

# European Institute of Women's Health



*Secretariat: Women's Health Interest Group*

[www.eurohealth.ie](http://www.eurohealth.ie)



# The Women's Health Interest Group



- **MEPs, civil society and researchers** working together to improve gender equity in health and prioritise women's health issues.
- **The EIWH 2024 Manifesto for Women's Health** outlines examples of relevant legislation including the Clinical Trials Regulation, the EU Beating Cancer Plan and the EU Caring Strategy.
- Currently supported by 27 organisations.
- If you would like to support our manifesto, please contact [info@eurohealth.ie](mailto:info@eurohealth.ie).
- It is time for action - we need an **EU Strategy for Women's Health**

# Policies and Legislation

- The Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC)
- The Equal Pay Recommendation (2014/124/EU)
- European Pact for Gender Equality
- The Work Life Balance Directive for Parents and Carers (2017)
- The Clinical Trials Regulation
- The Pharmaceutical Strategy
- European Digital Agenda for the Decade 2020 – 2030
- Horizon Europe Programme
- EU Care Strategy 2022
- EU Mental Health Strategy
- EU Beating Cancer Plan
- European Pillar of Social Rights





# Advisory Roles



# Young Women's Health Group

**EIWH YOUNG WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP**

The European Institute of Women's Health wants to hear from young women, aged 18 - 35 years, across Europe on their health needs, priorities and experiences. This group will discuss health issues, healthcare, gender equality and how Europe can better support young women's health.

**Why join our young women's health group?**

- Have your say in the workplan and future of the EIWH
- Meet likeminded individuals and network
- Stay up to date with gender and health policy and research at national, EU and international levels
- Opportunity to get involved in the work of the EIWH

For more information and to join the young women's health group email [aoihbinn@eurohealth.ie](mailto:aoihbinn@eurohealth.ie)

The **Young Women's Health Group** was set up by the EIWH to ensure that women's voices are included in research and policy. The following **10 priorities** were set at the kick-off meeting:

- Sexual and reproductive health
- Pain
- Stigma
- Mental health
- Violence against women
- Research
- Work-life balance
- Intersectionality
- Access to care and information, quality and comprehensiveness of care
- Education

## Scoping Review on Young Women's Health Priorities in Europe

The following topics were identified:

- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
- Mental health
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Gender-based violence
- Access to healthcare

**Young Women's Health Priorities in Europe**

**INTRODUCTION**

Gender equity is increasingly cited as a goal of health policy at national, European and international levels, as it is associated with a number of positive outcomes such as increased population health (King et al., 2018) and economic growth (Maceira, 2017). According to the WHO (WHO, 2022b):

*Equality in health means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full rights and potential to be healthy, contribute to health development, and benefit from the results. Gender equity means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits, power, resources, and responsibilities between women and men.*

To work towards gender equity, it must first be recognised that women's health to date has not been allocated the same level of resources as compared to men's health; equal research has not been conducted on women's health issues, and women are notoriously under-represented in clinical trials. Thus, less is known about diseases that are unique to women, diseases that disproportionately affect women; and women's health in general. Women's anatomy and physiological processes differ compared to men's and thus drugs and treatments can have different interactions and outcomes in women's bodies. Women have different psychosocial needs and their experiences in healthcare settings can vary. They can face discrimination based on their sex and gender which can affect their health. Furthermore, uneven power dynamics between men and women have led to men exercising a level of control over women's health (Sen & Ostin, 2008).

The term 'young women' can encompass a broad and diverse group. For the purpose of this scoping review, 'young' will be defined as those in the 18 - 34 years age bracket. This range was chosen as it represents those who have entered adulthood and are often seen to be in relatively good health. It is often viewed as the prime of life and thus, the health problems, issues and topics relevant to this group are less often examined. Additionally, mortality can sometimes be utilised as a key indicator when assigning priority to various sociodemographic groups (Kokkeva et al., 2015; Saarna, 2018), and in this sense young people's health does not compare with that of children and older adults. 'Women' is used in this review to refer to all who identify as female. However, some results may also relate to those who do not identify as female but were assigned female at birth, and to those who have higher levels of female hormones.

