

This newsletter presents monthly highlights of EPF's and our member parliamentary groups' work and gives an overview of legislative and Parliamentary initiatives on sexual and reproductive health and rights and international development in Europe and around the world on the part of the global community of Parliamentarians committed to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Enjoy the reading!

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I. EPF Activities May 2008

1. EPF hosts Strategic EuroNGOs Workshop: “SRHR – Population – Environmental Degradation – Climate Change”, 15-16 May 2008, Istanbul, Turkey



Summary of Workshop Outcomes and Key Findings

In order to stimulate a first discussion on the opportunities and challenges to integrate environmental and climate change issues in our right's based SRHR advocacy in Europe, the European NGOs for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Population and Development (EuroNGOs), in close co-operation with its member organisation, the European Parliamentary Forum (EPF), organised a strategic workshop on “**SRHR – Population Growth – Environment – Climate Change**” linkages.

The 2-days workshop, which also served as a preparation for EuroNGOs Conference and AGM 2008, focused on providing an overview about current research and discussion about the (possible) interdependence between SRHR, population patterns, environmental degradation and global climate change, the ethical implications to link these issues, as well as an exchange of information and of best practices/lessons learned examples from the field.

The primary objectives of our workshop were:

- to provide an overview about current research and discussion about the possible interdependences between population growth, environmental degradation, consumption and climate change in the different regions of the world
- to stimulate discussion on how to best approach these interdependences as right's based SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) organisations
- to Initiate the development of a common strategy on how to respond to current population and climate change discourses as a SRHR platform with regards to future advocacy and communication strategies, including the identification of common points to be shared with other Civil Society groups (ecological, "age", women's rights, migration, etc.),

The event, which brought together 32 SRHR, environmental and humanitarian aid experts from the EU member states, the USA, and African countries, was governed by lively and thought-provoking discussions. The key findings and suggestions of this workshop will be used as a basis for and taken over to the EuroNGOs conference and annual general meeting 2008 in October in Lyon, France.



II. Parliamentary Leadership on SRHR

1. Hon. Anne Van Lancker hosted Expert Lunch on 'Fractured Lives in Fragile Situations: Is Aid Effective?' in the European Parliament

With the specific objective to provide input for the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008, the EPWG organised a meeting hosted by **Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP**. The meeting brought together key field, governmental and civil society experts.

During the meeting Hon. Anne Van Lancker, EPF President and Chair of the EPWG emphasised the necessity for concrete inputs from decision-makers, especially parliamentarians for the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. With its eight roundtables, one of which will be on "Situations of Fragility and Conflicts" making parliamentarian's voices heard will be key for issues on health and sexual and reproductive health.

EPF together with Marie Stopes International (MSI) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network (IPPF-EN) will organise a parliamentary study tour to Ghana at the time of the Accra meeting. This will create the opportunity for European parliamentarians to participate in the High Level Forum and enables them at the same time to get first-hand information on the sexual and reproductive health and rights situation in Ghana.



2. UK Parliamentarians reject amendments to reduce 24-week limit for pregnancy termination

Attempts to cut the 24-week upper limit for abortions to 12, 16, and 20 weeks have been rejected by MPs in the British House of Commons. Tory MP Nadine Dorries proposed the 20-week limit in an amendment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill - a piece of legislation that did not deal with the issue of abortion as such but essentially updates laws on assisted reproduction treatment and embryo research to take account of scientific developments and social attitudes since the last fertilisation legislation was passed in the UK in 1990.

Hon. Christine McCafferty, MP and Chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health told UK newspapers that putting restrictions on women who had made the already difficult decision to have an abortion was cruel. "Support the status quo if you're pro-humanity," she urged members.



3. Hon. Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, MEP succeeds in including SRHR and women's rights in European Parliament's progress report on Turkey

On 21 May the European Parliament adopted the own initiative report by Ria Oomen-Ruijten on the 2007 report on Turkey's progress towards accession. **Hon. Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, MEP** and Member of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee succeeded in introducing an amendment stressing that *"the new constitution should ensure gender equality, avoid the use of vague criteria such as general morality, refrain from perceiving women primarily as family or community members and reaffirm women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, as their individual rights"*.

With the adoption of the amendment during the vote in plenary, it is the first time that SRHR language has been introduced in a progress report on Turkey, which is composed on a yearly basis.



