



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

Polish Government limits access to emergency contraception

On May 25th the Polish Government voted in favour of limiting access to emergency contraception violating women's reproductive rights few months after the "Black Protest".

The draft proposal was put forward by the ruling Law and Justice party and accepted for further works in February this year. Besides issues focusing on patient's access to medicines it also aimed to make all contraception, including emergency contraception, available only on prescription from doctor. 242 Members of Parliament voted in favour of this ruling, including all representatives from the Law and Justice party who have a majority in the Parliament, 188 against and 9 abstained from voting. 21 did not attend the session.

As result of the C(2015)51 ruling from the European Commission, and upon recommendation from the European Medicines Agency (EMA), in January 2015 emergency contraceptive with ulipristal

acetate, registered in Poland under the brand name ellaOne, received the authorization to be sold without prescription across the European Union (EU). The ulipristal acetate emergency contraceptive pill (UPA ECP) – ellaOne - became available in Polish pharmacies without prescription from April 2015 contributing to rising the standard of reproductive health services and supplies for Polish women and girls, and expanding the postcoital contraceptive choices of women.

Mr. Konstanty Radziwił, the Polish Minister of Health announced that he, as a doctor, would never prescribe emergency contraception to a raped woman. One of the arguments for reinstating the provision of a mandatory doctor's prescription for emergency contraceptives is the apparent (yet not proven) 'misuse of the pill' by teenage girls in Poland and its detrimental effects on women's health.

The planned restrictions will greatly impede the lives of women and girls and contribute to the sales of this product from unsafe sources. The economical aspect of this decision is crucial to note as only women who can afford to visit a doctor at a private facility (gynecologists at public facilities have an average waiting time adding up to app. 18 days) will be able to do so. This ruling, besides weakening women's reproductive health and rights, will contribute to a rise in the number of unplanned pregnancies and abortions in a country where access to a safe and legal abortion is already incredibly difficult.

Poland becomes one of the very few European countries where such an obstacle in accessing emergency contraception will exist. Such a requirement is also present in Hungary, Albania and Russian Federation.

Source: [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Reproductive rights activists counteract the "March for Life" in Croatia

An estimated 15,000 people turned up for the second annual March for Life on Saturday, May 20, 2017 in the capital city of Croatia, Zagreb and in Split. The march in each location attracted media attention at a time when the Constitutional Court of Croatia earlier this year reached a decision that demands parliament to adopt the new abortion law within the next two years.

The president of the Croatian Medical Chamber (Hrvatska liječnička komora, HLK) Mr. Trpimir Goluža publically participated in the March for Life. In addition, he posed for media photographs with Željka Markić, head of the In the Name of the Family which a political agenda which seeks to prohibit safe and legal abortions, decrease reproductive rights overall, delegitimize gender equality, women's and LGBTIQ rights in Croatia. Group of human rights NGOs sent a letter to international expert organizations claiming that Mr. Goluža, a specialist gynecologist-obstetrician, used his public office to express his personal religious beliefs on a matter that is at the very core of his profession, thus breaking ethical and professional standards. The authors of the letter claimed that this cannot be viewed as merely an expression of his personal religious beliefs and ambitions, but instead must be recognized as part of a wider political agenda that threatens to roll back the state of women's sexual and reproductive rights in Croatia ([see the statement here](#)).

Davor Ivo Stier, Croatia's deputy prime minister and minister of foreign and European affairs, brought his family to the March for Life. Stier, who also attended last year's first March for Life as a European parliamentarian, stated publicly that his political position has not caused him to change his values. Earlier this year, Stier created an uproar at an EU Commission meeting by stating that Croatia officially does not consider abortion to be part of the agenda for "reproductive rights."

Organizers of anti-choice March for Life in Zagreb and the city of Split have been accused by some politicians and Platform for women's reproductive rights of politicizing the events by staging them on the day when Croatia is supposed to descend into a pre-election "silence", ahead of local elections. Platform for women's reproductive rights warned that the March is a political gathering that has nothing to do with the preservation of life but has an agenda to restrict abortion accessibility and to make it illegal. In other words, to take away a women's right to decide if she wants to, when and with whom to have children.

