



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

World Health Organisation (WHO) launches a new set of guidelines on self-care interventions for sexual and reproductive health and rights

Self-care consisting of self-testing, self- diagnosis, self-management, self-medication, self-monitoring and self-educating is said to be able to reshape global and national health systems. Understood as an opportunity to promote autonomous decisions of a patient and support for a person-centered approach, self-care interventions allow people across the world to protect their health without the

need of visiting a medical professional when it is not necessary for providing oneself with successful treatment.

The publication offers solutions and guidelines that will help meet the Sustainable Development Goals, while assuring access to proper medical care to everyone, including representatives of underprivileged groups, inhabitants of the Global South region and people that struggle to find a medical professional in their vicinity.

The document is WHO's first set of consolidated guidelines - it shifts its approach to healthcare to a more patient-focused. The first edition of guidelines tackles topics related to sexual and reproductive health, presenting evidence-based recommendations on interventions for maternal health, contraception, cervical cancer, fertility and STIs, including HIV and safe abortion.

Full document can be accessed [here](#).

Source: [WHO](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights report on Poland

Commissioner Dunja Mijatović and her team visited Poland from 11 to 15 March 2019. During the visit, the Commissioner held discussions on the independence of the judiciary and the prosecution service as well as issues pertaining to the rights of women, gender equality and domestic violence. The present report focuses on the following key issues:

Independence of the judiciary and the prosecution service

Poland's wide-ranging judicial reform, carried out in several stages and still on-going, has had a major impact on the functioning and independence of practically all key building blocks of the country's justice system, fundamentally affecting the Constitutional Tribunal, the National Council for the Judiciary, the Supreme Court, the common courts, individual judges, and the prosecution service. (...)

Women's sexual and reproductive rights

The Commissioner shares the concern of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers that six years after the adoption by the European Court of Human Rights of the most recent key judgment against Poland on access to abortion and the related care, no measures have been taken to ensure access to lawful abortion throughout Poland. The Commissioner is not persuaded that the means of

recourse available in Polish law against refusals to provide abortion and the related care allow women to effectively access the requisite care to which they are entitled in good time, while inaction or delay may in some cases create a very real and grave risk to a woman's life and health. The Commissioner was concerned to learn that many Polish women reportedly resort to clandestine abortions or travel abroad to get help, and that in some areas in Poland abortion is either completely unavailable or very seriously limited. (...)

Gender equality

Poland has a solid legal framework protecting equality between men and women. However, its policy framework should be brought up to date, in particular through the finalisation, as a matter of priority, of a new national action plan on gender equality, in close consultation with all relevant actors including experienced women's rights organisations. (...)

Violence against women and domestic violence

(...) The Commissioner is concerned that the abrupt and/or unexplained interruption of access to central government funding which affected several well-established and reputable women's rights organisations in recent years has led these to limit the scope of their activities, negatively affecting their ability to help victims. She is also concerned by the stigmatising effect of the police searches carried out in the premises of some of these organisations in late 2017. Stressing that civil society organisations are often the main providers of assistance to victims of domestic violence, the Commissioner pays tribute to their commitment and dedication and calls on the Polish authorities to create and maintain safe and favourable conditions for the activities of such organisations, including through their unhindered and stable access to public funding. (...)

Source: [COE Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

Largest Pride in history of Kiev, Ukraine

Thousands have marched through the Ukrainian capital for its annual gay pride event, the largest and most peaceful the country has seen.

Ukrainian politicians joined the celebration in Kiev, with organisers putting the number of attendees at 8,000 - up from 5,000 last year.

However, there was tight security as far-right activists staged a counter-demonstration.

Despite a few scuffles, there were only nine arrests before the event.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, a former comedian who took office last month, has made clear his intention to promote tolerance in a country where the LGBT community is often under attack.

Source: [BBC](#)

First ever Tbilisi Pride takes place, not without causing an uproar

An organization made up of seven queer rights activists has managed to pull off the country's inaugural Tbilisi Pride week in Georgia. Or at least most of it.

