

## July 2019 NEWSLETTER **in** NUMBERS

**35** MEPs call on Ursula von der Leyen to support and defend gender equality and SRHR

**16.9 million** women and girls provided modern methods of family planning via UK Aid

MEPs for SRR welcomes **3** new members

### In the news

#### EPF NEWS

**35 MEPs call on Ursula von der Leyen to strongly support and defend Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**



STRASBOURG, 16 July 2019 - Members of the European Parliament and representatives of MEPs for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the pro-choice network ALL of US call on the newly elected President of the European

Commission Ursula von der Leyen to protect and further strengthen gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in the work programme for the European Commission 2019-2024.

In the Statement, signed by 35 MEPs, they urge Ursula von der Leyen to include the following objectives in the work programme for the European Commission 2019-2024:

- Adopt a binding EU Strategy for Gender Equality and an LGBTI strategy and work towards the eradication of gender inequality and violence against women and gender-based violence and ensure that standards needed to achieve this are put in place.
- Safeguard the right of all to live free and safe reproductive lives without discrimination and include the promotion and improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the next EU's Public Health Strategy.
- Firmly denounce regressive discourse and prevent the enactment of laws and policies that undermine women's rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBTI rights, reiterating that those retrograde measures have no place in a democratic XXI century Europe.
- Invest EU resources and make a political priority out of delivering far-reaching initiatives to change harmful social norms through education and empowerment, to defend women's rights, gender equality and LGBTI rights.
- Provide political and financial support to women's rights groups and human rights defenders, particularly those working in challenging contexts, including in EU member states and implement gender-responsive approaches to budgeting in a way that explicitly tracks what proportion of public funds are targeted on women.

[Download Open Statement](#)

Visit website [www.mepsforsrr.eu](http://www.mepsforsrr.eu)

## Global Parliamentary Alliance event in Rome draws 100 attendees



ROME, 25 July 2019 - The Italian All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Global Health and Women's Rights and AIDOS jointly organised a public event on the Global Parliamentary Alliance for Health, Rights and Development at the Rome Chamber of Deputies.

The meeting followed from the [creation of the Global Parliamentary Alliance at the Parliamentary Forum on the margins of the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver last month](#). Hon. Laura Boldrini – former President of the Chamber of Deputies - joined the Global Parliamentary Alliance on behalf of the Italian APPG and presented the parliamentary work on the issue and expressed their will in continuing their commitment of behalf of women's rights together with Sen. Valeria Fedeli, member of the Special Committee on Human Rights at the Senate and Sen. Valeria Valente, president of the Committee of Enquiry on Femminicide and other forms of gender based violence, members of the APPG. During the event, Maria Grazia Panunzi, president of AIDOS, stressed the importance of linking the Global Parliamentary Alliance and the theme of Women Deliver 2019 ("Power. Progress. Change") with the next international events: The Nairobi Summit to Advance the ICPD Programme of Action and the 25th anniversary commemoration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020.

Neil Datta, EPF Secretary, presented upcoming activities in the parliamentary sector in the run-up to the Nairobi Summit.

The meeting brought together over 100 actors from civil society and women's rights associations that expressed their common aim in supporting and promoting women's rights.

For more information and GPA membership registration, see [here](#) (also in French [here](#)).

See articles written on the event below (Right-click on Google chrome article to translate to English)

[LA CONSIGLIERA DI PARITÀ DELLA PROVINCIA DI CATANZARO PARTECIPA ALLA CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI ALL'ALLEANZA PARLAMENTARE GLOBALE SUI D](#)  
[Morano Cinque ad alleanza parlamentare globale su diritti donne](#)  
[Women empowerment, Boldrini: donne al potere](#)

### **European Commission First Vice-President Timmermans responds to MP letters**



BRUSSELS, 23 July 2019 - The First Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans has responded to two letters sent to him in April by Members of Parliament to voice their concern about an attack on fundamental rights and democracy in the EU by anti-choice groups and far-right extremists.

- [On the 12th of April 2019, 51 Members of Parliament wrote a letter to First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans and Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, regarding their concern towards US Christian right and fundamentalists funding extremist purposes in Europe.](#) On the 25th of May, Vice President Timmermans responded with a letter including the below quote:

*The Commission is committed to ensure that fundamental rights, including non-discrimination and gender equality, are fully respected. You mention the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on violence against women in Europe,*

*which is a matter of concern to Commissioner Jourová and myself. I had the opportunity to raise this issue at the last high-level meeting with religious leaders held on 8 October 2018. I referred in particular to the position of certain religious groups on the Istanbul convention and recalled that equality between men and women is a fundamental right that must not be put at risk and that women and families should be protected from violence. I can assure you that we will continue our engagement with religious organisations on this matter.*

- [On the 26th of April, 7 Members of Parliament signed a letter sent to First Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans urging him to protect the fundamental rights, values and liberal democracy in the European Union.](#) On the 23rd of July, Vice-President Timmermans responded with a letter highlighting measures taken by the European Commission both in the pre- and post-election stage to "bolster European democracy and protect free and fair elections".

