



## Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

### CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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### BURNING ISSUE

#### **The UN High Level Panel released its report on future development.**

On May 30<sup>th</sup> the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons submitted to the UN Secretary General the final report on Post-2015 Development Agenda entitled [“A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development”](#). The launch event and meeting with various stakeholders, including the civil society, was held in New York on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

This report is the culmination of the ongoing for several months consultations of the High Level Panel members with various stakeholders, including the civil society, through various channels: online consultations, submission of statements, four in person High Level Panel meetings. It brings a new perspective on the future development and cooperation. The universal development agenda in this report builds on the Millennium Development Goals and recognizes 11 universal goals with targets which will complete the unfinished business of the MDGs.

The Goal 4 “**Ensure Healthy Lives**” includes strong reference to SRHR which is a critical priority in its own right - “*Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is an essential component of a healthy society*” (page 39). The report states that full realization of both sexual and reproductive health, and sexual and reproductive rights, requires universal access to comprehensive, rights-based sexual and reproductive health services, as well as is critical for the empowerment of young people. However, abortion is mentioned once in the context of unplanned pregnancies which

are a consequence of “222 million women in the world who want to prevent pregnancy but are not using effective, modern methods of contraception. This results in 80 million unplanned pregnancies, 30 million unplanned births and 20 million unsafe abortions every year” (page 39).

Goal 2 “**Empower Girls and Women and achieve gender equality**” clearly states the importance of gender equality in all aspects of life and the necessity of its integration across all goals.

Moving forward, this report is a big step in the Post-2015 process and there is now time to look to the Open Working Group and other parts of this process which will be able to build on this report and also ensure prioritizing SRHR issues as well human-rights based approach to population.

Source: [www.post2015hlp.org](http://www.post2015hlp.org)

## **REGIONAL UPDATES**

### **Anti-choice moves in Georgia.**

The Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch, Ilia II, has addressed the Georgian authorities to introduce anti-abortion legislation as the demographic situation of Georgia is worsening and abortion is a “heinous murder” in itself. Supporters and protesters on women’s free choice confronted each other in front of the State Chancellery after the Patriarch’s statement. Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili responded to this call by stating that the Government has already taken measures to improve the country’s demographic situation and that the main focus should not go to restricting access to abortion but to supporting families in economic manner. Georgia has one of the highest abortions rates in the world and the sex ration for girls and boys has reached a worrying trend.

Source: <http://geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=28084&lang=eng>

### **Lithuania: the Seimas gives its initial backing to a proposed abortion ban bill.**

On Tuesday May 28<sup>th</sup> the Lithuanian Parliament secured the abortion ban bill, proposed by the Electoral Action of Poles, to go to the parliamentary Committees on Human Rights, Health Affairs and Legal Affairs for further considerations. 46 MPs voted in favour, 19 were against and 25 abstained. It will be sent back to the Seimas during the fall session. The bill was supported by 20 representatives of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, eight members of the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania political group, eight representatives of the Labour Party and individual members of other political groups. Only members of the Liberal Movement political groups unanimously voted against the bill. Under the proposed bill abortion would be possible only if it posed a threat to life or health of the woman or was the result of criminal acts. In such cases, abortion would be performed only by 12<sup>th</sup> week . Currently, abortions are allowed by the 12<sup>th</sup> week with no additional conditions. Around 10 000 abortions are performed in Lithuania every year. This proposed anti-abortion bill has aroused a lot of controversy in the country. One month ago the Lithuanian Social Democratic Women’s Alliance appealed to members of the Seimas to dismiss the bill proposed by the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania. “Banning abortion is an act of violation of the European Convention of Human Rights which Lithuania has signed” as was written in their statement. The Alliance pointed to Poland as a negative example of introducing such law: “Polish women risk their life and health by terminating their pregnancies abroad”. They also underlined that abortion is not treated as a method of family planning and women should have the right to make their own decision in regards to pregnancy. If Lithuania introduces the law which will dramatically limit women’s right to choose and access abortion it will be the fourth country in the EU, after Poland, Ireland and Malta to have banned abortion. The proposed bill is almost a copy of the existing Polish law which bans abortions except in case of rape, incest, fetal malformation or a threat to the woman’s health or life. The

Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania had already submitted an anti-abortion proposal in the Seimas in year 2005, it was even backed by it in 2007 until eventually dismissed.

