



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

No 08/09 (167) 2017

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BURNING ISSUE

Abortion battle in Poland continues

Poland remains to be at forefront of battle over women's rights and women's right to a safe and legal abortion. In recent months, despite the success of the "Black Protest" from last year we are witnessing attempts to further restrict the current, already very strict, legislation. However, this time the anti-choice groups, with clear and vocal support from the Catholic Church, are not aiming for a total ban of abortion or criminalizing women for the procedures. They are targeting one of the three legal instances which allow for a lawful termination of pregnancy - that is the situation in which women experience a pregnancy with fetal damage. In year 2016 there had been 1042 abortions that fall into this category out of a total of [1098 legal abortions](#) in the entire country. 55 abortions were performed due to threat to woman's life and 1 as a result of criminal act.

At this moment there are three legal initiatives aimed to ban abortion due to fetal malformation: civic initiative undertaken by radical anti-abortion organization "Life and Family" in cooperation with Citizen Go; draft legislation submitted by a group of 100 right wing MPs and the Constitutional complaint regarding whether abortion due to fetal impairment is constitutional.

In opposition to these three anti-abortion proposals, representatives of pro-choice organizations, groups and parties established the "Save Women" Civic Committee which, as in 2016, prepared a draft bill to guarantee access to abortion, contraception, sexuality education and respectful antenatal care. The Committee had been established on 24th July and now has three months to collect at least 100 000 signatures under the draft law to ensure that the law will be debated in the Polish Parliament.

The draft ["Save the Women 2017"](#) bill includes:

- 1) legal abortion financed from the state budget on demand until 12th week of pregnancy; after 12th week abortion would be performed due to threat to woman's health or life, in case of fetal malformation (until 24th week of pregnancy or if the fetus is unable to survive outside woman's body without a deadline) and when pregnancy is a result of rape or incest (until 18th week of pregnancy);
- 2) subsidized and accessible contraception;
- 3) emergency contraception available without medical prescription;
- 4) comprehensive sexuality education in schools;
- 5) obligation for hospitals and the National Health Fund to publish a list of doctors who invoke conscientious objection to deny performing legal abortions;
- 6) obligation for hospitals to find another doctor as a subcontractor who would perform an abortion when a physician hired by the hospital refuses to do so;
- 7) shorter deadline (7 days) for the Medical Commission to consider a patient's complaint in case of refusal of abortion;
- 8) right for adolescents who have turned 15 years old to visit a gynecologist, a urologist and a dermatologist without parental consent.

The coming months will be rich in activities from the pro-choice groups aiming to raise awareness on the importance of both – endorsing and pushing the liberalization of the anti-abortion law and stopping the current anti-choice initiatives.

Source: ASTRA Network, Federation for Women and Family Planning

REGIONAL UPDATES

MEPs call for zero tolerance for violence against women

The EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention will provide a coherent European legal framework to prevent and combat violence against women and gender-based violence. Women's rights and Civil liberties MEPs welcomed the signing of the EU accession of the Istanbul Convention on 13 June 2017 and made following recommendations:

- urge Member States to speed up negotiations on the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention;
- EP should be fully engaged in the monitoring process of the Istanbul Convention following the EU's accession;
- Member States should allocate adequate financial and human resources to prevent and combat violence against women and gender-based violence;
- victims should be compensated, in particular those living in areas where the protection services to the victims do not exist or they are very limited;
- appropriate training, procedures and guidelines for all professionals dealing with the victims of all acts of violence should be available;
- promote a change in attitudes and behaviours;
- combat sexism and stereotyped gender roles - promoting gender-neutral language and address the key role of media and advertising;

The denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including safe and legal abortion, is a form of violence against women and girls, says the text. MEPs reiterate that women and girls must have control over their bodies.

The Istanbul Convention ensures that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called "honour" cannot be a justification of any acts of violence against women. Committee MEPs call on Member States to adopt measures to address new forms of crime, including sex-extortion, grooming, voyeurism and revenge pornography, and protect victims, who experience serious trauma leading sometimes even to suicide.

