

Promoting Gender Equity Post Covid-19 in EU Policy Development

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The European Institute of Women's Health

- The European Institute of Women's Health is a health NGO launched in 1996
- The EIWH **advocates** for a gender-sensitive approach to health and research policy, prevention, treatment, care in order to reduce health inequalities and improve quality of life
- **Organisation:**
 - Extensive multi-national, multi-disciplinary network of patient groups, health NGOs, researchers, gender experts, politicians, and medical professionals
 - Expert Advisory Board

EIWH Advisory Role

- European Medicines Agency (EMA) Member of Patient and Consumer Working party: *Patient representative* –
- *Member of EMA Geriatric Expert Group,*
- *Member of EMA WG of Clinical Trials Results for Laypersons*
- European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC);
- *Member of Technical Advisory Group on Vaccination*
- *Member of ECDC Advisory Forum Representing patients*
- European Commission DG SANTE: *HTA Stakeholder pool*
- European Commission DG SANTE :Joint Action on Vaccination,StakeholderNetwork
- DG Research H2020 Member of Advisory Groups :*DemographicChange Health and Wellbeing & also Gender Advisory Group*
- European Patients Forum (EPF) Digital Health, Vaccination
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) Board Member and former Presidency

Impact of Covid on Women- An Inclusive Europe must prioritise women and family health

The UN's Fourth World Conference adopted the Beijing Declaration in September 1995, committing to gender equality, women's empowerment and social justice.

2020 marked *twenty-five years* since the Beijing Declaration and *five years* of the UN's Social Development Goals (SDGs), yet large sex and gender inequities continue to persist and are now in danger of being heightened as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted and exacerbated sex and gender inequities in societies across Europe and the need for clearly defined response mechanisms. The sustainability of health systems has become an urgent issue and with-it universal access to prevention, treatment and care for all EU citizens.

Europe must ensure health, well-being and gender equality are systematically and deliberately included in all policy areas as Europe works together in the short and long-term to rebuild, recover and restructure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact of Covid-19 on Women

- Older adults and those with serious chronic medical conditions - increased vulnerability to the coronavirus.
- Ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants, people with disabilities and Roma also being hit particularly hard by the pandemic.
- The coronavirus also has implications for the treatment and care of women who are pregnant.
- Women also comprise 76% of healthcare workers, which increases their exposure to the virus.
- School closures, quarantines, business closures and other responses to the pandemic will impact women and their families physically, financially and emotionally.
- Increased violence against women

Gender and Covid-19 EU Response

- During disease outbreaks, women can have less power and decision-making roles designing responses, which can lead to their needs being insufficiently addressed.
- Women must be part of high-level pandemic response groups.
- Europe can and must do more to protect women, men and their families at this critical juncture for society. Women are essential leaders during and after the coronavirus response.

Eu programmes to support health –Post covid

- New EU4Health programme (post Covid funding response) DG Sante
- Horizon Europe Research Programme
- EU Pharma strategy
- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025
- EU Beating Cancer strategy
- EU Clinical Trials Regulation
- The EU Violence against Women Roadmap
- EU Ageing Green Paper
- EU Health in the workplace Roadmap

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New EU4Health programme (post Covid funding response) DG Sante

- Tackling cross-border health threats
- Making medicines available and affordable
- Strengthening health systems

https://ec.europa.eu/health/funding/eu4health_en

Gender and post Covid-19 in Horizon Europe

- The Commission's The Commission's Horizon 2020 Expert Group to update and expand "Gendered Innovations/Innovation through Gender", has developed a case study on "[The impact of sex and gender in the current COVID-19 pandemic](#)"
- Building on the latest scientific knowledge, including from Horizon 2020 projects (e.g. [i-CONSENT](#), [ACT](#), [VRespect.Me](#) and [GENDERMACRO](#)) it addresses the following key issues:
 - sex differences in immune responses
 - dosing and sex-specific side effects of vaccines and therapeutics
 - gender-specific risk factors (for e.g. healthcare workers and caregivers)
 - gender-sensitive prevention campaigns
 - gender-specific socioeconomic burden of public safety measures
- <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe/recovery-coronavirus-success-stories/eu-values-and-citiz>

EU Pharmaceutical strategy

The European Institute of Women's Health fully supports the Commission's new pharmaceutical strategy to ensure timely patient access to affordable medicines for all.

The EU should embrace a collaborative approach to ensuring global equity in access to medicines for existing unmet public health needs.

- “EU options for improving access to medicines”, using transparent decision-making
- mechanisms which are grounded international solidarity.
- We need better consideration of age, sex and gender in clinical trials (Clinical Trials Regulation of the EC (2014), as well as measures to ensure that trials are transparently registered, with disaggregation of results by equity stratifiers.

