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Norwegian feminists visit KARAT

On December 4-5, 2013 KARAT played host to Karin and Marte from the Norwegian women's organization [KUN Centre for Knowledge and Gender Equality](#). The aim of a 2-day meeting was to discuss a bilateral cooperation between KARAT and KUN in the project on enhancing gender equality policy of the regional governmental bodies in Poland.

The participants of the meeting discussed the details of partnership and how the KUN's knowledge and experience in mainstreaming gender equality can be used to get the greatest possible benefits for the project. They also shared Polish and Norwegian experiences on mainstreaming gender equality, including the challenges the non-government organizations face when introducing this topic to the government and local authorities in Poland and Norway. Karin and Marte gave suggestions on how to approach this issue basing on their own experience in working with local authorities. The participants of the meeting had a chance to learn about the gender analysis methods used by Karin and Marte to analyse the strategic documents developed by the public administration and institutions. The meeting was very fruitful for both organizations as they developed ideas for extending cooperation and got familiar with the Polish and Norwegian context in terms of gender mainstreaming.

The meeting was possible thanks to financial support of Batory Foundation within the Programme "[Citizens for Democracy](#)" financed by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism ([EEA Funds](#)).

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Macedonia: Silent auction to support women victims of violence

On November 25, 2013 Macedonian Association of Development and Integration – MADi and Zonta Club Skopje joined the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. To celebrate the Orange Day they decided to support the women victims of violence living in a shelter center by organizing a silent auction of handmade products.

Having in mind that these women often lack a necessary self-esteem and economic independence in order to build the solid bases for their lives in a society, the organizations will use money fundraised during the auction to enhance the women's skills and knowledge in computer accounting. The women from the shelter center run by the Organization of Women of Skopje City will enroll on a course of computer accounting provided by the University Kocho Racin in Skopje, Macedonia. The obtained education and qualifications will increase their chances to find jobs and be more competitive on a labour market.

In 2012 the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign proclaimed every 25th of the month as Orange Day. The Orange Day was celebrated in Macedonia for the first time.

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Poland: Proposals to criminalize women for having illegal abortion

The Criminal Law Codification Commission proposed amendments to the Criminal Code. The suggested changes include criminalization of women who have abortions illegally and increasing a penalty from three to five years' imprisonment for those who perform abortions. Additionally, the Committee suggested that the women who in some way exposed the fetus's health to danger during a pregnancy should be punished as well. The proposed amendments caused a commotion in media and were strongly criticized by women's and human rights NGOs. The Polish Prime Minister asked about this issue claimed that the government does not plan to change the current abortion law.

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

Poland: Government adopted National Action Plan for Equal Treatment

On December 10, 2013 Polish government adopted a long-awaited "National Action Plan for Equal Treatment for the Years 2013-2015", prepared by the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment. It is the first government document that raises the issue of equal treatment of many groups exposed to discrimination. The document includes analysis of the situation of groups susceptible to discrimination, identifies problematic areas, defines goals and objectives of the national policy, as well as formulates concrete steps to be taken by the government. In terms of women's rights, there is a strong language on women's participation in politics. The need for the adoption of parity system with 'zipper system' (the alternate order of women and men) on electoral tickets has been highlighted. However, the most burning area of rights' violations which is sexual and reproductive health has been not adequately recognized in the document. Furthermore, the economic status of women with lower level of education in feminized sectors remains not addressed. The document rarely relates to the foreigners, with the exception of recommendations regarding education of foreign children, appropriate gynecological assistance for women from other cultures and quality of services provided by institutions dealing with immigrants.

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Tajikistan: Women activists and deputies in online dialogue

On November 19, 2013 the women's activists from Sughd province and the women deputies of the lower chamber of Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan took part in an online conference to discuss the burning issues on women's rights protection policy. The online conference provided a space for a dialogue on implementation of the Law on Social and Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence, the level of compulsory education for girls, a problem of early marriages and migrant women. The discussion resulted in many ideas on how to improve implementation of the law in order to provide better protection of women's rights. The women activists suggested, among others, strengthening a role of school and family psychologists, increasing a number of women employed in police, raising a role of chairman in the mahalla female council, introducing the obligatory marriage contracts for women migrating with a purpose of getting married, and adopting a new law to combat trafficking in human. All the suggestions were sent to the board of Tajikistan's lower chamber - Majlisi Namoyandagon.

