May 2019
NEWSLETTER in NUMBERS

751 MEPs elected in 2019 European Parliament elections

145 MPs signed the Ottawa Statement of Commitment to date

Iceland legalises abortion within first 22 weeks

In the news

EPF NEWS

Over 50 MPs mobilise for 2019 Women Deliver Conference
GLOBAL, May 2019 - Over 50 MPs from all over the world have signed up to join the MP delegation to Women Deliver 2019 from 3-6 June 2019 in Vancouver, Canada.

EPF is organising a 3-day Parliamentary Forum in the margins of the Conference including high-level speakers as well as MP participation in side-events and other meetings at the Conference.

6 months to ICPD25, Ghana, Canada and Senegal have the most MP signatures for the Ottawa Statement of Commitment

GLOBAL, 23 May 2019 - 7 months since 101 MPs signed the Ottawa Statement of Commitment, parliamentarians from around the world are still encouraged to sign up ahead of the ICPD25 event in Nairobi in November. To date, 145 MPs from 78 countries have signed the Commitment.

Congratulations to Ghana, Canada and Senegal for the most MP commitments so far!

The postcards that parliamentarians wrote to their future selves during IPCI 2018 were sent to them this month as a reminder of their commitment to act both on the ICPD Programme of Action and the Ottawa Statement of Commitment.

See here the list of MPs who have signed the commitment.
New ICPD25 Summit newsletter launched

GLOBAL, 22 May 2019 - The first electronic newsletter dedicated to the ICPD at 25 Summit in Nairobi co-convened by UNFPA and the governments of Kenya and Denmark was sent.

EPF is in discussions with UNFPA and others to organise a Parliamentarians’ Forum at the Summit.

Subscribe to the newsletter by clicking here
Contraception Atlas selected as 'highlight' for 2020 Congress of the Contraception Society in Dublin

DUBLIN, 21 May 2019 - The Contraception Atlas has been selected as a 'highlight' for the 16th European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health Congress in Dublin in 2020.

The Atlas presentation will take place on Thursday 14 May 2020.

The theme of the Congress is “Let the conversation begin” Cultural and ethnic diversity in a changing world. The ESC, over time, has broadened its membership and geographic spread to reflect the demographics of those who provide and those who avail of our services.

This Congress is an innovative approach to integrating the science and research of reproductive health care with the cultural and ethical mores of a broad based service. The Congress will facilitate and encourage debate on a wide range of subjects from Classical contraceptive topics to Gender fluidity.

See more here.
Event in Warsaw gathers MPs and future potential MEPs to discuss countering ultraconservative movements


The event was well attended with around 80 participants as well as being livestreamed (see here). The panel included EPF Secretary, Neil Datta, and two Polish journalists: Klementyna Suchanow and Tomasz Piątek, who discussed the structure and methods of work of ultraconservative organisations in Europe. EPF Policy Officer, Manuela Smolinski, gave a presentation about fundamentalism in the European Parliament – their coalitions, topics, work and lobbying methods.

Participants also learned about activities of ultraconservative groups at the EP via a short movie including interviews with Hon. Heidi Hautala, Hon. Terry Reintke, (both from Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance), and Elena Zacharenko (IPPF European Network).

The event culminated with a round table of EP MEP candidates. Among invited participants were: Hon. Joanna Scheuring-Wielgu, (Robert Biedroń’s Spring Party), Hon. Michał Boni (European People's Party), former MP Anna Grodzka (Left Together), Elżbieta Jachlewska (Democratic Left Alliance) and Magdalena Galkiewicz (Green Party). The round table was moderated by Eliza Michalik, popular in Poland journalist and political commentator. The participants of the
roundtable presented their vision of promotion of SRHR at the EP after the elections.

Even far-right media covered the event. See below (right-click on article on Google chrome to translate into your language).

"Online Crusades Against Human Rights" panel discussion in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, 17 May 2019 - The eighth edition of POINT Conference (Political Accountability and New Technologies) was held in Sarajevo from 16th to 18th May. This year’s conference brought together representatives of civil society organisations and activists from the region of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, but also around the world who are engaged in using new technologies to advocate responsible and transparent society.

On the 17th of May, EPF Secretary Neil Datta spoke on a panel on "Online Crusades Against Human Rights" where the focus was orchestrated campaigns funded by "dark money" which work to roll back the rights of women and LGBT people in Europe – and elsewhere.

To find out more watch the video of this session here.
KOSOVO, 14 May 2019 - The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, sets comprehensive standards to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. It recognizes the obligation of the state to fully address gender-based violence in all its forms, and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

Although unable to ratify the Istanbul Convention, Kosovo is aiming at amending its Constitution to recognize the Convention’s direct applicability. Encouraged by an initiative of the Caucus of Women Members of Parliament, the President of the Assembly of Kosovo, Mexhide Mjaku-Topalli, requested the Constitutional Court to review the amendment proposed by eighty deputies of the Assembly. The Court ruled positively on the matter and enabled the Assembly of Kosovo to vote on the adoption of the amendment in the near future. The Court found that the proposed amendment would strengthen the commitment of Kosovo towards the protection of human rights.
Iceland’s parliament passes landmark abortion law

REYKJAVIK, 14 May 2019 - The Icelandic parliament passed a bill which legalises the termination of a pregnancy within the first 22 weeks regardless of circumstances. Abortion was previously legal within the same timeframe, however a person's decision to terminate a pregnancy after the 16th week required approval by a committee. That decision is now solely in the hands of the pregnant person.

The bill was passed with 40 votes against 18.

Read more at the links provided below.