Last week, the group hosted members of the LGBTQ community, their allies and international guests for two separate Pride events, before deciding to postpone their rally in light of ongoing political unrest. Instead, the Tbilisi Pride organizers took to the streets to join the thousands of protestors who have now been demonstrating every night since June 20.

Read a letter of concern signed by over 30 NGO's on [Human Rights House Foundation's website](#).

Source: [Global Comment](#)

FROM ASTRA MEMBERS

WHO recommendations on Safe Abortion, including Medical Abortion, discussed in the round-table, organized in Kazakhstan by RHTC

The Regional Reproductive Health Training Center (RHTC) from Moldova in cooperation with the Concept Foundation, Geneva and DKT / Woman Care Global, organized recently a roundtable entitled "Safe abortion in Kazakhstan: manual vacuum aspiration abortion method and medical abortion. The latest recommendations of the World Health Organization", which took place in the framework of the 2nd edition of the International Scientific and Educational Forum "ANA MEN BALA". The event was held from May 16 to 17 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

During this roundtable protocols, indications and contraindications on medical abortion were presented, according to the latest World Health Organization recommendations on safe abortion. The participants also discussed the importance of the quality of medicines for medical abortion and presented Medabon as a good-quality product. Other important topics discussed at the roundtable were: "Manual Vacuum Aspiration - indications, benefits and usage techniques"; Importance of pre-abortion counseling, and "The post-abortion contraception.";

Rodica Comendant, the CIDSR director and representatives from the Concept Foundation -

Fabienne Bochaton and DKT Women Care Global - Nodar Gvetadze, as well as colleagues from Kazakhstan Dr. Galina Grebennikov, director of Reproductive Health and Dr Balkenje Imanculova participated in this session's talks and debates. More information and presentations in English and Russian can be found [here](#).

Source: Reproductive Health Training Center

Youth Activism

Celebration of the International Children's Day was joined by Association Hera XXI's youth group. Two simultaneous campaigns took place in Tbilisi and Khobi, a city in the Western part of Georgia. The campaign disseminated following message: Education Is My Right. Activities of the campaign were designed to increase the accessibility of information and raise awareness of youth about the importance of healthy lifestyle and reproductive health. Educational activities, such as the quiz, Answer to Association Hera XXI took place during the campaign.

Education of professional groups

During the month of June, Hera XXI has been actively working with various professional groups, including journalist and social workers. Series of lectures/workshops and trainings were conducted in Tbilisi to equip journalists and social workers with necessary and detailed information about SRHR in order to help them to carry out their professional work more efficiently with the respect of standards and guides related to SRHR.

Advocacy Visits

In June, Association Hera XXI continued its visits in Kvemo Kartli local municipalities. In the framework of cooperation with the Administration of State Representative in Kvemo Kartli, Hera XXI meet with the representatives of 5 local municipalities to discuss the issues of SRHR reflected in government policy documents and talk about the role of local municipalities the implementation process.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Women's Resource Center's success

Women's Resource Center NGO has been chosen as a member of the Public Council under the Ministry of Healthcare of RA, which means that we will have the opportunity to voice and put issues on the agenda that relate to women's reproductive health and rights, in particular the three-day mandatory waiting period in the law on abortion; biased counseling services, as well as the problems different groups of women face and improper attitude of health care providers towards vulnerable groups of women.

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

Social media campaign on the new Northern Macedonian abortion law

On 4th of June HERA (Health Education and Research Association) has launched a social media campaign regarding the benefits from the recently adopted Abortion law in North Macedonia. Namely, within two weeks 5 animated videos were shared and informative posters were disseminated in 72 private and public health institutions in 8 cities throughout the country. The campaign lasted for two weeks and informed the public about the positive law amendments which significantly promote reproductive freedom in North Macedonia.

With the elimination of the biased counseling and 3-day waiting period, which were obligatory until now and at the same time life-threatening in some cases, wellbeing of the woman is set on the first place again. The new law foresees introduction of the medical abortion as another safe option for terminating early pregnancy, not only in the hospitals but in the properly equipped gynecological offices on a primary level, which should improve accessibility of this medical service throughout the country.