Finally, MEPs stress that the EU's accession will bring better monitoring, interpretation and implementation of EU laws, programmes, funds and better data collection.

The interim report was adopted on July 11th by 58 votes to 12 with 4 abstentions.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

Eight CEE countries to participate in the 2018 Voluntary National Review of Agenda 2030

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven". These national reviews - Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) - are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. Regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

Ahead of the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development titled "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", 35 countries have already declared to present their

experiences in implementing the Agenda 2030 through the VNRs, and 8 of them are from the Central and Eastern European region: Albania, Armenia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

For full list of countries and more information click [here](#)

UN Joint agency statement on non-discrimination in health care

The UN has come forward with a first ever [UN Joint inter-agency statement](#) calling for an end to discrimination in health care. It calls for, amongst other things, repealing discriminatory laws and practices, including laws that criminalize sex work, drug use and SRH services and information. This statement is part of UNAIDS' agenda on zero discrimination in health care ([link to agenda](#)).

Armenian LGBT Activist Mamikon Hovsepyan Announced as Equality Award Winner for 2017

The Equal Rights Trust announced Mr Mamikon Hovsepyan, Executive Director of [PINK Armenia](#) as the winner of the 2017 [Bob Hepple Equality Award](#). Despite facing considerable challenges, Mr Hovsepyan has fought tirelessly to combat discrimination against LGBT individuals in Armenia. In addition, he has advocated a holistic approach to non-discrimination, working to challenge violence against women, and collaborating with other members of the [Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition](#) to promote the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Armenia. With this award the Trust hopes to encourage those – like Mr Hovsepyan – who promote improved protection from all forms of discrimination, both in Armenia and elsewhere.

In response to news of the award, Mr Hovsepyan said: "I am so touched that my work with PINK Armenia has been noticed. It makes us stronger and prouder of the work we do and we share this with our community, our supporters and allies. It encourages me in my fight as an activist to continue empowering others to join the frontline and make the world a better place for everyone."

Since it was founded, PINK Armenia has been the subject of numerous threats and intimidation; in 2015, 37 NGOs detailed such instances in a [joint letter to the President of Armenia](#) and on two occasions safety concerns resulted in PINK Armenia relocating offices. When these challenges have arisen, PINK Armenia has stood tall, it has continued to uphold an ambitious and innovative mandate and its multifaceted approach has remained inclusive of advocacy, litigation, awareness raising, training and support services.

Source: [The Equal Rights Trust](#)

New survey shows abortion rate declining in Armenia

The fertility rate (births per woman) in Armenia is reported at 1.7 while the rate was 2.8 in 90s per women, Karine Saribekyan, Director of the Maternal and Child Health Department at the Armenian Ministry of Healthcare, told reporters while presenting the data of the newly released "Armenia Demographic and Health Survey 2015-2016" (ADHS). In Saribekyan's words, a tendency of declining abortion rates is observed in Armenia. According to the research, in 2015-2016, 69% of pregnancies

ended in live births in 2015-2016, 23% - in induced abortions, while 9% - in miscarriages, and stillbirths. The previous research conducted in 2000 suggested abortions rate at 55%, 45% in the research conducted in 2005, and 29% - in the Demographic Research of the year 2010. The head of the department detailed that two third of the induced abortions were due to the woman's wish to have no more children, 8% - with diseases in offspring, another 8% for sex-selective reasons.

Source: panorama.am

From ASTRA Members

Traditional news from Romania from a religious and a political standpoint

Romania to hold same-sex marriage referendum this autumn

Romania's ruling Social Democrats hope to organize this autumn a referendum to restrict the constitutional definition of family, which would effectively rule out the possibility of legalizing same-sex marriage, according to ruling party - Social Democratic Party (PSD) - leader Liviu Dragnea. The plan for a referendum came about after the Coalition for the Family, a civil society group, collected 3 million signatures last year in favor of changing the constitutional definition of marriage as a union strictly between a man and a woman from the existing "spouses." Under Romanian law, the constitution can be changed after a proposal by the president, the government, a quarter of all lawmakers or at least 500,000 citizens. Parliament must approve any revision, which must then pass a nationwide referendum.