Source: [www.lithuaniatribune.com/39499/seimas-voted-in-favour-of-the-abortion-ban-bill-201339499](http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/39499/seimas-voted-in-favour-of-the-abortion-ban-bill-201339499)  
[www.rynekzdrowia.pl/Polityka-zdrowotna/Litwa-Sejm-przyjal-w-pierwszym-czytaniu-projekt-ustawy-antyaborcyjnej,130932,14.html](http://www.rynekzdrowia.pl/Polityka-zdrowotna/Litwa-Sejm-przyjal-w-pierwszym-czytaniu-projekt-ustawy-antyaborcyjnej,130932,14.html)

### **Macedonia's Government to limit access to abortion.**

The Macedonian Ministry of Health proposed amendments to the existing laws on abortion, which are already up for parliamentary debate. The officials claim these changes are only being made out of concern for the reproductive health of women. The proposed bill includes however several articles which restrict access to abortion. These include: the woman is to submit a written application in order the pregnancy to be terminated as well as a written consent for the procedure to be performed; mandatory pre-abortion counseling and waiting period of three days after the pre-abortion counseling, partner (husband) of the woman is to be informed about the procedure and the doctor is also to submit a written confirmation.

Source: [www.hera.org.mk](http://www.hera.org.mk)  
[www.balkaninsight.com/en/blog/macedonian-officials-concern-for-my-health-is-phony](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/blog/macedonian-officials-concern-for-my-health-is-phony)

### **New study says one in four women in Poland had an abortion.**

According to the results of the study conducted by a Polish public opinion research institute CBOS on over 3500 women at least one-quarter, possibly even more - up to one-third of women in Poland have had an abortion at least once. Taking into account the sensitive nature of the subject and the fact that abortion access has been heavily restricted for the past twenty years, the study was designed to ensure higher probability of results through increased anonymity. The study revealed a surprising fact that women declaring right-wing political views and actively engaging in religious practices have had more abortions than those less/non-religious and progressive in views. Researches have also admitted that the ban on abortion in Poland might have impacted the public opinion – in the past years we have noticed a decline in support for the woman's right to choose. Since termination of pregnancy is presented as a criminal, shameful act, people are more likely to declare their opposition to abortion rights. As we can see from the study of women's reality, views are one thing and real life decisions are often different from declarations. Two decades of work done by the Federation for Women and Family Planning, including counseling to women facing unwanted pregnancies confirm what the study says – that women in Poland are not some exception from the rule and need access to abortions the same as women in other countries of the world. The effect of the restrictive law is not the reduction of the number of procedures but the elimination of abortions performed in a safe, legal environment. We hope the government will seriously consider the results of this study and the recommendations of the Federation. It's time for bold decisions necessary to ensure full access to reproductive rights which are, after all, basic human rights.

Source: [www.federa.org.pl](http://www.federa.org.pl)

### **Croatia suspended Sexuality Education in schools after strong Catholic Church opposition.**

Only after a few months of teaching the Croatian Constitutional Court suspended all sexuality education classes in public schools. Introduced by the Prime Minister in February these classes were launched to “raise awareness of sexual health” among Croatian youth. The Catholic Church strongly opposed this programme and with support of church-supported associations claimed that lack of parental authorization of this programme stood in contradiction with the constitution. The Prime Minister, Zoran Milanovic, will continue to fight for sexuality education classes despite strong opposition from conservative groups.

Source: [www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/24/croatia-sex-education-catholic-church-court-ruling\\_n\\_3332518.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/24/croatia-sex-education-catholic-church-court-ruling_n_3332518.html)

### **New State Policy on Gender Equality in Georgia.**

The Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia launched a series of discussions about the state policy on gender equality. On 24-26 April, members of the Georgian Parliament, representatives of the key ministries and international organizations discussed the ways to promote equal participation of women and men in decision making and politics. This included stronger representation of women in local self-governance and the introduction of specific mechanisms, such as quotas, to promote women to elected positions and political party lists. Finally, the working groups discussed the adoption of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2014-2016. The UN, with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is implementing a joint programme “To Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia”. Three UN agencies are involved in this project: UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women.

