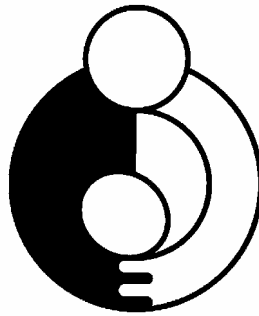


**EUROPEAN
MIDWIVES
ASSOCIATION**



**ASSOCIATION DES
SAGES-FEMMES
EUROPEENNES**

Statement on the Reproductive and Sexual Health of women

The European Midwives Association believes that women's health is a process in which she takes an active part and which impacts on all aspects of her daily life. Her health should be able to develop by virtue of the fact that she and her family have the ability to make decisions and understand that they can influence the circumstances that mould their lives.

The European Midwives Association believes that society should be inspired by the concept of human rights and an outlook based on solidarity and humanism that is also beneficial to public health. A woman has the right to get the care she needs to maintain her wellbeing at all stages of her life, irrespective of illness or disability.

The European Midwives Association recognises that having a child is an emotional and social event in which the woman's confidence and self-esteem have every opportunity to develop and grow. A woman should be able to give birth in an environment which reinforces the normal physiological course of events. If complications arise during birth she has the right to medical treatment as appropriate. It is the right of all women to have access to midwifery care pre-pregnancy, during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. This care must include exploring the woman's choices and options in relation to all aspects of the childbirth experience and should be sensitive to her specific beliefs, values and customs.

Sexual health is a part of the woman's reproductive health; it is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected and protected. This demands a respect for and commitment to appropriate sexual education, a respect for bodily integrity and the right to decide to be or not to be a mother.

The European Midwives Association believes that the structures and prevailing attitudes in society should nurture parents and parenting. There should be no discrimination against pregnant women or the parents of small children in the labour market. Parents should be supported in developing a good knowledge of the needs of their child and have the time and resources to meet these needs so that their child attains optimal wellbeing. The European Midwives Association also recognises that the mother and the newborn form a unit that should not be separated.

The European Midwives Association believes that the provision of maternity care that is service-centred rather than woman-centred leads to unnecessary medicalisation and subsequent morbidity in pregnancy and childbirth. It also believes that midwives in all European countries should actively promote their full autonomous role as the expert educated to look after a woman and her baby during pregnancy, labour and the puerperium.

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