



**Right from the Start:  
Resetting the Agenda in Women's Health in Europe**  
*European Institute of Women's Health  
21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Expert Conference*



*European Economic and Social Committee  
Room TRE 7701, Trèves Building, 7th floor, 74 rue de Trèves, 1040, Brussels, Belgium  
4-5<sup>th</sup> December 2017*

### Conference Overview

In celebration of the European Institute of Women's Health's (EIWH) twenty-first anniversary and sixty-years of sex and gender equality in EU policy since the Treaty of Rome (1957), we are bringing together decision makers and thought leaders to review progress that has been achieved in women's health, wellbeing and prevention. We will explore existing gaps by employing a cross-sectoral approach and devise steps for moving forward together.

### Conference Objectives

The two-day conference will examine both the biological and social factors relevant to sex and gender equity and wellbeing across the lifespan through expert discussions. Experts from throughout Europe will be invited to participate in the conference, bringing their unique expertise, perspective and suggest recommendations for action to reduce sex and gender inequities across the lifespan contributing to the development of the **European Action Plan for Women's Health** through facilitated expert discussion.

### Conference Audience

Conference delegates comprises of a multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial group of experts from local, national and European levels relevant to women and family health. The experts include but are not limited to policymakers, healthcare professionals, academics, non-governmental organisations, patients, sex/gender experts and other thought leaders.

### Conference Speakers

The keynote and closing speakers will be given 15 minutes to speak on their designated topics. All other speakers will have approximately 10 minutes to speak.

### Panelist Discussions

The conference will comprise of seven panel discussions. Three panels will take place over the first day and four panels on the second day. Each panelist will be asked to prepare a 5-minute presentation that will provide the background information on his/her topics, central issues and challenges facing Europe and 1-3 concrete recommendations for action to improve women and family health. The duration of the panel will be facilitated discussions to devise action points for the **European Action Plan for Women's Health**.

## **Day One: Evaluating the State of Women's Health**

The first day sets the scene by evaluating the state of women's health and wellbeing today through a series of interactive panels and keynote speeches. Utilising a life-course approach and the most recent evidence base to highlight the current issues in women's health the first day will answer the questions: ***What progress have we achieved in reducing sex and gender inequities in health over recent decades? What is the current state of women and family health across Europe? What are the existing gaps and challenges that we need to tackle? How do we best promote health and wellbeing, including prevention and early intervention?*** The panels will evaluate the progress that has been achieved and the current state of women's health. It will provide an evidence base for the ***European Action Plan for Women's Health***.

### **Central Objectives:**

- Summarise the key actions and achievements of the EIWH over the last twenty-one years.
- Present an overview of sixty years of sex and gender equality in European policy.
- Evaluate the current state of women's health in Europe.
- Provide an evidence base for intervention in sex and gender inequities in health in Europe utilising a life-course approach with particular focus on early intervention and promotion.

### **Early Intervention in Maternal and Child Health**

Early intervention and health promotion is key to tackling modern day health problems. Maternal and child health is a vital intervention point for public health intervention to reduce the burden of disease and promote wellbeing in Europe. Maternal health has implications for both mother and child. The protection of mother and child is of paramount importance to society. Every woman has a fundamental right to high quality maternity care within the EU. Yet, large variation exists across Member States with regard maternal mortality and morbidity prevention, strategies and outcomes. Central key issues in maternal and child health include: perinatal health, pregnancy, birth and post-partum support; safe use of medicines during pregnancy and lactation; and environmental exposures and prevention of chronic disease with a focus on diabetes; and the development of guidelines on gestational diabetes.

### **A Life-Course Approach to the Health of Women and their Families**

The biological differences between females and males are relevant for the prevention, early intervention, diagnosis and treatment of various diseases and conditions. Sex and gender differences also interact with socio-economic determinants to influence health. Important social issues with consequences for health include education, employment and family life. Socioeconomic, educational, cultural and ethnicity differences can impact the patterns of behaviour and access to resources. Sex and gender inequities like violence against women, lack of decision-making power, and unfair work divisions all have an impact on health. Despite the vital role that women play in their families, communities and societies, women have significantly less financial resources than men. Consequently, socioeconomic disparities further exasperate sex and gender inequities in health. Understanding this interaction is important for addressing sex and gender inequities in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care, ultimately, for improving health in both women and men and ultimately. Health promotion, policy, research and care in Europe has historically failed to adequately integrate of sex and gender differences in health. The panel will focus on chronic disease prevention and early intervention; healthy lifestyles and vaccination; and women's multiple roles in society.

