



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

No 6 (176) 2018

Table of contents:

- Burning Issue
- Regional Updates
- Global Updates
- Youth
- Resources
- Upcoming events
- Call for Papers/Action

BURNING ISSUE

Civil society at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council was held on July 9th to 18th, including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum in the second week of the session at UN Headquarters in New York.

The HLPF was held under the theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" and the set of goals to be reviewed in depth were the following, including Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), that is to be considered each year:

- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

ASTRA participated in the Forum as part of the [Women's Major Group](#). The WMG was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where governments recognized Women as one of the nine important groups in society for achieving sustainable development and currently it is an official participant in the UN processes on Sustainable Development.

Throughout the Forum the [WMG Position Paper for the 2018 HLPF](#) served as means of advocacy messages and actions and also provided the participating activists and experts with intersectional analysis of the SDGs discussed at the HLPF: "The complexity of women's lives and realities is reflected in the intersectional nature of the sustainable development goals. While 8 of the 17 goals explicitly integrate commitments to women and girls, the achievement of targets across the agenda has implications for women's and girls' human rights. The six goals under review at the 2018 High Level Political Forum, on water and sanitation, energy, safe and sustainable cities, protecting biodiversity, addressing unsustainable consumption and production and ensuring the means of implementation to achieve the SDGs are as important for gender equality as they are critical for sustainable development. This paper offers a detailed gender analysis of the six goals, demonstrates how women and girls are differently impacted by development failures and provides specific recommendations for future action."

At this Forum several countries from their region of Central and Eastern Europe participated in the Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among them: Poland, Albania, Armenia, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. [ASTRA](#) and [youth](#) representative from Poland contributed to the Polish VNR by delivering oral statements that were a result of consultation with a wider group of NGOs and other stakeholders present at the HLPF.

The HLPF ended with the adoption of the [ministerial declaration](#).

Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018>, www.womenmajorgroup.org

REGIONAL UPDATES

NGOs in Bulgaria Condemn Constitutional Court Decision Rejecting Istanbul Convention

More than 30 prominent NGOs and individuals, working in the field of human rights, children's rights, women's rights and LGBTI rights, condemned the much awaited decision on 27 July by the Bulgarian Constitutional Court, which announced that the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, is inconsistent with the Bulgarian constitution. They declared it the court's "worst decision" to date.

With eight votes to four, the decision is a serious blow to human rights in Bulgaria and the integrity of the Bulgarian judiciary. In its ruling, the Constitutional Court claims that the term "gender", used in the Convention, is misleading and introduces a concept that is incompatible with the constitution's understanding of "sex". The court reaffirms the view that "sex" is a binary concept, with two rigidly fixed options: male or female.

It disapproves of the convention's definition of "gender" as socially constructed roles, behaviours, and activities, stating that it would blur the line between the two biological sexes. In this way, the court shockingly declares that "if society loses the ability to distinguish between a woman and a man, combating violence against women would only be a formal but unenforceable commitment." The Bulgarian Constitution, the court ruled, understands social roles as deriving from the biological sex, stating that the notions of "mother," "giving birth," and "midwifery" are inherently female roles. It essentially propagates the same gender stereotypes that the Istanbul Convention is set to tackle.

The court claims that the Istanbul Convention introduces a hidden "gender ideology," that teaches people they can choose their identity in contradiction to their biological sex. The phrase has been used by conservative politicians and activists across Europe to redefine reforms that would benefit women and LGBTI people as the "imposition" of a system of beliefs that threatens the traditional family and corrupts society.

The decision goes as far as to deny, though not directly, the right to protection and recognition of the identity of transgender and intersex people. It states that the Istanbul Convention would require the introduction of a procedure for changing legal documents of transgender people, which the Convention in reality does not do.

"The Court's decision humiliated the Bulgarian institutions and Bulgaria as a member of the EU family, which is based on the respect for human rights. Most of all it humiliated women in Bulgaria. It is humiliating for the next generation of Bulgarian children, who will continue to grow in a country where violence is tolerated," declares the statement from Bulgarian NGOs.

Around a hundred citizens rallied together on Friday evening to demand a commitment from the incumbent government to tackle gender-based violence in the country. Despite statistics that every other week a woman is killed, in most cases by a former or current partner or relative (93%), there has been close to no societal mobilization on the issue.