The Platform for women's reproductive rights organized a series of actions along the route of the so-called March for life in Zagreb, as well on the buildings on the main square in which the March took place. All actions were organized in order to highlight the real intentions of the gatherings and warned that this is a walk on women and their rights. A transparent that said "March for life is attacking women" was being carried in front of the March for life, non-violent sit-in action of women. Several activists were held under arrest. Two big transparents stating "Church and the state in a war against women" and "March for life is attacking women" were put on two buildings that were facing the main square. The Croatian activists have sent out a message that they will not let women's rights be eliminated.

The Platform demands legal, accessible, safe and free abortion. We demand accessible and free contraception and adequate comprehensive sexuality education based on facts. We demand the abatement of the instrument of the objection of conscience. We demand a family, demographic and social politics that will make it possible for a woman to make a decision about child-bearing or the lack of it and family planning.

Although abortion is legal in Croatia, it is practically unavailable. As a result of high prices, the conscientious objection and stigma many women are not in a position to exercise their right. The Platform demands legal, accessible, safe and free abortion. We demand accessible and free contraception and adequate comprehensive sexuality education based on facts.

Source: [CESI](#), [Libela](#)

Poland undergoes Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council

The [27th session of the Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR) was held at the UN Human Rights Council, in Geneva, from 1-12 May 2017. Eleven countries were reviewed during UPR27, among them Poland. The Federation for Women and Family in collaboration with the [Sexual Rights Initiative](#) submitted a report ([read it here](#)) to the Human Rights Council on the UPR focusing on violations of women's sexual and reproductive rights in Poland including restricted access to abortion and contraception, biased and poor quality comprehensive sexuality education, poor ante-natal care and lack of access to medically assisted reproduction. The escalating violations of Polish women's sexual and

reproductive rights place their lives and health at risk and undermine their rights to bodily autonomy and integrity, privacy, to be free from torture, to education and to self-determination.

The UPR outcome for each State reviewed during UPR27 will be adopted at the 35th session of the HRC (June 2017). The outcome report indicates which recommendations the State agrees to implement, and its responses to other recommendations. This is the only opportunity for civil society to make an oral statement during the official UPR process. The Federation for Women and Family in collaboration with Sexual Rights Initiative will work to ensure that sexual and reproductive rights are visible during this segment of the UPR process.

The intervening period is an opportunity to engage in dialogue with States on accepting relevant recommendations – and, at the same time, not accepting those recommendations that are inconsistent with human rights norms and standards. It is also a means for gaining the support of media and the general public.

Deferred Recommendations during the 27th UPR session:

- Amend the Act on Equal Treatment in order to prohibit discrimination, in a comprehensive manner, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, in all areas and sectors, in particular, taking into account access to education, health, social protection and housing (Mexico)
- Expand the scope of the compulsory course on family life education, to provide a comprehensive and age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and to ensure unimpeded access to sexual and reproductive health services, including to safe and legal abortions (Slovenia)
- Strengthen the elimination of all forms of violence against women by criminalizing domestic violence and marital rape (Belgium)
- Ensure that women are provided the necessary medical and professional service to exercise their legal right to termination of pregnancy, and ascertain that women have the right to decide over their own bodies (Sweden)

[Click here for the full list of recommendations](#) made related to sexual rights, including State responses during the 27th UPR session.

Source: [Federation for Women and Family, Sexual Rights Initiative](#)

Women's rights in Poland: MEPs from FEMM Committee checked the situation in the country

MEPs of the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality visited Poland from 22 - 24 May. They observed the situation of women's rights in the country with a special focus on the implementation of the Istanbul convention and victims of violence, sexual and reproductive rights and women's economic empowerment. The delegation composed of Maria ARENA (S&D, Belgium), Malin BJÖRK (GUE/NGL, Sweden), Terry REINTKE (Greens, Germany) and Daniela AIUTO (EFDD, Italy) met with representatives of the civil society, among these was ASTRA Network and the Federation

for Women and Family Planning, Polish authorities, Deputies and Senators, academics, human rights professionals and service providers in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation on women's rights in Poland.

