



European Federation of Nurses Associations

EFN UPDATE

April-May-June 2022

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

Nurses and midwives are at the forefront of the global response to COVID-19 and now are facing unprecedented and unimaginable challenges with the invasion of Ukraine and the serious implications for the world. It is with great sadness that we are collectively facing another humanitarian crisis that threatens our colleagues and their families and world peace.

The EFN in a recent [statement](#) condemns the unprecedented aggression against Ukraine and the unacceptable pain, suffering, and loss of lives. With the ongoing reports of shelling and damage to health facilities in Ukraine, we are deeply concerned about our nurses, midwives and all health professionals in hospitals and health services in Ukraine. Healthcare facilities must not be military targets as this is a violation of the Geneva Convention IV and customary international humanitarian laws. The laws date back over 150 years and state that parties must not attack or interfere with health workers, facilities, ambulances and people who are sick or wounded.

Adherence to international humanitarian law and the international principle of medical and health care neutrality must be respected, and that the principle of human rights must be upheld and protected. Casualties and patients in Ukraine must have full access to healthcare. Healthcare professionals must not be prevented from performing their professional duties, and any action taken to prevent or sanction them for carrying out their duty of care to protect lives, contravenes international law.

The EFN is a member of the [Safeguarding Healthcare in Conflict Coalition](#) (SHCC) and with over 40 member international organisations released a [statement](#) and are working together to support humanitarian support and law. SHCC promotes the security of health workers and services threatened by war. It monitors attacks on and threats to civilian health; strengthens universal norms of respect for the right to health; demands accountability for perpetrators; and empowers providers and civil society groups to be champions for their right to health. [Insecurity Insight](#) a member of the Coalition has recently released a report on the impact of the conflict on the Ukrainian health system EFN and as part of the SHCC [is lobbying international bodies](#) including the United Nations, the World Health Organization and other key stakeholders including governments throughout the world to raise awareness of the violations and demand action to protect human rights and healthcare. The SHCC has also published a [timeline](#) of attacks on healthcare and public health.

The European Commission created a dedicated [stakeholders' network](#) on the Health Policy Platform to support Ukraine, neighbouring EU Member States and Moldova. This was in response to the European Commission webinar with over 350 participants including the EFN, patient organisations, health professionals, NGOs and industry interested in sharing knowledge to avoid duplicating efforts in order to prioritise needs and to be able to provide assistance and medical supplies as quickly as possible.

Nursing and midwifery community is stronger together and EFN is working with the International Council of Nurses, the European Federation of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations, WHO Europe, our National Nursing Associations and other key stakeholders to collectively support the effort to support and protect nurses, midwives, health professionals and ensure access to healthcare and promote peace through a unified nursing and midwifery response. ICN has launched a **#NursesforPeace** campaign to join nurses across the world in solidarity with the nurses of Ukraine. The [campaign webpage](#)

contains banners, social media and other campaign resources for download. A joint statement with EFN and European nursing organisations condemning the invasion of Ukraine can be signed [here](#), and donations to the ICN Humanitarian Fund can be made [here](#).

Now more than ever, international cooperation and solidarity are vital to support nurses, midwives and healthcare workers on the frontlines. In solidarity with Ukrainian nursing and midwifery leaders and all our colleagues in neighbouring countries, we stand together to proactively support the provision of critical humanitarian aid for emergency food assistance, health care, and urgent support for vulnerable populations and communities to actively protect health professionals, health care, life, liberty and a return to diplomacy and peace.

Collectively as EFN Members will have the opportunity to discuss these ongoing challenges during the EFN General Assembly that will take place in ZOOM on 21 April 2022.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President

News from EFN

Impact of restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 crisis on the free movement of professionals



Organised by the European Parliament Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO), this [event](#) held on 28 February, focussed on restrictions introduced by the EU Member States in response to the COVID-19 crisis that led to additional difficulties for professionals involved in the supply of goods and services as well as professionals, exercising regulated activities in critical sectors, as health professionals including nurses. The

aim of the hearing was to draw some lessons and to ensure that appropriate actions will be taken in the future to facilitate and further improve cross-border provision of services and contribute to upcoming debates on the legislative proposal for a single market emergency instrument. Invited as keynote speaker, the EFN Secretary General stressed the importance of having a minimum Emergency Capacity to be better prepared and focused on the Directive 2013/55/EU which is key for facilitating nurses' mobility among EU Member States. Reflecting on the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic is essential to create a robust and resilient healthcare workforce and eco-system able of facing any future challenges. Be prepared as key priority!

