

# ICPD Beyond 2014 – From Promise to Action, CSOs Defining the Way Forward

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
**LOBBY**  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

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# The EWL: the democratic voice of women at European level

- ✓ The largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the EU
- ✓ Promoting women's rights and equality between women and men in Europe
- ✓ Members in all 28 EU member states and 3 candidate countries, as well as 20 European-wide associations → representing over 2000 women's organisations
- ✓ Diversity in membership and advocacy
- ✓ Virtual working group on SRHR + Observatory on violence against women



# Challenges in Europe today

## SRHR as a priority?

- ✓ **Lack of services** – e.g. in Slovenia on HIV support services: only 1 self-help group, for gay men
  - ✓ **Therefore lack of access:** 5% of women in Serbia use services
  - ✓ **Lack of trained health professionals** – e.g.: in FR Belgium on abortion: only 1 module in 1 university
  - ✓ **Cost of contraceptives & lack of diversity** – 8 types in Serbia (5 subsidised)
  - ✓ **Lack of access for women with specific needs:** women with disabilities, women from rural areas, undocumented/migrant/refugee women
  - ✓ **Lack of comprehensive policies on violence against women:** direct link between VAW and SRHR, impact of VAW on SRHR and vice-versa (impact on health & enjoyment of rights)
- Disengagement of the public authorities, worsened by current crisis and austerity measures



# Challenges in Europe today

## Impact of the crisis and austerity measures on SRHR

- ✓ **Discrimination against young women in the workplace:** job interviews in Slovenia, precarious contracts
- ✓ **Closing down of medical centers and hospitals** (Greece, Bulgaria), mainly in areas with high unemployment, low income and in rural areas
- ✓ **Population losing public health insurance** (1/3 of population in Greece) because of prolonged unemployment
- ✓ **Cuts in public care and health services:** return to traditional roles of men and women & reprivatisation of care (home)
- ✓ **Poverty of women:** in France, young women with low income less often use contraceptives
- ✓ **Increase of violence against women:** direct impact on SRHR
  - Facilitates attacks from conservative and religious groups



# Challenges in Europe today

## Pressure from conservative and religious groups + use of tradition as an excuse

- ✓ **Attacks on abortion legislation:** Turkey, Poland, Spain, Hungary...
  - ✓ **Biased counselling**
  - ✓ **Increase of the use of conscientious objection**
  - ✓ **Attacks on LGBT rights:** e.g. in Slovenia, rejection of family code / Conservative reaction in France about same-sex marriage
  - ✓ **Attacks on sexuality education:** e.g. in France
  - ✓ **Promotion of breastfeeding as first choice for women:** Slovenia
  - ✓ **Early marriage in Romani communities justified as “specific cultural phenomenon” + FGM (Serbia)**
- Increases gender inequality, attacks on women’s rights and women’s and girls’ empowerment



# Challenges in Europe today

## Pressure from neoliberalism and the consumer society

- ✓ **Commodification of health:** professionals seeking profitable activities + persecution of midwives + influence of pharmaceutical companies
- ✓ **Sex education through the Internet:** in Bulgaria, 45% of 14-19 year-old children get awareness about sex from the Internet
- ✓ **Sexualisation of girls and commodification of sexuality**
  - Impact on enjoyment of SRHR for young people
  - WHO “Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence”
  - Obstacle to making boys and men responsible for SRHR



# Agenda post-2015 & challenges

- ✓ Overarching financial architecture / governance
- ✓ Poverty reduction / food security
- ✓ Climate change / sustainable energy
- ✓ Access to land and resources
- ✓ Jobs and growth
- **Invest the post-2015 agenda**
- **Re-politicise the post-2015 agenda**
- **A human-rights & people-centered approach: OUR framing**



# Agenda post-2015: focus on rights

- ✓ **UN context: narrowing of SRHR in MDGs + refusal to talk about rights**
- ✓ Any human being should have the right to enjoy the highest standards of sexual and reproductive health, on an equal footing
- **Equality of sexual and reproductive rights**, between women and men
- Ensure accessibility, availability, and quality services for all – multiple discrimination and diversity of needs
- ✓ Health depends on one's power to negotiate efficiently with someone else about questions linked to sexuality and reproduction, at intimate/individual but also institutional/social level
- **Questioning the power relations in SRHR**, from all sides (religions, traditions, markets, politics...), and other systems of domination (economic, racism, hetero-normativity, etc.) + structures that reproduce them



# Agenda post-2015: linking SRHR and gender equality

- ✓ SRHR should be a priority in the post-2015 agenda
- ✓ Should be linked to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment + address diversity of needs and situations
- ✓ **A stand-alone goal on gender equality + gender mainstreaming**
- ✓ Gender perspective in health in general
- ✓ Building on international agreements: Cairo, Beijing, CEDAW
- ✓ Addressing resource inequalities and distribution
- ✓ Agenda post-2015: not only a development issue!
- ➔ **Europe needs to take the post-2015 agenda seriously, as an EU internal issue too**



# 2013 EP report on SRHR

## Focus on rights, in Europe, in broader context of gender inequalities and multiple discrimination

- ✓ SRHR in general
- ✓ Unwanted pregnancy: access to contraception and safe abortion services
- ✓ Comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services
- ✓ STI prevention and treatment
- ✓ Violence related to sexual and reproductive rights
- ✓ SRHR and official development assistance

## EWL amendments

- ✓ SRHR of lesbians, migrant women, women with disability, Roma women, transgender women
- ✓ Sustainable funding
- Impact of sexual violence on SRHR



Thank you!

[www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org)



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