



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

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Swedish Presidency of the EU,

Jeanette Lund
Attaché
Employment and Social Affairs
Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU
Square de Meeûs, 30
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 289 57 15
Fax: +32-2-289 56 00
jeanette.lund@foreign.ministry.se

I am writing regarding the forthcoming first meeting of the **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)** under the Swedish Presidency, 30 November – 1 December 2009 in Brussels.

ASTRA Network is working in the field of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). ASTRA is constantly monitoring the situation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as concerns reproductive and sexual health and prohibiting discrimination on grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. ASTRA strives to increase awareness about SRHR issues and to ensure that the specific reality of women's sexual and reproductive rights and health in Central and Eastern Europe receive the highest priority on international, regional and national agendas, in particular at the EU and UN. ASTRA as a network of 29 NGOs from throughout the region, including NGOs in both member states of the EU and in neighboring countries works to promote and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights at the regional and international level, including at the European Union. Our aim is to raise awareness **about women's health** and reproductive choices and to build capacity, knowledge and to improve policy standards in this respect. In our work we pay special **attention to young people** and other underserved groups.

With this letter, we would like to ensure you that ASTRA Network truly appreciates the fact that the agenda of this EPSCO meeting addresses the follow-up of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform of Action - "Beijing 15+"

In March 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Emphasis will be placed on the sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals. Member States, representatives of non-governmental organizations and of UN entities will participate in the session. Ongoing national and regional review processes are feeding into the global review process.

The General Assembly is expected to mark the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in a commemorative meeting during CSW.

Having this in mind, ASTRA sees the Review of Beijing 15+ Progress as an opportunity to reaffirm commitments of heads of states to sexual health, reproductive health and rights.

Therefore, we would like to express concerns regarding some developments of the new anti-discrimination Directive according to which reproductive rights might be excluded from the proposed Directive protection. We hope that the Swedish Presidency will remain committed to gender equality in all spheres of women's life including their sexuality and reproduction as indicated in the Platform for Action without any exclusions.

Women in Europe want to enjoy all their rights including reproductive rights as agreed in Beijing 15 years ago.

I truly believe this issue will be addressed during the forthcoming EPSCO meeting.

On behalf of ASTRA Network

Yours sincerely,



Wanda Nowicka
ASTRA Coordinator

ASTRA members:

Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association, 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, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Gender Education, Research and Technologies, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), CESI - Center 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 Center, 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 - Sheltar Centar, Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Center, 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 Center, Slovakia - Pro – choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Charitable SALUS Foundation, ASTRA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Center for Reproductive Rights, Ipas, Women's Link Worldwide/Colombia.

ASTRA Secretariat, ul. Nowolipie 13/15, 00-150 Warsaw, Poland, ph/fax 48.22.635 9395,

nwanda@federa.org.pl