III. APPG Affairs

1. Lithuanian Parliament adopts Draft National Family Policy with Gender Stereotypes

The Lithuanian Parliament this month approved a resolution which develops a conceptual framework for a national family policy' (National Family Policy Framework), which will provide the basis and support for the content of laws and policies related to the family.

The concept of 'family' promoted in the National Family Policy is limited to heterosexual marriage. It excludes other non-traditional families that women in Lithuania may be part of –single-parent families, unmarried parents and their children, unmarried couples, partnerships of lesbian couples, families composed of children and grandparents, etc. Thus, the National Family Policy enhances the gender stereotyping of women as essentially child bearers.

Esmeralda Kuliestyle from the Lithuanian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association told the Polish ASTRA Bulletin that this policy *"is especially dangerous in light of the fact that the model of family has significantly changed in Lithuania in recent years. Currently, there are increasingly fewer people who follow the traditional pattern of establishing families. For example, in 2005 two thirds of children were born to unmarried couples. Furthermore, the divorce rate is on the rise (similarly to other countries) and it has to be expected that there will be more and more single parents in the future, out of which 98 percent are women who will be most affected"*.

This bill, the first of its kind in Europe, has been applauded as a breakthrough by the Catholic Church and conservative politicians.

2. Belgian Parliamentary Group for the MDGs raises awareness about Maternal Mortality

On the occasion of this year's Mothers Day, the Belgian All-Party Parliamentary Group "Parliamentarians for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)" organised a series of actions and meetings to raise awareness about the problematic of Maternal Mortality.

Every minute, a women dies out of complications giving birth. This means that annually, 535 900 women die in childbirth.

On May 8 the Group organised an awareness-raising event in the Belgian Parliament to sensitise colleagues about this tragedy. In the framework of this action, the Parliamentary Group presented their resolution on Maternal Mortality which has been tabled in Parliament as well as in the Senate. The resolution, amongst other asks, demands the Belgian Government not only to implement its policy note on "The Belgian Development Cooperation on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights". It also urges the government to financially and practically support its partner countries enabling them to ameliorate their health care systems.



On May 10 the Parliamentary Group also organised a "Mother's Night". Presentations on the subject of Maternal Mortality were given by Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP and EPF President, Hon. Hilde Vautmans, MP and EPF Executive Committee Member and Hon. Marleen Temmermans, Member of the Belgian

Senate. The programme was complemented by dance contributions of African Dancers who succeeded in bringing the subject of Maternal Mortality closer to a wider audience.

The resolution (in French and Dutch) can be found here: http://www.sensoa.be/pdf/internationaal_parlementair/voorstel_resolutie_moedersterfte_2008_05_15.pdf

For more information on the events contact the following website: http://www.sensoa.be/fr/3_4_2_2.php

3. Nordic-Baltic Conference on SRHR in Tallinn

Vaestoliitto, together with the Finnish All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development was the organizer of the Nordic-Baltic Conference on: ***Increasing Europe-Wide Support for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Towards the High-level Meeting on HIV and AIDS*** that was held in Tallinn. The Conference was hosted by the Estonian Sexual Health Association. It was the third event in a twinning initiative between the Nordic and Baltic States aiming at promoting global SRHR in national and European Union development policies.

This year's focus was on the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into HIV prevention policies and implementation in light of the upcoming UN High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS in New York in June 2008. Lessons learnt and best practices from national and international work regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights issues were dealt with in addition to Nordic and Baltic experiences.

4. Hon. George Tsereteli, Member of the Executive Committee re-elected as a Member of the Parliament in Georgia

Hon. George Tsereteli, Member of EPF Executive Committee was re-elected Member of the Parliament during the Parliamentary Elections in Georgia held on 21st May. The Ruling Party (National Movement Party) to which Mr. Tsereteli is a Member has secured 120 seats in the 150 seats Parliament. Overall, four parties have entered the Parliament after passing the 5% threshold: National Movement Party (Saakashvili) with 59.24%, Nine-Party opposition block – 17.7%, Christian-Democratic Party – 8.63 % and the Labour Party – 7.43%. At the constituting meeting on 10th June the Parliamentarians will decide about re-allocations of Committees and re-elect new Chairpersons.