MEPs are very pleased to have received the assurance of the Government of Poland of its commitment to the Istanbul Convention in view of not only maintaining it, but also of fully implementing it. Furthermore, the Members consider positive the objective of the Government to fight against poverty.

On the other hand the Delegation has serious concerns that the application of the current law regulating access to abortion does not provide a guarantee of legal and safe abortion. Moreover, concerns persist that the said law could possibly become more restrictive in future. The Delegation reiterates the European Parliament's position that denial of access to sexual and reproductive health services including abortion is a violation of fundamental women's rights and asks the Government to ensure the full implementation of the national legislation. Members stress the importance of active prevention, information and education policies which would inevitably include the access to contraception and the non-discriminatory sex education which keeps in step with the times. The Members are further concerned about the shrinking public space for the civil society and emphasize the importance of ensuring diversity of voices in a democratic society. In that regard, it is imperative that the Commission pays close attention to this phenomenon and ensures that the women's rights organisations are adequately funded, in particular to deliver the needed specialized support and protection services to women, in accordance with the Victims' Rights Directive.

View the press conference summarizing the visit here: <http://bit.ly/2qVNH4k>

View photos from their visit here: <http://bit.ly/2qVY2nI>

Source: [European Parliament](#)

Members of the European Parliament visit Croatia

Croatian MEP Biljana Borzan organised visit of S&D and Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) Mission to Croatia beginning of May. MEPs observed the situation of women's rights in the country with a special focus on sexual and reproductive rights. The delegation composed of Iratxe Garcia Perez, (Spain), Biljana Borzan (Croatia), Liliana Rodrigues (Portugal) and Julie Ward MEP (Great Britain) met with representatives of the civil society, members of the Parliament, Ministry of Health and service providers in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation on reproductive rights in Croatia. They also organised public event „The female body as political battleground: sexual and reproductive health and rights in Croatia“

Please find short video about their visit [here](#).

Source: [CESI](#)

From ASTRA Members

Public debate with medical professionals and civil society on abortion law in Croatia

CESI and Initiative of pro-choice doctors organized a public debate on 9th of May: [“The abortion law for the 21st century”](#) in order to emphasize that abortion should be legal, safe and accessible to all women. The Croatian Constitutional Court reaffirmed in March this year the constitutionality of access to abortion and ruled that by allowing women’s access to abortion on request within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy, the law gives effect to women’s constitutional rights to privacy, liberty, and personality and complied with international human rights law and comparative European law. As the 1978 law predated the current Croatian Constitution, the Court requested that the Croatian Parliament adopts new legislation within two years. It is expected that the current Croatian Government, under the pressure of ultraconservative forces, will attempt to severely limit access to safe abortion through mandatory counseling and waiting periods and promotion of conscientious objection. The conclusions which emphasise that the Croatian authorities must not deviate from universal and regional human rights principles and standards that protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women were sent to decision makers with request to include the civil society and women’s groups recommendation into the new abortion law.

Source: [CESI](#)

Queer Monologues in Armenia

Within the context of this year’s International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia Society Without Violence (SWV) organized a theatrical play called “Queer Monologues”. The goal of the play was to increase the visibility of lesbian, bisexual, and trans women (LBT women) and shed light on the issues and problems they face in everyday life. The monologues also aimed at celebrating the victories and success of LBT women, and the success with which they overcome the difficulties they face in their life.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia

Within the context of the “Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia” Society Without Violence provided 4 micro-grants to NGOs and private individuals for projects aiming to increase the positive visibility of LGBTI people in Armenia. One of the projects produced and released during the IDAHOT week was an illustrative video dealing with the false myths about the LGBTI community, while the second project organized a reading session on literature dealing with LGBTI issues in the SWV office.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

“Attitudes of Armenian Parents towards Adolescents’ Sexual Development” research findings are now available