This kind of online conference was held for the first time in Tajikistan and was organized by the NGO "Nasl" on the eve of International Campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Violence.

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Uzbekistan: Forced sterilization of women is widespread. Report

A new report on forced sterilization of women in Uzbekistan at government clinics says the practice remains widespread across the country. Natalia Antelava, the author of the report by the U.S.-based [Open Society Foundations](#), says medical professionals throughout the country are under government pressure to perform sterilizations as a means to combat population growth. Presenting the report to the press on December 13, 2013 she stressed that all women of reproductive age who had delivered two or more children were potential targets for forced sterilization. "The sterilization campaign by the government is still carrying on, it's happening everywhere, across Uzbekistan. So, it is not that individual regions are targeted, rather across the country clinics and hospitals are performing the procedures. It hasn't shown any sign of slowing down in the last five years." She also said that women with lower socioeconomic status and representatives of ethnic minorities were the most likely to be sterilized. Since 1999, Uzbekistan's ongoing and systematic forced-sterilization program has affected tens of thousands of women.

Source: [RFE/RL](#)

European Union

Estrela SRHR report rejected

On December 10, 2013 (the International Human Rights Day) the European Parliament failed to support the sexual and reproductive rights and rejected the [Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#) (also called the Estrela report). The report was replaced by an [alternative proposal](#) drafted by the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists group backed by the European People's Party by a margin of 7 votes. A short majority of Members of European Parliament (MEPs) replaced the extensive Estrela report of nearly 90 recommendations and opinions on sexual and reproductive health and rights with a unique paragraph: "Notes that the formulation and implementation of policies on [sexual and reproductive health rights] and on sexual education in schools is a competence of the Member States". The new version of the report adds that the EU can still help Member States share good practices.

It is a great loss and disappointment that the MEPs failed to recognise the right of all people, and especially women, to make informed choices on their reproductive and sexual lives, including such issues as contraception and abortion. The MEPs have also failed to acknowledge the urgent need to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV as well as gender based violence. If adopted, this report would have been a strong political statement from the European Parliament in defense of sexual and reproductive rights. Mikael Gustafsson, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) said: "I remain ashamed and stunned that so many people still can't see how important sexual and reproductive health and rights are to achieving gender equality in the EU and beyond. We will continue to defend a woman's right to safe and legal abortion and access to contraception. We won't back down on calling for comprehensive, non-discriminatory sexuality education for all as well as for urgent protection of the rights of LGBTI persons in Europe. The Estrela report contained all these objectives and it is a scandal that right-wing forces have succeeded in throwing it out."

Source: [Astra Network](#), [European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights](#)

MEPs call for women's rights a day after rejecting the Estrela report

On December 11, 2013, the European Parliament adopted its yearly report on [the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2012 and the European Union's policy on the matter](#). In particular, Members of European Parliament (MEPs) call for a stand-alone goal for women's rights and gender equality to be included in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals, with a strong emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). What is interesting on the day before, MEPs rejected the Estrela report on SRHR.

Moreover, the report on Human Rights "calls for efforts to be stepped up to ensure the fullest possible achievement, prior to the expiry of the deadlines, of the Millennium Development Goals as regards gender equality, maternal health and access to adequate health systems, education and sexual and reproductive health rights, especially for the most vulnerable groups such as girls and young women, on the basis of a solid commitment on the part of governments to enhance accountability and monitoring mechanisms for existing human rights obligations, promote access to justice for all and ensure effective participation for all, including the most marginalised and disadvantaged, in development, decision making and implementation."

Finally, the report calls for an immediate end to all acts of violence, sexual assault and other forms of degrading treatment against female protesters and women's rights activists and for serious and impartial investigations into all such cases and full accountability for those responsible.

Source: [EWL](#)

Resources

PSIRU: How women are being affected by the global economic crisis and austerity measures

The global trade union federation Public Services International (PSI) commissioned this report to identify how women are being affected by the global financial and economic crises, and the austerity measures being implemented by many governments. The report analyses how women are being affected by changes in employment, income, public services and benefits

You can find the publication under: http://congress.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/upload/event/EN_PSI_Crisis_Impact_Austerity_on_Women.pdf

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

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