The process of ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the member states of the Council of Europe was accompanied by a careful review of its constitutionality by each one of them. So far, no national judicial authority in a member state has uncovered problems and internal contradictions that the

Bulgarian Constitutional Court found. It is currently ratified by 32 states, including all other Balkan countries.

The decision comes after the parliament asked the Constitutional Court for an opinion on the constitutionality of the convention, following a national outcry over the language of gender roles, which resulted in the withdrawal of the treaty. The Istanbul Convention was fanatically opposed by the far-right group in the ruling coalition, the "United Patriots", surprisingly alongside the Bulgarian Socialist Party (member of the Party of European Socialists), leader of the parliamentary opposition.

Source: [Bulgarian Helsinki Committee](#)

From ASTRA Members

Women's Resource Center workshop on human rights and reproductive rights

Two day capacity building workshop for local experts was held on 11 and 12 July 2018 and was organized in cooperation with the Center for Reproductive Rights. The event was held in Yerevan for members of the WRC Network and other women's rights activists. The workshop discussed "Using International Human Rights and Public Health Standards to Advance Reproductive Rights". Overall 20 people participated in the workshop. The main topics involved: Reproductive Rights and International Human Rights and Public Health Standards on Abortion Care; Mandatory Waiting Periods and Biased Counselling Requirements; Reproductive Rights and the Right to Life; International Human Rights Mechanisms; Reproductive Rights and Son preference; Language and Shifting the debate.

Source: [Womens Resorce Center](#)

"Women in Urban and Rural Areas" - Traveling Documentary Photo Exhibition in Bulgaria

The Gender Alternatives Foundation launches its first artistic project "Women in Urban and Rural Areas - an Overview of Their Role in Society". The project is part of the cultural program of Plovdiv European Capital of Culture 2019 and is co-funded by "Plovdiv 2019" Municipal Foundation under the program "Community Centers (Chitalista) - Community Participation and Innovation".

The initiative aims to organize a traveling exhibition in five regions of Bulgaria - Plovdiv, Pazardjik, Smolyan, Kardzhali, Haskovo in the period 09.2018 – 03.2019. It will visualize the everyday life of Bulgarian women, promote their localities and provoke a discussion about the role of women in society.

Through the power of photography and oral history techniques, the project aims to construct alternative (her)stories by women who are traditionally deprived of such – women from rural areas, poor women, minority women, elderly women and women with disabilities. It will also seek to capture women who are leaders in their communities. Thus, "Women in urban and rural areas" exhibition will give voice to women's individual perspectives and experiences on socially important themes such as "education", "work", "culture", "family". By constructing a new "collective memory"

and understanding, we will question what is historically important and provoke and encourage local discussions about the (traditional) role of women in our society - what is visible and what not, who are the "heroes of the day" and how they move society.

By involving a large number of community centers, local people will have free access to cultural content, inspired by representatives of these communities and areas. The exhibition will be carried out in partnership with five community centers in the five regions of Bulgaria – “Aleko Konstantinov – 1954” – Plovdiv city, “Maritsa – 2008” - Raynovo village, “Orpheus Forest – 1870” – Smolyan city, “Yumer Lutvi 1993” – Kardzhali city, “Vazrazhdane-1926” - Karabunar village.

Source: [Gender Alternatives Foundation](#)

2018 AIDS Conference in Amsterdam

Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) remains the only region in the world where new HIV cases and AIDS deaths continue to grow rapidly. Low access to treatment, repressive legislation, stigma and discrimination of key populations, as well as the unwillingness of states to finance and ensure the sustainability of prevention programs in the EECA region, hinder an effective response to the epidemic. The response to HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia will only be successful if decriminalization, destigmatization, zero discrimination and demedicalization are recognized as key needs of the communities. These aspects require comprehensive support from the global community, enhanced partnerships and immediate action by all stakeholders. One of the AIDS 2018 objectives was to spotlight the state of the epidemic and the HIV response in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It's the right time and place to attract the attention of the whole world to the region and communities' actions and to support them. Therefore the team of regional community networks, joined forces in the campaign at AIDS 2018. Slogan – Chase the virus, not people! Goal is to present to the world the impact of repressive, discriminatory laws and practices of their application, as well as stigma against key populations and people living with HIV. To achieve obligations to create an enabling legal environment and to involve key populations and people living with HIV in decision-making processes. “Chase the virus, not people!” campaign aims at the common needs of all key populations and focuses on achieving the goals in general and for each community in particular.

