



September 2024

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## International & European Institutions



### Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Closes One Hundred and Thirteenth Session

OHCHR

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concluded its 113th session, adopting observations on reports from seven countries and its new general recommendation No. 37 on racial discrimination and the right to health. This recommendation provides guidance for eliminating racial discrimination in healthcare, emphasising equality and non-discrimination.

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## Adolescent girls face alarming rates of intimate partner violence

World Health Organization

A WHO analysis reveals that nearly a quarter of adolescent girls in relationships experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence by age 20, with significant regional disparities. This violence has severe impacts on health, education, and future prospects, highlighting the need for targeted prevention and support services. The study emphasises the importance of advancing gender equality through education, legal protections, and the elimination of harmful practices like child marriage to combat this pervasive issue.

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## Menstrual health is a fundamental human right

World Health Organization

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is vital for the health, dignity, and rights of women and girls, as emphasised by a recent United Nations Human Rights Council resolution. The resolution calls for universal access to affordable menstrual products, improved WASH infrastructure in schools, and education on MHM to advance gender equality. WHO/Europe has been actively strengthening the capacities of health and education authorities across the region to enhance MHM in schools, ensuring safe and inclusive learning environments.

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## Slovak Republic: urgent need to address human rights of Roma and adopt an intergenerational approach

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty visited Slovakia in early July. He visited a number of Roma communities, and spoke about several issues faced by these communities. These including housing quality, segregation in healthcare, environmentally unsafe living conditions and difficulties faced by civil society. The focus on health was quite pronounced, with visits to the Slovakian Health Regions, as well as a meeting at the Ministry of Health.

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## Poland violated women's rights by unduly restricting access to abortion, UN committee finds

OHCHR

Women in Poland face severe human rights violations due to restrictive abortion laws, leading many to carry unwanted pregnancies, seek unsafe abortions, or travel abroad for legal procedures. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) condemned these laws as gender-based violence, potentially rising to the level of torture. CEDAW's report calls for legal reforms to decriminalize and legalize abortion, recognizing it as a fundamental right to address the serious mental and physical suffering imposed on women.

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## Research Developments



### Time to reap the fruits of EU-SILC's new way of measuring unmet needs

#### European Journal of Public Health

To successfully counteract health inequities, reliable equality data is of utmost importance. At the same time, getting this type of data is also one of the largest challenges. Eurostat, through its EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC) survey can provide great value, but developments are slow. This article makes the case for prioritising releasing more datasets as soon as possible.

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### Intergenerational effects of racism on amygdala and hippocampus resting state functional connectivity

#### Nature

It is no secret that structural racism causes systemic and deep-cutting issues throughout the life course. Research from the US now once again underlines that health of people facing racism is no exception. There is preliminary evidence that intergenerational racism has an effect on infant brain development among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

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### Assessing Disparities in Health and Living Conditions: A Comparative Study of Hungarian-Speaking Roma and non-Roma Women Across Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia

#### Frontiers

Health inequities faced by Roma can differ significantly across countries and population groups. This research reveals that factors such as age, education, financial status, and living conditions markedly influence health outcomes, with Roma women often experiencing worse health.

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## Racism and the health system

### The Lancet

The article explores how racial categories, though socially constructed, are often treated as biological truths, harming marginalised groups. In Systemic: How Racism Is Making Us Ill, Layal Liverpool highlights the deep entrenchment of racism in healthcare systems, showing how systemic issues, rather than just individual behaviors, contribute to health disparities.

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## Health and income inequality: a comparative analysis of USA and Italy

### Frontiers

There is a wealth of ways in which we can explore how socio-economic status can influence health. Researchers from the University of Milan have ventured to make a comparative analysis between the USA and Italy. Its main findings focus on what shape inequities take in both countries, and what kind of health inequities this results in in low-income households in the respective countries.

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## Gender equality in the health workforce

### The BMJ

Women was a disproportionate care burden, yet also face large inequities in the health care sector. In cooperation with Global Health 50/50, the Africa Population and Health Research Centre, and the international Center for Research on Women, the BMJ released a series of articles that analyse gender equality in the healthcare workforce.

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## In the Media



### A World Apart: Addressing the healthcare needs of Ireland's Roma communities

#### Medical Independent

Roma inclusion policy in Ireland has been going through quite some development in recent years. In the context of Ireland's National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, a Roma Health is now being developed by the Health Service Executive. It will include a number of useful tools to address health inequities faced by Roma, if it is well-designed and well-monitored.

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## Many crises, one call to action: advancing gender equality in health in response to polycrises

The Lancet

In times of polycrises, it is often the most marginalised who bear the brunt of negative effects. Writers from a wide range of UN bodies comment on this concept, focusing specifically on health inequities and gender equity from a systems perspective. Polycrises are structural issues, and require action across sectors to be solved.

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## Pregnant women suffer racist and discriminatory abuse at NHS trust, says inquiry head

The Guardian

A review of Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust uncovered discriminatory and racist behavior, including staff mocking accents and denying interpreters to expectant mothers, according to inquiry lead Donna Ockenden. The investigation, involving over 1,900 families, revealed severe neglect and poor care, contributing to stillbirths, neonatal deaths, and significant health issues.

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## Racism in healthcare: "I left the practice and immediately started crying"

tagesschau

The article highlights how racist stereotypes in healthcare lead to unequal treatment of patients due to prejudices, with particularly severe consequences for Black and Muslim women. An example of this is Jasmin Habeib-Erol, whose complaints were not taken seriously because her doctor dismissed her stomach pains as "cultural stress."

*(Article in German)*

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## Other News



### Pain Built-In

Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies

The article highlights gender inequities in healthcare, and outlines major problems such as the normalisation of pain women experience as well as the additional burden some groups face such as black mothers. Despite some progress and technological advancements, significant gaps in women's healthcare persist, necessitating more inclusive research and better medical practices.

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## EU: Strengthen, Expand Efforts to Promote Equality and Non-Discrimination

Human Rights Watch

While we gear up for the new Commission's mandate in a new political reality, it is crucial to call attention to non-discrimination and equality. Human Rights Watch brings together 133 organisations to make a clear statement to the new Commission, calling for clear attention to anti-racism. They call for a strong mandate for this topic in the Commission, for stronger equality strategies, a matching budget and other actions to strengthen the policy approach to racism.

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## Upcoming Events

### Breaking Barriers for Gender and Health Equity Through Research

#### Nature Conferences

To continue a much-needed conversation on gender equity and social justice, Nature Conferences is organising a free online conference with a wide range of speakers from across the globe. Topics of discussion will be mainly on research to reduce health inequities and increase gender equity. It is also followed with a mentorship programme for networking purposes.

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Our mailing address is:  
European Public Health Alliance AISBL, Rue de Trèves 49-51, Brussels 1000, Belgium

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