



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

Warsaw/Brussels, 25 February 2010

John Dalli

European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy
European Commission
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.

The right to health is embedded within European values. At ASTRA we struggle that this right is equally appreciated by European men and woman. However, as you must be aware there still exist inequalities in terms of access to health between genders. We trust that you as Commissioner for Health will address these differences.

ASTRA believes that within these the most important is that of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). You must be aware that in a number of European Union countries, including the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, reproductive health remains to be inadequately addressed and as a consequence women health and life is endangered.

This needs to be urgently addressed and we call on you to do your utmost to remove any existing barriers at the EU level that prevent women from having full and EU wide access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Having this in mind, ASTRA network 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 control over their sexual and reproductive rights. This resolution is of particular importance and meaning for women citizens of European countries with restrictive antiabortion legislations as it strengthens their Fundamental Rights.

ASTRA believes that this important resolution will be an important step to integrate SRHR in in all EU policies and programmes and that you as new European Commissioner for Health will take this issue forward.

We are looking for your support for 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 and other topics

related to sexual and reproductive health. 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 health and free reproductive choices.

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 and sexual and reproductive health and rights not currently covered by existing EU laws. 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", Novgorod 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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