



**Statement of the European Midwives Association on Antenatal Care
Adopted at the Annual General Meeting of 2009**

The aim of the European Midwives Association (EMA) exists to influence the implementation of policies that relate to women's health, including the European Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications of the midwife (1). EMA also supports the international definition of the midwife (2). Both of these documents clearly identify the midwife as essential in providing antenatal care for all pregnant women.

Introduction

Research has identified the positive outcomes associated with midwives undertaking the full responsibility for the antenatal care of healthy women.

Midwife-led care presents benefits for pregnant women and their babies and is recommended (3). In addition, antenatal care provided by a midwife is associated with improved perception of care by women (4).

To gain insight in the provision of antenatal care in Europe, EMA conducted a survey prior to the Annual General Meeting in Malta 2008. Twenty eight countries responded to this survey.

Context

The main findings raised concerns and informed EMA about the current status on antenatal care provision by midwives. These findings have underpinned the development of this statement and are as follows:

- The organisation of health care varies considerably in Europe. The main factors that impact on the delivery of maternity services are: the proportion of the different health professionals; the availability of midwives or obstetricians and the organisation of health care and remuneration patterns.
- Access to antenatal care varies between the countries. In a number of countries healthy pregnant women cannot have direct access to midwifery care, either fully or partially.



- Midwifery students' experience of providing antenatal care may be limited. This clearly contravene the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of the professional qualifications of the midwife.
- The safety of pregnant women may be jeopardised when midwives with limited antenatal care experience register in other countries where midwives fulfil the activities of the midwife

EMA fully supports midwives in countries where the activities of the midwife (according to Directive 2005/36/EC) have not been fully implemented

EMA's position and recommendations

EMA aims to influence and improve access to midwifery care in an effort to optimize the health care of childbearing women and to promote a healthy lifestyle.

EMA urges each Member State to provide maternity care in which the activities of the midwife (Directive 2005/36/EC) are fully recognised.

EMA urges Member States to fully recognise and utilise the essential role of the midwife in preventative health care, in preconception care and in the wider public health arena.

EMA encourages national midwifery associations to adopt these principles and utilise this statement in their own countries.

References

- (1) Directive 2005/36/EC On the recognition of the professional qualifications of the midwife, Official Journal of the European Union, 2005, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2005:255:0022:0142:EN:PDF>
- (2) Definition of the midwife, ICM, FIGO, WHO, 2005
- (3) Hatem M. Et. all., Midwife-led care versus other models of care for childbearing women, The Cochrane Collaboration, 2009
- (4) Villar J. Et. all., Patterns of routine antenatal care for low –risk pregnancy, The Cochrane Collaboration, 2009