Source: [Chase Virus](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

Zeid warmly welcomes appointment of new UN Human Rights Chief

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on Friday warmly welcomed the UN General Assembly's appointment of Michelle Bachelet to succeed him when his mandate comes to an end on 31 August 2018.

"I am truly delighted by the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as the next UN High Commissioner for Human Rights," Zeid said. "She has all the attributes – courage, perseverance, passion, and a deep commitment to human rights – to make her a successful High Commissioner. The UN Human Rights Office looks forward to welcoming her and working under her leadership for the promotion and protection of all human rights, for everyone, everywhere."

Bachelet most recently served as President of Chile (from 2014 to 2018, and 2006 to 2010). She was the first Executive Director of UN-Women between 2010 and 2013. She has also served as Minister of Defence and Minister of Health in Chile. The UN General Assembly today approved the UN Secretary-General's appointment of Bachelet for a four-year term as High Commissioner.

Michelle Bachelet will be the seventh High Commissioner since the Office was created in 1993. Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein has been in office since 1 September 2014. His predecessors are: José Ayala-Lasso (1994-97); Mary Robinson (1997-2002); Sergio Vieira de Mello (2002-03); Louise Arbour (2004-08); and Navi Pillay (2008-14).

Source: [OHCHR](#)

Iceland replaces US at UN Human Rights Council

Iceland has just been elected to take a seat on the UN Human Rights Council at the UN headquarters in New York. Last month the United States announced its withdrawal from the council. Iceland received 172 votes. A minimum of 97 votes are required.

Iceland will have a seat until December 31st 2019. A total of 99.4 % of votes went to Iceland and France received one vote.

Iceland will occupy the seat vacated by the US for the remainder of the current term which expires at the end of next year.

Source: [Iceland Monitor](#)

Amnesty International adopts new policy positions on abortion

Amnesty International has adopted new proposals to tackle the devastating human rights consequences of misguided attempts by countries to criminalise and restrict abortion and also to punish people for using drugs.

Delegates from around the world gathered in Warsaw, Poland, over July 6-8, where they green-lit motions on the organisation's positions on safe and legal abortion and how States control the production, sale and use of drugs.

"We want to make sure we are well placed to fight for the human rights of millions of people whose lives are impacted by how governments criminalise or restrict access to abortion and by the prohibition of drugs. Both issues require a much more compassionate approach from governments to protect the rights of the people who are most at risk," said Tawanda Mutasah, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Law and Policy.

Representatives voted to adopt an updated position on abortion that calls on States not just to decriminalise abortion, but to guarantee access to safe and legal abortion in a broad way that fully respects the rights of all women, girls and people who can get pregnant. It will replace Amnesty International's current position on abortion, which calls for the decriminalisation of abortion, and access to abortion in a limited set of cases, which was adopted in 2007. Unsafe abortions continue to be one of the leading causes of maternal death worldwide, with an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions estimated to take place each year.

Representatives also voted to adopt what will be the organisation's first ever position on how States should address the challenges posed by drugs from a human rights perspective. The proposed policy calls for a shift away from the current "scorched-earth" approach of heavy-handed criminalisation, to an approach where protection of people's health and rights are at the centre.

Amnesty International will now develop detailed policies to guide its advocacy and campaigning on the issues of abortion and drug control. This will involve further consultations across and beyond the Amnesty movement, on specific details of the policies.

Source: [Amnesty International](#)

Germany: Criminal prohibition of abortion "advertising" restricts information provision

In November 2017 general practitioner Dr Kristina Hänel was sentenced under §219a of the German Penal Code to pay a fine of Euro 6000 for stating on her office website that she provides abortion services. Her conviction (against which she is appealing) and the cases of other physicians have prompted a debate on the repeal or reform of §219a, one of several remaining Nazi era Penal Code articles. Entitled "advertisement for termination of pregnancy", §219a criminalises those who "for material gain or in a grossly inappropriate manner" offer abortion services, irrespective of whether the abortion provided is lawful. In Germany abortion is a crime which is not punishable if undertaken after mandatory "conflict pregnancy counselling" up to twelve weeks of gestation and for specified indications at later stages. There is no general prohibition against physicians' websites stating the services they provide. Supporters of the repeal of §219a argue that it stigmatises abortion, violates women's rights to access information about a lawful medical procedure they have decided or may decide to undergo and unjustifiably exposes physicians to criminal prosecution for providing factual information. Advertisement by physicians can be regulated adequately by laws on the practice of medicine. Opponents of repeal argue that §219a is a necessary part of the state's protection of prenatal life, relying on Constitutional Court statements that abortion must not be "normalised" or

