



European Federation of Nurses  
Associations

# EFN UPDATE

October-November-December 2022

## President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

Welcome to the autumn edition of the EFN Newsletter. It is with pleasure that I will soon see you all at the EFN's 115<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, taking place in Bled, Slovenia, on 13-14 October 2022. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia for organising this gathering on our behalf. I am positive this meeting will be an

excellent opportunity to discuss the ongoing challenges the nursing profession is facing, and as always in solidarity and collaboration action solutions to support nurses to deliver effective, safe and appropriate nursing care for all European citizens.

For the EFN, ensuring that nurses' views and expertise are incorporated into developments at EU level on the EFN key policy topics: Education, Workforce, Patient Safety, Quality of Care and digitalisation is an ongoing challenge. Nurses have a long track record in creating and proposing innovative solutions that positively contribute to EU policy development with fit-for-purpose tools and mechanisms, as the new European Commission's initiative – [European Care Strategy](#), that has benefited from the perspective of nurses, and potentially could respond to the challenges of ageing and the rising unmet care needs in the EU and Europe. It is really positive that the [ENVI](#) and [LIBE](#) Committees in the European Parliament will be negotiating the proposal and that Sweden and Spain in their EU Presidencies will have this as a priority on their agenda. Also of note as part of the European Commission's ambition to build a greener and more digital Europe, the [2022 State of the Union address](#) emphasised importance of the digital transformation in advancing Europe's digital decade targets by 2030 is a priority that requires investment and progress. As nurses, this is particular topic of interest in light of the unprecedented nursing shortages which has been identified at the WHO Regional Committee as 'a ticking bomb'. Digitalisation of healthcare has the potential to completely transform how healthcare is provided by nurses and other healthcare professionals, in addition to significantly enhancing clinical experience and positive outcomes for patients. [Artificial Intelligence](#) and the [European Health Data Space](#) are important lobby priorities for nurses and nursing in the EU and Europe.

The European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, delivered her inspiring annual keynote [speech](#) before the European Parliament in Strasbourg recently. President von der Leyen stressed the importance of education and upskilling, with a clear proposal to make 2023 the European Year of Skills, as well as the need to better facilitate the recognition of qualifications – a key issue for the nurses and the nursing profession, due to the growing [nursing shortage](#) at EU level, and globally. In order to deliver on the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) ambition to secure health care to populations of Europe in a timely and accessible manner, the availability of [suitably qualified professional nurses](#) must be prioritised. The [Directive 2013/55/EU](#) remains a fundamental foundation to continue to build and strengthen nursing in the EU.

In relation to education and upskilling, the EFN is a partner in a new EU project – [BeWell](#) – which aims to form an alliance, to build a movement of all healthcare stakeholders supporting and committed to the development, implementation, and upscaling of the strategy on upskilling and reskilling of the European health workforce. There has never been an more important time for governments and health systems to invest in nursing education and in a [resilient nursing workforce](#) to address the growing nursing shortage. Nursing is the solution to address the world's growing health care needs. The 10

[WHO points](#) to address the 'ticking bomb' is just a start, but EU institutions will need to build synergies to address this new public health pandemic. Nurses' contribution to innovative solutions at EU policy level are key to delivering effective and efficient EU policies that impact positively to the health and well-being of EU citizens.

Furthermore, in line with the [European pillar of social rights action plan](#), the European Commission will present in 2022 an initiative to support social dialogue at EU and national level. Your [input](#) (deadline 20 October 2022) is key to further develop and fine-tune this initiative.

We are looking forward working closely with the European Commission and European Parliament on important files for nurses such as EHDS, the European Care Strategy and the nursing workforce shortage file that could cause the upcoming public health pandemic in the EU and Europe. Therefore, our 115<sup>th</sup> EFN General Assembly in Bled, Slovenia, where all the EFN members will meet in person, will be key to formulate nurses' policy responses to the ongoing political development in the EU and Europe.

