



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

### CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

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#### BURNING ISSUE

**Charter for the Platform for Abortion Rights.** The new prochoice initiative was launched to reassert the pro-choice stance and remind the governments about their obligations in the field of public health and equal opportunities. The meeting of the platform will take place in Brussels on March, 24<sup>th</sup>. Everybody willing to express their support for the right to safe and legal abortion is encouraged to sign the Charter for the Platform that is available online. The Charter calls for recognizing access to abortion as a right, assuring accessibility of abortion to all women, and organization of information campaigns.

More: <http://abortionright.eu/index.php?lang=EN&PHPSESSID=mkp9sqccjlur4ddufk20rbc22>

#### REGIONAL UPDATES

**Hungarian Government Funds Scientific Association against Premarital Sex.** The new initiative of Hungarian conservative government, the Hungarian Association for the Science of the Family (*Magyar Családtudományi Társaság*) was founded on February, 24<sup>th</sup>. According to the official position of the new association, sexual relationships before marriage, cohabitation, and non-

heterosexual relationships are harmful. Among the members of the new initiative funded by the Hungarian government are a Member of Parliament from the governing Fidesz party and the president of the Alfa Alliance, a radical Hungarian pro-life group. The scientific society receives funding from the Hungarian Ministry of National Resources and is sponsored by at least four members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The meeting of the society was hosted by the National Institute for Family and Social Policy, a research center operated by the Hungarian government. The new civic organization has developed plans to train public school teachers to teach courses on family values. Mandated by the new national curriculum, which was made public just recently, in early February, school teachers will have to incorporate ten new educational goals into their teaching, such as morality, national consciousness and patriotism as well as physical and psychological well-being. Among these new areas are classes covering family life and family values. Their programme must be in accordance with the Hungarian constitution. The new Hungarian constitution that had come into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 prescribes protection for the foetus, defines marriage as a union between man and woman, states that the family is the basis of the nation's survival and encourages the commitment to have children.

Source: PATENT

**Further Restrictions on Abortion in Russia.** The Russian Health Ministry has cut the list of social grounds that allow women to have a free abortion, which leaves sexual assault as the only excuse for women to abort their pregnancy. Under current law, women can obtain an abortion without restriction as to reason until the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the pregnancy; and abortions can be performed for medical reasons at any point during pregnancy. Before the change other social factors that qualified a woman for a free abortion were deprivation of a woman of her parental rights, woman's imprisonment, or disability or death of the father. There are both state-run and commercial clinics that carry out abortions in Russia. The former offer free services in case a woman has social or medical factors that need to be taken into account, while the latter allow women to have an abortion even if they do not qualify for a free one. Russia's new abortion bill that was adopted in December 2011 seriously limits access to abortion services and toughens criminal punishment for doctors who carry out illegal abortions.

Source: RFPA

**Hungarian Midwives Court Case.** Hungary has legalized home birth, yet midwives who attended home births before legalization have been harshly imprisoned. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012 the Budapest Appeal Court announced the verdict in the case of Dr. Ágnes Geréb (an OB/Gyn as well as a midwife) and four other Hungarian midwives. Dr. Geréb is facing criminal charges in 4 separate cases. Two involve post-partum hemorrhages, one a twin birth at home after which one of the babies was born in an oxygen-deprived condition and subsequently died less than a year old, and one case of shoulder dystocia in which the baby died. The Budapest Court of Appeals announced its sentence for Dr. Ágnes Geréb, an obstetrician and home birth midwife. The court of appeals not only upheld the lower court's decision, but added to the severity of the sentence. Dr. Geréb is to serve two years in prison, not eligible for parole. The court also banned Dr. Geréb from practicing her profession either as an obstetrician or as a midwife for 10 years. Furthermore, the appeals court obligated Dr. Geréb to pay the legal fees associated with her criminal case, which amount to more than HUF 1.5 million (EUR 5000). The criminal proceedings against Dr. Geréb and other midwives started before the implementation of the new regulations (2011) and are having an extremely chilling effect on the establishment of normal midwifery care in Hungary. Dr. Ágnes Geréb is an internationally renowned obstetrician-midwife who was the first in Hungary to let fathers into the labor ward, allowing families to experience the birth together. She assisted several thousand normal births without complications. Her work is perceived as indispensable for the establishment of safe and good midwifery practice in Hungary. In 2011, due to the international outcry regarding Dr.

