

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Political Environment

Since Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004, the expectation toward a positive influence on the strengthening of the human rights and gender equality has been very high. Those expectation were not fulfilled, visa versa, the efforts of the conservative political forces to limit reproductive rights in Slovakia continued in 2005 with full strange. The main political and ideological issue was the draft on the Treaty on the Right to Exercise the Objection of Conscience with the Holy See. If approved, the treaty would gain the status of an “international human rights treaty” and will take precedence over current Slovak law. The Treaty on conscience objection, the first in the history of concordats, has the purpose to protect the “free and unlimited” exercise of the conscientious objection based on Catholic teachings of faith in the area of reproductive healthcare, education, employment, legal and military services. Such action would be in breach of Slovakia’s own Constitution, in breach of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in breach of international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The proposed regulation of the conscientious objection is also in a strong opposition with recommendation on reproductive healthcare policy endorsed by the European Union. A legal panel of human rights experts appointed by the European Commission has analysed the draft treaty and agreed, that it could restrict access to sensitive medical treatment such as abortions and in-vitro fertilization. The lawyers warned that the treaty could place Slovakia in breach of its obligations as a member of the EU and UN.

SFPA Projects and Efforts in 2004

ADVOCACY

SFPA advocacy efforts were focusing on the opposition to the Treaty on the Right to Exercise the Objection of Conscience with the Holy See. SFPA in the cooperation with the Pro-Choice platform in Slovakia regularly informed members of European Parliament, relevant people from the European Commission as well as the international NGO community working on SRHR and women rights. In the closed collaboration with IPPF EN and Catholics for Free Choice, SFPA was able to bring the treaty at the agenda of the EP Committee on Civil Liberties and Justice which finally asked for the legal analysis mentioned above. Our effort helped to start discussion on concordats and objection of conscience as a mean to restrict the access to SRH services and human rights.

Important issue was also advocacy for the SRHR to be integrated in the development aid policy and the Millennium Development Goals framework. Before the Millennium Development Summit, SFPA advocated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be supportive to such a target. The IPPF fact sheet has been translated and sent to the ministry.

ABORTION

Slovakia belongs to the European countries with the most positive development in number of artificial abortions, which dropped down by 70% over last 15 years. Despite of this positive development, conservative forces continued their effort to limit legacy and access to abortion services. Advocacy for legal abortion status is and stays for SFPA the primary goal. The experts of SFPA participated in several discussions and media presentations defending the present liberal abortion law. SFPA prepared in the cooperation with the Centre for Reproductive Rights a comparative legal analysis on the decision of constitutional courts, UN commission and other relevant legal bodies on the women rights to access legal and safe abortion. The analysis has been translated in Slovak and it is prepared to be sent to the Slovakian Constitution Court when deciding on the legal status of abortion.

In November, SFPA participated in the hearing on sexual and reproductive rights in European Parliament with the focus on abortion and access to services. Hearing has been organized by RSFU Sweden. SFPA's executive director reported on the situation in Slovakia given emphasis to the objection of conscience used to restrict access to abortion.

ADOLESCENTS

Information campaign on hormonal contraception

The campaign on planned parenthood, particularly on using hormonal contraceptives continued in 2005 with lectures to girls and youngsters in age 15 to 18 at the high schools around Slovakia. The quality of the lectures as well as the common information and sexuality education provided at the schools within the state educational system was monitored and evaluated through questionnaire. SFPA performed a targeted mailing through internet in May and June where around 50.000 emails has been sent to young women in age of 15 to 18 with basic information on family planning. They

were invited to visit SFPA web page, which has been accessed by more than 20.000 hits in a short time. Visitors were asked to fill a questionnaire on basic knowledge on SRHR and sources of information about it. The campaign, particularly the cooperation with gynaecologists around



Slovakia proved to be very important for SFPA visibility and capacity building.

