



# Policy Brief 3

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## Gendered Exposures and Vulnerabilities

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# Biological Differences and Gendered Factors

- The differences between women and men in health vary in magnitude across various health conditions.
  - Some conditions are determined primarily by biological differences.
  - Others are the result of gendered differences.
- Many health differences reflect a combination of both the biological differences and gendered factors.
- Understanding the contribution of biology and gender is for addressing effectively women and men's differential exposures and vulnerability of health risks.

# Gendered Exposures and Vulnerabilities

## Biological Dimension

- The biological sex differences between females and males are relevant for the treatment and diagnoses of various diseases and medical conditions.

## Social Dimension

- Important social issues with consequences for their health include education, employment and family life.
- Socio-economic, educational cultural and ethnicity differences can impact on patterns of behaviour and access to resources.

# Interaction Between Sex and Gender

- Gender divisions have direct impacts on the health behaviours, exposures, needs and access to care of women and men.
  - Women are more likely to seek help from and disclose mental health problems to primary care physicians than men
  - Men are more likely than women to seek specialist mental health care and are the principal users of inpatient care
- Gender divisions thus lead to inequitable patterns of health risk, of access to health services, of use of health services and of health outcomes
- Despite considerable progress in recent years at both national and international levels, gender inequalities in health remain in many areas across Europe

# Steps for Policy Action

## **1) Prioritise the standardisation of data collection methods in a sex/gender-disaggregated manner across the EU**

- Collect data in a format that can easily be processed and interchanged between local, national and EU levels
- Encourage work to standard templates for data collection
- Gather information at source in a simple, usable form
- Feed data to higher levels

## **2) Reduce health inequalities by integrating sex and gender-specific data into health policy design and healthcare planning, paying special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups**

- Uncover and report discrimination in the healthcare sector

# Steps for Policy Action

## **3) Make the inclusion of women in clinical trials explicit and the numbers included statistically relevant to allow for systematic analysis of sex differences**

- Include women in clinical trials in numbers that match the prevalence of the disease in the general population
- Stratify analysis separately for men and women to take into account the fact that a treatment may not only have a different effect in men and women, but secondary factors influencing efficacy, treatment adherence and side effects

## **4) Encourage the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to include gendered health policy in their work programme**

- The EIGE should not only collect gender-specific socio-economic data but also include gender equality data within the health sector

# Steps for Policy Action

## **5) Combat health inequalities under the current and future Health programmes by introducing gender sensitive strands**

- Suggest strategies to minimise the disparities across the EU
- Ensure a gender-sensitive approach in relation to information, health literacy, health promotion, prevention and screening programmes

## **6) Encourage Member States to make their health policies and programmes gender-sensitive, paying particular attention to marginalised groups of women and men such as the disabled, elderly, migrants and ethnic minorities**

- Account for the differences in health patterns between men and women when designing health policies to ensure the health needs of the entire population are met

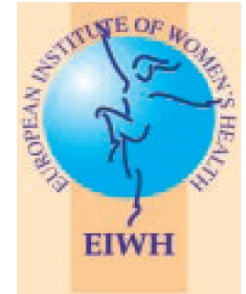
# Steps for Policy Action

## **7) Institute policies that encourage healthy active ageing for both women and men, through investing in a lifespan, gender-sensitive approach**

- Ageing is a life-long process where a multi-sectorial “health in all policies” approach converges
- Create timely opportunities for prevention, early diagnosis
- Enable older people live independently for as long as possible.

## **8) Strengthen stakeholder involvement for the development of gender-sensitive health policy and care**

- Encourage collaborative projects, particularly NGO involvement in policy and care development.



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