Source: HERA XXI, Georgian member of ASTRA Network  
[http://www.undp.org.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=22&info\\_id=11779](http://www.undp.org.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=22&info_id=11779)

### **Russian “No anti-AIDS strategy”.**

The Russian government is taking no steps to fight the spread of AIDS in the country. "We have no national strategy to fight against AIDS," said the director of the Russian Federal Agency against AIDS, Vadim Pokrovsky. The number of deaths caused by this disease is growing, the rate new HIV infections grew by 12% in 2012 with 69,649 new cases registered against 62,384 cases in 2011.

Source: [www.france24.com/en/20130516-russia-has-no-anti-aids-strategy-official](http://www.france24.com/en/20130516-russia-has-no-anti-aids-strategy-official)

### **ICPD+20 Review Process in Europe**

The current ICPD + 20 process is aiming to review the implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) agreed by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. In the region comprising Europe, North America, Central Asia and Israel, the [UN Economic Commission for Europe](#) has coordinated the conduct of global survey on ICPD PoA implementation in its Member States. Based on the results and available data UNECE is preparing a report which will assess the progress made and identify good practices and constraints in implementing ICPD PoA in the region. This report will be launched at the Regional Conference [“Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century”](#) on 1-2 July which will mark the culmination of the review process in this region. It will play a very important role in the global ICPD Review Process and in the negotiations about the

future post-2015 development framework. Prior to this conference a series of thematic meetings, co-organized by UNFPA and UNECE, are held across the region. The ***“Inequalities, social inclusion and right”*** thematic meeting was held in Belgrad on 15-16 April. The ***“Families, sexual and reproductive health over the life course”*** meeting took place in Bucharest on 25-26 April.

Source: [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl), [www.unece.org](http://www.unece.org), <http://icpdbeyond2014.org>

## GLOBAL UPDATES

**Women Deliver Conference.** The 3rd Women Deliver global conference took place on 28-30 May in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. More than 120 concurrent sessions, high-level plenaries, skills-building workshops, and ministerial and parliamentary forums inspired and informed the participants' work to build a better world for girls and women. The Women Deliver 2013 conference was one of the key dates in the international population and development calendar. With the 2015 Millennium Development Goal deadline rapidly approaching, the time is now to deliver for girls and women. Women Deliver 2013 serves as a global platform for ensuring that the health and rights of girls and women remain top priorities now, and for decades to come. Full programme can be accessed [here](#). Visit the website ([WD2013.org](http://WD2013.org)) and follow [@womendeliver](#) on Twitter for more information.

**First global conference on contraception, reproductive and sexual health** was held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 22-25 May.

Source: [www.escrih.eu/events/esc-events/2013](http://www.escrih.eu/events/esc-events/2013)

**May 17th – International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia** was celebrated in over 100 countries of the world and brought attention to legal discriminations, social homophobia and transphobia which deny millions of people across the world their basic human dignity.

Source: <http://dayagainsthomophobia.org/>

### **28<sup>th</sup> May - International Day of Action for Women's Health**

Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights is coordinating the global May 28<sup>th</sup> campaign which is dedicated to **ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTIVES AS A HUMAN RIGHT**. Governments from all over the world have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to have access to contraceptive services and information, accordingly with the human rights treaties and international human rights standards and the consensus documents as well, such as the ICPD PoA and Beijing Platform of Action.

Source: <http://wgnrr.org/may-28-2013-call-action>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ICPD+20 Review Process

UNECE Regional Conference [“Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century”](#) will be held on 1-2 July, 2013 in Geneva. The event will bring together high-level experts, officials, youth and civil society representatives to discuss the outcomes of the national surveys and expert meetings, and build consensus around regional priorities for the future. The outcome of the European Population Forum will feed into the global ICPD Beyond 2014 review, and will inform discussions on the development agenda for the time after the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015.

