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Dear KARAT News Readers !

I would like to draw your attention to an interesting student initiative to strengthen relations between Visegrad countries and France, and the Congress of Women - the biggest in Europe feminist event that took place in Warsaw. You might also be interested in new EU initiatives focus on gender equality. KARAT is glad that after a two-year delay Poland finally adopted its report to CEDAW Committee. However, we feel disappointed with the UPR session of Poland as the problems raised by NGOs were not addressed properly neither by Poland nor by UN.

I encourage you to visit KARAT's website and to post your news on KARAT's Facebook profile. Remember also that I am always looking forward to receiving your news..

Have a nice reading !

Agnieszka Walko-Mazurek, KARAT Networking Officer

What's new in KARAT

New French initiative focuses on Central Europe

KARAT welcomes a new initiative “V4SciencesPo” which focuses on the Visegrad countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia and their relations with France. The association “V4SciencesPo” established in 2011 by the students of Paris Institute of Political Studies (in short *Sciences Po*) aims at strengthening relations between France and the 4 countries of Central Europe, spreading the knowledge about the countries, and maintaining the links between the graduates from these countries and the Institute. Although the association is young it works dynamically organizing a number of international events with prominent guests from Central Europe, experts on these 4 countries.



Recently the V4ScencesPo activists have turned their interest to gender equality and organized an international seminar “Women, Gender and Feminism in the V4 Countries” on 18th of September, 2012 in Paris. This successful event was attended by experts on gender issues from Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland (including KARAT’s representative) and France, and covered 3 main topics: 1) employment, job market and childcare; 2) sexual and reproductive health and rights; 3) migration, minorities and discrimination.

The problems presented by the speakers included women’s situation on the labour markets. Zora Butorova (Slovakia) focused on Slovak women, Amelie Bonnet (France) covered situation in Poland with analysis on the impact of the European structural funds on situation of women in labour markets. Katarzyna Pabijanek (Poland) and Judith Wirth (Hungary) were talking about limited access to reproductive rights and services. Maxime Forest (France) presented analysis of anti-discrimination law concerning the LGBT of 4 countries, and Eva Valentova (Czech Republic) presented the campaign on discrimination of migrant women domestic workers in Czech media.

The KARAT’s representative Kinga Lohmann concluded the conference speaking from regional perspective about the economic transformation and impact of the crises on women’s rights. She stressed that we cannot talk about economic crisis in isolation from an economic transformation in the 90s and further adjustments related to political and economic changes, since the women from Central Europe still experience negative effects of those processes. She also talked about a backlash against women’s rights worldwide and the serious challenges for European women’s rights organizations causes by the financial crisis. She ended her speech with rhetoric question “if the women rights organizations in Europe disappear who will take over the responsibility to push the European governments to continue promotion of women’s human rights agenda in the world?”.

For more information please contact Kinga Lohman at: kinga.lohman@karat.org.pl

Social economy in Romania

The social economy specialists took part in the courses on social economy organized between 21st – 25th of September 2012 in Deva, Romania. The event was part of the project “*Creating and promoting social economy instruments for the inclusion of marginalized groups on the labour market*” conducted by Romanian organization “AUR” A.N.S.R.U and its partners, including KARAT.

KARAT contributed to the courses by conducting a workshop “*Social Economy in Europe*” as an introduction to the e-course being developed within the project. The e-course will focus on the experiences in social economy from different European countries. It will provide information and examples of good practices in the areas of organizing social economy, cooperation between social economy enterprises, local communities and commercial business actors, and development of social economy enterprises in different sectors (i.e. production, services etc). The e-course will be a part of wider online education program on different aspects of social economy developed within the project for Romanian beneficiaries. KARAT’s workshop in Deva was an opportunity to present the key ideas for the e-course to its future participants and gather their feedback on the proposed structure as well as suggestions for its improvement.

For more information on KARAT’s involvement in the project please contact Joanna Szabuńko at:

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Feminists from across the world debate in Warsaw

Poland's feminist and women's organizations gathered for the 4th Annual Congress of Women held on 14th- 15th of September 2012 in Warsaw, Poland. The Congress, considered to be the biggest feminist event in Europe, was attended by just under 10 000 women, including guests from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Georgia and Ukraine.

This year event focused on economic issues and problems of women from smaller towns and villages. The range of discussed topics included motherhood, education, business, local government initiatives, violence against women and equal opportunities on the labor market.

The representative of KARAT – Aleksandra Solik took part in the Central and Eastern European women’s NGOs round table titled “Women Citizens of Europe Unite!”. The participants talked about the biggest challenges that women’s and feminist movements in their countries are currently faced with, and strategies and actions that should be undertaken to address these challenges and advance women’s rights in the countries. Aleksandra Solik stressed that Poland does not get involved enough in shaping the politics of EU and that the Polish government is reluctant to use UN’s mechanisms to protect women’s rights.



