



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

Warsaw/Brussels, 25 February 2010

László Andor

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
B-1049 Brussels
BELGIUM

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of ASTRA regional network of NGOs I would like to congratulate you being approved by the European Parliament as a Member of the new European Commission. We know that your previous experience and competence will allow you to successfully head this important commissioner portfolio and the challenges it will involve. We are convinced that the new Commission is ready to successfully work in the coming years. We have no doubts that your experience will help in addressing global challenges by using the EU justice policy instruments.

At ASTRA we believe that one of these challenges is the issue of equality between men and women. ASTRA, therefore, welcomed the latest resolution of European Parliament on the new "Report on Equality between men and women in the European Union" that called for the right of women to have the right for full control over their sexual and reproductive rights.

This resolution is of particular importance and meaning for women citizens of European countries and we believe that as a Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion you are obliged to ensure to no form inequality is experienced by European women.

Within Member States, citizens in lower socioeconomic groups have significantly lower life expectancies and lower health status. The situation is even worse in the newer Member States as they are having less developed public health infrastructures and relatively poorer societies. This is especially evident in the sexual and reproductive health area. The disparities between Member States in terms of implementation of reproductive and sexual rights which often do not respond to the needs of the society leads to significant gaps in full realization of citizens rights. ASTRA believes that you will work towards strengthening European Union policy within your portfolio to close the gap between the more disadvantaged and more resourceful parts of the EU.

We will support you in reaching this ambitious task!

We would be happy to provide you with any further information or material that would assist your work in the European Commission. We are looking forward to establish more direct contact with you to work together with us on a number of gender equality issues. We would very much appreciate the possibility to meet you in a near future to share with you our common vision of what the European Union can do to support women's rights.

On behalf of ASTRA network, I also encourage you to take into consideration and implement within the area of your work any relevant action that would result in strengthening gender equality. We hope that during your term as the Commissioner you will ensure that women's issues remain one of the key objectives of the European Commission work programme for the coming years.

I am publishing this as an open letter on our website.

My best wishes for your new term in office.

Yours sincerely,



Wanda Nowicka
ASTRA Coordinator

ASTRA members:

Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association, Armenia - Women's Rights Centre, Azerbaijan - Centre "Women and Modern World", Belarus - Women's Independent Democratic Movement of Belarus, Bulgaria - Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Gender Education, Research and Technologies, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), CESI - Centre for Education and Counselling of Woman, Women's Centre for Sexuality and the Prevention, Research, and Combating of Sexual Violence - Women's Room, Georgia - Women's Centre, Kazakhstan - The Legal Centre for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim", Lithuania - Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, Latvia - Latvia's Association for Family Planning And Sexual Health, Macedonia - Sheltar Centar, Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Centre, Poland Federation for Women and Family Planning, Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health, AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis, Russia - Institute of State and Law, Russian Academy of Sciences, ANO "Women's Health", Novogorod Gender Centre, Slovakia - Pro – choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Charitable SALUS Foundation, ASTRA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Centre for Reproductive Rights, Ipas.

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