October 2019
NEWSLETTER in NUMBERS

European Parliament calls for €10 million increase on human development
129 MPs call on von der Leyen to support women’s rights
Delegation of 15 MPs participate in Burkina Faso UHC & ICPD25 trip

In the news

EPF NEWS

Burkina Faso MP Delegation on UHC & ICPD25

OUAGADOUGOU, 1 October 2019 - Hosted by the Burkinabe National Assembly and UNFPA Burkina Faso, an EFP FPA delegation of 15 MPs from Belgium, Cameroon, Senegal and Burkina Faso travelled to Ouagadougou for a programme on UHC and ICPD25. The trip included a
courtesy call at the National Assembly, a round table debate, press conference and a visit to the Zagtouli district health centre in the outskirts of Ouagadougou.

Inter-Parliamentary Union adopts first parliamentary resolution to achieve health coverage for all by 2030

BELGRADE, 16 October 2019 - A landmark resolution calling for parliaments to take all legal and policy measures to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030 has been adopted by the world's parliaments gathered in Serbia for the 141st IPU Assembly.

The resolution reinforces the importance of strong primary health care and strengthening health systems and also includes a strong focus on women, children and adolescent health, reinforcing sexual and reproductive health and rights as a key component of UHC.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General commended the news, "Parliamentarians have a vital role to play in making this happen. Because it's parliamentarians who pass laws and allocate funding. It's parliaments who keep government accountable for the commitments it's made and who forge the partnerships that help countries make universal health coverage a reality." The resolution calls for collaboration between the WHO, the IPU and other global partners to support implementation.

Hon. Petra Bayr, MP, EPF Vice-President and member of the IPU Health Advisory Group told EPF, "The adoption of the IPU resolution on Universal Health Coverage is indeed a landmark for the access to a sufficient health care system including sexual and reproductive health and rights for every person everywhere in the world. Now that it is adopted the real work for us as members of parliament will start: to fulfil a resolution with life means to struggle about the budgets needed, to decide about the programs that speed up the implementation and to evaluate the accessibility that really nobody is left behind."

Website: Read the official press release
BRUSSELS, 8-11 October 2019 - EPF celebrated the International Day of the Girl by co-organising the 7th European Week of Action for Girls.

#GirlsSpeakOut was the motto of this European Week of Action for Girls, when 16 youth advocated from around the world gathered in Brussels to speak out on what matters most to them. These young advocates met with MEPs, the EU Finnish Presidency, EU decision-makers and other NGOs in various institutions, including the European Parliament.

The week began with the youth advocates participating in advocacy workshops, where they broke down their messaging to four main topics:

- Education
- Equal political participation
- Economic empowerment
- Ending gender-based violence

On Wednesday, they led a public event in the European Parliament where the youth advocates spoke out for their rights with MEPs and EU leaders Iratxe García Pérez, Saskia Bricmont, Anna Donáth, Evin Incir, Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, Mara Marinaki, Manon Aubry, David Lega, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Evelyn Regner and Chiara Adamo.

On Thursday they participated in a meeting with the EU Finnish Presidency where the young activists got to ask, in the presence of several Permanent Representation staff, what will Finland do for Girls Rights over the next 6 months.

The group then had a unique opportunity of meeting with Mara Marinaki, Principal Advisor on Gender for the European External Action Service of the European Union.

Website: [Visit the EWAG website for more information](#)  
Read Parliament Magazine coverage of the public event
MEXICO CITY, 12-15 October 2019 - EPF attended the 24th Congress of the World Association for Sexual Health: Building Bridges in Sexual Health and Rights, which took place in Mexico City. Neil Datta EPF Secretary delivered a keynote speech on Restoring the natural order: Religious extremists' vision to mobilise European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction.

Additionally, EPF participated in the poster exhibition with its Contraception Atlas and Lead on International Advocacy & Partnerships, Marina Davidashvili, presented Atlas 2019 results during one of the sessions dedicated to the Sexual Medicine and Public Health and Public policies.

Both interventions sparked questions and a debate on how to improve the situation on SRHR in Europe and worldwide.
BRUSSELS, 1 October 2019 - In light of this year's International Safe Abortion Day, **127 MEPs and 2 Dutch MPs from 24 countries** signed a letter on behalf of MEPsforSRR to first female President of the European Commission, von der Leyen, calling on her to secure the rights of 15 million women in the EU who still lack access to safe and legal abortion.

The EU is founded upon the shared values of human dignity, freedom, equality, and respect for human rights as stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. We pride ourselves in being a union of values. This notion, however, does not hold up when it comes to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women across our Union. Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in efforts of governments and anti-choice movements to obstruct a woman’s right to choose. In some Member States, abortion can even lead to a woman’s imprisonment.

**Website:** [Read the full letter here](#)
EPF at the Inspire Conference 2019

ATHENS, 1-2 October 2019 - EPF Secretary Neil Datta spoke on a panel at the Inspire (former EuroNGOs) annual conference on addressing the attack on gender.