The Congress formulated 10 postulates including a ratification of the Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, liberalization of the anti-abortion law, institutionalized care for pre-school children, introducing parities and the principle of gender alteration on electoral lists as well as gender quota in managements of public companies.

From more information please contact Aleksandra Solik at: aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl

The source: [Women’s Congress](#)

Members' News

Poland: Delayed report to CEDAW Committee finally adopted

On 7th of September 2012 the Council of Ministers has finally adopted the report on the implementation of CEDAW in Poland in the years 2002-2010. Further, the report will be submitted to the CEDAW Committee, that would indicate the timing of the reviewing session.

The last CEDAW (Convention on Elimination All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) reviewing session of Poland took place in 2007. Since 2010, KARAT together with a number of Polish civil society organizations monitored the implementation of the Concluding Observations (a set of conclusions and recommendations released by the CEDAW Committee) and lobbied the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment to draft the official periodic report, which was due to be submitted to the CEDAW Committee by September 2010. In March 2011 KARAT participated in the consultations of the government's report and coordinated the production of the alternative report on the situation of women in the country.

The government report is available in Polish at:

http://rownetraktowanie.gov.pl/sites/default/files/cedawwersja_przyjeta_przez_rm_7.09.12_aneks.pdf

For more information please contact Magdalena Pocheć at: magda.pochec@karat.org.pl

Georgia: Gender equality a part of National Action Plan

The Women's Center has started cooperation with the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration to amend the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan (2009-2014). The cooperation focuses on developing and including in the document a component concerning human rights and gender equality.

This initiative is a part of a multi-year project aimed at strengthening the legislative framework to build the national minority legal right protection system and promoting gender equality. The project includes establishing a multidisciplinary group to develop the component on human rights and gender equality, meetings with representatives of the government inter-institutional commission responsible for implementation of National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, and consultations with the minority public agencies and organizations.

For more information please contact Ia Verulashvili at: iaverulashvili@yahoo.com

Poland's UPR in Geneva

On 20th of September 2012 the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Poland took place in Geneva. During the session the Polish government responded to the recommendations formulated by the Working Group on UPR consisted of UN member nations. Many [recommendations](#) addressed the problem of seriously limited access to reproductive rights and services such as abortion, contraception and sexual education. These were already pointed out in [the report on situation of Human Rights in Poland](#) presented to Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) by KARAT Coalition and three other human rights organizations in November 2011.

However, the Polish response to the recommendations related to reproductive rights and services was "Accepted. Already implemented" that means that Poland does not recognize the problem of a great number of illegal abortions being a result of strict abortion law, lack of effective mechanisms to exercise a woman's right to legal abortion, limited access to contraceptives and poor knowledge of teenagers on issues concerning their sexuality.

Other recommendations accepted by Poland include developing the policy on reducing the wage gap between men and women, recognizing gender identity as possible ground for discrimination, improving access to justice of the victims of domestic violence, and promoting the participation of women in the public and political life of the country.

All the relevant documents on UPR process on Poland can be found on [HERE](#)

For more information please contact Magdalena Pocheć at: magda.pochec@karat.org.pl

European Union

EU initiative to strengthen social protection policies

The European Commission presented the first ever [Commission Communication](#) on social protection in international development. It explains how EU development cooperation can support the strengthening of social protection policies and systems. It includes proposals such as supporting nationally-owned policies, introducing measures to support job creation and employment, involving the civil society and the private sector, and tackling the hidden causes of vulnerability – particularly those that affect women – to readdress the balance. These proposals have been made after a broad consultation process with over 250 stakeholders and 17 Member states. They will be discussed by EU Development ministers and the European Parliament in the coming months.

The EC initiative is important since social protection still remains an unachieved goal for billions of people, especially of vulnerable groups such as women, children, the disabled, the elderly, etc. Furthermore, the lack of social protection is a strong obstacle to the long-term and sustainable development of middle and low income countries.

Source: [Andris Piebalgs](#)

New EU programme to improve gender equality

The EU has launched a new programme called Equality Pays Off. It aims at supporting the efforts of companies in tackling one of the major challenges of the future – skills shortage – by promoting equality between men and women, and consequently reducing the gender pay gap. The programme offers workshops for companies in all participating countries and a conference in Brussels that will allow for the sharing of good practices and networking on gender equality across borders.

The programme is targeted at business leaders and key decision makers at large companies in 34 European countries. From the region of Central and Eastern Europe the programme will be conducted in EU member countries, Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia.

