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## KARAT & Members' News

### Belarusian Gender Equality Draft Law discussed in Warsaw

On April 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 eight women's rights advocates from Belarus took part in a strategic meeting in Warsaw, Poland on formulating and advocating for gender equality law in Belarus. The meeting was a response to the current challenges faced by the Belarusian women's movement. It focused on dissemination of expertise and utilization of Croatian and Polish experiences in the area of developing a draft law and strategy for its adoption by the parliament. The experts shared information about the challenges faced by the women's movements on their ways to adopt the law on equal status of women and men in their countries. The participants learned the details of the Croatian Gender Equality Law, how it works in practice, and the reasons for rejecting the gender equality draft law by the Polish parliament in the 90ties. These provided them with the broader perspective on how the social and political climates around the gender equality issue might influence the law's implementation and practice. The participants and the foreign experts actively discussed the strategy, chances for draft law's implementation as well as the draft law itself.



The outcome of the meeting was a set of recommendations from the Croatian, German and Polish experts for the Belarusian colleagues.

The training was one of the series of initiatives that Belarusian women's organizations have been undertaken to make the state's authorities adopt the bill on equal status of women and men as well as the bill on preventing and combating domestic violence. The training was organized by KARAT with its Belarusian member organization Public Association of "Women's Independent Democratic Movement" (PA 'WIDM') in the frame of the project "Advancing gender equality in Belarus" financed by Dutch Embassy in Poland.

For more information please contact Agnieszka at: [agnieszka.mazurek@karat.org.pl](mailto:agnieszka.mazurek@karat.org.pl)

### **Kyrgyzstan: National Women's History Month promotes women's rights**

In March the Women's Movement of Kyrgyzstan organized a series of events under a common title "National Women's History Month". They aimed at promoting the equal rights and opportunities, drawing the attention of society to the problem of small representation of women in decision-making processes, and changing the stereotypical, mostly political view on the holiday of the Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The NGO "Women Support Center" organized a photo exhibition of women-politicians and women-leaders who actively contribute to the development of their communities and promote gender equality in their work. Another event was the intellectual marathon "Brain Ring". For the first time the deputies of local councils, representatives of governmental ministries and departments, as well as a village administration (ayil okmotu) competed on knowledge about the protection and promotion of women's rights. One of the key components of this event was a design of the stand "shyrdak" collection of more than 50 recommendations concerning the promotion of women's political rights.



For more information please contact Women Support Center at: [kyrgyzwomen@gmail.com](mailto:kyrgyzwomen@gmail.com)

### **CEDAW Committee takes into consideration the List of Issues & Questions proposed by Polish NGOs**

On March 3, 2014 the representatives of the CEDAW Coalition of Polish NGOs coordinated by Karat Coalition took part in the Pre-Session Working Group of CEDAW Committee in Geneva. During the Pre-Session the Committee developed the List of Issues & Questions for 8 States parties, including Poland. CEDAW Coalition of Polish NGOs presented an oral statement. The statement focused on the most burning issues concerning the implementation of CEDAW Convention in Poland such as the principle of non-discrimination and equality, gender stereotypes, violence against women and education, sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as the situation of vulnerable groups of women. The members of CEDAW Committee, who attended the Pre-Sessional Working Group, asked the representatives several questions concerning the status of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Poland, the national machinery and its capability to implement gender equality, and the Government's actions towards increasing the women's participation on the boards of publicly listed companies. The Committee was also interested in the issue of women's exploitation in prostitution in Poland. KARAT on behalf of CEDAW Coalition of Polish NGOs submitted to the CEDAW Committee the proposed [List of Issues & Questions along with the draft of the alternative report](#). The list was taken into account by the Committee and many of the issues raised by CEDAW Coalition of Polish NGOs can be found in the official [CEDAW Committee's List of Issues & Questions](#) sent to the Polish government.

The review of the Polish Government's report is scheduled for the 59th Session planned in October 2014, for which the CEDAW Coalition of Polish NGOs will submit the final version of the alternative report.

Read the CEDAW Committee's [List of Issues & Questions](#) in relation to the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Poland.

