



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

New report from Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights calls for progress to ensure women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe

“Women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights. Regrettably, however, women in Europe still have these rights denied or restricted as a result of laws, policies and practices that ultimately reflect continuing gender stereotypes and inequalities. States must acknowledge and address these violations and resolutely commit to advancing gender equality in this crucial sphere of life”, said the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, while releasing a report on this topic in early December.

The document provides an overview of states’ obligations under international and European human rights standards in the field of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. It provides examples of shortcomings that European states must address in particular as regards the rights to life, health, privacy, non-discrimination as well as the right to be free from torture and ill-treatment,

with a particular focus on comprehensive sexuality education, modern contraception, safe and legal abortion care, and quality maternal health care.

The Commissioner sets forth 54 recommendations aimed at helping European states address the pressing need to:

- renew political commitment to women’s rights and guard against retrogressive measures that undermine women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- establish health systems that uphold and advance women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- ensure the provision of comprehensive sexuality education;
- guarantee the affordability, availability and accessibility of modern contraception;
- ensure all women’s access to safe and legal abortion care;
- ensure that refusals of care by health care workers on grounds of conscience or religion do not endanger women’s timely access to sexual and reproductive health care;
- respect and protect women’s human rights in childbirth and guarantee all women’s access to quality maternal health care;
- eliminate coercive practices and safeguard women’s informed consent and decision-making in sexual and reproductive health care contexts;
- ensure all women’s access to effective remedies for violations of their sexual and reproductive rights;
- eliminate discrimination in laws, policies and practices and guarantee equality for all women in the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

“Sexual and reproductive rights protect some of the most significant and intimate aspects of our lives. Ensuring these rights for women is a vital component of efforts to achieve women’s rights and gender equality. Given the resurgent trends seeking to roll back protections in this field, we must ensure that we remain committed to these rights, which were established only after a long struggle. States have the duty to provide all women with accessible, affordable, good quality sexual and reproductive health care and services”, said Commissioner Muižnieks.

[Read the Issue Paper on women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights](#)

[Read the summary of the Issue Paper](#)

[See the special page on women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

World Congress of Families will be held in Moldova in 2018

The World Congress of Families, the conservative coalition that acts against right to abortion, LGBT rights and "gender" in general will be hosted by Moldova in 2018. The President of Moldova, Igor Dodon, initiated holding the congress in Chisinau. The previous locations for this event was US, Tbilisi and Budapest last year.

Source: a-tv.md

Conference on Women's Political Participation „Georgia: No one left behind “

On 12 December, at the initiative of the Gender Equality Council of Georgia a high-level conference on women's political participation was held. The conference "Georgia: No one left behind" was conducted with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Sweden. The event was attended by members of the Georgian Parliament, representatives of the civic society, as well as of diplomatic missions and international NGOs.

The conference discussed best practices of legislative regulations supporting women's political engagement in the world and future perspectives of Georgia on this issue, international commitments that Georgia has to follow regarding women's political representation, financial incentives for voluntary quotas and mandatory quotas, national action plans of inter-agency commission on gender equality, political parties and internal party democracy, and more.

Source: HERA XXI

Training course in SRHR for future journalists

On 23 December, the Association HERA XXI conducted the concluding event of a one-month learning-course for beginner journalists. The course aimed to inform students on reproductive health and rights in order to help them prepare interesting and high-quality journalistic materials on the above mentioned topics during their future professional work. Trainings were conducted by relevant field experts. At the concluding meeting participants were awarded with certificates.

Within the course, students received exact and detailed information on reproductive health issues. The trainings included active discussions on the importance of relevantly delivering these issues to the society; how to put right emphasis during informational coverage, what is the role of the media in the formation of the healthy public opinion and on the contrary, what threats may rise when these issues are ignored or inaccurately media coverage.

Source: HERA XXI

GLOBAL UPDATES

2018 Regional Preparatory Meetings for HLPF

The following dates and venues have been announced so far for the 2018 Regional Preparatory Meetings for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development:

ECE – 1-2 March, Geneva ()

ESCAP – 28-30 March, Bangkok (for Asia and the Pacific)

ECLAC – 18-20 April, Santiago (for Latin America and the Caribbean)

ESCWA – 24-26 April, Venue TBC (for Western Asia)

ECA – Dates&Venue TBC (for Africa)

The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) follows up on and reviews the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the particular regions. RFSD is open to participation of all relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector.

Source: EuroNGOs newsletter

More information: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

YOUTH

SDGs for Young People, Young People for SDGs in Sofia

The three-day meeting held in Sofia, Bulgaria entitled SDGs for Young People, Young People for SDGs. Tracking Progress for Young People. Europe and Central Asia Regional Dialogue on ICPD and SDGs gathered representatives of youth-led organizations and UN agencies, policy makers, statisticians, and regional partners from various countries of Europe and Central Asia. The main purpose of the event was to create a framework for youth advocacy and develop a regional monitoring system to track progress on youth-related goals and targets included in the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development.