Few politicians openly support same sex marriage or even civil partnerships in the socially conservative eastern European nation of 20 million, where the Orthodox Church yields significant influence.

In June, dozens of Romanian rights groups jointly asked parliament to reject the proposed constitutional change that they said would push the European Union state onto a populist, authoritarian track leading to an erosion of democratic rights and liberties.

The Coalition for the Family also supports cancelling subsidies for contraception and elective abortion, forcing parents of minors to have counseling if they want to divorce, and lowering some taxes for married couples. Restricting the definition of family based on a marriage between man and woman also would hurt single parents, non-married couples and other non-traditional parenting units (source: Reuters).

All this is happening while Romania ranks first in the EU in number of births in girls between the ages of 10 and 14, the percentage of adolescent mothers 3 times higher than the European average, due to lack of sexuality education, which is not included in the school curriculum. Unfortunately, despite the Romanian advocates' continuous uphill battle with the opposition Coalition for the Family, policymakers and parents to make sexuality education a compulsory subject in school we continue to be at a standstill. Currently, sexual education is part of an optional health education class, taught once in a while, upon school decision, by volunteers of 3 specialized NGOs, one of which is the Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality (SECS), an Astra Youth member.

In order to counteract all these setbacks, the Society for Feminist Analyses AnA is leading a small coalition of pro-choice NGOs in preparing advocacy actions for September 26, World Contraception Day and September 28, International Safe Abortion Day. The NGOs are the Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality (SECS), Youth for Youth Foundation, Romanian Anti-AIDS Association and Marie Stopes Foundation Romania. SECS is developing a video to be launched on the World Contraception Day and all NGOs will be present for a debate with parents and policymakers on sexuality education in school as a means to preventing unwanted adolescent pregnancies. The debate will be held in a public library in Bucharest. On the same week, we will also start working with a film crew from Germany on a documentary regarding the growing number of adolescent mothers in Romania, causes and impact. The documentary will be funded by Arte.

By Daniela Draghici, Advisory Board member of ASTRA Network, Society for Feminist Analyses AnA and Society for Education in Contraception and Sexuality (SECS), Romania

Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia: Micro Grants

Within the context of the “Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia” SWV provided 4 micro-grants to NGO-s and private individuals for projects aiming to increase the positive visibility of LGBTI people in Armenia. As it was mentioned in the previous ASTRA Bulletin, one of the grantees, Right Side NGO, the first transgender NGO in Armenia, held an exhibition called “Our Love is Real”, which depicts trans persons in various locations in Armenia. One of the projects was directed to promotion of informative video which covered LGBT related facts for public awareness raising.

Another grantee translated and published sections from Jeanette Winterson’s “Oranges are not the only fruit” and organized a related discussion.

The next project - “Building healthy relationships for sustainable personal and social development” consisting of 7 meetings/sessions for LGBT people was implemented in Vanadzor, Lori region. During the meetings/sessions the participants discussed what they value in their lives and what they would change. Some topics were directed to interpersonal communication, there were also art therapy sessions, etc.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

“Together, Diverse and in Solidarity” public event in Armenia

Since 2011 Every year on July 27 SWV holds a public awareness raising event on various topics related to gender equality and feminism. The subject of this year’s event which was organized by SWV’s regional network of young women and girls was the idea of sisterhood and solidarity among women. During the event participants wrote and read their own manifests on gender equality, feminism, domestic violence, solidarity, women and sport, body positivity and queer experience. The event was held in Armavir region in Armenia. As a sign of solidarity among women, the participants sewed a blanket with different colors and shapes of shreds. Each shred symbolizes a woman and by sewing shreds with each other is showing the differences among women. During the sewing the

participants discussed different topics: social norms and stereotypes and the idea of sisterhood.
Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Let's Talk about IT: Women's Sexual Health in Armenia