From January to June 2016, Women’s Resource Center, NGO carried out fieldwork in Yerevan, Armavir, Lori, and Gegharkunik regions of Armenia to study the perceptions and attitudes of parents regarding the sexual development of their children. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, parents’ attitudes toward their child’s sexual development, gender roles and methods of upbringing were collected. The results showed that parents tend to avoid topics such as sex and sexual orientation. Parents instead center their lessons on sexual morality and, to a lesser extent, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy prevention. The majority of parents agreed with the idea of talking to their children on sexual and reproductive rights but they also noted that it is important to teach children about those issues at schools. In Armenian there is no comprehensive sex education at schools. Parents also avoided the mention of sex in their daily interaction with their children. Reasons proffered were that sex is still considered a taboo in the society, and more importantly, these parents feel that they lack the skills and knowledge needed to teach their children about the topic.

The purpose of this research is to provide policymakers, educators and the general public information about parental attitudes towards teenage sexuality, as well as to discuss the possibility of introducing a comprehensive sexual education program in the educational system of Armenia. In the frame of the project, the first educational web page in Armenian has been launched for parents on sexuality of their teens.

Source: [Women’s Resource Center](#)

Conference on I DECIDE in Lithuania

Following the IPPF Campaign’s ‘I Decide’ goal for 2017 – equal access to contraception/family planning for women and girls by the year 2020, the member of Lithuanian Parliament Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen in cooperation with Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (Association) organized a press conference “Universal and Equitable Access to Contraception for all Women and Girls”. The conference was held in Lithuanian Parliament. Speakers of the press conference: Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen, Member of the Parliament, Esmeralda Kuliesyte, Executive Director of FPSHA, Vytautas Klimas, Doctor Gynecologist, Arturas Rudomanskis, President of National Patients’ Association, Egle Janusonyte, representative of Lithuanian Medical Students’ Association.

The aim of the press conference was to draw the attention of the society, politicians and decision makers to the problem of the access to contraception in Lithuania.

Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen talked about the need to improve the access to contraception for the most vulnerable women and girls. Esmeralda Kuliesyte indicated that girls and women facing low access to contraception usually have unplanned pregnancies and abortions. She reminded that 2012 Lithuanian UPR commitments to improve the access to contraception were not implemented. Vytautas Klimas emphasized that contraception is very effective to avoid unplanned pregnancy which is related with abortion, negative influence to woman’s and newborn health. Arturas Rudomanskis presented STIs indicators and highlighted that it is necessary to decrease the price of condom and to

establish contraception reimbursement system in Lithuania. Egle Janusonyte talked about youth needs and stressed the importance of accessible, reimbursed contraception to youth.

Source: [Family Planning and Sexual Health Association](#)

„Yard Sale for Choice” in Bucharest

On the International Day of Action for Women’s Health, #28May, Daniela Draghici, a member of the Society for Feminist Analyses AnA, Romania, organized a “Yard Sale for Choice” in partnership with the Youth for Youth Foundation, Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality - SECS, an Astra Youth member, Romanian Anti-AIDS Association – ARAS, Marie Stopes International Romania Foundation and the National Public Health Institute. The scheduled workshops focused on:

- Anti-HPV Immunization: "Protect Her Wings" Campaign, National Public Health Institute
- Health Campaign for vulnerable Roma populations: "Mother, thank you for taking care of me!", National Public Health Institute
- Human Sexuality: how can we better understand communication and relationships with those around us – Youth for Youth Foundation
- HIV/AIDS Prevention - Romanian Anti-AIDS Association
- Family Planning Services – Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality, SECS
- "What is the difference between sex & gender?; Who is (still) afraid of feminism" – Society for Feminist Analyses AnA
- « Midwives’ Role in Women’s Lives » - Midwives’ Association of Romania
- Marie Stopes International Romania Foundation offered vouchers for free contraception consultations
- Daniela Draghici, Society for Feminist Analyses AnA, the main organizer, held a Body Dance demo session.