5. Proposal on neglected diseases approved by Bundestag

On April 23rd 2008, a parliamentary proposal entitled "Germany's Global Responsibility for the Fight Against Neglected Diseases - Promoting Innovation and Ensuring Access to Pharmaceuticals for All" was approved by the German Bundestag. The proposal was initiated by the two governing parties, CDU/CSU and SPD, and was predominantly pushed by members of DSW's Parliamentary Advisory Committee (PAC), including EPF Malaria taskforce member **Hon. Antje Blumenthal, MP**. Among the recommendations provided by our partners DSW, the reference to the important role of product-development partnerships (PDPs) in the field of research and development were adopted in the proposal's final version.



For more information, please visit:

http://www.europeanallianceagainstmalaria.org/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Newsletter_6_-_May_2008.pdf

6. France – "Malaria & Pregnancy": A Parliamentary Study Tour to Burkina Faso

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As a member of the “European Alliance against Malaria”, Equilibres & Populations has organized a Parliamentary study Tour on the issue of “Pregnancy and Malaria in Burkina Faso from April 29th to May 6th, 2008. Two MPs participated: Hon. Henriette MARTINEZ (conservative), president of the study group on “Population & Development” in the French National Assembly and rapporteur of the ODA budget and Hon. Françoise CASTEX (socialist) member of the Working Group on Reproductive Health, HIV Aids and Development (EPWG) at the European Parliament.



The mission’s objectives were twofold:

- MPs wished to get first hand information on related programs definition, access to financing, implementation and assessment of programs. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with a substantial number of Burkinabe officials, multilateral and bilateral technical and financial partners as well as civil society representatives. Field visits have been organized outside Ouagadougou and covered all components of the public health pyramid.
- Participants wished to identify future advocacy activities on this topic. A plan of action has been drafted, comprising activities to be conducted in Paris, in Brussels and in Burkina Faso with the support of local Parliamentarians.

During the mission, the participants discussed the current key ODA related issues such as the nature of technical assistance and aid harmonization, the strengthening of health systems and sexual and reproductive health issues in relation with demographic trends.

For more information, please contact M. Cyril Wissocq, Operations Director, Equilibres & Populations at: cyril.wissocq@equipop.org

7. Azerbaijan: The Unmet RH Needs of Young People Clearly Addressed in the New National RH Strategy

On January 31, the Ministry of Health of Azerbaijan approved the new National Strategy on Reproductive Health. The Strategy was developed by the team of national experts and medical professionals under the direct international expertise of UNFPA and WHO and covers the period of 2008-2015. For the first time in Azerbaijan the National RH Strategy includes the separate module on RH of adolescents and youth with clear targets and tasks. It also reflected the main stakeholders for implementation of the planned activities, including line ministries (MoH, MoE, MoF), local and international NGOs, international bilateral donor organisations and expert development agencies (USAID, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, etc). The key institution responsible for the formulation of the document was the National RH Office, (NRHO) which is also one of the main stakeholders of the Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the Caucasus (RHICY) Action in Azerbaijan. NRHO is engaged in facilitating training sessions and workshops for medical professionals and is actively participating in the operationalisation of youth-friendly clinics in the country.



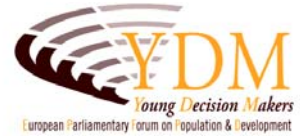
IV. Young Decision Makers (YDM) – Cultivating the Leaders of Tomorrow

1. European Young Greens adopt Resolution on SRHR and Youth



During their 8th Council Meeting in Ljubljana, that was held from 11-13th April 2008 the European Young Greens have adopted a resolution on “Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Youth”.

The resolution was initiated by Bartosz Lech, Spokesperson of the Federation of the European Young Greens (FEYG) and member of the EPF Steering Committee of the Young Decision Makers Project (YDM) and was a result of the YDM Youth Conference on “*Global Responsibilities of Europe’s youth regarding SRHR and the MDGs*” held in Lisbon in



September 2007.

The Lisbon Conference was co-organised by the Portuguese Family Planning Association (APF), The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) and the Instituto Português da Juventude (IPJ) under the patronage of the Portuguese All Party Parliamentary Group (GPSPPD), and brought together 25 Young Decision Makers throughout Europe and 25 Young Decision Makers from Portugal.

