

Press Release

Stakeholder alliance for universal and equitable access to maternal healthcare launches 10 point charter and performance assessment framework for EU health-care systems

Bad Hofgastein, Switzerland – 29 September 2016. The Alliance for Maternal Health Equality (AMHE) today launched two flagship activities designed to support parents, campaigners, policy makers and healthcare providers plug the gap in maternal care which continues to plague European social systems.

“We need to wake up to the fact that Europe is lagging behind when it comes to ensuring the health of mothers and babies, which is critical for the future of our societies,” said Jacqueline Bowman-Busato, policy lead for AMHE. “Two of the biggest issues we have are unequal access to care, and the lack of specific data and integrated performance indicators.”

Launched at a [workshop](#) during the European Health Forum Gastein 2016 (EHFG 2016) and during [Safe Motherhood Week](#) – a global initiative aiming to raise awareness around maternal rights – the AMHE Charter points out that the situation in “Europe must no longer be seen as an ideal-case scenario when it comes to maternal health”. According to a [survey](#) by Safe Motherhood Week, 95% of mothers in Europe face at least one kind of issue during their pregnancy, related to their employment, medical care or access to information. One in ten women do not have access to care during their first months of pregnancy and according to the World Health Organisation, there were 1900 maternal deaths in Europe in 2013 alone.

Speaking at the workshop, Mervi Jokinen, President of the [European Midwives Association](#) said addressing these deficits requires an integrated policy approach that places women at the centre: “For care to be relevant and accessible, women’s experience must be integral to the development of services. We need a more woman-centred approach to care.”

The workshop at the EHFG 2016, titled “Making it a reality: measuring maternal health-care performance”, also developed and presented a “matrix” evaluation system to strengthen the focus on maternal health in the [EU Health Systems Performance Assessment Framework](#).

“Maternal care needs to be more prominent in the EU healthcare performance indicators, it is in fact a ‘litmus test’ for how healthcare systems are performing,” said Ms. Bowman-Busato on the sidelines of the workshop.

According to Ramazan Salman, Executive Director of Migrants for Migrants (MiMi), “women play a key role with regard to family health. They are experts in terms of their families’ health needs. Measuring health systems performance in regard to them therefore offers the opportunity to improve the health status of all Europeans.”

The 2016 Safe Motherhood Week Europe (26 September - 2 October) events bring together a wide spectrum of organisations, including the Alliance for Maternal Health Equality, Health with Migrants for Migrants (MiMi), The Synergist, the Maternity Foundation, MSD for Mothers, UCB, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development (EPF).

Aside from the workshop in Gastein, the week was also marked in Brussels with an executive workshop hosted by Microsoft Europe focusing on how to use innovation and ap-

ply visionary ideas and approaches from across sectors to ensure the best possible motherhood and pregnancy experience for all women.

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Find out more: www.maternalhealthalliance.eu; <http://safemotherhoodweek.org/>

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