A teacher at the American school in Bucharest had disseminated information regarding this unique event for Romania at the school and she also participated in the event, along with some students, making links to invite the NGO volunteers to teach sexuality education classes at their school. The president of the gender commission in the Chamber of Deputies also came to support the event and promised to make links with her colleagues apt to help with health and sexuality education unresolved issues. One key television station, Digi24, was present to conduct interviews with key participants for a documentary on ob-gyns refusal to perform abortions on request and to admit it on camera. As a fair goes, there were clothes, accessories, jewelry and other objects for sale at low prices. Participants also participated in salsa session to celebrate reproductive health, rights & choice.

Find event details and photos [here](#).

First National Conference on the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women with Disabilities in Moldova

In the context of the International day of Action for Women's Health celebrated on May 28, the Reproductive Health Training Center organized the [First National Conference on the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women with Disabilities in Moldova](#)! The event was held on 29 May in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

The estimated number of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova as of 2017 is 187,000 according to the Ministry of Labor, Social protection and Family, of which 50% are women. Girls and women with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova face many obstacles when they try to exercise their Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Very often they are stigmatized, discriminated, and forced to make decisions about their private life, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, their relationship with their partners and childbirth.

On March 21, 2017, the RM reported to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities about the achievements in the field. On April 12, 2017, the [UN Committee came up with a series of recommendations](#), among which was the recommendation to take measures to ensure the Sexual and Reproductive rights of people with disabilities, especially women.

The purpose of this event was to discuss at country level the problems faced by women and girls with disabilities in the exercise of their Sexual and Reproductive rights, to raise awareness among key actors about the need to improve the situation and to establish the next steps in order to make the necessary changes.

The event gathered participants from all over the country: women with disabilities; representatives of the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, as well as from the Ministry of Health; representatives of UN agencies; representatives of organizations working in the fields of Sexual and Reproductive health, rights, disability and the media.

In order to move things forward, the Conference participants signed the conference resolution recommending the following:

- the Ministry of Health to ensure the access of disabled women to sexual and reproductive health services and commodities, which includes: the psychical access in medical institutions, provision with adapted medical equipment/gynecological chair, provision with free contraception and well trained primary level of care providers on sexual and reproductive health and rights of people with disabilities with competencies to provide reproductive health services, including on family planning and contraception;
- the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family to ensure the social services providers are trained in sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities, are respecting these rights, and support persons with disabilities to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights in Moldova;
- the Government of RM and National Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to revise the national legal framework in line with international instruments to ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities are respected.

Please access the [full version of Resolution](#) for details.

Besides the Conference findings, the Resolution reflects the [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommendations to RM from April 12](#) and those from [RHTC situation analysis](#) related to problems faced by women and girls with locomotor disabilities in Moldova in exercising their sexual and reproductive rights ([now available in English](#)).

Source: [Reproductive Health Training Center](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

International Day of Action for Women's Health

May 28 is the International Day of Action for Women's Health! As the global geo-political context threatens to become increasingly regressive, it is more important than ever to denounce any attempts at curtailing women's rights, including our human rights to decide freely upon all aspects of our bodies, our sexualities, and our lives, free from coercion, discrimination and violence!

This International Day of Action for Women's Health, WGNRR invited all their fierce members, partners, and allies worldwide to Mobilize, Speak Out, and Take Action - let's stand together, voice our resistance, and remind world leaders that Women's Health Matters!

Learn more and see the May 28th events and actions in all regions here: <http://may28.org>

YOUTH

ASTRA Youth representative at European conference on sexuality education in Berlin

On May 15-16, 2017 a representative of ASTRA Youth from the PONTON Group of Sex Educators based in Warsaw, Poland, participated in the international conference "Sexuality Education: Lessons Learned and Future Developments in the WHO European Region" in Berlin. The conference was held by German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZGA), World Health Organization, UNESCO and International Planned Parenthood Federation and hosted almost 200 SRHR scientists and activists, alongside with the representatives of the German authorities. Our representative was a member of the Youth Delegation – a group consisting of associates from other European organizations led by young activists.