Geréb's arrest and the absurdity of the legal situation in Hungary, the government passed new regulations that were meant to provide guidelines and licensing for home birth practitioners. Although the regulations came into effect April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, not a single person has actually received a license from the Hungarian authorities to attend home births.

More: [www.freegereb.org](http://www.freegereb.org)

**Macedonia Gay Rights Record 'Worst in Balkans'.** An updated annual report, "Rainbow Europe Index 2011" by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, ILGA–Europe, puts Macedonia at the bottom of the Balkans when it comes to legal protection for the community. Macedonia scored only -2 on a scale from 17 to -7, with 17 as the highest score and -7 as the lowest, meaning a country characterised by "gross violations of human rights and discrimination" against the gay community. Macedonia is the only country from the Balkans placed in the so-called red zone of worst offenders, among 13 other states. The rest of the Balkans is only slightly better and most countries fall into the so-called yellow zone of countries that are mediocre respecters of gay rights. Kosovo and Bosnia both scored 1, while Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Montenegro scored 2. The only Balkan countries listed in the better so-called green zone are Slovenia with 6 points and Croatia with 7. Of the rest of Europe, Ukraine comes right at the bottom, with -4 points, making it the worst violator of LGBT rights in the continent. The United Kingdom with 12.5 and Spain and Sweden with 12 points are on the top of the chart of 49 European countries.

Source: ILGA Europe

**Kyrgyzstan: The Parliament not yet ready to stop bride kidnapping.** In the end of January the Kyrgyzstan's parliament rejected the bill that aimed to lower the number of marriages resulting from bride kidnapping. The bill would have introduced fines for Islamic clerics who bless the marriages that are not already registered with the state. According to a member of parliament, the bill was rejected because a key provision could also be used to stop the practice of polygamy. Although the Criminal Code forbids the bride kidnapping and polygamy, they are widely tolerated in the Kyrgyz society, especially in rural areas. In some towns and villages almost 50% of marriages are non-consensual and result from bride kidnapping. The bride kidnapping practice causes very serious legal consequences for a kidnapped woman. She is usually forced to religious, unofficial marriage which denies her the right to children, property, alimony or state's protection if she leaves her husband. According to the women's rights NGOs the voting on the bill showed that the Kyrgyz MPs have very conservative view on gender roles and give favour to tradition at the cost of women's human rights and their well-being.

Source: KARAT

**New Initiative to Legalize Abortion in Poland.** Committed pro-choice advocate turned MP Wanda Nowicka submitted a draft bill legalizing access to abortion in Poland to the Parliament. Nowicka's draft legalizes abortion on demand up to 12<sup>th</sup> week and changes current provisions regulating access to sexual and reproductive health services. The draft is expected to be debated by the Parliament in spring, but current conservative composition of the Polish Parliament most likely will not allow for liberalization of Poland's extremely restrictive anti-abortion regulations.

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

**WomanCare Global to Distribute Mifepristone in Europe and Africa.** WomanCare Global announced that mifepristone has been added to their reproductive healthcare portfolio. Through an

agreement with Linepharma, WomanCare Global will provide sales, marketing, provider training and distribution of mifepristone in seven European and seven African countries. Linepharma's mifepristone is labeled for use as a single 200mg tablet of mifepristone to perform medical abortion in conjunction with a prostaglandin, in compliance with the World Health Organization's recommendation. Linepharma's mifepristone is manufactured in Europe and is currently approved in five E.U. countries. The planned distribution of mifepristone by WomanCare Global in 14 countries will ensure that close to 55 million women will have another safe, quality product to manage their reproductive health.

