



## Editorial

### Where are the women? Science, healthcare, and the cost of exclusion.

Today, women still suffer worse health outcomes than men in many scenarios. They experience higher mortality rates after a heart attack, poorer self-reported health due to chronic conditions, and significant economic disadvantages that, paired with adverse life experiences, contribute to higher prevalence of mental health issues. We can identify multiple root-causes of this systemic problem: neglecting the effects of sex and gender in health research, chronic under investment in health conditions that affect women uniquely or disproportionately, and societal attitudes that undermine and diminish women's health concerns as secondary, incidental or imagined. The result is not solely due to inequity – it is a product of healthcare systems built on blind spots.

Bridging the gender gap in access to health requires a multifaceted approach, but one thing is clear: women-driven discoveries and patents are more likely than men's to tackle women's health, yet fewer women lead in innovation, research and healthcare. According to a [recent publication](#) in *Science*, "the inventor gender gap is partially responsible for thousands of missing female-focused inventions since 1976". Sadly, today's numbers are far from promising. While women are in charge of 67% of paid global healthcare activities and 76% of all unpaid care activities, they only represent 26% of leadership positions in healthcare. Unfortunately, and despite the lack of transparent data on the matter, women's academic careers follow a concerning mirrored trajectory. Women are over represented in health science classrooms, earn their doctoral degrees at similar rates to men, yet remain drastically underrepresented in tenure-track positions and governing boards.

Science and healthcare are at a pivotal moment where gender equity must be at the forefront of progress.

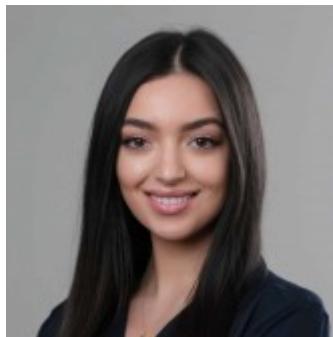
This newsletter examines the undeniable impact of women in science – those who pioneer vaccines, lead digital health revolutions, and challenge outdated models of research, while confronting barriers that continue to hold them back.

From the structural inequalities that limit women's influence in scientific decision-making, to the urgent need for gender-balanced policies in digital health, we examine the systemic shifts required to ensure that women are not just present, but leading the way. The pieces within highlight how greater representation of women in STEM fields fosters more inclusive healthcare solutions, how mentorship and visibility empower the next generation, what's lost when women's leadership is sidelined, and why breaking the leadership gap is essential to driving transformative change. Women are already shaping the future of science and healthcare, but their full impact depends on breaking down the barriers that still stand in their way. Ensuring access, recognition, and leadership opportunities is not just a matter of fairness, it's essential for progress. The challenge ahead is clear: will the world continue to restrain women's potential, or will it finally embrace its true value?

*Co-authored by*



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Director General

## This Month's Top Stories

### Women in science: breaking barriers to advance health equity

*"Science has always been a powerful force for progress and for doing good, transforming the way we prevent disease, treat illness, protect public health - and, ultimately, improve people's lives and longevity. Yet, for too long, the contributions of women in science - particularly in health and medicine - have been undervalued, underrepresented and underutilized."*



**Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat**, Director, Division of Country Health Policies and Systems, WHO/Europe

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### STEMinists needed: why women in science will transform healthcare

*By Anca del Río, Consultant Data and Digital Health at WHO*

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### Holding back is no option. Women must show up, stand up, and speak up to safeguard science for better health equity

*By Dr. Kristine Sørensen, Director, Global Health Literacy Academy.*

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## Closing the women's health gap: a call for more representation in innovation

By **Samira Rafaela**, Former Member of European Parliament

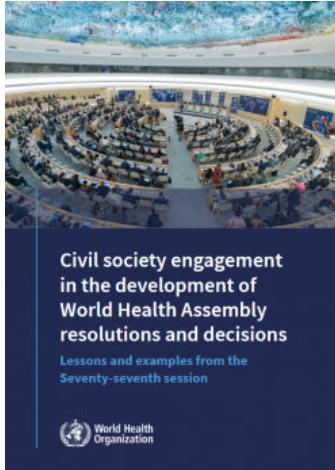
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## Seeing is believing: the power of role models for women and girls in science

By **Isabel Castanho**, Harvard Medical School, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) & Host of the Podcast "She Has a PhD"

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## EPHA Updates



### EPHA co-authors WHO CSO Commission report on "Civil society engagement in the development of World Health Assembly resolutions and decisions"

This landmark study, co-authored by EPHA's DG, Dr Milka Sokolović, alongside three other members of the WHO CSO Commission Steering Committee, evaluates civil society's involvement in shaping three key resolutions at the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA77). It offers an in-depth exploration of interactions between civil society, the WHO Secretariat, and Member States on critical topics.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

### EPHA responds to consultation on EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025

The European Commission is developing a new EU Anti-Racism Action Plan, informed by stakeholder consultations and insights from civil society. EPHA and the DisQo Stakeholder Network have provided key recommendations on anti-racism, discrimination, and health equity, ensuring affected communities are central to the process. Their input aims to drive meaningful, long-term change.

