



**Federation for Women and Family Planning**  
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Warsaw, February 12, 2010

Mr. Robert MADELIN  
Director-General for Health and Consumer Protection

Dear Mr. Director-General,

I am writing to you on behalf of Federation for Women and Family Planning and ASTRA Network in order to thank you for invitation to participate in Sexual Health Forum on 13<sup>th</sup> of January. Inspired by the Forum I would like to continue this important discussion and express our willingness to further contribute to the debate on sexual health strategy for youth of Europe. We would like to encourage the Commission to include a recommendation that the whole of Europe works towards ensuring access to reproductive health supplies and services for all youth in the it's programme on sexual health of young people.

Moreover, we share your belief that it is important to create a strategy targeted explicitly at young people regarding improving their health, and we welcome the idea to stress the human right's approach in the future activities of Commission.

However as a representative of regional network of NGOs, ASTRA Central and Eastern Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health, I am quite concerned with the influence the current composition of the Forum may have on the discussion. Although all the invited experts present exquisite level of expertise, the standpoint they represent suggests that comprehensive sexuality education is accessible for youth in the whole EU. As a representative of a network gathering various SRHR organizations from the region of Central and Eastern Europe, I must stress that this is not the case.

European Union has formally recognized the essential nature of sexuality education in official documents dating back decades, under areas such as human rights, public health, HIV prevention, youth, and gender equality. Further, sexual health education is explicitly included in provisions of



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CEDAW, CEDAW General Comment 21 on the rights to health, CESC General Comment 14 on the rights to health Cairo, and Beijing. Yet, many Member States continue to directly deny adolescents their right to sexuality education, violating their rights to highest attainable standard of health, to be free from discrimination, to self-determination, and to education. The EU has a duty and an obligation to address this issue and to operationalize the implementation and realization of official and formal commitments to comprehensive sexuality education for all EU citizens.

As you know, in countries like Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Lithuania do not guarantee their youth the access to comprehensive education. I would like to use the opportunity of being included in the Sexual Health Forum to remind the Directorate General ASTRA Network's and Federation's for Women and Family Planning main postulates regarding the accessibility of comprehensive sexuality education:

- Legislation mandating compulsory comprehensive sexuality education in all Member States in order to fulfill government obligations and responsibilities and to cease violating the rights of youth and adults alike
- System of accountability and transparency to monitor the status of sexuality education in Member States and to develop mechanism to ensure that these obligations and rights are not violated in the future, paying particular attention to ensuring that these mechanisms are accessible to adolescents
- Guidelines to support Member States in implementing evidence-based programs which respect human rights
- Direct Member States to engage with youth in the development, execution and operation, and monitoring and evaluation of all comprehensive sexuality education programmes in order to respect the rights of youth to participate in the realization of their own health and well-being

Regarding the crucial role of the EU in making healthcare a more accessible, high-quality, sustainable and safe service for citizens, ASTRA Network and Federation for Women and Family Planning would like to encourage you to address the status and access to information of sexual and reproductive health for youth in Central and Eastern Europe as one of priority issues in sexual health strategy for coming years.

Further, as it regards the Sexual Health Forum, I would like you to consider widening the spectrum of experts through inviting representative of different countries. Therefore, I would like you to consider inviting experts and representatives of the NGOs from Eastern and Central Europe as it will enrich the discussion with the diverse European perspectives of underrepresented countries.



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Looking forward to continuing fruitful cooperation with DG SANCO,

Yours sincerely,

*Wanda Nowicka*

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President

Federation for Women and Family Planning  
ASTRA Network Secretariat