



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

The Day of Action for September 28: Global Campaign for the Decriminalisation of Abortion was a day of mobilization for abortion rights. This year the original Latin American and Caribbean campaign was organized by WGNRR members and partners in several other countries across the world. SRHR networks and organisations from Poland, Tanzania, Nigeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nepal and Japan mobilized communities and built awareness about the impact of restrictive abortion laws or the lack of adequate abortion services in their countries. Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Dominican Republic continue to uphold the complete ban on abortion in any circumstances. In Colombia according to the recent finding by Guttmacher Institute 99% of abortions performed in the country remain illegal and occur in unsafe conditions despite Colombia's 2006 Constitutional Court ruling that legalized abortion in certain circumstances. Poland already has some of the strictest abortion restrictions in Europe and continues to run the risk under the conservative pressure of a complete ban on abortion in all circumstances. Activists used the day to call on the governments to recognise and uphold sexual and reproductive rights as indivisible, universal human rights, as was recently emphasised by Anand Grover, UN Special Rapporteur for Health, in his September 2011 report to the United Nations General Assembly: "Criminal laws penalising and restricting induced abortion are the paradigmatic examples of impermissible barriers to the realisation of women's right to health and must be eliminated. These laws infringe upon women's dignity and autonomy by severely restricting decision-making by women in respect of their sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, such laws consistently generate poor physical

health outcomes, resulting in deaths that could have been prevented, morbidity and ill-health, as well as negative mental health outcomes, not least because affected women risk being thrust into the criminal justice system. Creation or maintenance of criminal laws with respect to abortion may amount to violations of the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health.”

UN: Special Rapporteur Anand Grover's report on abortion. The Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council, Anand Grover, has released a groundbreaking report on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

This report will be presented at the General Assembly on October 24th.
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/66/254

REGIONAL UPDATES

Poland: Yes for Women. With the beginning of September the new civic project was initiated in Poland. It is called Tak la Kobiet (Yes For Women) and it is promoting its new draft bill entitled “Law on responsible parenthood and other reproductive rights”. It legalizes abortion on demand up to 12th week and changes current provisions regulating access to sexual and reproductive health services. The initiative has to collect 100 000 signatures in three months to proceed with the project. When the signatures are collected, the draft will be debated by the Parliament.

More: www.federa.org.pl

Poland: Eliminating gender-based discrimination. At the last session of the Sejm (Polish Lower House of Parliament) of the current term of office, the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment on behalf of the Government presented what has been done to advance women’s rights and eliminate gender-based discrimination in the last four years. The information was provided on the request of the leftwing party in opposition in Sejm. Civil society organizations working in the field of women’s rights organized a press conference at which main comments to the Government’s performance were presented. First of all, women’s groups expressed disappointment with the fact that the Government did not commit to effectively improve women’s situation (especially vulnerable groups of women) and that there was no comprehensive approach to policy making. Poland did not implement any National Programme for Women since 2005, which translates into lack of sustained and relevant policy at place. The ad hoc activities that are carried out do not address the most burning areas of discrimination that are: reproductive health and rights, discrimination in education, sustained gender-based stereotypes and lack of legal protection from discrimination in all areas of life. Women’s rights advocates highlighted dissatisfaction resulting from the fact that women’s groups weren’t involved in the consultation process with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, as well as design, implementation and evaluation of activities. Furthermore, Polish Government did not take any action to implement the last Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee and it did not meet the deadline for submitting its next periodic report that was due to September 2010.

Source: KARAT

If you would like to learn more about CEDAW-related activities in Poland go to:
http://www.karat.org/karat_20_en.html

Women’s Lobby Of Slovenia: Solidarity With The Women In Russia And Poland. At the beginning of September, the Women’s Lobby of Slovenia and their members organized two protests in solidarity with the women in Russia and Poland, threatened by serious attempts in the parliament to diminish their right to legal and safe abortion. Protests took place in front of the

Russian and Polish embassies in Ljubljana. The EWL members in Slovenia appealed in support of the women of Poland and Russia in letters addressed to Vladimir Putin and Donald Tusk and delivered to the Russian Deputy Ambassador and to the Polish Ambassador in Slovenia. These appeals requested from the Prime Ministers to use their political influence on the leaders of the most important political parties and persuade them to implement binding international standards concerning women's rights to freely decide upon their own bodies. In Slovenia there exists a constitutional right to freely decide upon reproduction as well as effective legislation on sexual education and family planning.

Source: EWL

Ireland : 'Confusion' claim over contraception for under-16s. A survey of 251 consultations with young people at the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) city centre clinic over the last five years revealed the legal status of prescribing contraception to young people under the age of 16 in Ireland remains very unclear. Many teenagers would rather run the risk of an unplanned pregnancy or infection than face the possibility of their parents finding out about their sexual activities. As a result, ambiguous laws about contraception are putting young people at risk of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, it was claimed. According to IFPA, the situation is further complicated for medics by the fact that the age of sexual consent in Ireland is 17. A lack of clarity is a serious deterrent to young people in need of sexual health services, and also poses a major dilemma for doctors who are ethically required to provide a confidential service which is in the best interest of their client.

Read more: <http://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/confusion-claim-over-contraception-for-under-16s-522015.html#ixzz1ZEs72yDy>

Liechtenstein: Referendum narrowly rejects abortion on request. Voters in Liechtenstein narrowly rejected a law proposing abortion on request in the first 12 weeks. There were 52.3% 'No' votes in the national referendum ballot. The initiative had asked for abortion on request in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, after counselling and a further three day wait. It would also have allowed abortion with no time limit for health and for severe fetal reasons. Abortion campaigners feel that this is a surprisingly good result in a very catholic country. Parliament will now have to decide whether another compromise bill should be presented.