During the conference, its attendants had a chance to take part in a number of panels on the vast spectrum of subjects, varying from sexual and gender-based violence, through parental involvement in modern-day sexual education, to use of modern technologies and social networks in the area of working with young people. As the conference focused on analyzing past and present data in creating roadmaps for the future, there were new research data presented, both from Europe and Central Asia. This data, combined with experience of the panelists and attendants, were used in elaborating new modes of action, better suited for contemporary political and social situation in the region.

The most resounding thought of the conference was the one expressed by Dr. Gunta Lazdane, the Regional Advisor for Sexual and Reproductive Health working with the WHO, that the differences between Western and Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia are a real issue to overcome and the work on introducing minima should be a priority. However, this work still remains a struggle mainly because of poor, populist governments, relying on their rightist electorates. This mission is yet more important because of the galloping revival of conservative and populist movements across the region.

See the concept paper and programme [here](#).

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#), [BZgA](#)

Report of the High-Level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents

“Governments have an obligation to give full attention to meeting the reproductive health service, information and education needs of young people with full respect for their privacy and confidentiality, free of discrimination.”

This and other recommendations are part of the [report drafted by the High Level Working Group on Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents](#), presented at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May. The Working Group was established last year by WHO and OHCHR to secure political support for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health (2016-2030), a comprehensive human rights-based roadmap to health for the most marginalized.

This report refers throughout to rights “to health and through health” to express this fact: the right to health does not stand alone but is indivisible from other human rights. Good health not only depends on but is also a prerequisite for pursuing other rights. Human rights cannot be fully enjoyed without health; likewise, health cannot be fully enjoyed without the dignity that is upheld by all other human rights. The report is a must-read to better understand human rights as determinants of health and for useful recommendations on strengthening evidence and public accountability.

Source: [WHO](#)

“Informational-Educational Session in Girls’ Club”

On May 10, 2017, Association “HERA XXI” held an informational-educational session on SRHR at the Center for Crime Prevention under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia within the project “Girls’ Club”. The meeting aimed to increase the interest of girls aged 13-17 on volunteerism, reproductive and sexual rights and healthy lifestyle. The event started with the presentation of Association “HERA XXI”, introducing services and opportunities for volunteers to engage in organization’s upcoming activities. During the meeting doctor-reproductologist of Association “HERA XXI” made a presentation and held

a discussion with 20 participating young girls about reproductive health and healthy lifestyle. The event was very interactive with each participant engaged in the discussion.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

“All in One Curriculum” Training of Trainers

On May 20-21, 2017 Association “HERA XXI” held TOT training “All in One Curriculum” aimed to increase awareness and capacity of 13 young people from four different regions of Georgia about SRHR and prepare them as peer educators. During the training sessions participants not only gained information and knowledge about the SRHR related issues but were also involved in individual and group exercises and discussions. They made group presentations, discussed case-studies, played role game “Stereotypes: Myths and Reality” and formulated action plans. Following the training sessions all of the 13 young peer educators will conduct informational-educational sessions on SRHR in their communities.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Society Without Violence training Armenian women to become peer educators

Society Without Violence organized a two-day training for trainers in Yerevan. The participants of the training were the fourteen active young women who had participated in the awareness raising trainings in the different regions of Armenia. The purpose of the training was to equip these young women with the necessary skills to become trainers and to pass on their knowledge to other young women and girls.

The topics covered during the training included gender, gender stereotypes, domestic violence, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and its impotence to achieve gender equality. The training also included study trips to the offices of Women in Black and Women’s Support Center to witness how different women’s groups work.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Human Rights Council to hold its thirty-fifth regular session from 6 to 23 June 2017

The United Nations Human Rights Council will hold its thirty-fifth regular session from 6 to 23 June 2017 in the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The session will be opened by Ambassador Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli of El Salvador, President of the Council. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein will provide an oral update to the Council at the opening meeting.

During the three-week session, the Council will hear the presentation of more than 80 thematic and country reports by more than 30 human rights experts and investigative bodies on a wide range of issues. It will also hold two panel discussions, its annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women, and its annual half-day thematic discussion on technical cooperation.