The decision for terminating the pregnancy until the 22nd week of the pregnancy will be made only by the woman who won't need to gather documents from the institutions in case of unexpected socio-economic circumstances or when a pregnancy is a consequence of a rape.

Also, a brochure was created for journalists regarding the new law which encompassed recommendations for the media on the best way to report about the abortion ([Brochure](#))

Videos could be seen on following links [video1](#), [video2](#), [video3](#), [video4](#), [video5](#).

Source: [HERA](#)

RESOURCES

New report on factual access to abortion in Romania

From the report:

Out of the 158 public hospitals which were contacted and have the infrastructure required to perform:

- *The procedure is done at any time in 40 hospitals in 24 counties, none in Bucharest (25.3% of the responding hospitals).*
- *The elective procedure is not done during religious holidays in 36 hospitals in 19 counties (22.7% of responding hospitals).*
- *The procedure is not done at all in 51 hospitals in 29 counties (32.2% of responding hospitals).*
- *I could not obtain more information by phone in 31 hospitals (19.6% of the hospitals that responded).*

It should be cleared that the elective pregnancy termination procedure does not require a referral from the GP, only proof of pregnancy. The monitoring revealed that there are hospitals in Romania where both referral from the GP and payment of a tax are required, despite it being for an elective abortion. The requested fee varies between 100 and 650 lei depending on the hospital and the need for 1. 0 7 JUNE 2019 anesthesia. The maximum amount of 650 lei was requested by the Alba County Emergency Hospital. In addition, the health card and ID card are necessary(health card was even required in the case of elective abortion, which is not covered by the state) and proof of pregnancy. Besides, Dorohoi Municipal Hospital informed us that it is necessary to bring a set of gloves for the medical staff, and the Hospital King Carol I Costești and two other hospitals that it is necessary to bring a cotton wool pack. A particular case consists of doctors from public hospitals who also run private practices and refuse to perform abortions in the hospital, only to send their patients in the private practice, like how we found in Călărași and other counties.

Source: [Centrul FILIA](#)

All-in-one platform for safe abortion

With the expansion of the Global Gag Rule and in the face of an emboldened opposition, MSI, Ipas, IPPF, PSI and SAAF are standing together in support of a woman's right to safe abortion. Launching [SafeAccess](#), a digital platform sharing best practice guidance on safe abortion and post-abortion care, we hope to open up research and implementational knowledge from across the SRHR sector.

Sharing tangible resources, such as how-to guides, infographics, videos, toolkits and more, SafeAccess will become an online home for safe abortion guidance. Through this, we hope to support providers and policy influencers to expand access to safe services globally.

In a [joint statement](#), the CEOs of MSI, IPPF, Ipas, PSI and SAAF shared:

“As part of our commitment to both sharing knowledge and to a more collective approach, MSI, IPPF, Ipas, PSI and SAAF are delighted to launch the SafeAccess Hub. As implementing organisations, we share our own learnings on what works, with the hope that those on the frontline can use these lessons to expand access to life-saving services.

“With growing opposition to reproductive rights, it is more important than ever that our community comes together in support of a woman’s right to safe abortion. It is time to remove barriers to access, to put women at the centre of reproductive health programmes and to finally eliminate unsafe abortion, together.”

[Safe Access Hub](#)

New study published. Building a transformative agenda for accountability in SRHR: lessons learned from SRHR and accountability literatures

Global strategies and commitments for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) underscore the need to strengthen rights-based accountability processes. Yet there are gaps between these ambitious SRHR rights frameworks and the constrained socio-political lived realities within which these frameworks are implemented. This paper addresses these gaps by reviewing the evidence on the dynamics and concerns related to operationalising accountability in the context of SRHR. It is based on a secondary analysis of a systematic review that examined the published evidence on SRHR and accountability and also draws on the broader literature on accountability for health. Key themes include the political and ideological context, enhancing community voice and health system responsiveness, and recognising the complexity of health systems. While there is a range of accountability relationships that can be leveraged in the health system, the characteristics specific to SRHR need to be considered as they colour the capabilities and conditions in which accountability efforts occur.

Source: [Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

1-2 October 2019 - [INSPIRE Conference](#) in Athens, Greece

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 - Novgorod 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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