Elizabeth Adams  
EFN President

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## News from EFN

### Supporting Ukraine, neighbouring EU Member States and Moldova Network

The "[Supporting Ukraine, neighbouring EU Member States and Moldova](#)" Network on the Health Policy Platform [met](#) for the sixth time on 13 September 2022, to review the work and progress made in the recent months and discuss actions and priorities to support Ukraine and neighbouring countries. DG SANTE acting Deputy Director General for Health John Ryan gave an overview on the EU response in supporting the transfer of patients, the work of the European Reference Networks, and the additional financial commitment, raising that an additional one million Euro was secured for two other EU Calls for Proposals on mental health to implement best practices and train frontline healthcare providers, bringing the investment up to 3 million Euro. These will be open also to Ukrainian stakeholders now that Ukraine can participate in the [EU4Health programme](#). Being one of the 3 leading organisations of the coalition, the EFN set the scene on mutual recognition of professional qualifications of Ukrainian nurses in the EU Member States, with Grazyna Wojcik, President of Polish Nurses Association, a member of EFN, providing an overview on the Polish bridging courses for the recognition and equal level of qualification of Ukrainian nurses as health professionals that will facilitate the professional assimilation of Ukrainian nurses who temporarily or permanently settle in Poland or other EU Member States. For the EFN, it is crucial to invest in Ukrainian nurses to avoid losing them to other professions, namely knowing the huge shortage in the field, and to strengthen the reconstruction of the Ukrainian health system with people and with the already available expertise and resources, and not just with new blocks. The next meeting will take place on 24 November.

### BeWell EU Project on Digital Skills

The health sector has been identified as a priority partnership to be launched under the [Pact for Skills](#). The digitalisation of the healthcare ecosystem, in particular the [EU Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#), with promoting the skilling and upskilling of the health workforce is an important priority for the European Commission. As such, the new 4-year BeWell EU project, funded under Erasmus+, has been launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July, aiming to develop a green and digital skills' strategy for



the health ecosystem that can be implemented at a local, regional, national, and European level through the Pact for Skills, in the context of the [Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills](#). Over a consortium of 24 beneficiaries and 4 associated partners from 11 countries, the EFN will be actively participating in most Work Packages, especially the development of the skill strategy (WP3) based on WP2 mapping of existing upskilling and reskilling initiatives and upscaling analysis/findings, led by European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (Observatory) and the Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research (Nivel), next to elaborating, with the other consortium stakeholders, the exploitation plan once the main results are achieved (WP4, 5 and 6). Finally, having a huge network, the EFN will also be part of WP9 to deliver communication and dissemination activities. Upskilling and reskilling our healthcare professionals, especially nurses, is key to create a robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem and to be better prepared for facing future healthcare crisis and challenges.

### InteropEHRate 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting and Final Conference


 Aiming to enable patients to be in full control of the usage of their health data, [this 4-year project](#) has come to an end. Being a partner in the project, representing the nurses as end-users, the EFN took part in the project last plenary meeting and final conference, held in September 2022. These were a good opportunity to provide a good overview on the final [outcomes](#) of the project and to explore how to further develop a citizen-centric health data sharing approach to improve care and research.

### Smart4Health 8th General Assembly


 The [Smart4Health](#) Consortium met in Berlin on 29 and 30 September 2022, for the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the project. Over two days, the partners had the opportunity to get updates on the project state of progress towards the objectives and plans of the different Work Packages and respective deliverables and to discuss and prepare the next steps towards the end of the project. Aiming to pave the way for the full deployment of citizen-centred solutions and services in a digital single market for wellbeing and healthcare, through an easy-to-use, secure, constantly accessible and portable health data and services prototype, thus advancing citizens' health and wellbeing, and digital health innovation, citizens can, over time, identify progress and influencing factors and share this information with their healthcare providers via the Smart4Health platform, with data stored in a structured format using ICNP. And nurses have a key role to play in this, thus the EFN being a key partner in the project, actively participating in the solution co-creation bringing in the nurses' views and expertise as end-user.