The following day, EPF Policy Officer Julie Pernet spoke on a panel entitled "Looking beyond the Opposition: Leadership and Making the most of 'swing voters'". 

Read more on the conference website

An interview with EPF President Hon. Petra De Sutter, MEP in the Parliament Magazine

BRUSSELS, 7 October 2019 - EPF President and MEPSforSRR Co-Chair Hon. Petra De Sutter, MEP featured in this month's Parliament Magazine discussing what drives and matters most to her, including SRHR.

"This is not just about abortion, I think it's important to say, it's also about access to contraception, it's about child marriage, it's about female genital mutilation. It's very much linked to the United Nations programmes that empower girls and women to make their own
autonomous reproductive choices to allow development, to allow autonomy, to allow equal chances."

"If an Indian or Central African girl is married when she’s 13 and she has three children by the time she’s 18, you can imagine that she has little educational opportunity, no way of providing for herself. If something happens, or her husband leaves her, she’s alone with her children, she cannot provide for herself. To empower women they need education and to have education they shouldn’t be pregnant when they’re 13."

Website: [Read the article here](#)

**Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 in Croatia**

ZAGREB, 30 October 2019 - In collaboration with the Club of Independent Parliamentarians, EPF organised a full-day Conference "Achieving Sustainable Development Goal #5 in Croatia: Policies for gender equality and empowering all women and girls" in the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia. The goal of the conference was to bring together Croatian and European parliamentarians, high-level decision-makers and experts in the field in order to share examples of good policy practices, promote evidence-based policymaking and learning across borders, and specifically to inform Croatia’s National Plan for Achieving the SDGs. Participating parliamentarians included Hon. Fred Matic, MEP, Hon. Bojan Glavasevic, MP and Hon. Petra Bayr, MP.
Event on right-wing populism and antigender politics: lessons from Poland

WARSAW, 5 October 2019 - EPF participated in the Congress of Secularity “Ultra-right versus human rights”. EPF Secretary Neil Datta was a guest in one of the panels “the international network of authoritarian ultra-conservatism and examples of its operations in Poland.” The event was an excellent platform of exchange of information and ideas between progressive MPs, academics, activists and journalists.

What Canada's federal election results mean for SRHR

OTTAWA, 21 October 2019 - Canada underwent its 43rd general election on Monday, with approx. 66% of the electorate (18M people) voting in the election. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, was re-elected to parliament with this party securing 157 (down from 177 prior to the election) of 338 seats in the House of Commons – not quite to secure a majority. Prime Minister Trudeau will continue to lead the government, likely with support from many sides of the House.

The Conservative Party of Canada increased the number of seats from 95 to 121 – solidifying its position as the Official Opposition.
The issue of whether or not the federal government should ‘re-open’ the abortion ‘debate’ was among the top issues discussed by leaders. The Liberal Party, New Democratic Party and Green Party all came out strongly in support of measures to increase access to abortion. The Conservative Party limited its comments on the issue to a commitment to not ‘reopen’ the debate, at the federal level.

Midway through the campaign, the Conservative Party of Canada announced a proposed cut Canada’s aid budget by 25%, with a focus on reducing aid to ‘middle income countries,’ while maintaining a commitment to Canada’s recent ‘SRHR investment, including its focus on abortion.’

The NDP and Green Party both committed to increasing Canada’s aid budget to 0.7%.

The LPD, NDP and Green party all reaffirmed Canada’s commitment to Canada’s existing financial and policy commitments to global SRHR.

Overall, the outcome of the election in terms of Canada’s support for SRHR, globally and domestically, is positive. The Liberal Party will likely maintain a strong commitment to its Feminist International Assistance Policy, and 2019 10-year commitment of $14B for women and children’s health and rights (with a dedicated focus on SRHR). The NDP will play an important role holding the LPC accountable to its commitments in this area.

In terms of allied parliamentarians, CAPPD members Dr. Hedy Fry, Pam Damoff, Anita Vandenbeld, Yasmin Ratansi and Raj Saini (all from the LPC) were re-elected. There are also a number of new parliamentarians with strong connections to global and domestic issues that Action Canada will approach to join CAPPD in the coming weeks.

Former Development and Status of Women Minister, the Honourable Maryam Monsef and former Development Minister, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau were both re-elected.

Website: Find out more on Action Canada's website
A positive outlook for SRHR in the Commissioner Candidate hearings 2019

BRUSSELS, October 2019 – Before the new College of Commissioners can take office, the European Parliament exercised its power of scrutiny and held public hearings to assess the commissioners-designates suitability for the job. Many members of MEPs for SRR, the European Parliament’s Working Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) quizzed the candidates about their commitments and plans for future actions to promote SRHR.