SWV's intern facilitated a workshop for women on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights on August 22. There were almost 10 participants, mainly SWV's volunteers. The participants discussed SRHR related stereotypes, international laws, biology of female reproductive system, vagina's structure and contraceptives. All these topics are taboo in Armenia, so it was a good chance for participants to learn about all of these. All the discussions were in informal way, which helped the participants to speak easily about all these topics.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

Chile court ruling ends abortion ban!

A Chilean court on Monday, August 21st, ruled that a law legalizing abortion in certain cases is constitutional, a win for President Michelle Bachelet's center-left coalition and for groups that have campaigned for years against the country's strict ban. With the decision by Chile's Constitutional Court, women in the South American nation will be allowed to seek an abortion when their life is in danger, when a fetus is unviable or when a pregnancy results from rape.

Chile was one of only a handful of countries worldwide where abortion was illegal without exception. The ban was put in place during the closing days of Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship, and Bachelet introduced a bill to loosen the prohibition soon after taking office for a second time in 2014.

The road to congressional approval was difficult and met multiple delays due to deep divisions in the governing coalition and a unified opposition. The abortion bill was passed in its final form earlier in August, but conservative legislators then challenged its constitutionality.

After listening to over 130 organizations over several days, the Constitutional Court rejected that challenge largely along partisan lines, meaning the bill now becomes law. Following the decision, women's rights groups as well as left-leaning and centrist political parties celebrated outside the court in downtown Santiago.

"What this decision definitively does is take Chile once and for all off the embarrassing list of countries that still criminalize abortion without exception," said Ana Piquer, the executive director of Amnesty International Chile.

Source: [Reuters](#)

Global Experts Prioritize Tackling Conscientious Objection to Abortion

Fifty experts from 20 countries in Africa, the Americas and Europe, gathered at the first international convening on conscientious objection to abortion have concluded that the [refusal to provide legal abortion services is hurting women all over the world](#) and must be tackled.

The meeting, co-hosted by [Mujer y Salud en Uruguay \(MYSU\)](#) and the [International Women's Health Coalition \(IWHC\)](#), featured policymakers, academics, health professionals, legal experts, and feminist activists who collectively established that objecting to the provision of voluntary abortion services on religious or moral grounds, is a chief barrier to safe abortion and endangers the lives of women.

The group highlighted that conscientious objection in relation to health services is not supported by international human rights frameworks. The practice, sometimes allowed by national law, increasingly stigmatizes a fundamental health service and pushes women to carry a risky or unintended pregnancy to term. Women denied access to abortion are also forced to seek illegal or unsafe means to abort with dire consequences, including death.

Participants agreed to individually further legal, ethical, health, and policy objectives that can mitigate the [damaging effects of conscientious objection](#) and reduce the immense burden on women who seek a legal, professional service that must be rendered without prejudice.

Research to understand the motives and measure the impact of conscientious objection on women's quality of life and on health systems more broadly—including financial costs—was also considered a priority.

The group emphasized that doctors and health workers who support the rights of women have a significant role to play in ensuring best medical practices. Health workers also face the challenge of ensuring that professional bodies recognize that personal beliefs can seriously undermine the provision of women-centered, professional health services.

Source: [International Women's Health Coalition](#)

Meeting of the UN High Level Political Forum in New York

The meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will be held from Monday, 10 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017; including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from Monday, 17 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017.

The theme will be "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". The set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be the following, including Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

In accordance with paragraph 84. of the [2030 Agenda](#), Member States have decided that the HLPF shall carry out regular voluntary reviews of the 2030 Agenda which will include developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities and other stakeholders. The reviews will be state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of [major groups and other relevant stakeholders](#).