For more information please contact Aleksandra at: [aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl](mailto:aleksandra.solik@karat.org.pl)

### **Tajikistan: Making the law on domestic violence a reality for women**

The NGO "Nas" in cooperation with the Center of Human Rights in Sohgd area conducts the trainings aimed at increasing knowledge on the [Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence](#). The trainings are addressed to the representatives of local authorities as well as the medical workers, police and teachers who are obliged to report whenever they witness or suspect violence against women or girls. The participants of the trainings learned about the law itself and how to use it in practice to prevent the acts of violence and to effectively help the women victims of violence.



The Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence was adopted in December 2012 by the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan. However, there is still a lot to be done to make this law a reality for all of Tajikistan's women.

For more information please contact Orzu Ganieva at: [orzu-77@mail.ru](mailto:orzu-77@mail.ru)

## **European Union**

### **European Parliament rejects a report on gender equality**

The Parliament has rejected the report prepared by the Portuguese MEP Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE) by 298 votes (289 in favour, 87 abstained) on the "Equality between women and men in the European Union." The text, an own-initiative report, contained a series of observations on gender equality and on the protection of women's rights on social, family and job sectors. It underlined the importance of being committed to reach targets such as wage equality between men and women, social security, stopping violence and gender-targeted stereotypes. It was also focused on sexual health, recommending Member States to "safeguard women's right to free, high-quality public gynaecological and obstetric healthcare services and to sexual and reproductive health in general, including the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy." The author of the Report commented on its rejection: "This is a disgrace. The Parliament has sent a shameful message. [...] The MPs do not care about women rights, not even in theory."

Source: [EU News](#)

### **Poland: Government gives the green light to the Istanbul Convention**

On April 29 the Polish government agreed to ratify the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#). Now the Convention must be ratified by the Parliament. The women's and human rights organizations in Poland have been demanding the ratification of the Convention for a long time. However, the Convention has been strongly criticized by the Polish Catholic church for not taking into consideration the natural differences between woman and man, as well as for promoting a sexual education. To ratify the Convention it was necessary to adapt some of the Polish legal regulation. One of the major changes was introducing to the Criminal

Code the law saying that in case of rape the criminal investigation will be initiated regardless the fact if a victim asked for it or not.

According to the women's rights organizations it is still a long way to ratification of the Convention as the conservative forces in the Parliament are strongly against it.

Source: <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/rzad-zgoda-na-ratyfikacje-konwencji-ws-zwalczania-przemocy-wobec-kobiet/y09hb>

### **Poland: The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of Women calls for community, equality and responsibility**

On May 9-10, 2014 some 8,600 participants attended the 6<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Congress of Women, a social and political organization set up by ethics professor Magdalena Środa and economist Henryka Bochniarz. The guiding theme for this year's debates was: "Community, Equality, Responsibility". "Equality is the biggest challenge that Europe is facing at the moment. We have freedom, and a European community, and it is now time to fight for equality", Środa said in one of the opening speech. This year's panels discussed, among others, issues such as: the rights of women in Ukraine, the forthcoming European Elections, the European solidarity, the 25 years of freedom and democracy in Poland, and the women's health.

The Congress of Women was established in 2009, on the 20th anniversary of the political and economic transformation in Poland. Its goal is to shed light on the vast contribution of women to the social, civic and economic transformations, emphasizing women's role in the building of modern Poland. The Congress gives the women a forum for sharing their experiences, finding inspiration, and gaining motivation.

For more information about the Congress of Women visit its website: <http://www.kongreskobiet.pl/en-EN/>

## **World**

### **Georgia: Early marriages still a problem according to the ombudsman's report**

Discrimination of sexual, ethnic and religious minorities, child marriage, family violence, bullying in schools, people affected by hydro power development and mistreatment of prisoners. These are some of the human rights challenges in the Georgian ombudsman's 2013 report, which has been recently presented in Georgian parliament. The 600 page report draws attention to the violence against LGBT, a number of cases of violations of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and the early marriage of girls which still remains a problem in this country. The early marriages usually happen on the basis of agreement between parents or by kidnapping. Only in January and February 2014 three cases of kidnapping girls for a marriage and more than 20 cases of early marriage took place in Georgia. According to data from the Education Ministry, 7 367 girls stopped going to school from 2011 to 2013 because of early marriage.

