

WGH Austria Chapter Launch event

26 September | European Health Forum Gastein



Women in Global Health (WGH) Austria officially launched in September during the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2023, with 120 attendees in Bad Hofgastein and a global online audience.

As part of the global movement, WGH Austria advocates for gender equity in health leadership. The chapter, hosted by the EHFG, has over 180 members and aims to build alliances for women working in a range of health professions, with a commitment to gender equality in health leadership in Austria.

The Launch showcased pioneering women in global health, introduced core members, and featured a panel discussion on the three topic areas of One Health, migration and discrimination in the health sector, and education and training of health professionals.



Panel One

Moderated by:
Dorli Kahr-Gottlieb, EHFG

Panellists:
Roopa Dhatt, WGH

Ilona Kickbusch, Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies Geneva

Sabine Ludwig, Medical University of Innsbruck

Beginning the session, Roopa Dhatt described how early experiences of gender inequities in medical training had motivated her to kickstart WGH. Her campaigning for gender equity within health connected her to Ilona Kickbusch and together, they faced the World Health Assembly to challenge government delegations on female leadership representation.

Ilona highlighted the importance of networking and mentorship in identifying future female leaders. With a further nod to the power of networks, we heard how Sabine became connected with Ilona through a mentoring opportunity at the Charité University Hospital, Berlin. Together, they initiated the German chapter and subsequently the European WGH hub.

All three panellists shared personal experiences of leadership barriers and professional achievements enabled through the power of women coming together.



"The fight and the critical push for change is important but we also need to support and find men in power who want to change things."
Ilona Kickbusch

Minister Johannes Rauch, a key ally, delivered a powerful keynote recognising the historical challenges women in healthcare have faced. He emphasised the need to forge strong alliances, leverage network growth, and reaffirmed his personal and political commitment to challenging and changing the status quo, promoting equity within his team and broader policies.

"Management positions in the health sector are largely held by men, care work, often unpaid, is done by women. That needs to change."
Minister Johannes Rauch



"Every time new chapter of Women in Global Health launches, it becomes a catalyst that will change the barriers we are facing."
Roopa Dhatt

Panel Two

Moderated by:
Dorli Kahr-Gottlieb, EHFG

Panellists:

Petra Haderer, IZ Academy
Eva Turk, University of Applied Sciences, St. Pölten
Selam Woldemariam, Medical University of Vienna

Members of the WGH Austria core team shared their professional and personal leadership journeys with the audience. Petra highlighted the need for applying an intersectional and gender lens consistently to prevent discrimination. Eva discussed how WGH can elevate colleagues, fostering shared experiences and expertise.



"The WGH network provides a place to connect and grow together, professionally and personally."
Selam Woldemariam

Panel Three

Moderated by:
Viktoria Stein, Leiden University

Panellists:

Annette Nigsch, Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety
Regina Roller-Wirnsberger, Medical University of Graz
Ursula Trummer, Center for Health and Migration, Austria

The discussion started with One Health, exploring its concepts and links to gender equity and climate-related issues. The audience learned about the impact of education, workforce challenges, and demographic shifts on gender equality, highlighting the disparity between the gender split in medical students and leadership positions. Data revealed that a majority of caregivers are migrant women, raising concerns about sustainability and the creation of medical deserts in some countries, affecting care provision.