In 2017, 44 countries have volunteered to present their national voluntary reviews to the HLPF, with Slovenia and Tajikistan as representatives of ASTRA region. For more details, please [click here](#).

Source: [Sustainable Development](#)

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda a priority for 2018 for ECOCOS

On 27 July, the newly elected President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – Maria Chatardová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the UN – set support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a priority for 2018. “I wish to announce that the key priority of my Presidency will be to develop initiatives towards fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all” [Chatardová said](#). Moreover, she informed that ECOSOC’s 2018 theme “From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities” will be aligned with the 2018 focus of the High-Level Political Forum: “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”. She also praised a high interest of the Members States to participate in the National Voluntary Reviews and pointed out that the Council must do more to ensure the participation of civil society and assure clear commitments from private sector in order to reach the SDGs.

The Council also elected three Vice-Presidents: Mahmamin Mahmaminov (Tajikistan) from the Asia-Pacific States, Inga Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) from the Latin American and Caribbean States, and Marc Pecsteen De Buytsverve (Belgium) from the Western European and other States.

Finally, the Council adopted its [provisional agenda](#) and working arrangements. The next ECOSOC Special Meeting at the United Nations Headquarters will take place in May 2018 and will explore further collective action on inclusion and participation for sustainable development.

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

YOUTH

Romania and Bulgaria have the highest proportion of teenage mothers in the European Union

Nearly one-in-ten births in both countries was to a teenager or girl even younger in 2015, the latest year for which data is available - that is more than three times the EU average. The data, from Eurostat, also uncovered hundreds of girls in the 10-14 age group from France, Germany, Bulgaria and Romania become mothers each year.

Experts say a repressive sexist culture and a lack of respect for women in some countries is fueling the problem. Nearly 1,000 births in Bulgaria and Romania in 2015 were to girls between the ages of 10 and 14. Bulgaria had nearly 300 of the young mothers – representing nearly five percent of all the country’s teenage births.

It’s not just a problem in south-eastern Europe. Hundreds of girls the same age gave birth in Germany, France and the UK – although they made up a smaller proportion of overall teenage births. In around half of EU countries, births to girls of this age do not even reach double figures, notably in Scandinavia.

While overall teenage births fell in every EU country over the decade to 2015, the 10-14 age group was far more stubborn. Slovakia, France, Austria, Italy and Romania all had more mothers in 2015 than a decade earlier.

The figures show a broad trend of higher levels of teenagers giving birth in south- and north-eastern Europe. Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland are all among the EU’s worst when it comes to young mothers. The UK is the only western European country in the EU’s worst 10, with three percent of births to a girl aged 10-19. Despite this, there has been huge progress in Britain. Teenage pregnancies have dropped from 50,396 in 2005, to 26,824 a decade later.

Around 25,000 births in Romania and Bulgaria were to teenagers or young girls or one-in-ten of new arrivals. Like the rest of the EU, both countries have seen their numbers of young mothers come down over the last decade.

Teenage births have fallen across the EU over the last decade – but the biggest drop was in Estonia. It had 1,116 teenagers giving birth in 2005, compared to 368 ten years later.

Read more: [Euro News](#)

Launch of the Youth Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Europe and Central Asia

On July 20, the “Youth in Power – Joint Youth Strategy for SRHR in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” was officially unveiled.

The project was initiated in 2016 by YouAct in partnership with ASTRA Youth along with Y-PEER, YSAFE, and PETRI-Sofia, with the aim to develop a strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights by youth and for youth. The initiative was supported by Council of Europe’s European Youth

Foundation (EYF), UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (UNFPA EECARO) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN). The project was developed based on the input, experience, needs and ideas of young people in Council of Europe and Central Asia countries. The final “Youth in Power” publication is supposed to serve as an advocacy and awareness raising tool on SRHR of young people on the national, regional, and international level.

