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Thematic Session II: Families, sexual and reproductive health over the life course

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Dear Participants,

The right to have comprehensive sexuality education, family planning and contraception are central for happy and healthy life of young people. These are their human rights.

We know that teenage pregnancy is often one of the multiple problems in a young person's life. It is important to prevent unwanted pregnancies and abortions, and when the time is right, to get pregnant and have children. The key to that is comprehensive sexuality education and free contraception.

In Finland, we are committed to provide evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education for all ages. We have rather qualified and systematic sexual education system for children and young people starting at kindergarten to primary schools and secondary education. Comprehensive sexuality education is a part of curriculum of all stages of education.

In Finland contraception, abortion and STD services available in the public sector free of charge. Services including consulting and sexuality education are free and universal as a part of primary health care. They are organized either as separate services or together with maternity care and as part of school and students' health services.

According the programme of the Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government in 2019: "There will be a national pilot on free contraceptives to everyone under the age of 25."

The pilot to provide free contraception to all under 25 years olds has been available during last two years. The service of free contraception has been easy access, high quality and safe. It has included all contraceptive methods. The pilot has involved young people in developing the services and also digital and remote services have been developed. In addition, during the pilot we have improved the competence of the personnel who work in social and health care services and in schools.

Free contraception service includes professional support, guidance and counseling as a part of contact or visit. It supports the protection of fertility. Fertility counseling is part of sexuality education – it is raising awareness and protecting adolescent fertility for the future.

In the free contraceptive pilot we have got very good results.

- Free contraception increases the use of long-term contraceptive methods and reduces abortions among young people – and it is proofed to be cost-effective for young people under 25 years.
- Free contraception and a higher level of education are connected with a lower number of teenage pregnancies.

- The number of young people having engaged in intercourse has not increased because of free contraception.

There has been presented a fear that unconsidered and uncontrolled sex experiments and activities among young people would increase as a result of free contraceptives or sexuality education. We have shown this concern to be unnecessary. By contrast, free prevention and sexuality education and free contraceptives create a good start for happy and healthy adulthood and family life.