive Health Matters -"Violence: a Barrier to SRHR"

Read our latest issue which covers a range of emerging topics, including violence in the context of conflicts, obstetrics violence, and domestic violence.

Source: <http://www.rhm-elsevier.com/inpress>

Women, Faith and Human Rights – new UNFPA report

This is an overview of some of the most honest and critical thinking, by women and men of faith and human rights actors, on the relationship between human rights and their respective faith traditions. Convened by UNFPA over a number of years, with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and under the auspices of the Church of Sweden, these authors straddle the worlds of religious leadership and faith service, while also powerfully advocating for gender equality and human rights.

This publication provides a glimpse into the arguments made by these contributors, who are from different countries and faiths. Their views are described in language that seamlessly combines the principles of human rights with religious norms and interpretations. How they articulate the connection between faith and human rights proves to be both enlightening and thought provoking.

Access the publication [ONLINE](#).

Source: [UNFPA](#)

CALL TO ACTION

Protect the human rights of women and girls everywhere

Amnesty International and the Center for Reproductive Rights launched an online petition calling on all UN Member states to match their commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals with robust plans for monitoring and reviewing progress in order to protect the human rights of all, especially women and girls. World leaders came together at the UN in 2015 and promised to provide

universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. This was part of an ambitious set of 17 global targets, called the Sustainable Development Goals, to end poverty, fight inequality, and address climate change by 2030.

To make these goals a reality, governments must be held responsible for their commitments through strong accountability measures at the global and national levels.

The petition is available [HERE](#).

Call for Papers: Disability and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Submissions: 1 October to 30 November 2016

The forthcoming issue of Reproductive Health Matters journal welcomes original research, personal experiences and critical analyses that address the current situation and future potential in SRHR of people with disabilities. The issue will be co-edited with Guest Editors Janet Price and Renu Addlakha, and will be produced in partnership with CREA.

Weblink <http://www.rhmjournal.org.uk/journal/call-papers>

Member profile

CESI - Center for Education, Counseling and Research from Zagreb, Croatia

CESI - Center for Education, Counseling and Research is a feminist organization established on International Women's Day, March 8th, 1997, in response to the violation of human rights, in particular women's and minority rights, problems of militarization, nationalism and the deterioration of economic standards in the post-war period in Croatia. CESI was founded by activists and members of women's and peace initiatives that had had years of experience working with women survivors of war trauma. The core team counts 20 members, and a number of associates and volunteers that contribute to the development and achievement of CESI's goals.

CESI has been conducting many relevant, visible and recognized projects in three main fields of activism: social justice and equal opportunities, social activism and political processes, and sex, gender and sexual rights. The period 2015-2016 has been marked by a series of projects and important advocacy activities. More than 15,000 people have participated in different activities: institution representatives, unions, political parties, NGOs, women, youth, students, and teachers. CESI continues to work on empowerment of unemployed women and improvement of gender equality in labor world; promotion of political participation of women and gender mainstreaming; provision of psychological and legal support to women victims of violence; prevention of gender-based violence among youth and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights and health.

CESI's most recent project, "Collective Voice for Sexual and Reproductive Rights", aims at protecting and promoting sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) in Croatia. Its objectives include awareness-raising of young people on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and enhancing

collaboration and increasing the capacities of NGOs and other citizen's initiatives in order to protect SRR and LGBTI rights and influence government's agenda on SRR. The project intention is to mobilize a wide network of supporters and allies affected by the neo-conservative policies and clerical groups' agenda and increase their capacities and strengths in order to be able to recognize and respond to threats, to formulate policy priorities and hold decision-makers to account. Project activities include research, advocacy and public policy and capacity building.

The membership and cooperation with ASTRA Network increases CESI's visibility and our advocacy capacity at the national and international level, allowing us to make our voice heard, and the challenges related to sexual and reproductive rights of women from our region recognized in international instruments and institutions. This cooperation also provides support for CESI in national campaigns for the introduction of comprehensive sexual education, the provision of safe and accessible abortion, but also connections and cooperation with other organizations, and exchange of ideas and strategies for improving sexual and reproductive health and rights.

CESI runs also additional projects directed at youth, education, journalism and awareness raising such as [Radnica](#), [Libela](#), [Sezam](#) and [Gender Pay Gap](#).

Website: www.cesi.hr

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CentarCESI>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PortalLibela>, <https://twitter.com/GenderWageWatch>

Youtube: www.youtube.com/user/Ravnopravnost



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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Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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