



**PRESS RELEASE: April 26th-The European Institute of Women's Health (EIWH) Celebrates 16 years of European Immunization Week
The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of immunization: Safe and Effective Vaccines saves lives and bring us closer together.**

“For over 200 years, vaccines have protected us against diseases that threaten lives and prohibit our development. With their help, we can progress without the burden of diseases like smallpox and polio, which cost humanity hundreds of millions of lives.”(WHO)

Years of evidence has shown Immunisation programmes protect the at-risk population from a specific disease by offering vaccines to a large group. If a sufficient percentage of the population is vaccinated, it is difficult for the disease to spread, even among those who have not been vaccinated. Those who have not received or have refused to be vaccinated are protected by this phenomenon called “herd immunity” or “community immunity.

For example, in the case of measles, everyone is protected—including the vulnerable, frail and those who cannot be vaccinated for various reasons—if 95% of the population is vaccinated against this infection. Society must commit to immunisation programmes to combat infectious disease effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

Currently, there are about twenty vaccines in use worldwide for diseases such as diphtheria, haemophilus influenza type b (Hib), hepatitis B, human papilloma virus (HPV), influenza, measles and rubella, mumps, pertussis, poliomyelitis (polio), etc. Immunizations save more than three million lives annually. A further three million more deaths of both children and adults could be prevented by vaccination.

Traditionally, women have played an important role in childhood vaccination. It is primarily mothers who take their offspring to be vaccinated and ensure that the schedule is kept up to date. With the introduction of the HPV vaccines for the prevention of many forms of cervical cancer, mothers and their daughters face the issue together of vaccination past childhood into teenage years.

Women are the main carers of children and ageing parents; therefore, they are more likely to recognise the importance of preventing disease. **Women are an obvious group** for public health experts to engage in a meaningful dialogue about covid-19 vaccination.

Women are often involved in or targeted by the anti-vaccination lobby with negative information on vaccine safety and effectiveness despite robust evidence on the benefit of immunisation.

The covid-19 pandemic has provided vital opportunities to build trust and understanding of the benefits of immunisation vaccination to the public and counteract misinformation and alarm. All medicines, including vaccines, are closely monitored in the EU after they are authorised and put on the market. Side effects are rare or very rare. The safety and effectiveness of authorised COVID-19 vaccines will be rigorously monitored, as for all medicines, through the EU's established medicines monitoring system.

Women across Europe have been on the frontline of the coronavirus pandemic. Women are, in the main, providers of both informal and formal care in Europe. Women also comprise 76% of healthcare workers, which increases their exposure to the virus. The roles that women play in society, particularly as health professionals and caregivers, makes them at increased risk for catching the coronavirus. Nurses and healthcare workers for example, have particularly high exposure to the virus due to their intimate care with patients.

Women provide most of the unpaid care giving, which has increased due to the pandemic as well as increase their exposure if they are caring for infected individuals. In addition, not all people, particularly women who provide essential care, are able to social distance, getting vaccinated to protect and prevent Covid-19 is crucial for women and their families.

“European Immunization Week is an opportunity for politicians health professionals, the public health community and the public to discuss and embrace vaccination together.

Ends, Contact info@eurohealth.ie

For further information

<https://vaccination-info.eu/en>

<https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2021/04/european-immunization-week-2021>

https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/safe-covid-19-vaccines-europeans_en