The detailed agenda of the session can be found [here](#), further information on the thirty-fifth session can be found [here](#), and the reports to be presented can be found [here](#).

Source: [OHCHR](#)

EuroNGOs 2017 Conference "Re:Frame. Promoting SRHR in a time of growing populism"

The dates for the 2017 EuroNGOs Conference have been shifted to September 27-28 with the event taking place in Brussels. This year, the conference will focus on how we can protect and promote SRHR in a time of growing populism. Rising support for populist movements, echoed through examples such as Brexit in the UK, the rhetoric of Orban in Hungary and Kaczynski in Poland, the success of far-right parties from Germany to Greece, and Trump in the USA, is reshaping the politics of many Western societies. For the SRHR community this global political shift is particularly worrying as populism favours traditional over progressive values and national self-interest over international cooperation and development aid. These changes can have serious implications in terms of political support and financial investment in SRHR and development issues, and also risks undermining the achievement of SDGs and decisions taken at UN level.

More information on the background, rationale and objectives of the 2017 EuroNGOs conference can be found in the [Conference concept note](#).

- Go on [website](#) to access registration instructions and online registration form. Please register before the 25th of August 2017.
- Wish to apply for the financial support? The sponsorship information for participants are also available on [our website](#). Don't forget to apply before the 12th of June 2017.

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

Member of the Month

Union Women's Center, Tbilisi, Georgia

Union Women's Center was established in 1996 in Tbilisi, Georgia to advance and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights by bridging the gaps between women's issues, health and human rights issues. It also works on prevention of domestic violence and trafficking and protecting its victims and establishing institutional mechanisms for coordinated health sector response to gender-based violence.

Union Women's Center works at three different levels: policy and decision-making level, national and local institutional level, grassroots level through work with civil society. Programs focus on the realization of sexual and reproductive rights of women and youth, family planning, access to safe abortion, safe motherhood, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS prevention, medical services, youth friendly services, consultations via hot-line, educational programs healthy lifestyles and reproductive health at schools and at university level. Also, the Center works towards creating an enabling environment to eliminate violence against women, especially domestic violence, trafficking, integration of ethnic minorities and confidence building and support in conflict regions.

In year 1998 the Women's Health Care Center was set-up which provides consultations and medical assistance for women. In 2004 the youth group working on sexual reproductive health and rights issues was established and joined the ASTRA Youth Network in later months.

Since 2014 Union Women Center has the consultative status with the Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN.

Women's Center is a member of ASTRA since year 2002. It actively participated in numerous projects and spoke on its behalf at a series of public hearing at the European Parliament. With ASTRA's support this was the first NGO in Georgia to begin working on the awareness raising of SRHR as human rights according to international documents. The organization contributed to implement international policy in Georgia delivering information on the choice of safe abortion, full range of modern contraceptives, information, education and services on SRHR with special attention to youth. Combining legal action with public education and advocacy helped to make a difference in the lives of women and girls. Today, Women's Center is cultivating and empowering the next wave of reproductive rights activists.

Website: www.womancenter.org.ge



ASTRA Network Members: Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association; Armenia - Society Without Violence; Armenia - Women's Resource Center; 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; Bulgaria - Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation; Bulgaria - Gender Education, Research and Technologies; Bulgaria - Demetra Association; Bulgaria - Gender Alternatives Foundation; Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo Open Center; Croatia - B.a.b.e.; Croatia – CESI; Croatia - Women's Room; Georgia – HERA XXI; Georgia – Real People, Real Vision; Georgia - Women's Center; 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 - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women; Macedonia – H.E.R.A.; Macedonia – Shelter Center; Moldova – Family Planning Association; Moldova - Reproductive Health Training Center; Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning; Romania - A.L.E.G.; Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis; Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health; Russia - Novogorod Gender Center; Russia – Russian Association for Population and Development; Slovakia – Pro Choice; Tajikistan – Gender and Development; Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning; Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation; Uzbekistan - Future Generation

Prepared by Marta Szostak

Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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