EPF plans to pursue these issues during the Commissioner-designates' hearings and with the new College of Commissioners this autumn.

### **EPF Executive Committee Meets in Brussels**



BRUSSELS, 8 July 2019 - The EPF Executive Committee assembled in EPF's Brussels office for their second official meeting of the year in Brussels, where members discussed the background, origins, and current and future activities of the parliamentary forum.



Topics of the day included the [creation of the Global Parliamentary Alliance](#), the renewal of the EU Institutions, EPF's projects, including the 2019 Contraception Atlas, development aid for RMNCAH, and anti-SRR movements.

In attendance were 9 of the 11 Executive Committee members: EPF President Hon. Petra de Sutter, MP (Belgium) the two vice-Presidents Hon. Öznur Çalık, MP (Turkey) and Hon. Petra Bayr, MP (Austria) as well as members: Hon. Malahat Ibrahimqizi, MP (Azerbaijan), Hon. Ulla Sandbaek, MP (Denmark), Hon. Hanna Sarkkinen, MP (Finland), Hon. Alice Mary Higgins, MP (Ireland), Hon. Florian Dorel Bodog, MP (Romania) and Hon. John Mann, MP (UK).

Hon. Ulla Sandbaek is retiring and received a goodbye gift from the Executive Committee after many years of work with EPF.

### **EPF meets newly reconstituted APPG in Armenia**



YEREVAN, 10-11 July 2019 - Hosted by Members of the Standing Committee on Health and Social Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, EPF presented findings from the 2019 Contraception Atlas, as well as our report "Restoring the Natural Order." The documentary "Abortion: Backlash in Europe" was also screened. The event was co-hosted by Hon. Arpine Davoyan.

During the visit to Yerevan, EPF also had the opportunity to meet with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, local NGOs, activists and CSOs representatives, the WHO country Office and the UNFPA country office. Topics of discussion were Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the issue of domestic violence in Armenia,

progress in adoption of the Istanbul Convention, and the situation of local NGOs, among other important issues.

### **Save the date: European Week of Action for Girls 2019**



BRUSSELS, 30 July 2019 -The 2019 European Week of Action for Girls (EWAG) will take place from October 8 through to the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11. Brussels will be a hive of activity and event all focused on the rights of girls and young women, and what Europe can do to support their empowerment around the world.

EWAG asks the EU to better protect and champion the rights of girls, particularly through its external action. [Organised by a coalition of civil society organisations](#), and supported by the European Institutions and UN Agencies, EWAG 2019 will give girls the opportunity to talk to EU decision-makers and help shape a better world for all girls. They will address EU leaders on what needs to be done to overcome the barriers they face and to ensure their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

This year is an important edition, taking place at the beginning of a new cycle for the EU institutions. With a new European Parliament and College of Commissioners, this EU leadership will set the vision for the EU and it is crucial that this builds on the current momentum towards greater gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Partner organisations are working together to create an exciting and jam-packed agenda for around 20 girl advocates from around the globe.

Key topics of focus will be girls' right to education, economic empowerment, girls' and young women's participation in decision-making and freedom from (gender-based) violence.

Any MEPs wishing to participate in this year's EWAG can contact [secretariat@epfweb.org](mailto:secretariat@epfweb.org)

More details will be coming soon, but for now put it in your diaries! For more updates and information, **just follow #eugirlsweek across social media!**  
[Visit the website for more information](#)

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT NEWS

### MEPs for SRR welcomes 3 new members



BRUSSELS, 31 July 2019 – 13 members of the European Parliament all-party group were re-elected during the European Parliament elections in May 2019. Since the elections, MEPs for SRR is happy to welcome 3 new members to MEPs for SRR:

- EPF President Hon. Petra De Sutter, MEP (Belgium), Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- Hon. Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, MEP (France), Renew Europe Group
- Hon. Karen Melchior, MEP (Denmark), Renew Europe Group

EPF President Hon. Petra De Sutter, MEP, will be co-chairing the group along with Hon. Sophie in 't Veld, MEP (Netherlands) from the Renew Europe Group.

Recruitment of MEPs to the group is ongoing. For more information, see the website and brochure below.

MEPs wishing to join can email [manuela@epfweb.org](mailto:manuela@epfweb.org)

 [MEPs for SRR brochure](#)

[For more information visit the website](#)



## APPG NEWS

### (UK APPG) UK determined to "Leave No One Behind" with impressive investments in SRHR



LONDON, 3 July 2019 - The UK published its voluntary national review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), concluding that the review identifies many reasons to be proud yet also outlines key areas where further action is required, stating that:

*the UK remains fully committed to continuing to strengthen and enhance efforts on the Goals, both domestically and internationally, generating continued concrete action to Leave No One Behind.*

The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Goals, 169 Global Targets and 244 Global Indicators. As of June 2019, UK data are reported on 180 (74%) of the 244 Global Indicators, one of the highest proportions in the world.