Young people expressed their perspectives on the current gaps, challenges, and recommendations regarding the realization of SRHR for young people in the region through an online questionnaire filled out by over 1000 young people from all over Europe and Central Asia. Young representatives from over 15 countries gathered in Kiev, Ukraine in December 2016 to analyze the collected results and to develop a strategy based on the results obtained.

You can access the “Youth in Power” publication [here](#).

Abortion in Eastern Europe from a Youth Perspective Toolkit 2.0

In 2016 ASTRA Youth participated in developing a toolkit called "Speak My Language - Abortion Storytelling in Eastern Europe from a Youth Perspective".

YouAct, as the leader of the project, after evaluating its results, decided that the toolkit had brought added value but was difficult to implement, as a set with practical guidelines was missing. Therefore, under the Abortion Toolkit 2.0 project YouAct aims to develop these guidelines which together with a webinar will demonstrate how the Speak my Language Toolkit can be better used and implemented, with the final goal of alleviating stigma and taboos surrounding abortion.

As last year, ASTRA Youth participates in the project, along with Real People, Real Vision from Georgia, Health Education and Research Association (H.E.R.A.) from the Republic of Macedonia, and the Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender (A.L.E.G.) from Romania.

Inroads: the International Network for the Reduction of Abortion Discrimination and Stigma has again agreed to support the project.

Launching the EBCOG/UNFPA Regional Master Class Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health

On July 18-20, the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) in partnership with the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (EBCOG) launched the EBCOG/UNFPA Regional Master Class Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). The purpose of the Regional Master Class programme, developed by EBCOG with UNFPA support, was to strengthen national institutional capacities and guide national experts on how to develop and implement evidence-based, cost-effective national action plans and strategies in SRH at the country level. After its full regional rollout, the programme will ensure that the sustainability criteria, quality standards of care, and human rights are fully embedded in national programmes in all EECA countries. The three-day Master Classes programme covers the priority areas of SRH, addresses the

causes of mortality and morbidity of women, and shares international knowledge and best practices to improve the SRH outcomes of the population and safeguard women's health. The programme will build institutional capacities in developing and delivering national strategies and SRH services by incorporating key concepts, including universal access, quality assurance, human rights, and accountability in line with ICPD Programme of Action and 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

Launch of the "I Decide" campaign and the International Family Planning Summit in the UK

Since its launch in May 2017, the Association HERA XXI's efforts to promote the campaign have reached approximately 181,855 people (post highlighting the importance of family planning and abortion rights on virtual channels). The "I Decide" campaign has focused on universal and equitable access to family planning for women and girls everywhere as well as increasing access to SRHR to address inequality and reducing unmet need for family planning services.

HERA XXI's youth leaders have successfully planned activities with a famous Georgian blogger to promote "Universal and Equitable Access to Family Planning". The main focus has been on youth and vulnerable groups; financial, geographic, psychological barriers to access; modern methods of contraception as prevention of unwanted pregnancies; family planning services and contraceptives as an opportunity for young girls to obtain education and participate in public life; myths and misconceptions about modern methods of contraception as the main barrier to family planning services. Opening a dialogue with parliamentarians on universal and equitable access to family planning for women and girls has been another part of the "I Decide" campaign in Georgia.

Furthermore, regarding the World Population Day and the International Family Planning Summit in the UK on July 11, HERA XXI joined the next "I Decide" campaign, which was a great opportunity for the association to promote the message that all women and girls have the right to access the affordable, high-quality sexual and reproductive health services that they choose, free from stigma, and on their terms. The campaign posts on social media have reached 10,765 people.

Source: [HERA XXI](#)

FemCamp in Armenia

Society Without Violence (SWV) organized a Feminist Camp called "FemCamp 2017", which took place from June 27 until July 2. The aim of the camp was empowering young women and girls giving them opportunity to get informed about feminism and gender equality in detail. The camp covered a wide range of topics: Feminism, gender based discrimination and equality, gender based violence (domestic violence), sexuality and SOGI, and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and others.