For the final text of the resolution, see:

http://www.europeangreens.org/cms/default/dok/230/230054.8th_egp_council_meeting_ljubljana_11th13@en.htm

For additional information contact: Saskia Pfeyffer at: Saskia@iepfpd.org

V. EPF Visibility:

1. EPF briefs Members of the German *Bundestag* on findings of Political Party Mapping research and on Council of Europe Report on “Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in Europe”

Members of the German Parliamentary Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights invited EPF Secretary Neil Datta to brief them about the findings that EPF’s research exercise “Political Party Mapping” (PPM) revealed. In the framework of this project EPF has mapped 75 parties that were mapped in 12 European Countries including the European Parliament. Being the first study of this kind, PPM is to offer a snapshot of the European Political Party landscape and political party’s positions on abortion, sexual orientation and international development aid. German APPG members were interested on how to use these findings in their efforts to promote SRHR policies. EPF believes that this study will contribute to a better understanding of political parties’ voting patterns on these sensitive issues and will help to formulate more coherent and predictable strategies.

PPM already proved helpful in providing intelligence to the SRHR community in Europe as to likely voting outcomes for the Report on “Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in Europe” that was adopted in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in mid-April this year. Having monitored and analysed the voting outcomes in debt, Neil Datta was able to inform the German APPG members about the implications of this important piece of legislation that is currently the only existing frame of reference for the issue of abortion at European level.

2. EPF invited to speak at Membership Meeting of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) Meeting in Brussels

EPF was invited to present its work on parliamentary advocacy during the ninth membership meeting of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) that was held on May 22–23 in Brussels and hosted by the European Commission. The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition is a global partnership of public, private, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income (LMI) countries can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies to ensure their better reproductive health.

Although the last 40 years have seen tremendous improvements in the reproductive health (RH) of men and women in low- and middle-income (LMI) countries these achievements are under threat today because many in the developing world can no longer access the basic reproductive health supplies and commodities they need, whether it is to prevent unwanted pregnancies, ensure safe deliveries, or manage and treat sexually transmitted infections. As a member of the Countdown 2015 Europe Project, whose objective is to increase funding for supplies on from European donor countries, EPF believes that access to RH supplies for everyone and everywhere is an essential step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For more information, see: <http://www.rhsupplies.org/> and <http://www.countdown2015europe.org/>

3. EPF to start monthly updates on the upcoming elections to the European Parliament

To keep our members and readers up to date, EPF will start a monthly newsletter that regularly reports about the latest developments, initiatives and facts with regard to the upcoming elections to the European Parliament to be held in all EU Member States from 4.-7. June 2009.

VI. EPF - European Parliament Relations:

1. European Parliament - Public Hearing on “Demographic Future of Europe”, 28 May 2008, Brussels



Upon the initiative of **Hon. Françoise Castex, MEP, France**, who participated in EPF's Study Tour to Niger, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs organised a Public Hearing on the “Demographic Future of Europe”. Mr. François Héran, Director of the French National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) was invited as key speaker.

He presented the demographic trends projected by the United Nations for 2050 for selected European countries which indicate that the gap between old people active-age people and children will widen over the next three decades. Policies that lead to an increase in the birth rate or that encourage immigration would enable this effect to be reduced by only half, as fertility has been permanently insufficient in many European countries. The UN Study also highlighted that France, the United Kingdom and Sweden have all maintained the



stability of their active-age population. It is estimated that an active migration policy, and also a prolonged growth in fertility could increase the active-age numbers by 20%.

During the subsequent discussion, Hon. Françoise Castex, MEP insisted on the necessity for the countries to develop policies concerning child support and to urgently improve health care costs in the future, stressing that the demand of care is going to increase with life expectancy.

Arguments by a Polish Conservative Member of the European Parliament that *"if women were staying at home, they would be more likely to have more children"* were dismissed by Mr. Hérán as being incorrect since scientific studies clearly demonstrate that on the contrary, this would not influence the birth rate positively.

4. European Parliament adopts report on *"Follow-up to the 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness"*

On 22 May 2008, MEPs adopted the Belgian Liberal Johan Van Hecke's report on aid effectiveness. The report was adopted with 443 votes in favour, 8 against and 11 abstentions.

The report drafted by **Johan Van Hecke, MEP, Belgium** and Member of the EPWG as well as EPF Taskforce on Malaria calls on the Commission to set up two new instruments First, an indicator to monitor parliamentary scrutiny in the countries receiving development aid which will increase accountability and permit more strategic forms of oversight, and second, a revision of the Donor Atlas initiative to promote cross-country policy dialogue between European donors and tackle the problem of orphan countries and sectors.