Shaping the future for Community and health

The Italian Nurses Association, a member of EFN, organised on 18 February a key event on "shaping the future for communities and health: innovation, challenges and success strategies", with the aim to shed light on the main challenges and possibilities for shaping the best future ever for nurses and nursing profession in EU Member States. Invited as keynote speaker, Paul De Raevé, EFN Secretary General, focused its intervention on the potential of digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence to really support nurses in their daily frontline job, expressing the need to collaborate with frontline in co-creating digital innovation. He then highlighted the importance to create digital tools which can facilitate frontline working life. To



achieve this goal, it is crucial to give nurses the right digital skills and education, allowing them to derive a real benefit from these tools.

In this digitalisation context, the European Commission proposed to the European Parliament and the European Council to sign up a [declaration](#) of rights and principles that will guide the digital transformation in the EU, as well as the policy makers and companies to manage new technologies. Once approved, the declaration will deny the approach to digital transformation that the EU will promote around the world. The draft declaration that aims to give everyone a clear reference point about the kind of digital transformation Europe promotes and defends covers key rights and principles for the digital transformation, such as placing people and their rights at its centre, supporting solidarity and inclusion, increasing safety, security and empowerment of individuals, and promoting the sustainability of the digital future. In an increasingly digitalized world, the health system must also adapt to these logics. The new digital tools need to be a real support for the nursing profession in their daily work.

Climate change and Health



Taking further one of its key policy agenda topics, the EFN has been following closely the EU developments on climate/planetary health. As such, the EFN participated in the European Commission meetings on Climate & Health in Europe, as on 16 March (organised by DG Santé together with DG for Climate Action, and European Environment Agency) that [focused](#) on climate change impacts on health through national policies, with some concrete examples of integration of health and climate into national governance structures, policy and action from Finland, France and Germany. The meeting made clear that addressing climate change impacts on health in an effective manner requires actionable national policies, and in particular, emphasis on protecting health in national climate change adaptation policies, and the consideration of climate change impacts in the national public health strategies are needed.

Climate change is part of our daily routine and can no longer be underestimated. As such, through the ["Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability"](#) the European Commission invites the EU Member States and the educational partners to invest in skills and training on sustainability, climate change and environment. The aim is to promote environmental sustainability policies, education and training programs and processes to educate citizens about the green transition, and to develop a coherent approach to the competences, skills and attitudes that people need to act, live and work in a sustainable manner, strengthening the importance of lifelong learning to ensure that everyone can acquire those competences and skills; next to facilitating the sharing of policy maker, researcher and educator expertise and best practices at system and institution level. Climate change has a negative impact on the environment and health. We must be prepared to handle this change!

News from the EU

David Sassoli's passing and new European Parliament elections

A great European Parliament President left us in January 2022. David Sassoli had always been at the forefront to support the EU nurses as demonstrated by the important speech he made on the occasion of the International Nurses Day in May 2020, and the European Citizens' Prize that was awarded to the nurses (EFN) in November 2021. The EFN, representing 3 million nurses in Europe, clings to the pain of its family, friends, party and MEPs. This open position led to the election of a [new European Parliament President](#), a woman, Roberta Metsola (EPP, MT), with 458 votes, that the EFN warmly welcomes. She is the third woman to hold this position, after the French Simone Veil (1979-1982) and Nicole Fontaine (1999-2002). The EU nurses are counting on her support to push many important EU policy agenda forward to



strengthen the nursing profession. It is fundamental to build a strong and robust healthcare ecosystem by creating a resilient healthcare professionals and nurses. With our best wishes, we look forward to collaborating with her.