“commercialised” and so should not be treated like other medical procedures. Information about physicians offering abortions could be published online by state-level Ministries of Health. In favour of repeal, the Social Democrat Party called for a free parliamentary vote if a law reform agreement with its repeal-opposing Christian Democratic partners in Germany’s coalition government cannot be reached in autumn 2018.

For further information please click [here](#).

Use of second abortion pill at home to be allowed in England

Women in England are to be allowed to take the second abortion pill (misoprostol) at home, giving them the same rights as their counterparts in Scotland and Wales. The UK government announced that it would legalise the home use of early medical abortion drugs by the end of the year. It comes after pressure from campaigners for England to follow in the footsteps of Scotland, which last year became the first part of the UK to introduce the option, and Wales, which announced its own plans in June.

Women currently have to take both pills - mifepristone and misoprostol - at a clinic, 24 to 48 hours apart, to terminate an early pregnancy (before 10 weeks’ gestation). They leave the clinic after taking the misoprostol and pass the pregnancy at home but the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) says the process can cause unnecessary stress and trauma, leading women to begin to miscarry before they have even reached their front door in some cases. Under the new legislation they will be able to terminate an early pregnancy in safe and familiar surroundings.

Prof Lesley Regan, president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said: “Today’s announcement that use of misoprostol at home will be allowed in England is hugely welcomed and a major step forward for women’s healthcare. “This simple and practical measure will provide women with significantly more choice and is the most compassionate care we can give them. “It will allow women to avoid distress and embarrassment of bleeding and pain during their journey home from an unnecessary second visit to a clinic or hospital. It will also improve access to safe and regulated abortion care and take pressure off NHS services.”

Four in five terminations in England are early medical abortions, carried out under 10 weeks’ gestation, according to the DHSC.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

Argentina’s Senate Narrowly Rejects Legalizing Abortion

Argentina’s Senate on Thursday August 9th narrowly rejected a bill to legalize abortion, dealing a stinging defeat to a grass-roots movement that pushed reproductive rights to the top of the country’s legislative agenda and galvanized activist groups throughout Latin America. The vote gripped the nation as opposing camps fought to sway undecided senators until the final hours. As legislators debated the bill into the early hours of Thursday, thousands of advocates on both sides

waited outside Congress in the winter cold, and the Roman Catholic Church held a “Mass for Life” at the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral.

Proponents of the bill — which would have allowed abortions during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy — had hoped Argentina would begin a sea change in reproductive rights in a largely Catholic region where 97 percent of women live in countries that ban abortion or allow it only in rare instances.

In the end, thirty-eight lawmakers voted against the bill, 31 voted in favor of it and two abstained.

Just weeks ago, the abortion-rights campaigners appeared to have a good chance of success, stunning opponents and thrilling women’s rights advocates in nearby countries who were inspired by the Argentine battle. But opposition in Argentina hardened as Catholic Church leaders spoke out forcefully against abortion from the pulpit and senators from conservative provinces came under intense pressure to stand against the bill.

While the proposal’s defeat was considered a major setback for the activists who backed it, analysts said the movement’s improbable rise had already begun to change the region in ways that would have been impossible just years ago.

Source: [The New York Times](#)

YOUTH

Youth Campaigns regarding International Youth Day

One of the strategic priorities of Association HERA XXI has been strengthening youth activism and meaningful youth participation in campaigning on SRHR. Association HERA XXI contributes to the formation of young activist leaders and their involvement in various activities and campaigns planned by the organization. Within this frame in August, Association HERA XXI organized and conducted series of large-scale youth activities and campaign regarding the International Day of youth - awareness day designated by the United Nations. Versatile actions such as informational-educational sessions, entertaining-cognitive quizzes and promotional youth campaigns intended to raise awareness of Georgian youth on SRHR in order to give an access to right and age-appropriate information and equip with knowledge to make informed choices.