MEPs also called for a better donors' coordination, the simplification of aid procedures and "considers that increasing transparency of information on aid flows is a critical objective for improving the effective use of aid and mutual accountability". In recognition of the role of corruption in obstructing the effectiveness of aid, the report calls on the Commission to "ensure greater accountability as well as transparency of countries' public financial management systems" and to take practical measures to fight corruption, for example, by supporting civil society initiatives.

The report also stresses the need to disburse aid according to the partners' priorities and timelines, and supports the Commission's choice to increasingly use budget support, enabling national parliaments, local authorities, civil society and the EP to trace the results of the EU contributions. Finally, the role of women and diasporas are highlighted in the report, as there is a disproportionate impact of poverty on women.

Please see the full report at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0237+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

VII. Upcoming Activities: Outlook 2008

1. G8 Parliamentarian Conference, 2.-3. July, Tokyo

This year's G8 Parliamentarians' Conference to be held in Tokyo from 2.-3. July focuses on Global Health, Climate Change and the MDGs and will be hosted by the Japan Parliamentary Federation and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD). EPF will bring a delegation of 2-5 Parliamentarians from G8 countries and other interested parliamentarians from donor countries to Tokyo.

2. Agenda and date set for the joint Meeting of Council of Europe's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, UNFPA Geneva Office and EPF

The Seminar on "Interaction between Population Decline in Europe, Global Population Growth and Migration" will take place on 25 November at the Palais des Nations Geneva. It will encompass three sessions: on fertility, on ageing and on migration, where the participants will have an overview of the existing policies and take a closer look at country examples from Eastern Europe/Central Asia, Southern Europe and Northern/Western Europe. The Seminar will be concluded by roundtable discussion on three topics and elaborating future policy options to be recommended by PACE.



3. XVII International AIDS Conference, 3. – 9. August 2008, Mexico City

In the framework of Countdown 2015 and in co-operation with the Finnish Family Planning Association Väestöliitto, EPF plans to bring a parliamentary delegation to this conference that will gather an estimated 25,000 participants. The main aim of the conference will be to both reflect on where we are today in the epidemic, as well as what is needed moving forward. In addition, the organisers plan to include a mini study tour component for Delegation Participants to gain first hand information about the SRHR and HIV/AIDS situation in the country.

4. Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, 2. – 4. September 2008, Accra/Ghana

EPF, again within the framework of its membership of Countdown 2015 is planning to send a parliamentary delegation to the Accra HLF on Aid Effectiveness to strengthen the parliamentary and subsequently the NGO component at this important event and to guarantee MP input into the aid effectiveness subject. It is envisaged to combine this event with a study tour component in Ghana which has an active and influential MP group on Population issues.

5. Global Fund Parliamentarians Meeting of European Donor Countries, 20 October 2008, Palais d'Egmont, Brussels

In cooperation with the Belgian Parliamentary Group on the MDGs, SENSOA, Friends of the Global Fund Europe and the Global Fund, EPF will organise a Parliamentarians meeting gathering European Donor Countries to discuss the new development aid architecture, the aid effectiveness and the role of leading actors of global health, such as the Global Fund. Participants will be able to share views and exchange best practices on global health and development related issues.

6. Global Fund Partnership Forum, 8-10 December 2008, Dakar/Senegal

In cooperation with the Global Fund, EPF will be able to bring up to 10 Parliamentarians to the Global Funds' Partnership Forum which is a component of the Fund's governance structure.

The EPF Secretariat

The EPF secretariat is based in Brussels and is responsible for implementing all EPF activities. EPF maintains a website with information about its activities and a monthly News Update on the activities of Parliamentarians, SRHR and development policy and related items. It can be found at www.iepfpd.org.

As of 1 December, the EPF Secretariat staff is composed as follows (in alphabetical order):

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EPF's Mission

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development believes Parliamentarians have the opportunity and the responsibility to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality, which are core elements of human dignity and are central to human development.

About EPF

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development is a Brussels-based Parliamentary network that serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination for the 25 all-party groups in Parliaments throughout Europe that focus on improving sexual and reproductive health and rights at home and abroad through national and regional health and foreign aid budgets.

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EPF is a member of:

- The European Alliance against Malaria
- Countdown 2015
- The Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)
- The Steering Committee of the International Parliamentarians' Conference of the Implementation of the IPCI Programme of Action (IPCI/ICPD)

EPF

- is an Associate Member of EuroNGOs
- has Special Consultative Status with the United Nation's Economic and Social Council
- has Participatory Status with the Council of Europe