Conference on the Future of Europe: 90 recommendations formulated



The [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) is a great opportunity for European citizens to discuss Europe's challenges and priorities, thus contributing to shaping the future of Europe. EFN, represented by its President, Elizabeth Adams, and its Secretary General, Paul De Raeve, was invited to share the nurses' views on the theme of "Reinforce the healthcare system" in the Stream called ["Caring for all"](#), and on ["Climate change, Environment / Health"](#). On 21-22 January 2022, the [Conference Plenary](#) took stock of recommendations made by two European Citizens' Panels and national Citizens' Panels. In this third session, 90 recommendations were formulated by the panels on European democracy / Values and rights, rule of law, security – with [39 recommendations adopted](#); and on Climate change, environment / Health with [51 recommendations adopted](#). As European citizen you have your say in the EU debate. Continue to contribute to it via the [multilingual digital platform](#).

The EU4Health work program 2022 adopted

On 14 January 2022, the European Commission adopted the [EU4Health work program 2022](#), which aims to continue building stronger and more resilient health systems able to address future health crises to create the European health ecosystem. €835 million is the budget foreseen for the new work program, an unprecedented budget to be invested in the healthcare sector, including around €77 million for digital investment. Ambitious actions and objectives have been planned to be achieved in 4 main areas: Crisis preparedness; Disease prevention; Health systems and healthcare professionals; and Digitalisation. Nurses are the backbones of the healthcare ecosystem and their voice really count. Therefore, their involvement in these developments is key to reach these ambitious goals.



European Care Strategy

The strategy was announced in the letter of intent accompanying the [2021 State of the Union address](#) of Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, and should contribute to the implementation the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and the subsequent adoption of the [Work-Life Balance Directive](#). The European Commission's [work programme 2022](#) foresees a Communication on [a European care strategy](#), accompanied by the revision of the Barcelona targets and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on long-term care for Q3 of 2022. The main objective of the new strategy is to create a series of policy reforms that help improve the sustainability of health care in the long term, namely: Improve the access and the quality of care, the working conditions, and bridge the employment gap by supporting the empowerment of women. This is a great opportunity for nurses who everyday play a crucial role in providing care and improving efficiency of the healthcare ecosystem. Improving working conditions of nurses and overcome the gender gap in this profession are 2 essential steps to improve patients' access and quality care. To conclude, it is necessary to find the right mix of actions to reach these ambitious goals.

Recovery and Resilience Facility: First annual report

In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Commission set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund for EU Member States – the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), the centrepiece of NextGenerationEU. On 1st March, the European Commission published its [first annual report](#) on the implementation of this Recovery and Resilience Facility which details numerous examples

of the investments and reforms financed by the RRF in the 22 recovery and resilience plans that have been adopted so far. These examples present concrete measures that are contributing to the six policy pillars defined in the RRF Regulation, including the green transition and the digital transformation.

The European Health Ministers discuss the implementation of a Public Health Policy at EU level



On 10 February 2022, the [French Presidency](#) of the Council of the European Union, running from 1 January to 30 June 2022, convened

the 27 European health ministers and their EFTA counterparts to discuss the future of health in the European Union. The [discussion](#) revealed the need to have tools that bring added value to EU health. The ministers focused on analysing the current situation of European cooperation in the field and identified possible [areas](#) for action to strengthen this cooperation. The European Commission announced it will work with the French Presidency to ensure the success of these objectives. In this context, it is important to involve nurses in co-creation and cooperation to identify what is really needed to improve the healthcare ecosystem.