Under the campaign slogan – “Youth-friendly education on reproductive health and healthy lifestyle is a guarantee for your safe space” Association HERA XXI conducted awareness raising activities and informational sessions in the cities and villages of five different regions of Georgia. As a result, 950 young girls and boys raised their awareness about SRHR. The representatives of local government structures, civil society and regional media as well as educational institutions were actively engaged in the campaigns.

Source: [Association HERA XXI](#)

HERA's advocacy activities in Macedonia

The "Intima (Intimacy)" art exhibition was the first of its kind that the volunteers of HERA Youth had organized as part of the D Music Festival that took place 6-8 July in Skopje, Macedonia. The goal of the exhibition was to break the stigma around the word "intimacy" and its paralleling with the word "sex". Anyone could participate in the exhibition by sending their picture and 11 pictures in total were sent to take part. In addition to the exhibition HERA Youth had an Intimacy Corner at the D Festival. There were many activities such as painting canvas, jumping rope, slam poetry, and a condomat. Videos promoting HERA Youth were shown, as well as presentations on how to become part of the organization.

Furthermore, throughout June and July HERA conducted workshops in the field of comprehensive sexuality education, diversity, and HIV/AIDS. 39 people took part in the workshops in total. By the end of the year, HERA is planning to have conducted four more weekend CSE workshops in Skopje, but also in other cities of Macedonia.

Source: [Health Education and Research Association](#)

UNFPA EECARO launches an advocacy video about CSE in the region

The Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund has produced a short cartoon video about the need to introduce comprehensive sexuality education to schools across the region. The video officially premiered at the International AIDS Conference 2018 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. UNFPA EECARO and partner organizations - [ASTRA Youth](#), [YouAct](#), [Y-PEER](#), [Teenergizer](#), [Petri](#) Sofia Center, and [the](#) PONTON Group, strongly encourage advocates from the region to use the video in their efforts to promote the idea of CSE in their countries. The video can be accessed [here](#).

Source: [UNFPA EECARO](#)

RESOURCES

Triumph of the women? The female face of the populist & far right in Europe

Much awaited publication by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on the female face of the populist right in Europe. The publication considers six countries with different baseline situations that have right-wing populist parties and movements of different strengths anchored in a variety of institutions. In Poland and Hungary, rightwing populist parties are in government. In Germany the AfD determines public discourse, while in Greece such parties play a lesser role. Despite these differences, our analyses form the basis for deriving action recommendations for progressive, civil society players. These recommendations for action are not universally applicable in all countries that find themselves confronted with the problem of right-wing populism, nor should they be seen as final. In order to develop effective counter-strategies it is always essential to take account of the situation in a

particular country, the country's history, its political discourses, majorities and its support networks, along with the relevance and sphere of influence of progressive and feminist players locally.

Access the publication [here](#).

Source: [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung](#)

Study on backlash against Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights

Study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee, is designed to identify in which fields and by which means the backlash against gender equality and women's and girls' rights in six countries (Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) is occurring. The backlash, which has been happening over the last several years, has decreased the level of protection of women and girls and reduced access to their rights.

Access the report [here](#)

Source: [European Parliament](#)

Summary report of WHO meeting on ethical, legal, human rights and social accountability implications of self-care interventions for sexual and reproductive health

Historically, health-care providers delivered health care within primary, secondary or tertiary facilities. A well functioning health system that is staffed with trained and motivated health workers, supported by a well maintained infrastructure and a reliable supply of medicines and technologies, backed by adequate funding, strong health plans and evidence-based policies, is a reality in very few countries. In addition, the estimated shortage of 12.9 million health workers which is anticipated by 2035, the expected reduction in international funding for health, and the estimated 1 in 5 of the world's population now affected by humanitarian crises, points to the urgent need to find innovative strategies that go beyond a conventional health sector response.

Among the most promising and exciting new approaches are self-care interventions. When accessible and affordable, these interventions have the potential to increase choice, as well as opportunities for individuals to make informed decisions regarding their health and health care. Approaches that facilitate user autonomy and peer support have the potential to advance health through strategies that promote participation of individuals in their own health care. Such approaches recognize the strengths of individuals as active agents in their own health care, and not merely passive recipients of health services

Access the summary report [here](#)

Source: [WHO](#)

Euromapping 2018 report – global funding for family planning at risk from US withdrawal

Euromapping 2018 report highlights the need for other global donors – the European Union and EU Member States – to increase their contributions to protect health of women and girls around the world.

