

Consultation of Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia “Accelerating the Implementation of Regional and National Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Frameworks”

Hotel Courtyard by Marriott
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SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Background and rationale

During the last 15 years, progress has been made in countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in improving maternal and perinatal health, family planning, preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unsafe abortions, as well as improving sexual health overall. Building on progress achieved in the implementation of the MDGs and strategizing on future health interventions in line with the 2030 development agenda, many countries have developed, or are in the process of developing, national sexual and reproductive health strategies and programmes.

However, although much progress has been made, inequalities remain both between countries and within countries.

- Maternal mortality ratio ranges from 3 to 76 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births in countries of the WHO European Region;
- Indirect causes of maternal deaths, especially from chronic cardiovascular and mental diseases as well as communicable diseases like tuberculosis and flu, are increasing in some population groups.
- Unmet need of family planning in countries of the European Region for which data is available ranges from 5% to nearly 23%.
- Sexually transmitted infections are often neglected until the moment of serious complications such as miscarriage, premature delivery, infertility and chronic pain among other long term complications.
- Access to safe abortion is still a challenge for many women due to legal restrictions, lack of access to health care or due to the effective methods of fertility regulations.
- One in four women in the European Region has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

Regional SRH policy documents require revision based on new evidence and in order to be aligned with recently approved strategic documents. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assists countries in improving health outcomes by supporting the achievement of universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. In many countries, UNFPA assists governments to develop policies and programmes to address priority SRH issues,

inequalities and gaps in accessing quality SRH services. UNFPA closely cooperates with WHO to implement the 2030 sustainable development agenda and European Health 2020 framework.

WHO Regional Office for Europe, in close consultation with Member States and partner organizations, is developing the European Action Plan for Human Rights Based Sexual and Reproductive Health (2017-2021). The intention is that this Action Plan will provide a framework to guide and inform development of country specific policy responses, action plans and programmes in improving sexual and reproductive health. UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO) closely cooperates with WHO/Europe in the development of the SRH Action Plan. The draft Action Plan will be shared with all Member States for consultation in February 2016. To ensure that the needs and priorities of countries are well reflected in the European Action Plan, UNFPA EECARO, in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, is organizing the above consultation.

Objectives of the meeting

The consultation will bring together representatives of ministries of health involved in policy decisions in the area of reproductive health, staff from UNFPA and WHO country offices in Eastern and Central Europe as well as experts in sexual and reproductive health.

The main objectives of the meeting are to:

- (1) Review the progress in development and implementation of national SRH policies;
- (2) Review the draft European Action Plan for Human Rights Based Sexual and Reproductive Health;
- (3) Discuss further ways to assist countries in Eastern and Central Europe to improve SRH outcomes.

The expected outcomes of the meeting are a consensus on the European Action Plan for Human Rights Based Sexual and Reproductive Health and recommendations on further improvement of SRH in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.