[International Conference on Human Rights](#), co-hosted by the Government of the Netherlands, UNFPA and the the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will provide an opportunity to assess the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action through an examination of the nexus between human rights, equality, equity and population and development, including in the key areas of gender, empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. It will be held in the Hague, Netherlands, on July 7-10.

### Post-2015

The 4th meeting of the intergovernmental **Open Working Group** on sustainable development goals will be convened on 17-19 June 2013. The meeting will be broadcasted through United Nations webcast. The themes for the meeting include Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture and Health, Population Dynamics. See the meeting’s [agenda](#) for further information.

Source: <http://ngosbeyond2014.org/articles/2013/6/4/fourth-session-of-the-open-working-group-on-sustainable-deve.html>

## YOUTH

### **Regional Youth Forum for UNECE region**

In order to offer an essential voice to young people from UNECE region (Europe, North America, Central Asia and Israel) that could be later transported into shaping the future development agenda at the UNECE conference [“Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century”](#), UNFPA EECARO hosted a Regional Youth Forum on 30-31st of May, in Istanbul. The event brought together 40 young people from the UNECE region to reflect on Global Youth Forum Bali Declaration and translate the global recommendation into actions, considering the regional context. UNFPA reached out to regional youth networks to mobilize young people in the region to provide input and establish a vision and ICPD priorities for the region over the next decade. The participants represented various youth organizations and networks working in the areas of youth and adolescents health, health, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, employment, youth leadership and participation in decision making processes, gender issues etc.

The Bali Declaration and the themes of the upcoming Regional Population Conference were at the core of the process and young people discussed and suggested key actions which would ensure the

implementation of the recommendations in the region. It is one of the components of the overall initiative and it is expected to generate further input from the youth perspective regarding the future priorities for the region. The meeting also selected 15 delegates for the regional UNECE Conference in Geneva (1-2 July), in order to present the outcomes of the Regional Youth Forum, along with the input gathered from the online platform and the national consultations.

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#)

## PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

- **State Of The World's Mothers Report 2013** is released each year around Mother's Day to provide a global status report of maternal and infant health worldwide. It includes data on women's health, children's health and economic wellbeing for 176 countries. On the global ranking system for maternal and infant health Finland, Sweden and Norway top the list, while Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo close it.

Source: <http://www.savethechildrenweb.org/SOWM-2013/>

- Annual "**Report on Progress on equality between women and men in 2012**" in the EU. In the report, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights are not mentioned even once.

Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/swd\\_2013\\_171\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/swd_2013_171_en.pdf)

- The Guttmacher Institute and the International Planned Parenthood Federation launched [\*\*\*Demystifying Data: A Guide to Using Evidence to Improve Young People's Sexual Health and Rights\*\*\*](#), a new publication designed to make accessible and contextualize a wealth of data on adolescent sexual health and rights in 30 countries, and to provide guidance on how to apply the data to advocacy, education and service provision efforts. The guide is designed to be a resource for youth advocates, sexuality educators and service providers as well as others working to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people around the world.

Source: <http://www.guttmacher.org/media/nr/2013/05/15/index.html>

## CALL TO ACTION

Lithuanian lawmakers decided to press ahead with work on draft legislation restricting access to abortion. Help us to pressure decision makers to express their support for women's human rights. Send a letter today to prevent criminalization of abortion in Lithuania and support the [ONLINE CAMPAIGN](#).

**ASTRA Network members:** Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association, Armenia - Women's Rights Center, Armenia - Society Without Violence, Armenia - Women's Resource 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, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), Croatia - CESI - Center for Education and Counseling of Woman, Croatia - Women's Room, Georgia - Women's Center, Georgia – Hera XXI, 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 – Shelter Center, Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Center, Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning, Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - A.L.E.G., Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health, Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis, Russia - Novogorod Gender Center, Slovakia – Pro Choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation, Uzbekistan – Future Generation.

Prepared by Marta Szostak

Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

**ASTRA Secretariat**

Federation for Women and Family Planning

Nowolipie 13/15, 00-150 Warsaw, Poland

ph/fax 48.22.635 9395, [federa@astra.org.pl](mailto:federa@astra.org.pl), [www.astra.org.pl](http://www.astra.org.pl)