Source: <http://rhmjournal.org.uk>

Proposed new Russian law threatens women's reproductive rights. A commission reviewing Russia's abortion legislation is developing proposals that, if passed, would severely restrict women's access to abortion. Russia's current law guarantees the right to abortion, but in practice this right has been slowly but steadily undermined over recent years. Legally, a woman can ask for an abortion on request up until 12 weeks of pregnancy. Between 12 and 22 weeks an abortion can be performed on the basis of defined medical or 'social' reasons. Over the years, government has reduced the number of medical and social reasons, although these currently only make up 2-3% of current abortions. The measures now being proposed by the commission that is reviewing abortion law include the need for married women to obtain a permission from their husbands to perform an abortion and for teenage mothers to obtain consent from their parents or legal guardians. A waiting period of one week will be instituted during which the woman seeking an abortion will have compulsory 'psychological consultations', mandatory viewing of ultrasound and listening to the embryo's heartbeat. The stated purpose of these obligatory procedures is to pressure the woman into changing her mind about the termination of her pregnancy. 'Social reasons' to undergo an abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy, such as the husband's death during the pregnancy will be eliminated, with the

only remaining social reason being a pregnancy resulting from rape. Doctors will be allowed to refuse to perform abortions with no guarantees of referral to another health care provider. An informed consent form is proposed, which warns women of 'serious risks' associated with abortion. The abortion amendments are likely to be introduced to the new version of the Health Law that is currently being debated by the Russian Parliament. If adopted, the proposed changes to the current law will significantly limit women's access to abortion, and will be likely to cause the rise of criminal abortions, already currently the cause of five per cent of maternal deaths in Russia.

Source: <http://rhmjournal.org.uk>

Serbia: Belgrade Pride banned. The Serbian LGBT pride march Parada Ponosa, due to take place on Sunday in the capital, was banned by the National Security Council. The Council announced it would forbid the pride march, as well as three far-right counter-protests that were planned for the first weekend of October. In a June 2011 report, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg had highlighted strong public opposition to LGBT pride events in Serbia. The European Parliament will take note of this weekend's events in its upcoming accession report for Serbia, planned for early 2012.

Source: <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2011/09/serbian-government-orders-cancellation-of-sundays-belgrade-pride-events/>

GLOBAL UPDATES

European Parliament welcomes recent UN developments on sexual orientation and gender identity. The European Parliament joined the United Nations' call for safeguarding the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the world. The text was co-signed by 6 out of 7 political groups, and adopted with a very wide majority. The European Parliament welcomed the work done by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay for the human rights of LGBT people worldwide. MEPs also addressed a range of recommendations to the European Commission and EU states in order to improve the EU's own human rights record. The resolution followed a short debate during which Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, presented the important work done by the EU and Member States to safeguard the human rights of LGBT people in the world. She also expressed her support for the proposal of an EU-wide comprehensive roadmap against homophobia and transphobia.

The text of the resolution is available here: <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/RES-20110928-Human-rights-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-at-the-United-Nations-As-adopted-Provisional.pdf>

Young people having more unprotected sex. The number of young people having unprotected sex in the world has risen sharply over the past two years, with health professionals concerned the safe sex message is falling on deaf ears. The survey to mark World Contraception Day also discovered that Thailand is a particular cause for concern because as many of 62 percent of young Thais have had unprotected sex with a new partner. But the figure was above 50 percent in countries as diverse as China, South Korea, Norway and Estonia. The study highlights that across Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America and the United States, the most common reason for not using contraception is a lack of preparedness for sexual activity. Up to a third of young people in those regions said they did not have any form of contraception available when at the time of intercourse.

For more details: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iA1WVUn5vLdYaSmy-2zSgbKDSIJw?docId=CNG.74c873b2ee28ca61f62f7806e68d8e1b.6d1>

Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Resolution. Over 350 000 women and girls die every year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these deaths are entirely preventable. The MMM resolution was adopted by consensus by the Human Rights Council. This is a groundbreaking step for addressing preventable maternal death and disability. The resolution reaffirms the international community's commitment to mainstreaming human rights into efforts to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity. Two landmark resolutions in 2009 and 2010, as well as two reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, laid the foundation for this new resolution which calls for the development of practical guidance to assist States, the United Nations system and all stakeholders in applying the human rights based approach to programs and policies designed to prevent maternal death and disability.

Text of the resolution is available here: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/press/hrc/index.htm>

UPCOMING EVENTS

The DSW's Symposium on RH Supplies at World Health Summit 2011. "Access to Reproductive Health Supplies –Challenges, Barriers and Opportunities in Developing Countries" panel during the World Health Summit, October, 23rd 2011 in Berlin, 4.15-5.45 pm, Room: Langenbeck Langenbeck-Virchow-Haus, Luisenstrasse 58, 10117 Berlin, Germany

You are cordially invited to join for the symposium on October 23rd, 2011. Please register via info@dsw-hannover.de (Reference: WHS symposium).

PUBLICATIONS

Abortion care for young women: A training toolkit. This groundbreaking new training resource includes program and policy guidance on delivering and ensuring access to appropriate abortion care for adolescent girls and young women.

Available at: www.ipas.org

Misoprostol use in postabortion care: A service delivery toolkit. This toolkit is designed to help district- and national-level clinicians and facility and program managers initiate use of misoprostol as a medical treatment for incomplete abortion or integrate misoprostol into existing postabortion care services.

Available at: www.ipas.org

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