The latest Euromapping 2018 report on global funding for family planning (FP) and reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) highlights the US as the world’s leading donor in this field, but that data does not accurately reflect the withdrawal from this field by the Trump presidency. The reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy, better known as the Global Gag Rule, in 2017 will accelerate a decline in US funding in the coming years. It is the responsibility of other global donors in Europe and the rest of the world to step up and make sure that life-saving funding for family planning, contraception and maternal health does not disappear.

At the launch of the report in the European Parliament in Brussels today, Neil Datta, Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF), whose organisation co-authored Euromapping 2018 together with Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), raised the alarm about the over-reliance on the US as a global donor, and challenged the complacency of European donors: “The implications of the Global Gag Rule are colossal. Trump’s policy creates a vacuum of an estimated \$8.8 billion of US global health assistance, meaning women and girls in about 60 low- and middle-income countries will have less access to contraception, resulting in more unintended pregnancies, and more – often unsafe – abortions.

“If other countries fail to fill this void, the restrictions will cause easily preventable maternal deaths, and cut services linked to newborn, infant and child health, including vaccinations; prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis (TB); and nutrition programs.”

The Euromapping report tracks the annual commitments and disbursements for FP and RMNCH by a selection of 30 OECD members. Not only tracking overall spending, it also reports this funding as a percentage of a donor’s overall overseas development assistance (ODA).

The latest Euromapping 2018 report, based on 2016 OECD data, reveals that while the EU institutions together with France, Germany, and the UK rank near the top of the list for total funding, this funding still only makes up a small percentage of their overall ODA. What’s more, the EU, for example, makes up 57% of all the ODA spent by the 30 donors covered in the Euromapping report, but only 30% of all donor commitments to FP and RMNCH. This discrepancy needs to be addressed in the next EU multiannual budget, which will be negotiated over the next 18 months in Brussels.

Source: [DSW](#)

Allies or Opponents? Medical doctors in the debate on women’s right to abortion in Poland

The following report is a short version of the report that was published in Polish in 2017. It presents the results of the research which was conducted in 2016 and 2017 among Polish gynecologists working in Poland and abroad on their attitude towards abortion.

Why is the voice of medical doctors absent from the Polish debate on abortion? Why are there only two or three representatives of medical professionals who are courageous enough to criticize recurring attempts to further radicalize the already restrictive abortion law in Poland? Why does the voice of the medical doctors, represented as a group by gynecologists' associations, remain conservative? Why don't gynecologists in Poland engage socially and politically in activities that could lead to liberalization of the abortion law? These questions were a starting point for formulating the objectives of the project Allies or Opponents? How to convince medical doctors to support reproductive and sexual rights—the project that was implemented by Foundation of Equality and Emancipation STER with the support of Open Society Institute, in collaboration with Human Rights Initiative of the Open Society Foundations. It began with an observation that while, on the one hand, there is a general consensus that medical doctors as a group are conservative – particularly given the fact that doctors rarely engage in activities on behalf of liberalization of Polish law; on the other, however, each of us know, or have come across (a) gynecologist(s) who support(s) liberal ideas on women's reproductive rights, and think that the abortion law which exists in Poland since 1993 should be changed. Why aren't voices of these doctors who think that women should make autonomous decisions about their pregnancies heard in the public debate? Why does the medical community remain silent in the ongoing political and media discussion about abortion? What should happen for this situation to change? How can we encourage doctors to become more active participants of the public debate on abortion? How can we strengthen their political and social engagement on behalf of the liberalization of the existing law?

The following report is an attempt to answer all these questions and can serve as a tool to mobilize medical community on behalf of women's reproductive rights.