In this context, the EFN has been invited as keynote speaker at the project session on "Digital Health Challenges for the Nursing Profession" taking place during the [Digital Transformation Summit 2022](#), in Madeira, from 24 to 27 October 2022, where the outcomes of the project will be presented to an extended audience. This will also be a good opportunity to expand networks and knowledge areas to other applications and domains as Artificial Intelligent and skills – crucial topics for the nurses and the nursing profession. This is particularly important when inter and multidisciplinary are mandatory in most of the upcoming EC calls.

### 2022 European Year of Youth – Policy dialogue on brain drain

The European Commissioner Ferreira, in charge of Cohesion and Reforms invited various organisations and associations over the EU, including EFN, to participate in a [policy dialogue](#), on 27 September 2022, on challenges and opportunities in European regions to attract and retain (young) talents. Invited as key stakeholder, the [EFN explained](#) that retaining and attracting high qualified talents to the healthcare sector is a real political challenge. More attention needs to go to the resilience and sustainability of the healthcare sector, and it is crucial to improve the working conditions and the salary of nurses and create policies that are fit-for-purpose, aiming to attract and retain frontline nurses in the profession, knowing that today, among young people, 30% already left the nursing profession.

### News from the EU

#### European Care Strategy



The European Commission launched recently its new initiative - [European Care Strategy](#), together with two Recommendations for the EU Member States on the [revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care](#), and on [access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#). This initiative announces EU-level action to strengthen long-term care and early childhood education and care, as envisaged under the [European pillar of social rights](#). It will help strengthen gender equality and social fairness, highlighting the need for high-quality, accessible and affordable care services in long-term care. For the nurses, who play a key role in the provision of health and social care, in particular in prevention and [long-term care](#), this is an important step further, being [key partners](#) in the implementation of this strategy. Investing in care is important to attract and retain healthcare professionals in the care sector, often characterised by difficult working conditions, low wages and shortages. In this difficult period, with high number of nurses leaving the profession, it is crucial to invest in the retraining of the nursing workforce and in education, especially as part of the continuous development of the European Care Strategy.

#### State of the Union address 2022

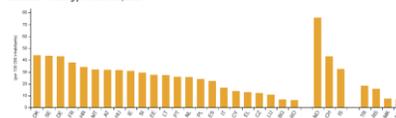

 As every year, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, gave [her State of the Union address](#), outlining flagship initiatives which the European Commission plans to undertake in the coming year, including the continuous support to Ukraine and its people; support to small and medium enterprises; climate; and defending democracy and the rule of law. Many of them are a response to the recommendations citizens made through the Conference on the Future of Europe, to which the EFN also provided input to. In her speech towards the European Parliament, she stressed the importance of education and upskilling as well as the need to facilitate the recognition of qualifications – a key issue for the nurses and the nursing profession, due to the huge [nurses' shortage](#) at EU level, and globally. Based on the requirements within the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), to secure health care to populations of Europe in a timely and accessible manner, the availability of [suitably qualified professional nurses](#) must be prioritised. The EFN will be following these developments very closely.

#### European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities

The [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), providing grants and loans to the EU Member States, under the EU's [NextGenerationEU](#) programme, to tackle the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, has now approved the [national recovery plans](#) of 26 countries, and 10 countries have received payments. See [here](#) the plans country by country, showing amounts, timetables and priorities.

#### Healthcare personnel statistics

Graduates – nursing professionals, 2020



Eurostat published a new [article on EU statistics on nursing and caring professionals](#) that shows that based on a sum of the available data, in 2020 there were approximately 3.9 million practising nurses in the EU Member States; some 162,000 practising midwives; and around 3.7 million practising caring personnel (no data for Cyprus and Sweden - and the data provided show an impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions). It also shows that the number of nurses may vary between EU Member States according to differences in healthcare systems and how nurses are classified. As example, in 2020, Germany had the highest number of practising nurses among the EU Member States with one million nurses; and Ireland had 1.617 licensed nurses per 100,000 inhabitants (the highest number of nurses per inhabitant in the EU).