Iceland Review: Abortion Bill Passed in Icelandic Parliament
The Reykjavik Grapevine: Iceland’s Parliament Passes Landmark Abortion Law
The Netherlands to criminalise sex without consent

THE NETHERLANDS, 22 May 2019 - The Dutch government plans to bring in new legislation to criminalise having sex with someone against their will. Going beyond criminalising sex with violence such as rape and sexual assault, the new legislation will make it illegal to have sex with someone while knowing they are unwilling. 'No means no, but no “no” does not necessarily mean “yes”,' Justice minister FerdGrapperhaus said.

The legislation will also make sexual intimidation online and in public a criminal offence. ‘Insults, humiliation and physical groping is not normal behaviour,’ Grapperhaus said. Rotterdam and Amsterdam have already incorporated rules against street intimidation into their bylaws. In the coming months, Grapperhaus said he will research how the new law can best be implemented and policed and definitive legislation will be drawn up by the end of the year.
ULB event on challenges to womens' rights in Europe

BRUSSELS, 3 May 2019 - Organised by STRIGES and Gender 5+, with the collaboration of the Institute of European Studies and the Gender and Politics WG of the Belgian Francophone Association of Political Science, the event "Les droits des femmes, un enjeu pour l'Europe" (Womens' rights, an issue for Europe) took place in Brussels.

The event began with a screening of the documentary "Eliane Vogel Polsky" produced by Haleh Chinikar and Agnès Hubert, followed by a roundtable of ULB academics and Neil Datta, EPF Secretary who discussed the main threats to womens' rights today in Europe.
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT NEWS

EPF congratulates elected MEPs and wishes best of success in new term 2019-2024

EUROPEAN UNION, 27 May 2019 - The European Parliament elections took place from 23-26 May 2019 across the 28 EU Member States. More than 50% of EU citizens eligible to vote participated in the elections which is the highest turnout in 20 years. The turnout increased in 21 countries and 751 Members of the European Parliament were elected. Final results for all countries will be available in the coming days.

More than 13 MEPs championing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) were elected or re-elected, including EPF’s president Petra De Sutter. At least 376 seats are needed to form a majority. The political groups will now be finalised in the coming days so that the political leadership can be elected shortly afterwards. The European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (EPF) congratulates all MEPs who are going to champion SRHR in the new legislative term 2019-2024 and wishes them the best of success in furthering women’s rights, gender equality and SRHR for all!
UTRECHT, 19 May 2019 - Ahead of the European Elections, a broad coalition of organisations in The Netherlands is calling on the public to vote against division and for connection in the European elections on 23 May. The coalition is called 'Hart boven Hard' or 'Love trumps Hate' and a manifestation was organised in the Transwijk Park in Utrecht which invited speakers to discuss a number of topics ranging from a fair and ambitious climate policy, a fair economy, to human rights and migration.

EPF Secretary, Neil Datta, discussed the importance of a vote to preserve sexual and reproductive rights for all in the next Parliament.
Portuguese APPG hosts presentation on Contraception Atlas and anti-choice movements

LISBON, 8 May 2019 - Hosted by the Portuguese Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (GPPsPD), Marina Davidashvili, EPF Senior Policy Officer, presented the Contraception Atlas 2019 and the Restoring the Natural Order report.

5 MPs attended the meeting held at the Assembly of the Republic to learn about their role in both promoting access to contraception as well as tackling anti-choice movements.

Photo credit: Sandra Ribeiro, Assembly of the Republic
VILNIUS, 28 May 2019 - Hosted by EPF Executive Committee member Honourable Dovilė Šakalienė, MP and Honourable Viktorija Ėmilytė-Nielsen, MP, a one-day event took place at the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania to mark the International Day of Action for Women's Health.

The conference provided a platform for doctors, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and politicians to gather and listen and discuss reports of challenges to reproductive and sexual health, especially vulnerable and young women.

EPF Senior Policy Officer Marina Davidashvili presented the results of the 2019 Contraception Atlas, where Lithuania ranks below average mainly due to a lack of reimbursement schemes for contraceptives.

"There is a lack of efficient reproductive policies in Lithuania. Reproductive health is not only a woman's responsibility. States should take responsibility to ensure full access to women starting from young women to vulnerable groups", said Honourable Dovilė Šakalienė, MP.
Resolution in support of the Activity of Human Rights Defenders approved by MPs in Albania

TIRANA, 12 May 2019 - On 3rd March 2019 the Parliament of Albania passed a resolution in support of the Activity of Human Rights Defenders towards the promotion, and protection of Human Rights and strengthening of the Rule of Law and Democracy in Albania. This resolution was an initiative of the parliamentarian sub-committee for Human Rights aligned with the constitution of Albania and all duties coming from the international conventions Albania has ratified. The resolution recognises amongst others the challenges human rights defenders face regarding protection of rights of marginalised groups, including women, children, disabled people, victims of violence and trafficking, minorities and persons with different sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBT) or those who belong to these groups, the right of emigrants or displaced persons.

On 12th of May the Sub-committee for Human Right carried out a consultation table on this resolution, gathering many actors from various institutions, UN agencies, international organisations and civil society organisations involved with and working for the protection of human rights. The purpose of the consultation table was to collect input from the human rights activists on the situation, issues, needs and challenges they face on a daily basis. The APPG secretariat in Albania, the Albanian Center for Population and Development, was represented by the Executive Director in this event. Along with her speech the ACPD representative highlighted that the organisations working with key populations in Albania in several cases have been facing attacks and violence from community members when implementing their programs. ACPD and partners have sent
reports and concrete cases regarding their challenges to fulfill the mission as human right defenders to the sub-committee for human rights office. Following this consultation table, the Sub-committee for Human Rights of Albanian Parliament shall develop a report regarding the current situation, challenges and recommendations for the future of the work of human rights defenders with the input from all actors and shall submit it to the Parliamentary Committee for Legal Issues, Public Administration and Human Rights.