On the first day of the meeting participants worked in groups on identifying needs and challenges of young people of the Europe and Central Asia region in the following thematic areas: health, employment, civic engagement, education, and gender.

The next day's sessions focused on the use and abuse of statistics, as well as selecting and validating the needs and challenges in each of the five thematic areas against the ICPD and SDGs targets and indicators. The working groups tried to select specific SDG and ICPD indicators against the previously identified needs and challenges. The day ended with a panel on initiatives on national and local levels

that advance the youth agenda. Five presentations from experts, as well as state and local government representatives were followed by a plenary discussion.

On the third day participants debated policy-making and implementation at both national and local levels, first in regard to the possible ways of using available data to hold governments accountable for their actions or lack thereof, and then the necessary resources needed in order to be more effective and persuasive in doing so.

During the concluding session of the meeting through an anonymous voting process participants chose Uliana Avtonomova from Ukraine to be their representative as a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe experts group on regional monitoring framework on ICPD.

The event took place on December 4-6, 2017 in Sofia, Bulgaria and was organized by [Y-PEER PETRI Sofia](#) and [UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office](#). ASTRA Youth was represented by the network coordinator.

Read more [HERE](#)

The Right to Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Georgia

The Association HERA XXI joined other Georgian NGOs (The Youth Development Center and Gydea) in a project conducted by YouAct that aims to encourage CSE policy change in five European countries: Cyprus, Georgia, Poland, Romania and the Netherlands. HERA XXI created infographics regarding the comprehensive sexuality education rights that are supposed to encourage the Georgian government to support raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights among young people.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

World AIDS DAY in Georgia

On 1 December HERA XXI participated in the exhibition-fair, which was organized by the Georgian Harm Reduction Network, for World AIDS Day. The youth group of HERA XXI handed out cups and badges inscribed with the slogan “End Stigma to HIV/AIDS”. They also informed the fair visitors about the activities of their association.

In the evening, World AIDS Day celebration moved to a cafe where the young members of HERA XXI organized a screening of Asmaa, a film about the life of an-HIV infected woman that let the viewers see the challenges that HIV-positive people face. The screening was followed by a discussion.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Youth meeting at International Black Sea University in Tbilisi

On 23 December, on the invitation of the European Youth Center, the youth group of Association HERA XXI conducted an informative and educational meeting on reproductive health and rights at the International Black Sea University. The meeting was held under the fifth term of the Model Youth European Parliament with the participation of pupils and students. The meeting involved discussion and active involvement of the participants. The attending youth, taking into the consideration their own experiences, discussed how important it is to raise awareness about reproductive health and rights in their society. Members of the HERA XXI youth group introduced the issues of SRHR, the international monitoring instruments, as well as the organizational activities and services.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Sexuality education as a means of preventing violence

To mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign, as well as the Human Rights Day, youth advocates from Europe have developed specific messages in the form of infographics adapted for our countries in support of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), as a means to educate children and youth about gender norms and thus to prevent GBV. The activists believe in the power of education and in empowering young people to make the best decisions for themselves and their partners when it comes to health, well-being and relationships. The group calls upon governments, academia, NGOs, teachers, parents and all European citizens to join them in ensuring access to age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education for all children and young people, everywhere.

Click below to see the English infographics for each country (PDF):

[Cyprus](#)

[Poland](#)

[Romania](#)

The infographics were developed by young people with support of local organizations and have been created as part of the “Europe Unite for Comprehensive Sexuality Education Rights” project implemented by the youth-led organisations CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality and YouAct, with support from ShareNet. The project aims to encourage policy change in five European countries: Cyprus, Georgia, Poland, Romania and the Netherlands. You can read more about the project [here](#).

Key Romanian ASTRA members of the Society for Feminist Analyses AnA and A.L.E.G, as well as Astra Youth member Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality (SECS) contributed to the development of infographics showing why access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education is key in treating violence.

Source: [You Act](#)

RESOURCES

New UPR Sexual Rights Database is here!

The Sexual Rights Initiative invites you to visit our new and improved Universal Periodic Review Sexual Rights Database. The database allows you to search all the sexual rights related recommendations and references made during UPR sessions at the UN Human Rights Council, including progress on the implementation of accepted recommendations. The database is part of a suite of tools developed by the SRI to support State accountability for the realization of all human rights related to sexuality, reproduction and gender. UPRDATABASE.ORG

Features: Open access – password no longer required; New design; User friendly search options; Includes all sexual rights recommendations from UPRs 1-26 with UPR 27 data currently in the process of being uploaded; Includes sexual rights references in UN Compilation Reports, Stakeholder Summaries, National Reports; Includes progress on recommendation implementation as reported by the State under Review; Rolling updates following UPR report adoptions; Broad range of sexual rights issues including abortion, birth registration, sexuality education, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, discrimination on the basis of gender identity, sex work, HIV, early marriage, forced marriage and many more.