Material for sexuality education

In 2005, SFPA started with an implementation of an IPPF project on developing a new youth friendly materials for sexuality education. Research of the present level of the knowledge on sexuality related issues was carried out among pupils and teachers at basic schools in Slovakia. SFPA collected different foreign schoolbooks and materials for pupils and involved teachers to evaluate the books. Project shall continue in 2006 with a preparation of a youth friendly and attractive school book.

Sexual education services in Banska Bystrica

Provision of Sexuality Education in Slovakia is thought to be inconsistent and inadequate. In rural areas, Sexuality Education is very conservative although in larger cities it is more progressive, but still dependent on individual teachers. Although pupils and parents are supposed to have the right to select between Religion or Ethics lessons, sometimes no Ethics option is provided at all because of lack of personal or financial capacity. The office in Banska Bystrica offers sexual education to young people as an external out-of-school service. The model shall be used in the other cities of Slovakia, where SFPA has an active member.

ACCESS

Gender Mainstreaming in the Reproductive Health services

Project supported by the European Social Fund Initiative Equal II. The project's ambition is to introduce Gender Mainstreaming in reproduction health services and include gender-sensitive education in the programmes of medical universities. In the project, SFPA will carry out a gender audit and analysis in the reproduction health services and in the medical education. According to the results in the cooperation with foreign partners from EU countries, proposal for the measures to decrease gender gap will be elaborated. Experts for gender trainings and gender mainstreaming strategy will be educated and prepared for the praxis. Curricula for gender sensitive approach in the medical education will be prepared and tested in a pilot project. The activities will be carried out by a partnership with Slovak Academia of Science (SAS) and Comenius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Gender studies department.

ACCESS - AIDS

SRHR for the Marginalized Groups in Central Europe including Roma

The project on sexual and reproductive health Vision 2000 aims to increase access to reproductive health services and sexual education for the marginalized groups in Central Europe, particularly Roma's minority. The activities were carried out through an integrated community approach and establishing sustainable partnerships with the Roma community and other marginalized people living in regions with a large Roma presence. Group of peer educators has been prepared for educational activities focusing on young people.

RomSexFest

In October 2005, SFPA organised in cooperation with Roma's NGOs a "RomSexFest" in Roznava, a city in the Eastern Slovakia with high rate of Roma's citizens. The aim of the festival was to educate Roma's youth in sexual and reproductive health. The group of SFPA activists prepared a short theatre performance on the dangerous life style leading to HIV/AIDS infection and unwanted pregnancy. Young people propagated the rules of healthy sexual life and distributed condoms among the public. The performance and educational sessions were topped up with the temperament Roma's dance and music from local culture groups. The RomSexFest captured the attention of Slovak media, the public and news TV brought a spot in the main news.



International cooperation with IPPF members

SFPA has an intensive cooperation with Rutgers Nisso Group (RNG) being involved in the MATRA project on institutional building. The project goal is the institutional and capacity building of the Slovak Family Planning Association through the technical assistance of experts from the Rutgers Nisso Group (RNG) and the Netherlands School of Public Health (NSPH) and the transfer of know how.

The SFPA has already a traditional cooperation with Czech FPA. Members of SFPA attended in the conference on sexual education in Pardubice, October 2005.

International conferences and events

SPFA representatives, particularly the executive director attended in many international events in conferences. The most important and valuable were:

March 2005 - CWS New York

Mrs. Pietruchova was a part of the official Slovak government delegation to the UN meeting of Commission for WOMEN Status, which reviewed the Beijing Action platform (10th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995)

April 2005 - IPPF London

Mrs. Pietruchova was invited by IPPF headquarter in London to take part in a final meeting of the ICPD at 10 Steering Committee – the committee that worked on the NGO-led activities around the 10th anniversary of ICPD including the Global Roundtable. The aim of the meeting was evaluation and closing of the Countdown activities as well as the brainstorming for the future steps.