Violence in the family and the rights of women is also described in the report. There were 21 cases of women being killed in 2013. From January 1 to December 31 there were 5 447 calls to the emergency call center about family conflicts, out of which 358 cases were identified as violence in the family.

But 2013 was a year that brought hope for thousands of Georgians that justice finally would be restored after almost a decade under authoritarian rule. The Ombudsman's Office received more than eleven thousand complaints, more than double what it was in previous years, which, the ombudsman says, reflects increased expectations to the office, increased awareness of human rights violations and the existence of a free environment.

Source: [Democracy & Freedom Watch](#)

## The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICPD - key instrument for Women's rights

[The Sixth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action \(IPCI/ICPD\)](#) was held in Stockholm, Sweden on 23- 25 April 2014. More than 260 parliamentarians from 134 countries met to renew their commitment to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to mark its 20th anniversary.

The participants discussed progress towards agreements made at the 1994 ICPD on the basis of the recently published [United Nations ICPD Global Review Report](#), which reviews of the implementation of the Programme of Action. As the report states, the gains in maternal health and other dimensions of sexual and reproductive health and rights during the past 20 years are among the great successes to celebrate since the ICPD. However, women still face significant challenges in exercising their rights all over the world. About 800 women die each day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, and more than 220 million women still have an unmet need for contraceptives.

The participants renewed their commitment to ICPD Programme of Action and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular MDG 5 b) on universal access to sexual and reproductive health. Find here the main outcome of the Conference and the agreements reached at this event: [The Stockholm Statement of Commitment On the Implementation of ICPD Beyond 2014](#).

Source: [EWL](#)

## Upcoming events

### European elections coming up: some useful websites

European elections are just around the corner. From 22 to 25 May 2014, nearly 500 million citizens from 28 EU Member States will go to the polls to elect the new Members of the European Parliament (MEP's) to represent their interests for the next five years. This time 751 MEPs will be elected. MEPs' seats are allocated among the various states, by the EU treaties, on the basis of 'degressive proportionality', which means countries with larger populations have more seats than smaller ones, but the latter have more seats than strict proportionality would imply. Find here the lists of [all European political parties](#) and [current MEPs](#).

Why are these elections different? In 2009 Lisbon Treaty introduced a new major development: EU citizens will –for the first time– have a clear say about next President of the European Commission's nomination, as the European election results will have to be taken into account.

Useful pages:

<http://www.elections2014.eu/en>

<http://www.debatingeurope.eu/vote2014/#.U1eOq6J2y71>

<http://www.electio2014.eu/>

<http://www.votewatch.eu/>

<http://euvox.eu/>

Source: [EWL](#)

### CEDAW Committee Elections

The CEDAW Committee Elections will take place on 26 June 2014. Now that the nominees have been named it is up to the states members of CEDAW (187 countries that ratified) to vote for each candidate, and through a simple majority

the 11 members with the most votes will win. At this time what you can do is to influence the voting in the member states parties meeting on 26th June to show you support certain candidates. You can do this in several ways: 1) having discussions or writing a letter of support for them with some of the missions in Geneva; 2) having discussions or writing letter of support to your own Ministry of Foreign Affairs to also support these candidates.

See this page for information about the upcoming election:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Elections2014.aspx>

## **CSW 59 - BEIJING + 20 - UN Commission on the Status of Women 2015**

The fifty-ninth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York, tentatively scheduled for 9-20 March 2015. Representatives of [Member States](#), UN entities, and [ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations \(NGOs\)](#) from all regions of the world attend the session.

The Commission will undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The review ([Beijing+20](#)) will also include the outcomes of the [23rd special session of the General Assembly](#), the first five-year assessment conducted after the adoption of the Platform for Action, which highlighted further actions and initiatives.

The session will also address current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda. The review will be conducted at national, regional and global levels. States are urged to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. The regional commissions of the United Nations will undertake regional reviews. Both the national and regional review processes will feed into the global review.

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## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS**

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