Patient-centred care in the development of medicines must ensure that not only will patients be included and adequately supported to voice their expertise in decision-making , but that representation will be age, genders, race, nationality etc. balanced.

https://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/strategy_en

Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

- On 5 March 2020, the Commission adopted the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The Strategy sets out the framework for the Commission's actions on promoting gender equality in all activities of the European Union. 5 Priority areas:
- The strategic engagement focuses on the following 5 priority areas:
 - increasing female labour market participation and economic independence of women and men
 - reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women
 - promoting equality between women and men in decision-making
 - combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims
- promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world
- <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210114IPR95617/gender-equality-strategy-2020-2025-parliament-s-reaction-and-input>

EU Beating Cancer Strategy

- National population-based cancer screening programmes including Bowel Screening, Cervical Screening and Breast Screening across Europe have been paused since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This is a cause for concern as a pause on cancer screening programmes will impact on delayed diagnosis and follow up treatment for cancer patients.
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- Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the provision of all national cancer screening programmes. The importance of detecting cancer at an early stage is a key focus for cancer screening programmes.
- While cancer screening is not a diagnostic test, it is hugely important for the national strategic approach to cancer care.
- <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12154-Europe-s-Beating-Cancer-Plan>

EU Beating Cancer Strategy

- **Prevention**

- Cancer prevention must be the key focus of any cancer strategy as it offers the most cost effective, long term approach to cancer control.
- Prevention both primary and secondary is a key to reducing the burden of cancer in the population.

- **Screening**

- The primary aim of screening programmes is to detect early cancerous cells with the aim of reducing cancer mortality in an asymptomatic population.

- **Treatment and Care**

- All women, regardless of age, geographic location, social status, culture and ethnicity are entitled to the highest quality cancer treatment and care. However this is not the case.

- **Survivorship**

- Cancer survivorship begins at the time of diagnosis and continues till the end of life. This needs a robust plan to ensure that all cancer survivors have access to all available cancer services for better medical and psycho-oncological services.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_342

European Medicine Agency (EMA)

- In its new Regulatory Science Strategy 2025, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has addressed various unmet medical needs for certain population groups such as pregnant and breastfeeding women and older people.
- We therefore welcome the Commission's proposal to enable innovation for unmet medical needs by harnessing the benefits of the digital technology.
- However, we would argue that EMA needs to be given the necessary resources to enable the Agency to address this currently unmet medical need.
- <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en>

Implementation of the Clinical Trials Regulation No 536/2014

- Attention to sex and gender in biomedical, health and clinical research is an important quality and safety issue.
- Medicinal products are safer and more effective for everyone when clinical research includes diverse population groups.
- The evidence base has been weaker for women. This applies also to older people
- There is an improvement with the Revision of **EU Clinical Trial Regulation No 536/2014** aims to create an environment that is favourable to conducting clinical trials in the EU with the highest standards of ethical and safety protection for participants.
- Age and Gender are now included
- https://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/clinical-trials/regulation_en

EU legislation on violence against women and domestic violence

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 presents the key actions foreseen in preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.
- The EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025) sets out the general EU framework on empowering all victims of crime.
- In the Gender Equality Strategy, the Commission confirms that supporting the finalisation of the EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – the 'Istanbul Convention' – remains a key priority.
- In April 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution seeking an opinion from the Court of Justice of the European Union on the compatibility between the Treaties and the modalities of the EU's accession. The Commission is fully committed to facilitating the conclusion of the EU's accession to the Convention.
- No specific legal instrument currently addresses violence against women and domestic violence at EU level. The topic nevertheless falls in the scope of application of several directives and regulations, in particular in the areas of equality between women and men
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/factsheet_lets_put_an_end_to_violence_against_women_en.pdf

EU Green Paper on Ageing

- EU Commission's document aims at proposing different working axes, which must be adapted according to national, regional and local contexts. These proposals include:
- Ensuring quality education opportunities in rural and remote areas for the youth in order to make the area attractive and to break the vicious circle of depopulation and ageing in some regions.
- Promoting lifelong learning to ensure a large enough workforce in the healthcare and long-term care sectors for older adults.
- Encouraging volunteering activities among older adults to facilitate their social inclusion and encourage cooperation, in particular between generations (including intergenerational learning, experience sharing and mentoring).
- Combating old-age poverty by acting on older adults' pension schemes.
- Promoting healthy ageing, for instance through the new EU4Health programme which can help to fight cancer and dementia.

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/silversmes/news/news-article/11130/eu-green-paper-on-ageing-published/>

EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027

- Particular focus will be given to encouraging Member States to adopt national strategies which will build on the EU strategy by taking into account national specificities and national laws and practices.
- The framework could build on the following elements:
 - Anticipating and managing change for better and longer working lives
 - Preventing work-related diseases and accidents
 - Improving the application of EU rules
 - Ensuring evidence-based policy
 - Promoting higher safety and health standards in the world

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/highlights/eu-strategic-framework-health-and-safety-work-2021-2027>



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