Source: [European Commission](#)

World

UN officials call on strengthening women's access to justice

The United Nations officials urged countries to implement measures to improve women's access to and participation in justice systems, stressing that the rule of law can help break down gender barriers. The problem of lack of or limited access to justice of women was discussed at the event at UN Headquarters in New York on 24th of

September within the framework of High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law, which drew heads of State and Government and ministers from nearly 80 countries.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon talked about 3 commitments that countries must make to ensure women have access to justice systems in their countries: eliminating laws that discriminate against women and girls, increasing women's involvement in the justice system, and investing at least 15% of overall rule of law funding in breaking down the barriers to justice for women. He stressed that gender equality must run through the entire development agenda.

The UN Women's Executive Director Ms. Bachelet noted that gender inequality continues to exist in many countries and is reflected in their laws. More than 100 countries still impose legal differences between women and men in areas such as a woman's ability to sign a contract, travel abroad, manage property and interact with public authorities and the private sector.

According to the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 8 in 10 women worldwide do not have access to their country's formal justice system.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)

September 28 for safe and legal abortion

On 28th of September the Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion was celebrated across the world. On that day actions, events and happenings took place to raise awareness of society and policy makers as, so they realize that reproductive rights are human rights that must be respected and guaranteed by the States.

At the official website of [September 28](#) everybody could join the campaign by signing [petitions and signature campaigns](#) for greater access to legal and safe abortion.

To commemorate that day several events were held in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In Macedonia, for example, the non-government organization [H.E.R.A](#) issued a press release stressing the importance of access to safe and legal abortion and called for registration of drugs for medical abortion in this country. In Poland, the [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#), a KARAT member, organized discussion panel and film screening during the 4th Congress of Women in Warsaw and press conference with participation of representatives of pro-choice organizations, and took part in a monthly group bicycle ride "Critical Mass" in Warsaw holding banners that demanded an access to safe and legal abortion in Poland. In Russia, RAPD, together with its Pro-choice Coalition organized a workshop on the right to safe and legal abortion and published on their social media pages videos of a bilingual English/Russian seminar on the access to abortion as a human right in Central and Eastern Europe.

Source: [September 28](#)



Resources

World bank eAtlas of gender

World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development looks at the facts and trends surrounding the various dimensions of gender equality in the context of the development process: although many women around the world continue to struggle with gender-based disadvantages, much has changed for the better and at a more rapid pace than ever before. But that progress needs to be expanded, protected, and deepened.

See [The World bank eAtlas of gender](#)

Development Journal Vol.55 (2012): Economic Justice

Development Volume 55 takes up the challenge with fresh insights and new voices in four cutting edge issues: Greening the Economy, Citizenship for Change, Gender and Economic Justice and African Strategies for Transformation. The "Gender and Economic Justice" chapter highlights the feminist debate on economic development looking at macro and micro issues. It explores how economic power is impacting on women as well as contributing to cutting edge analysis for diverse economies that take into account women's economic rights.

You can download the *Development* Vol. 55 from [HERE](#)

Upcoming events

International conference "Reconciliation of Work and Care: New Perspectives"

An international conference organized by Gender Studies, o.p.s. aims at new perspectives and questions within the area of reconciliation of work and care. International guests will present their views, expertise and experience from the field of work-life balance. It will be accompanied by speeches of Czech sociologists, NGO experts, companies and public administration representatives. Special focus will be given to the issue of age and gender aspects of work and care and the so-called sandwich generation will be discussed.

The conference will be crowned by awarding the winners of the *Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities. Company of the Year*. It is a prestigious award for companies that advance gender equality in their inner structures and processes.

Time: 18 October 2012

Place: Czech Republic, Prague, the conference hall of Ceska sporitelna

For whom: social scientists, NGO experts, public administration representatives, companies representatives (HR managers, diversity managers), (the conference is designed for 100 participants)

More information at: office@genderstudies.cz

Call for action

Say NO to UN resolution on Traditional Values

At the last session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Russia has proposed a resolution seeking to promote "traditional values" as a basis for human rights. Numerous UN experts have emphasised that traditional values are frequently invoked by States to justify human rights violations, such as family violence, marital rape, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

There is absolutely no recognition in Russia's draft resolution that many practices inconsistent with human rights come from traditional values. If this resolution is passed, there is no doubt that Governments in future will use "traditional values" to restrict human rights.

Learn how to take action against the proposed resolution [HERE](#)

For further information click [HERE](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

KARAT Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the following for their contributions to the News (forwarding information and providing us with 'original' information): Women's Center (Georgia), Gender Studies (Czech Republic), V4SciencesPo, Women's Congress, September 28, EWL, AWID.

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