[The publication is available in pdf format.](#)

Source: [Fundacja STER](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

39th session of the UN Human Rights Council

The 39th session of the UN Human Rights Council will take place from September 10-28, 2018. See the full programme of work [here](#). To see the expected resolutions and panels check out [this](#) guide by the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We also invite everyone who will be in Geneva on September 13th to the **Sexual Rights Initiative Side Event: Regional Developments in Abortion Law & Policy Reform** (13:00-14:30, Room XXV). In support of the Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion, panelists will highlight regional developments in abortion law and policy reform, shed light on regional commonalities and differences that have led to change, and illustrate the ways in which different stakeholders have used human rights law to develop innovative strategies to advance the right to access safe and legal abortion in their region.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS: Rakshya Paudyal, Beyond Beijing Committee; Victoria Pedrido, Akahata; Krystyna Kacpura, Federation for Women and Family Planning; Varyanne Sika, Coalition of African Lesbians; Maeve Taylor, Irish Family Planning Association

Source: <http://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com>

“Act on Hope. How the European SRHR community can help unlock rights and care for all” – 2018 EuroNGOs Conference in Belgium

The 2018 EuroNGOs Conference titled “Act on Hope. How the European SRHR community can help unlock rights and care for all” will take place in Gent (Belgium) on 6-7 November 2018. During this year’s conference, we would like to examine how reproductive and sexual justice is linked with understanding and overcoming other forms of structural oppressions that pose a threat to democracy as well as prevent the meaningful exercise of political, social, cultural and economic rights of women and marginalized groups, in particular. A two-day dialogue will allow participants to identify the ways in which the SRHR community can work together within human rights groups and other actors with linking interests such as LGBT, Disability or Migration movements as well as it will help set up a 2019 SRHR agenda for Europe in which the partnership, it’s members and allies can implement and act on.

You can read more about the conference’s theme and objectives [here](#).

Source: <https://eurongos.events.idloom.com/2018conf>

Regional Conference and CSO meeting on ICPD plus 25: Enabling Choices: Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development

Ahead of the 25th anniversary of the ground-breaking International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action in 2019, the [Regional Conference](#) will assess progress and identify gaps in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region. It will focus on key actions for implementation and address the wider policy concerns related to:

- Population dynamics and sustainable development;
- Families, sexual and reproductive health over the life course; and
- Inequalities, social inclusion and rights

Organized jointly by UNECE and UNFPA, the Conference further aims to strengthen the linkages between ICPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reaffirm commitment to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action in the region.

A report covering trends and developments since the last review in 2014 will inform discussions at the Conference. The report and the Conference outcome, in the form of a Rapporteurs’ summary,

will feed into the global review to take place at the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in 2019.

Participants are requested to complete the [registration form](#) by 5 September 2018.

The conference will be preceded by a **Civil Society Consultation** on 30th September, visit the <https://csopartnersforchange.org> website for more information. September 5th is also the last day to apply for financial support to attend the CSO event.

Call for Papers: The impact of politics on sexual and reproductive health and rights

Submission deadline: 31 October 2018

RHM is compiling a themed issue to be published in May 2019 on the impact of politics on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The purpose of the issue is to assimilate and highlight the consequences of and interconnections between political activities, systems or change on SRHR – whether at global, regional, state, or local levels, and at their intersections, especially in low- and middle-income settings.

The relevance of today's politics on SRHR is clear, but not always well-documented. In this RHM collection, we aspire to compile and generate a diverse range of perspectives and evidence to inspire debate, inform intervention and effect change that will lead to better lives for people. Politics will determine whose SRHR are protected, when universal health care and respect for rights can be realised, and how it will be achieved.

Read more here: <http://www.rhmatters.org/call-for-papers/>

Call for Action : September 28, International Safe Abortion Day

“No more smokescreens, no more labels, no more codes: let's talk abortion”

It is estimated that 35 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 happen each year worldwide. Abortion happens in Sweden, Greece and France, where it is legal, performed by medical professionals, and covered by the national health insurance. And it also takes place in Kenya, El Salvador, and the Philippines, where it is a crime and a woman who terminates a pregnancy risks going to jail or dying. According to anthropologists, abortion is found in virtually every society, going back at least 4,000 years.

Yet, one thing that all countries have in common regardless of their laws and policies on abortion is that it is a stigmatized procedure. There are levels of stigma depending on each of the countries and contexts but for the most part, women who access abortions still fear being judged, arrested, persecuted, harassed or even killed. As a result, many women are forced to seek out this health service through clandestine and/or often unsafe means, and at the same time, activists are forced to navigate precarious contexts in the face of restraint and repression. Silence, fear, shame, and stigma: these are all elements that are reinforced and reproduced through misinformation and ignorance. The prevailing views on abortion around the globe produce, reproduce and reinforce

stigma at individual, community, institutional, cultural, and legal levels. The stigma surrounding abortion shames and silences individuals seeking abortion, individuals who have had an abortion, and healthcare providers in this line of work. In some cases, abortion stigma justifies and upholds restrictive and coercive laws criminalizing abortion, thereby serving as a major contributor to unsafe abortions, and subjecting countless persons to grave human rights violations. The stigma surrounding abortion also intersects with pervasive power relations, patriarchal norms, wrongful gender stereotypes, and privileged identity markers.