### **Active and Healthy Ageing**

Europe has the highest proportion of older women in the world. There are now approximately three women for every two men between the ages of 65 and 79, with over twice as many women over the age of 80. One of the biggest challenges facing European societies is retaining health across the lifespan particularly in light of an increasingly ageing population. Women are on the forefront of ageing in two relevant ways: 1) their greater longevity than men and 2) their multiple carer and societal roles. Despite women's increased lifespan, their

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older years are disproportionately burdened by ill health. Women outlive men by six years, but the difference in healthy life expectancy is only eighteen months. Sex and gender inequities in health are evident across the lifespan from birth to older age. The main themes of the third panel will be the major challenges that face women in the future in an ageing population, highlighting brain health and living with cancer, and how to keep women healthy.

### **Day Two: Resetting the Agenda in Women's Health**

Day Two comprises of facilitated discussions on four central policy areas. Participants will build from the evidence base from Day One and develop the **European Action Plan for Women's Health**. Day Two will answer the questions: **How can we be more proactive in promoting prevention and keep women healthy for longer? Where do we want to go in the field of sex and gender equity in health? How do we advance the women's health agenda together?** Each workshop will agree on concrete recommendations to be included in **European Action Plan for Women's Health**.

#### **Central Objectives:**

- Explore effective and equitable strategies for reducing sex and gender inequities as well as promoting health and wellbeing.
- Evaluate the main issues and intervention in the four central policy areas.
- Generate a European Action Plan for Women's Health.
- Devise concrete steps for moving forward together to promote more equitable health across the lifespan.

#### **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

From a policy perspective, society must invest in a life course approach to health promotion and disease prevention, targeting existing gaps and challenges. Action must be taken early and at critical points to ensure health and wellbeing from childhood through old age. Collaboration with other sectors, such as education and employment, and with girls and women themselves is key to successful policy and programming. Available evidence must be used to best identify entry points for various interventions—both at the population and individual level—specific to girls and women throughout their life. Health inequities should be reduced by integrating sex and gender into health promotion and disease prevention programming and policy, devoting special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups. Different health patterns between men and women must be taken into account when designing policies and programmes. A life-course perspective is relevant to all stages of life; utilising a life-long perspective helps health promotion and disease prevention. Central foci of the discussion will include health promotion and prevention, vaccination, the prevention of chronic disease and health in all policies.

#### **Research and Personalised Medicine**

Translating the evidence from sex and gender research into regulatory practice will lead to more targeted, effective opportunities for health promotion, disease prevention, treatment and care. Currently, some sex and gender consideration are integrated into medicines regulation and information. However, many gaps continue to persist, so steps must be taken to make improvement in Europe in the future. For example, women make up the largest proportion of the older population and are the heaviest users of medicines. Yet, women have a 1.5- to 1.7x greater risk of developing adverse drug reactions compared to men as women are not sufficiently represented in clinical trials. The workshop will examine the steps that must be taken to ensure that research and analysis of results integrate sex/gender and age considerations, including effectively intervening early. Personalised medicine, clinical trials and the case of cardiovascular disease (CVD) will be explored.

### ***Access, Treatment, Care and Responsive Health Care***

Treatment and care has failed to adequately integrate sex and gender differences in health at a high cost to women and their families. Today, society must shift to a citizen and patient-focused view of health. Society has the opportunity to improve healthcare, so it adequately meets the needs of all people, including women as citizens, patients, family members, friends, healthcare professionals and caregivers. The use of healthcare services can be substantial at different stages of life: explanations for these differences include differences between men and women in healthcare seeking behaviour and biases in the provision of care to male and female patients. As women and men utilise healthcare services in different ways, services must be adapted to better meet individual needs. We must continuously change and be flexible to work to reduce all health inequities. This session will explore how to work towards achieving equity in health, including keeping women healthy longer. The panel will explore how to ensure that healthcare is responsive to sex and gender considerations as well as the needs of vulnerable groups.

### ***Education, Training and Health Literacy***

The failure to acknowledge the impact of sex and gender differences affects the quality of health care provision, precisely what good healthcare professional education seeks to prevent. There must be a commitment to mainstream an evidence-based gender perspective throughout all the healthcare professionals curriculum, at all levels of undergraduate, graduate, and continuous education for medical, nursing and pharmacy as well as all allied healthcare professionals. Sex and gender considerations must be integrated into healthcare professional education in order to move forward in order to improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families. The final workshop will focus on *Education, Training and Health Literacy*, specifically on integrating sex and gender into healthcare professional education and training. The session will also examine engaging the broader healthcare community and the broad concept of health literacy.