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**DisQo**  
anti-discrimination & health equity



## EPHA is now on Bluesky!

Exciting news: EPHA is on BlueSky! Join us on the growing platform to learn about our work and engage on key public health topics across Europe.

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## Zero Hidden Hunger Expert Interviews series

EPHA has begun the **expert interview series** to gather insights on micronutrient deficiencies. These interviews will inform the upcoming Policy Lab, shaping evidence-based recommendations for sustainable and equitable nutrition policies.

Insights from the interviews will soon be shared! Follow [SciFoodHealth on LinkedIn](#) for updates on this series!

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## EPHA Events

**G2H2 POLICY DEBATE**  
24 JANUARY 2025  
13.00-14.30 CET

**epha** european public health alliance  
**medicus mundi** international network health for all  
**WGH** WOMEN IN GLOBAL HEALTH  
**World Vision**  
**coregroup**  
IN COOPERATION WITH  
THE WHO CIVIL SOCIETY  
COMMISSION



## Launch of CSO Commission working group study “Civil society engagement in the development of WHA resolutions and decisions”

EPHA had the honour of co-organising the launch of the World Health Organization CSO Commission report: Civil Society Engagement in the Development of World Health Assembly Resolutions and Decisions.

The launch webinar featured insights from co-authors, including EPHA’s Director General Milka Sokolović, and a panel discussion on civil society’s role in shaping three key 77th World Health Assembly resolutions: the resolutions on social participation, climate change and health, and the WHO’s Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14).

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## News From Members



### Eurohealth: “MEPs for Women’s Health”

The initiative brings together Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) with a shared commitment to improving women’s health policies, ensuring access to quality care, and promoting gender-sensitive healthcare systems throughout the EU.

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### European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

*World Cancer Day: An Appeal to End Inequalities in Cancer Prevention and Care*

Four years after the launch of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, inequalities in cancer prevention and care remain a glaring issue. This World Cancer Day is a reminder that EU policy makers must accelerate action to tackle these gaps head-on by delivering on the unfinished initiatives in the fight against cancer without further delay.

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## European Cancer Organisation (ECO)

ECO, EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe, and the European Society for Paediatric Oncology (SIOPE) welcome a major initiative from the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents: the creation of a new 'Intergroup on Cancer & Rare Diseases' for the 2024-2029 legislature.

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## European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA)

Debunking Hepatitis and Liver Myths

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## Safe Food Advocacy Europe

Environmental concerns over simplifying green compliance rules

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## International Diabetes Federation (IDF)

World Cancer Day 2025: interview with NCDs Advocate Cajsa Lindberg

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## ASPHER

ASPHER Statement on the United States Decision to Withdraw from the World Health Organization

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## Other News



### Unlocking Europe's future: Prioritising Health under the next Multiannual Financial Framework

**When:** 26 March 2025 | 15:00-17:00 CET

**Where:** Room SPINELLI 5G1, European Parliament, Brussels

**Hosted by:**

MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA), MEP Stine Bosse (Renew),  
MEP Vytenis Andriukaitis (S&D), MEP András Kulja (EPP)



## Save the date: EU4Health Civil Society Alliance event on health in the next Multiannual Financial Framework

The EU4Health Civil Society Alliance organises an event on 26 March 2025 titled “Unlocking Europe’s future: Prioritising Health under the next Multiannual Financial Framework” and taking place at the European Parliament. This event will be hosted by Members of the European Parliament Tilly Metz (Greens, Luxembourg), Stine Bosse (Renew, Denmark), Vytenis Andriukaitis (S&D, Lithuania) and András Tivadar Kulja (EPP, Hungary).

In view of the new EU mandate, the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance, which gathers more than 30 health-focused civil society organisations, has continuously called for a strong and stable EU health funding which empowers all stakeholders to sustain continuous operations. The event’s aim is to reflect on the future of the European Health Union and the place of health in the next MFF.

EPHA (AISBL) is the European Platform bringing together public health organisations representing health professionals, patients groups, health promotion and disease specific NGOs, academic groupings and other health associations. The European Public Health Alliance has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union’s EU4Health Programme (2021-2027). The content of this email represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains. Transparency Register Number: 18941013532-08

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