After the camp participants had an opportunity to apply for micro-grants as feminist initiatives. SWV

provided 3 micro-grants to initiatives that were made during the camp directed to awareness raising on gender equality, women's involvement in sports, and women's involvement in visual arts.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Capacity and Consent: Empowering Adolescents to Exercise their Reproductive Rights

Newest publication from the Center for Reproductive Rights Capacity and Consent: Empowering Adolescents to Exercise their Reproductive Rights is a great resource for all those working on youth and SRHR issues. With adolescents and youth constituting a quarter of the global population – for a total of 1.8 billion people – it has never been more critical that their human rights be fully recognized and realized within global arenas and at the regional, national, and community level.

This publication sets forth the barriers adolescents face in realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights, discusses recent critical developments in the human rights framework underpinning these rights, and proposes a way forward for guaranteeing all adolescents the full exercise of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Access the publication [here](#)

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

PUBLICATIONS

A joint publication entitled "*Seeking accountability for women's rights through the SDGs*" from the Centre for Economic and Social Rights and UN Women is available [here](#).

Conscience-based refusal in reproductive medicine in Croatia

Conscience-based refusal in reproductive medicine paper by Croatian member of ASTRA – CESI - includes analysis of legislation, politics and practice regarding refusal of health care services provision on conscientious grounds in the Republic of Croatia, and indicating the problems in legislation and practice which enables malpractice thus violating the right of patient to access lawful medical care in a timely manner. The publication also contains recommendations and guidelines for regulating conscience-based refusal in a way that it does not hinder the availability of legal health care. It is necessary to adopt and implement standards that would clearly articulate the state's obligation which guarantees that conscience-based refusal in practice does not obstruct access and availability of lawful medical care in a timely manner, to ensure supervision and monitoring of practice as well as to seek responsibility of those who do not respect the standards.

Available in [English](#)

Source: [CESI](#)

All Hell Breaks Loose - Advocating for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Under the Neoconservative Attacks

This manual prepared by CESI from Croatia gives an overview of the organizations and their strategies of actions against fundamentalists as well as different strategies used by various groups and platforms for the advancement of SRHR. Besides it explores the development of the argumentation, messages and language that promotes the right to choice.

[Available in Croatian only](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

Source: [EuroNGOs](#)

September 28 – International Safe Abortion Day,

Resist & Persist: Our Bodies, Our Abortions, Our Rights!

Ensuring universal access to safe abortion is a fundamental human right, we cannot view it as only a “women’s issue.” It is a fundamental human right, which intersects with and is integral to realizing social, economic and reproductive justice. When individuals are able to access safe abortion, along with comprehensive sexuality education and a range of contraceptives, the social good outcomes are numerous – including plummeting maternal mortality and morbidity, and significantly reduced rates of STIs and teenage pregnancy. Other positive ripple effects include an increase in women and girls’ ability to continue education; increased gender equity and women’s empowerment; and reduced intergenerational transfers of poverty, among many other integral benefits.

What's happening on the world stage?

We have been witnessing a number of alarming rollbacks regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Some of the most recent rollbacks include:

- the reinstatement and expansion of the Global Gag Rule
- funding cuts to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- and new law proposals in a number of countries such as Poland and El Salvador, attempting to ban abortions or criminalize “suspicious” miscarriages.

Even in countries where abortion is legal or decriminalized, we are seeing on-going or renewed attempts to uphold obstructive barriers such as mandatory waiting periods, parental/marital consent requirements, prohibitive costs, and limited services in rural and remote areas. These barriers restrict access to timely and affordable safe abortion services, disproportionately affecting lower-income groups who are unable to afford private healthcare services, or travel to better-serviced areas.