Too often, rights to abortion are defended through reference to various tragic circumstances of pregnancy: life endangerment, rape, incest, and congenital malformation. But this silences and stigmatises the great majority of women whose reasons for obtaining an abortion do not fall into these categories.

In this time of eroding rights, we must renew our efforts to show that safe and accessible abortion is a social good that is inextricable from broader issues of social equality and justice. Abortion must be seen as a part of individuals lives. It should be discussed in our conversations in its full human setting: sex and sexuality, love, violence, privilege, class, race, school and work, men, the scarcity or inexistence in some countries of reproductive health care, of realistic, accurate information about sex and reproduction. It should be included in our demands for the right to bodily and psychological integrity, the right to autonomy, the right to health and the right to life free from harm. Conversations about abortion need to take place in our governments, in our classrooms, in our communities, in our homes if we are to realise, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls. Let's talk about abortion, let's normalise abortion.

This September 28, join us in asking governments, policy makers, the international community, friends, families and allies: #Letstalkabortion and let's normalise abortion.

TAKE ACTION!

Here is how you can contribute:

- Join the Bake-off for Safe Abortion!: To effect change, some people march, some sign petitions and some boycott. For this September 28 we are encouraging activists to bake a cake adorned with snappy protest slogans, like "Normalise abortion", and "Abortion is healthcare." Cake is normal, so is abortion. Share your cake photos via social media using the hashtag #letstalkabortion! Inspiration from @thesweetfeminist
- Join the "scarfazo"!: Using green bandanas, a symbol of abortion rights, Argentinian activists launched a "green wave" throughout the bill's evaluation in their country and, in turn, have launched an international movement. Let's join scarfs with them and wear green bandanas on September 28! Share your photos with the hashtag: #Letstalkabortion #greenwave
- Host an awareness raising activity: organise a forum, meeting, workshop/training, cultural event to discuss strategies and challenges to normalising abortion in your communities, talk about the role that media and community leaders play in this and what you can do to change the discourse and normalise abortion.

- Visit www.september28.org to download the campaign logo, campaign toolkit, campaign posters and for more suggested actions!

Source: www.september28.org

The International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion celebrates this year our successes and movements, e.g. in Chile, El Salvador, Macedonia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cyprus, Canada, UK, Mexico, Ireland, Jamaica, Argentina, Poland, Isle of Man, Côte d'Ivoire, Brazil, Indonesia, South Korea, Australia, Dominican Republic, and Bolivia. At the same time, it stands in solidarity with those who have experienced setbacks, e.g. in Argentina, Morocco, Algeria, USA, Belgium, India, and Kenya, to find renewed energy for moving forward.

This year, the Campaign calls on abortion rights advocates to celebrate local, national and international heroes who have supported women's right to safe abortion and call for the creation of a critical mass of support among women for abortion rights as a priority activity.

This year the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion invites women to: share their experiences of abortion, talk about why they or others they know have had abortions, and explain the difference it has made to their lives.

This year the Campaign invites all women to stand with those who have had abortions to say that: while most women who have abortions are mothers, and most others go on to have children later, we all have the right to decide whether and when to have children, or not to have children at all.

"This year, we call on our governments, parliamentarians and judges to reject anti-abortion bills and rescind anti-abortion laws and policies – because they kill women. They kill women! Lastly, we call on our governments, parliamentarians and judges to acknowledge women as full citizens with human rights, whose life choices command respect and support. We say: "Decriminalize abortion, because all women have a right to life and health.""

Source: www.safeabortionwomensright.org

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

Prepared by Marta Szostak

Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

ASTRA Secretariat

Federation for Women and Family Planning
Nowolipie 13/15, 00-150 Warsaw, Poland
ph/fax +48 22 635 93 95, federa@astra.org.pl
www.astra.org.pl

Follow ASTRA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)