Use the Database to:

Find out what governments have committed to do (or not) on sexual rights and how they have implemented the recommendations they accepted

Assist in the development of UPR stakeholder summaries

Inform analyses on UPR sexual rights trends at the national, regional and global level

Find out which States make sexual rights related recommendations and State under Review responses

Find out which issues raised by civil society and UN treaty monitoring bodies are being neglected by States making recommendations

About the UPR Process

The Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council is a process to review each of the 193 Member States of the UN on its entire human rights record every four and a half years. It is a powerful tool to hold governments accountable for sexual rights violations and to advocate for changes to particular laws and policies that impact on human rights related to sexuality, gender and reproduction. The SRI has been actively involved in the UPR process since its establishment in 2006 and has collaborated with over 150 national and regional organizations, activists and academics in more than 100 countries to consistently raise sexual rights at every UPR session. We are committed to ensuring sexual rights are systematically integrated into the UPR process as a critical means of ensuring accountability for human rights obligations related to gender, sexuality and reproduction.

Please share any feedback, suggestions for improvement, how you use the database in your work and any other comments or questions to info@sexualrightsinitiative.com

Visit the UPR Sexual Rights Database: www.uprdatabase.org

Source: [SRI](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

The 62nd Session of Commission on the Status of Women

The 62nd Session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 62) will be held from 12 to 23 March 2018 at the UN headquarters in New York. This year's priority theme is "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" and the review theme is "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women". The official [registration](#) for CSW62 for ECOSOC-accredited NGOs is open through 27 January 2018.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women organizes the NGO CSW Forum that includes an NGO CSW Forum Consultation Day, Reception, Conversation Circles and NGO CSW Forum Parallel Events during CSW 62. The [registration process](#) to attend the forum is open from 15 November to 7 March 2018.

The [registration for hosting parallel events](#) is open from 15 November to 15 December 2017.

The official website of CSW 62 can be found here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018>

51st Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development

The 51st Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) will take place from 9 to 13 April 2018 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The theme of the session is "Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration." [Registration](#) for the CDP is open from 1 November 2017 to 16 March 2018.

More information can be found on the CPD website [here](#)

MEMBER OF THE MONTH

Women`s Room – Center for Sexual Rights

The Women's Room - Center for Sexual Rights (ženska soba - centar za seksualna prava) from Zagreb, Croatia is a non-governmental, feminist, non-profit organization established with the aim of empowerment of women and raising awareness of institutions and general public about women`s sexuality and sexual rights through education, research, advocacy and public work. The Women`s Room provides direct and indirect assistance and support to all sexual violence survivors. Women`s Room envision a society free from patriarchy, discrimination, misogyny and gender-based violence, where individual choice is the fundamental value.

Goals of Women`s Room are:

- Elimination of all forms of sex, gender and sexual discrimination;
- Empowerment of women in exercising their fundamental human rights;
- Prevention of sexual violence against women and sexual and gender minorities;
- Provision of direct help to women who have survived sexual violence;
- Promotion and protection of sexual rights pursuant to the Declaration of Sexual Rights;
- Introduction of comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education based on scientific facts, at all education levels;
- Promotion of positive attitudes to female sexuality, sexual health and freedom of choice;
- Elimination of discrimination based on gender expression and/or identity, sexual orientation, and intersexual characteristics;
- Empowerment of LGBTIQ persons in exercising their fundamental human rights.

Organizational goals are fulfilled through 5 areas of work: Center for Victims of Sexual Violence, Education, and Scholarly research, Publishing, Development of public policy against sexual violence through public works, advocacy and networking.

Our core activity is Center for Victims of Sexual Violence in which experts provide direct and indirect support and help for victims of sexual violence. The team works with victims through providing support during the process of reporting sexual violence (accompanying the survivor to the police and hospital); preparations for court proceedings; counselling and therapy: crisis counselling (medical, legal and psychological), trauma-focused therapy, psychological counselling for family or friends of the survivor; development of and publishing different materials.

Education is another main activity. Women`s Room team makes great effort in the implementation of educational programs on the topic of violence against women, sexual violence, trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, sex and gender, sexual rights, women`s sexuality, sexual and gender minorities. Educational programs are implemented through trainings, workshops, lectures, supervision, consultations, seminars, performances, concerts and other public events.

All activities are focused on female survivors of gender-based violence with emphasis on sexual violence, children, youth, representatives of relevant state institutions, representatives of civil society organizations, LGBTIQ population persons.

Women`s Room launched a web site “Safe Zone” (www.sigurnomjesto.hr/en/) intended for women who are victims of all forms of violence in 2012. This web site have unique search engine with contacts of all relevant institutions (police stations, hospitals, courts, civil society shelters and counselling centers, etc.) for all Croatian regions.

„Women's Room is an organization that has been intensively involved in the issue of preserving the right to choice, the right to abortion that is intensively violated in Croatia. Being a member of ASTRA network is useful because it allows us to become acquainted with policies in other countries, practices and actions of other civil society organizations. Gathering information and learning from other members is important to us so we can contribute to the struggle to preserve reproductive rights in Croatia.“

Follow Women's Room online:

Website: www.zenskasoba.hr, [Facebook](#), [You Tube](#)





The Women's Room therapeutic dog and member of the team - Darko. He provides support in the Center for Victims of Sexual Violence.



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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