#### **Maternal, child, and sexual and reproductive health (3.1, 3.2, 3.7)**

On maternal and child health, the UK invested approximately £1 billion a year across bilateral programmes and multilateral organisations from 2014-17.<sup>114</sup> In 2017, the UK invested in the Global Financing Facility to increase financing of evidence-based maternal and child health interventions in 27 countries.

The UK is a global leader on sexual and reproductive health, co-hosted the 2017 Family Planning Summit, and is investing an average of £225 million per year in voluntary family planning from 2017-2022. Between April 2017 and March 2018, 14 million women and girls were reached with voluntary modern contraception, preventing 4.4 million unintended pregnancies, 1.2 million unsafe abortions and saving 4,900 women's lives.

#### **Sexual and reproductive health and rights (5.1, 5.6)**

The UK is a world leader in promoting and supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Since 2015, UK aid has provided 16.9 million women and girls with modern methods of family planning.<sup>186</sup> At the UK's 2017 Family Planning Summit, the UK committed to spend an average of £225 million per year on family planning (2017/18-2021/22). It is estimated that, every year, UK investment will support nearly 20 million total users of contraception, prevent 6 million unintended pregnancies, and thus prevent more than 3 million abortions, many of which would be unsafe. It will save the lives of over 6,000 women every year.<sup>187</sup> On maternal and child health UK government invested an average of approximately £1 billion per year across bilateral programmes and multilateral organisations from 2014-2017.

[Read the full review here](#)

**(UK APPG) Parliamentary questions submitted by Baroness Tonge reveal DFID funding figures to SRHR**



LONDON, 17 July 2019 - The responses to recent written parliamentary questions submitted by Baroness Tonge reveal DFID funding figures to SRHR.

"DFID takes an integrated approach to our programming on SRHR. The UK Government is delivering on the SDGs, reflecting them in its programme of work and integrating them into the Single Departmental Plan process. Between April 2018 and March 2019 alone, at least 23.5 million women and girls were reached with modern methods of family planning through our programmes, preventing 7.3 million unintended pregnancies, 2 million unsafe abortions, saving 8,300 women's lives and preventing the trauma of 89,000 stillbirths and 52,900 newborn deaths."

In 2016/17:

- DFID spent £307.2m directly targeting reproductive health.

- The UK Government made £40m contribution to UNFPA core funding and £208m to non-core funding
- DFID spent £27.1m directly targeting HIV and AIDS
- It is estimated that DFID spent at least 10.3% of its overseas development aid on SRHR.

Around 10% of UK ODA goes to SRHR as per IPCI ICPD recommendations.

### **(Norwegian APPG) Norway gears up for ICPD25 Nairobi Summit**



OSLO, 18 July 2019 - At a luncheon event in Oslo, Minister of International Development Dag-Inge Ulstein made a statement outlining Norway's commitment to ICPD.

*Norway strongly supports the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. We were deeply engaged in Cairo, and have had a strong commitment to the ICPD over the last 25 years. Norway has increased its financial support to sexual and reproductive health and rights. We believe that women and girls should be able to decide freely if, when and with whom they want to have children, and how many children they want to have.*

Norway committed to end sexual and gender-based violence at the Oslo conference in May this year. Minister Ulstein mentioned a strategy for international work against harmful practices to be launched later this year, with a focus on child marriage, female genital mutilation and son preference.

*We are on the way to Nairobi, and we hope that the summit will create the political momentum needed to address the unfinished agenda. The needs of those left furthest behind makes the financing of the ICPD unfinished agenda an imperative.*

[Read the full statement here](#)

**(Portuguese APPG) Advances on protection of pregnancy and childbirth amidst attacks on gender identity and expression in Portuguese parliament**



LISBON, 19 July 2019 - The last parliamentary session in Portugal saw the unanimous approval of the Law on strengthening the protection of pregnancy and childbirth for women and families to include a protection regime in preconception, medically assisted procreation, pregnancy, childbirth, birth and postpartum. This was an initiative of Hon. Catarina Marcelino, MP, Member of GPPsPD and recent participant of the MP delegation to Women Deliver 2019 and IPCI 2018 (pictured).

On the same day, a group of 86 members of the PSD, CDS and one from PS filed an application to the Constitutional Court “asking for successive scrutiny of the norms that frame education for gender identity and expression in public and private education”, calling it “gender ideology”.

During the week, various political personalities, activists and social scientists spoke out on the subject, rejecting what was at stake, remarking at the similarities with other such debates in other countries.

Hon. Catarina Marcelino noted that this is not the first time that on the last day of the Plenary and when candidate lists are being prepared for the upcoming elections, right-wing conservative party parliamentarians have launched an initiative against the SRHR. “This is not an isolated attitude. We are seeing it in other countries too and it is very important to track.”