May 2005 - IPPF Advocacy Workshop

Regional Advocacy Workshop was organised by IPPF EN. Mrs. Pietruchova held a presentation on the opposition to SRHR in Slovakia (included as Annex 11)

June 2005 - IPPF REC and RMM meeting, Luxembourg

The Regional Governing Council and Regional Executive Committee took place in Luxembourg. SFPA was represented by board members Mrs. Rovnanova and Mr. Bianchi. During the meeting, the Regional Management Meeting was organised, where ED took part in the meeting.

November 2005 – Brussels, European Parliament

Hearing on sexual and reproductive rights in EU with the focus on abortion and access to services has been organized by RSFU Sweden. At the hearing SFPA executive director informed the members of European Parliament and the SRHR community about the situation in Slovakia particularly focusing on the prepared Treaty with the Holy See on the Right to Exercise Objection on Conscience.

December 2005 – Madrid

Group of SFPA members visited partners at the Institute for Women within the Equal project, which contributed to SFPA vision on gender mainstreaming implementation in the public institutions. The cooperation will continue in next year with common activities, conferences and knowledge transfer.

Conference for sexuality education teachers

Slovak Family Planning Association organised in October a conference for sexuality education teachers. The aim of the conference was to inform in cooperation with Dutch partner RNG / Youthinitiatives about the liberal and open Dutch approach to youth sexuality, which is unusual in Slovakia. Within the IPPF project, we presented different foreign schoolbooks and materials for pupils written in a youth friendly, funny way and invited teachers to evaluate the materials. Important part of the conference was to give practical examples on sessions about issues, which are usually not



included in the standard curriculum like homosexuality and sexuality education for Roma's. In the evening a discussion with a HIV positive homosexual man opened for many teachers from conservative regions of Slovakia very new point of view, for lot of them it was the first time ever to meet such a person. However, the discussion showed that it is still a very long way to go to achieve a wide acceptance and tolerance at least among those, who have to teach our children about the human rights.

An important part of the conference was the presentation from Youth Initiatives about the sexuality education in Netherlands. The liberal and open approach to youth sexuality is unusual in Slovakia and it was very important for attending teachers to understand the right approach, which was for most attending teacher's completely new point of view. Ethnic specifics in sexuality education were subject of an especially lecture as well as a theatre performance conducted by four young SFPPA Roma volunteers. The performance was a new experience for teachers and may be used in schools and other educational institutions. More then 60 teachers and educators around Slovakia attended in the conference.

An important part of the conference was the presentation from Youth Initiatives about the

Conference on Matra Results and SFPA General Assembly

The conference was held in Bratislava on 22nd November 2005. The main part was focused on the cooperation between RNG and SFPA in Matra project. Anke van Dam from RNG evaluated the cooperation between RNG and SFPA during the project implementation. SFPA president presented the last year activities. After the conference, the SFPA general assembly with election took part. New board was elected. The SFPA president became Dr. Michael Kliment.

Visits and workshops

Group of SFPA employees and members visited RNG in Amsterdam. During the visit, the experiences from Dutch partner were subject of a study and knowledge transfer.

In November/December, executive director attended the IPPF training on eIMS (internal IPPF management system) in London.

Plans and Challenges for 2006

Advocacy for ICDP implementation, universal access to SRHR for all citizens in Slovakia, legal status of abortion and minimum sexuality education are the main challenges for year 2006.

Main activities in 2006 will focus on

Advocacy - Ensuring access to abortion around all regions of Slovakia remain the major problem and challenge. In 2006, Slovakia will have the parliamentary election. SFPA will contact all relevant political parties and propose SRHR to be a part of the electoral program.

SRHR – the national strategy on reproductive health, prepared by SFPA experts in order of government shall be put on government agenda. SFPA will advocate approving and implementing the agenda.

Sexuality education - SFPA will continue to work on educational materials for basic schools available on the internet for all teachers and pupils.

Gender mainstreaming - Equal project will continue with implementation. Experts on gender mainstreaming will be trained. Research on the gender relation in the reproductive health services will be carried out and measures for decreasing the gender gap are going to be elaborated.

Capacity building - SFPA will work on further institutional and capacity development using the possibility of EU project funding.

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