This year's campaign

In light of the current context, it is all the more imperative that we tap into both past and present forms of ongoing collective resistance, reminding ourselves of important achievements, and the power of collective organizing and mobilizing, propelled by local and individual actions. Our aim this year is to thus highlight, promote, and support the many different ways activists are currently challenging the status quo and resisting in diverse contexts. These seemingly small actions add up, make waves and contribute to collective movements. When I resist, we persist.

In turn, collective mobilization also feeds and sustains individual mobilization, through motivating and inspiring individuals, activists, and allies to continue our important abortion advocacy.

If anything, the current global context is a reminder of the “long-game,” vigilant, and intersectional nature of fighting for SRHR, and of ensuring transformative social change. As such, for this year's September 28, we at WGNRR invite our members, partners, and allies worldwide to join us in resisting at individual and collective levels, and persisting in our fight towards ensuring universal access to safe and legal abortion!

Click [here](#) to learn more details about the suggested actions!

September 28 has been a regional campaign for decriminalization of abortion in Latin America and Caribbean for nearly twenty years before being taken on by SRHR activists all over the world, through the initiative of WGNRR, as a Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in 2011. WGNRR undertakes September 28 annual campaigning activities in collaboration with its members, partners, and allies around the world, and as a member of the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion.

Download the call to action [here](#)

36th session of the Human Rights Council

The 36th session of the HRC in Geneva will take place from 11 to 29 September.

Among the many debates and resolutions the Universal Periodic Review outcomes, including civil society statements, of Brazil, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Netherlands, Poland and South Africa will take place.

We invite you to two interesting side events during the session:

[Sexual Rights Initiative: We Persist – Using human rights law and standards to advance the right to access safe and legal abortion](#) on September 26, 2017, 15:30 – 17:00 hrs in Room XV Palais de Nations

Center for Reproductive Rights: Realizing Women and Girls’ Sexual and Reproductive Rights amid backlash on September 14, 2017, 13:30 - 15:00 in Room XXVII

See the full Programme of Work for more information [here](#)

Source: [OCHRC](#)

CALL TO ACTION

Petition calling for access to abortion - Mobilisations throughout Europe around September 28

In solidarity with all European women, after the exemplary struggle of Spanish women in 2014 and Polish women in 2016, we demand that women’s rights, the right to control their own bodies, the right to abortion and to health are respected in all European countries and recognized as fundamental rights for equality in Europe.

Today, the right to abortion within Europe is within the sphere of competence of each national government. Illegal in Malta, extremely limited in Ireland, in Hungary and Poland. the right to abortion, even when it is legal, can be put into question by the conscience clause for doctors (Italy), the absence of the necessary hospital facilities (Greece, Bavaria), the cuts in staff and the closing of centres practicing abortion during hospital reorganizations (France), and, in all countries, the election of reaction, conservative and backward governments.

We reaffirm that :

- The access to abortion is a right;
- Abortion is a personal choice – my body is mine, I choose my life
- Financial resources must be allocated so that the centres carrying out abortion and family planning centres are accessible everywhere;
- Information campaigns addressed to all audiences are necessary;

- Sexuality education should be given to all so that both women and men can make clear and informed choices;
- Training in abortion procedures and accompaniment should be an integral part of the basic training of health professionals;
- The conscience clause for health professionals should be removed;
- The legal time limits for abortion should be brought into line with the most progressive States in Europe and abortion must be decriminalized completely.

We call for the organization of a European mobilization around the 28th of September 2017, international day for the right to safe and legal abortion in which each country will put forward its demands in the perspective of a European harmonization of respect for women's rights.

[SIGN THE PETITON HERE](#)

CALL FOR PAPERS

AnaLize - Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies

AnaLize is pleased to announce the launch of a call for papers for a special issue on *Communism/ Postcommunism. Perspectives on Gender*, with the intention of exploring the complex relationships between prevalent ideologies and conflicting reality/ies in the respective periods, as well as the gendered perspective on the actors involved in these relationships.

Read more: <http://www.analize-journal.ro/call-for-papers>

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

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Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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