This review will analyse young women's health priorities in Europe. The continent of Europe consists of 44 countries by traditional convention, the WHO considers 53 countries to be a part of the European Region, and the European Union is made up of 27 member states. The WHO definition of Europe will be used herein to allow the inclusion of as many voices as possible.

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# Maternal Health Report

There has been recent global recognition of a paradigm shift in the **maternal health agenda** from preventing maternal deaths to **promoting women's health and wellness**, given the links between chronic conditions, morbidity in pregnancy, and long-term health. In this paradigm, pregnancy is viewed as a **window of opportunity** into the current and future health of women, offering a critical entry point for women who may otherwise not seek or have access to care for chronic conditions.

## Some Facts and Figures

- Women categorised as having “non-western” origin are at a **60% higher rate of maternal mortality**.
- There are on average **1.53 live births per woman** in the EU. The average age of a woman at birth of first child in the EU was **29** in 2019.
- Nearly half of pregnancies in the EU are **unplanned**.
- EU Country-level studies report prevalence of **domestic violence** during pregnancy from **1.8%** in France to as high as **22%** in Portugal
- Most of the 5 million babies born in Europe every year have been exposed to **medications during pregnancy**. As high as 98% of drugs have insufficient data on the **safety of use in pregnancy and breastfeeding**. [IMI CONCEPTION](#)

# A Lifetime of Caring - Who Cares?

- Women are the main caregivers and perform the majority of household chores. In the EU **80% of care is provided informally** (unpaid) and **75% of informal carers are women**.
- **90% of the formal workforce** of carers are women.
- 7.7 million women are outside of paid employment across the EU due to carrying a highly unequal share of caring responsibilities.
- **1 in 3 people** across the EU with severe difficulties in carrying out everyday activities have access to homecare services

Effective implementation of the an EU Care Strategy, is clearly linked to enhancing the **working conditions** of informal and formal carers, as well as to respecting the **rights and independence** of care recipients, has the potential to enhance the **quality of care** based on greater **gender equality** and **social justice**.



# Midlife and Older Women's Health Report



## Life expectancy and causes of death and illness

- Gender differences in years lived in good and poor health
- Causes of death
- Preventable and treatable mortality
- Chronic disease

## Factors affecting women's health in older years

- Employment and financial resources
- Access to and experience of healthcare

## Priority issues

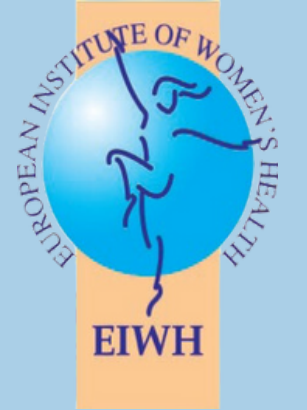
- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancers
- Mental health and neurological disorders
- Osteoporosis and bone health
- Urinary incontinence
- Digitalisation
- Vaccination

## Steps for action





# Mapping of Good Practices in Women's Health Across Europe



- 8 European countries: **Austria, Belgium, England, France, Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden.**
- Four countries (Austria, England, Ireland, Scotland) which have current **women's action plans or strategies** which cover the broad spectrum of women's health needs over the life course
- The other four selected European states (Belgium, France, Spain and Sweden) have **specific targeted plans in certain areas of women's health**, such as domestic, sexual and gender based violence (DSGBV).

- Rationale
- Consultation and planning
- Implementation and evaluation of women's health action plans
- Women's health issues
  - Menstrual health
  - Sexual and reproductive health
  - Pregnancy and maternal health
  - Menopause
  - Mental health
  - Domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence (DSGBV) against women.



# Gender and Women's Health Policy Briefs

- Women and Breast Cancer in EU – a Life Course Approach
- Women and Cervical Cancer
- Women and Diabetes in the EU
- Women and Incontinence in the EU
- Safe Use of Medicines During Pregnancy & Lactation
- Women and Menstruation in the EU
- Women and Ovarian Cancer in the EU
- Women and Aids / HIV

- Pregnancy and Smoking
- Women and Vaccination in the EU
- Women and Alcohol
- Women and Asthma
- Women and Cardiovascular Disease
- Women and Lung Cancer
- Women and Smoking
- Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Sex and Gender in Healthy Professional Education



# Thank You

## For more information:



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