Publications

Cross-Border Healthcare Directive 2011/24/EU

The European Commission DG Santé published a [study](#) on "Enhancing implementation of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive (2011/24/EU) to ensure patient rights in the EU". Aiming to support the European Commission's work in its [analysis](#) on how it continues to be difficult for a number of patients to access healthcare in another Member State, the main outcomes of the study show that 1/ The way Prior Authorisation procedures are implemented differs greatly across Member States and EEA EFTA countries; 2/ Certain administrative procedures and requirements across Member States and EEA EFTA countries may be regarded as creating potentially unjustified obstacles for patients seeking cross-border healthcare under the Directive; 3/ Patient organisations, healthcare insurers and healthcare providers do not appear to be familiar with the Toolbox; 4/ A limited number of Member States implement consultation arrangements between NCPs and relevant national stakeholders; 5/ Overall, stakeholders are concerned about consistent data availability across all Member States (and in all ERNs) and the associated burden the additional data collection would pose on national authorities, health insurance bodies and healthcare providers.



Continuous professional development training activities - course listings 2022



The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published the "[Continuous professional development training activities course listings 2022](#)" that aim to coordinate the institutional needs of the Coordinating Competent Bodies of Member States to sustain and create competent healthcare professional and nurses able to face cross-border health threats. Upskilling and reskilling our nurses and healthcare professionals is essential for the well-being of patients and of the entire healthcare ecosystem.

ECDC's Report: Overview of the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination strategies and deployment plans

This ECDC [report](#) provides an updated overview of the progress made by the EU Member States following the implementation of vaccination strategies against Covid-19 and the distribution techniques adopted. In particular: Vaccine uptake and uptake by target group; Vaccination strategies and policies; Challenges and good practice with the roll-out.



OECD: Policy responses in the long-term care sector

The OECD published a [brief](#) on the difficulties encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic in providing long-term care. The brief examines the mortality rates in nursing homes and the related policy responses undertaken. In addition, it presents an assessment of the industry's emergency preparedness highlighting lessons learned during the pandemic. The brief also focuses on healthcare personnel and on the best coordination needed in this sector.

Covid-19 put a strain Mental Health



As shown by [EuroActive](#), Covid-19 has taken a toll on everyone's mental health and the suicide rate among young people has greatly increased. Social distancing and restrictions have put a strain on young people, but also on the health professionals who have fought on the front lines ensuring health care and treatment for all. Mental health is a big concern that

needs to be considered and addressed. Taking care of the mental health of nurses that always face increasingly serious challenges every day is fundamental. Let's not underestimate mental health for young people and everyone, including healthcare professionals!

On its side, the World Health Organization for Europe conducted a consultation in 2021 as part of a global initiative to strengthen prioritization of adolescent well-being, focusing on six areas: digitalisation; education; mental health; nutrition and physical activity; relationship and connectedness; sexual and reproductive health. The [report](#) that came out of this consultation underlines the technical resources required to support Member States in the acceleration process to reach well-being for young people. They are the future of our country. Understanding their difficulties, facing them and giving them the tools they need to create their future is essential for the well-being of our country.



Programming document 2021-2024 - Towards recovery and resilience



Eurofound published its [work programme for 2022](#), in the context of its programming document 2012-2024. The document looks towards the post-covid-19 Europe, which brought long-term changes in the way we live and work. The priorities that Eurofound decided to focus on are oriented towards social cohesion and fair transactions in an environment which is facing the Covid-19 emergency. The main areas are: working conditions, employment and living conditions. The aim is to support stakeholders and provide the evidence needed to promote political action. In this context, act to improve nurses' working conditions is a fundamental step further for our healthcare ecosystem. Nurses are facing every day heavy and stressful situations. Helping them to improve their working conditions means better care for patients.

Health Literacy: WHO's Report

Health literacy is the ability of people to understand, evaluate and use information about their health. Health literacy has become an increasingly important topic, and the difficulty that some countries of the European Union are experiencing above all due to the absence of educational tools has emerged. This [concept paper](#) published by the World Health Organization promotes the possibility of introducing health literacy programs in schools to strengthen professional training in the health field, and highlights the role education plays in the health system and how to improve it. Improving health education to create better-trained professionals in the sector is a fundamental step in building a strong and resilient health system.



Join us also on: Facebook (/efnbrussels) / Twitter (@EFNBrussels) / Instagram (@efn_brussels)