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NEWSLETTER in NUMBERS

Delegation of 13 MPs participate in Ouagadougou Partnership meeting in Benin
2 EPF colleagues deliver presentations to CSOs in Bulgaria
Almost 40 MEPs contest screening of anti-choice film in European Parliament

In the news

EPF NEWS

MP delegation attends 8th Annual Meeting of the Ouagadougou Partnership in Benin

COTONOU, 3-6 December 2019 – A parliamentary delegation of 13 MPs from African countries participated in this year’s Ouagadougou Partnership Annual Meeting in Cotonou, Benin. Building on experience from past editions, this year’s annual meeting reviewed progress and the way forward towards achieving universal access to Family Planning in Francophone West Africa. This year’s edition of the “RAPO” focused on the theme “Youth, Social and Behavioural Change: We Want More!”
During plenary sessions parliamentary delegates discussed how to leverage opportunities for further investments in supplies for Reproductive Health and Family Planning as the way forward to achieve and surpass the objectives of the Ouagadougou Partnership, the UN 2030 Agenda and the African Union 2063 Agenda.

In the margins of the meeting, the parliamentary delegation exchanged on strategic priorities for parliamentary action with representatives of the UNFPA Country Office, Members of the Parliament of Benin during a courtesy visit to the National Assembly in Porto-Novo, and discussed “the power of youth and innovation” at a meeting with young activists and innovators organized at the headquarters of EtriLabs.

During the closing ceremony of the Annual Meeting, Hon. Juliette Zingan, MP, Senegal, speaking on behalf of the parliamentary delegation, commended the efforts and results of the OP before urging stakeholders to give concrete answers to promises to girls and women on Family Planning and Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescent and Young People in line with the roadmap of the African Union.

**Law-reform and communications strategies for SRHR workshop in Bulgaria**

SOFIA, 14 December 2019 - UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia organised a workshop for civil society activists on "Law-reform and communications strategies for SRHR; building transformative partnerships to accelerate SRHR and gender equality”.

The goal of this workshop was to empower civil society advocates’ strategic thinking and learning on a range of legislative and communications strategies and tactics that have been used successfully to advance SRHR and to counter regressive initiatives that seek to rollback SRHR.

Two EPF staff members, Marina Davidashvili and Remigiusz Bak, had the opportunity to give short presentations on cooperation with the international institutions and anti-choice movements in Europe.
BRUSSELS, 11 December 2019 - Almost 40 MEPs from the networks MEPs for SRR and ALL of Us co-signed a letter to the President of the European Parliament contesting the screening of the movie "Unplanned" organised by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. The movie contains misleading information, which "is at odds with the European Parliament’s long-standing support for sexual and reproductive health and rights", and oftentimes "utterly medically inaccurate".

The film screening, hosted by Polish MEPs Beata Kempa and Patryk Jaki, took place nonetheless.

Download the full letter here

**European Commission President von der Leyen responds positively to MEPs call to strengthen SRHR across the EU**
BRUSSELS, 6 December 2019 - President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen responded to a letter signed by almost 130 MEPs last October calling on her to secure the rights of 15 million women in the EU who still lack access to safe and legal abortion.

In her response, while she highlights that access to sexual and reproductive health services remains a Member State competence, she added that the European Commission does understand its obligation to "support Member States' efforts in implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant to women's health, universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education".

Concerning issues in her remit, she added:
"Together with the Commissioner for Equality and the Commissioner for Justice, I will ensure that our policies strengthen the rights of women and girls to be protected from gender-based violence, including sexual violence and female genital mutilation, and that victims' rights legislation is fully implemented at national level"

EPF and MEPs for SRR will continue working together to call out the backlash and ensure sexual and reproductive rights are upheld in the European Union.

Read the full letter here

Mogherini and Mimica respond to MEPs for SRR letter

BRUSSELS, 29 November 2019 - Following a letter issued by MEPs for SRR co-chairs MEP Petra de Sutter and MEP Sophie in ’t Veld asking the EU to stand united for the rights of women and girls last September, European Commission High Representative Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica responded positively in a co-signed letter.

The EU is firmly committed to playing a leading role in ensuring the full enjoyment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, by all. The lives of millions of women and young people can be saved is there is a continued commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over their bodies.

EPF and MEPs for SRR will ensure to follow up with the new High Representative and Commissioners on these matters.

Read the full letter here
COUNCIL OF EUROPE NEWS

A unanimous vote for reliable advice and information on modern contraception accessible to all

PARIS, 4 December 2019 - The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Discrimination unanimously adopted the draft Resolution "Empowering women: promoting access to contraception in Europe". The draft resolution calls for all types of modern contraception, including long-acting reversible contraception to be “accessible and affordable for everyone”, irrespective of their sex, social or national origin and any other status, and should be "accompanied by reliable advice and information". It also calls on European governments to introduce comprehensive sexuality education as part of all school curricula and ensure that age-appropriate sexuality education “is mandatory for all pupils, and that children cannot be withdrawn from it”.

Following the proposals by the rapporteur Hon. Petra Bayr, MP (Austria) and also EPF Vice President, the parliamentarians called for research on the use of all methods of contraception to be begun or enhanced, as well as the promotion of scientific research on male contraception methods, “with a view to developing and making available innovative contraceptives and devices for use by men”. The draft resolution is due to be voted in the plenary in April 2020.

Read the adopted report here