More: <http://www.womancareglobal.org>

## GLOBAL UPDATES

**International Women's Day.** Every year the European Parliament celebrates the International Women's Day with an event that brings together European and national MPs from parliamentary committees for equal opportunities. In 2012 the event will focus on the theme "Equal pay for work of equal value". President Martin Schulz will open the debate. European and national parliamentarians will have the chance to share their experiences and best practices on the effectiveness of current measures to reduce the gender pay gap and to talk about future initiatives to solve the problem. The meeting will take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March in Brussels and it is open to the public.

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/FEMM/home.html>

**“Advancing Women's Rights Worldwide” - Resolution of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.** The groundbreaking resolution calls for more gender equality, and a new impetus to be given to the protection, promotion and effective implementation of women's rights worldwide. The Assembly is worried that inequalities might deepen as a result of the steps taken by states to stop the economic and financial crisis. It also states that separation of religion and state is necessary for the realization of equality and non-discrimination both de jure and de facto. In the resolution the Assembly called upon Council of Europe Member States and observer states to increase efforts to combat discrimination against women and to raise the profile of gender equality issues and women's rights. It also calls on effective technical and political dialogue between civil society organizations and the governments by providing spaces for joint decision-making.

Source: EuroNGOs

**The fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.** The leading theme of this year's commission is the situation of rural women. Rural women constitute one-fourth of the world's population, and their contributions are vital to the well-being of communities, economies, and the achievement of all development goals. The event seeks to call for robust policies in order to remove the barriers that prevent rural women from reaching their full potential and ensure their rights, and underline the need to expand their economic opportunities and political participation and leadership. Highlighting the contributions of rural women and the challenges they face, UN Women events during the meeting will also showcase innovative strategies that focus on empowering rural women worldwide.

More: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

**The EU reassures its support to the UN Human Rights Council.** The Council of the European Union presented its conclusions on EU priorities at the UN Human Rights Council. These state that

“the EU is determined to continue supporting strongly the important work of the Human Rights Council, in cooperation with all other stakeholders and to contribute genuinely to the protection of human rights around the world”. The UN's Human Rights Council remains strongly committed to promoting the right to health as an inclusive right which covers not only healthcare but also underlying determinants of health such as access to health-related education and information, including sexual reproductive and maternal health. A key example of such commitment is the mortality resolution which was adopted by the Council on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

To view the Council's conclusions, please visit:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/128162.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/128162.pdf)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**The Logic of Backlash, the Logic of Feminism: Comparative Transatlantic Perspectives.** The Gender Studies Center of the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences (IBL PAN) in collaboration with the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw and with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw is pleased to announce the first edition of the Warsaw Summer School Gender Studies IBL PAN.

More: [www.genderstudies.pl](http://www.genderstudies.pl)

**Queering Green Theory/Greening Queer Theory.** The Green European Foundation, the Heinrich-Böll Foundation and FYEG will organise a seminar with the title "Queering Green Theory/Greening Queer Theory" in Zagreb, Croatia from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012. This seminar will be the first part of a series of three seminars on the Balkans in 2012 concerning the issue of LGBTQ.

Info: [www.fyeg.org](http://www.fyeg.org)

## PUBLICATIONS

**“Gender equality in development policies and practices in Poland”.** The study published by KARAT Coalition provides information about how Poland implements its commitments to gender equality in development cooperation and formulates recommendations to push for gender equality to be at the center of the Polish development cooperation.

More: KARAT

**'ICPD Beyond 2014' website.** A new website, ICPD Beyond 2014, has been launched by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It serves as the official website for the review of implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994. Implementation of the ICPD agenda is vital in the fight against HIV/AIDS and is important for ensuring respect for reproductive rights, outlawing gender-based violence, and above all ensuring access to reproductive health services and appropriate protective commodities. The EU has provided continuous support to the ICPD Programme of Action and the European Commission's development policies and strategies affirm the continuing relevance of ICPD. This is reflected in the various EU development policy documents such as the European Consensus on Development, the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

To view the ICPD Beyond 2014 website, please see: <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/>

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