The designate for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen confirmed that “Sexual and reproductive health will be a central focus of our work for gender equality, that’s very clear for me.” Moreover, she promised to develop a new Gender Action Plan: “I can promise you, here in front of the Parliament, that we are going to make a Gender Action Plan III. This is something I will propose and I’m very committed to preparing, so I think that is one tool for us to provide and promote gender equality.”

Commissioner-designate for Equality, Helena Dalli stressed during her hearing that: “women’s rights are human rights. I am a committed feminist and you have my word that I will do all possible in order to protect sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). So I will work with the task force to mainstream SRHR, especially in dialogue with the Health Commissioner, and we will stay strong with each and every step if I encounter resistance. But I believe that when you stand your ground you do find allies to build coalitions for the willing. We also need to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on women’s health and universal access to sexual and reproductive care and family planning and education. So you have my word that this is a guarantee that sexual and reproductive rights – without exception.”

A vote by the European Parliament on the full Commission is set for 27 November 2019, so that the new College of Commissioner can officially start its work on 1 December 2019.

See more information here.
BRUSSELS, 23 October 2019 - The European Parliament has today adopted its first reading on the EU 2020 budget. MEPs voted in favour of a €2.7 billion increase of the EU’s budget compared to the Commission’s proposal: an outright rejection of the Council’s proposed cuts.

A budget increase that could save lives and improve health and wellbeing
Dubbed as the last chance for the Union to meet key political commitments during this financial period, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Parliament’s call for an ambitious budget for the last year of the current MFF is welcome news.

With the support of the Committees on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, and Development, the Parliament called for an increase of €10 million in commitment to the budget line on human development compared to the Commission’s proposal. This increase will finance projects on education, tackling diseases, gender equality and access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SHRH), focusing directly on the needs and rights of people in developing countries. In addition, the budget line on ‘civil society in development’ would be restored and the one on humanitarian aid would increase by €50 million.

Website: See the full press release here
CROATIA:

Hon. Bojan Glavašević, MP denounces acceptance of violence against women and girls in Croatia

ZAGREB, 17 October 2019 - Speaking of the case of a horrific gang rape of a 15-year-old girl in Croatia, Hon. Bojan Glavašević, MP spoke in Parliament last week to denounce the acceptance of violence against women & girls: "For the current state of our society, we are all responsible".

Website: Watch the video with English subtitles here

SWITZERLAND:

Parliamentary elections in Switzerland

SWITZERLAND, 20 October 2019 - Switzerland's parliamentary elections yielded surprising results: both the green parties and women are the big winners of the elections. This is probably the result of the many climate strikes initiated by the “climate youth” and the big national women’s strike. Women's representation in the National Council increased from 32,2% to 42%, an important step forward after years of stagnation. The Green Party won 17
additional seats in the National Council and the Green Liberals an 9 additional seats. The right-wing Swiss People’s Party lost 12 seats. Both the left-wing Social Democrats and the centre-right Radical Liberals lost four seats and the centrist Christian Democrats lost two seats.

The biggest party in the National Council will still be the Swiss People’s Party (25.6%), followed by the Social Democrats (16.8%) and the Radical Liberals (15.1%). The Green Party is now in fourth place (13.2%) before the Christian Democrats (11.4%) and the Green Liberals (7.8%).

The elections provide good grounds to advance SRHR topics in the new parliamentary period 2019-2023. 22 members of the Swiss APPG have been re-elected and there are a number of newly elected MPs who could be interested to join.

What’s next: In November, there will be some additional elections for the Council of States. After that, the new parliament will start its work at the beginning of December. During the first session, the parliamentary group CAIRE+ will be relaunched at the occasion of its 20th anniversary with the new name parliamentary group for sexual health and rights.

UK:

Baroness Tonge references ICPD25 Nairobi Summit in House of Lords debate

LONDON, 15 October 20196 - Baroness Jenny Tonge spoke in the Queens Speech debate in the House of Lords on Monday evening, referring to the need to do more for women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights around the world.

I highlight the right of women all over the world to health, reproductive health in particular. I declare an interest as chair of the All-Party Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health. Great strides have been made in recent years, thanks in part to our Government and the people on the Benches across the Chamber. I thank them for what they have done, but more than 200 million women still lack access to family planning, 3 million girls undergo FGM every year and, despite maternal deaths being reduced by 40%, 830 women and girls, mostly young girls, die every day in childbirth. One-third of women worldwide report sexual and gender violence, and 132 million girls are still out of school. That is why it was so good to hear the Minister talk about our emphasis on education. I know how much the Government do for women's reproductive health and for girls’ education, which is crucial to development.
The International Conference on Population and Development, which was first convened in 1994 to address these issues, is holding a summit meeting in Nairobi in November. I know that our Government will be strong on these issues at that conference, but dare I hope that they will also take them seriously when negotiating trade agreements and emphasise to our future trading partners that these human rights issues are just as important as making money out of trade deals?

Website: Read the full speech