## WHO report "Health and care workforce in Europe: time to act"

The World Health Organization European Region published a report on workforce entitled "[Health and Care Workforce in Europe: Time to Act](#)" that reveals nurses' shortages that WHO Regional Director for Europe, Hans Kluge, describes as a 'ticking time-bomb'. The report presents an overview of the health and care workforce situation in the Region and highlights the EFN concerns addressed towards the EU Institutions and WHO Europe since the financial and economic crisis in 2009, and made even worse with the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Nurses are currently leaving the profession massively, creating a human resource pandemic. It is not anymore about the intention to leave the profession; it is a silent resignation. Post Covid-19, it is impossible for the nurses to stay in the profession. Knowing nurses are leaving the profession right now, and units/hospitals need to close down, throughout the EU and Europe, with a move towards aggressive and unethical recruitment, Brain Drain, will increase in the coming years. It is clearly time to act! And WHO will need to step up its efforts to keep nurses in the profession and focus down their priorities to address the [shortage of nurses](#) in the EU and Europe. WHO's Ten-Point Plan as identified in the report: 1/ **Align** education with population needs and health service requirements; 2/ **Strengthen** professional development to equip the workforce with new knowledge and competencies; 3/ **Expand** the use of digital tools that support the workforce; 4/ **Develop** strategies that recruit and retain health workers in rural and remote areas; 5/ **Create** working conditions that promote a healthy work-life balance; 6/ **Protect** the health and mental well-being of the workforce; 7/ **Build** leadership capacity for workforce governance and planning; 8/ **Improve** health information systems for better data collection and analysis; 9/ **Increase** public investment in workforce education, development and protection; 10/ **Optimise** the use of funds for innovative workforce policies. Looking at these Ten-Point Plan proposed by WHO Europe, it is clear that the EU and WHO need to step up their efforts, in synergy, to build a self-sufficient and resilient nursing workforce in the EU and Europe.



## New rights to improve work-life balance in the EU



Adopted in 2019, the EU-wide rules to improve work-life balance for parents and carers ([Directive 2019/1158](#)) came into force. According to [these rules](#), minimum standards have been established for parental leave such as, for example, the possibility of requesting flexible working arrangements so that people no longer have to sacrifice their careers for the family and vice versa. These rights, which come in addition to existing maternity leave rights, were achieved under the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

and is a key milestone towards building a Union of Equality. For the nurses, with a majority of women, this is a key step forward. The European Commission will ensure the full implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, which will help bring more women into the labour market and help fight child poverty.

## Study on Digital Health Implementation in the EU

The French Ministry of Health and Prevention recently carried out a study on digital health in the EU, under the initiative of the French Presidency of the EU Council. The [study](#), conducted in 29 European countries - the 27 Member States, Scotland and Norway -, provide a clear overview on the progress of digital health in the European Union, as well as proposals on digital ethics and European ethical principles for digital health. It [shows](#) that overall digital Health governance is taking shape through legislation and dedicated organisations, but individuals are not yet fully involved. Strategies and governance bodies are mainly focusing on the deployment of core national services. 2/3 of the countries have a dedicated agency in charge of implementing Digital Health projects. Some EU countries have set up committees including health professionals and/or patient representatives and providing practical advice on the use and/or assessments of Digital Health solutions. In some countries, an electronic health card allows the patient to decide which medical data they want to store. In this context of digitalisation, the EFN was partner of two 4-year projects - one that has just ended -

[InteropEHRate](#), and the second - [Smart4Health](#), also coming to an end soon. Both on Electronic Health Records (EHR), aiming to empower the citizen and unlock health data from local silos, using a bottom-up approach for EHR Interoperability.

## Publications

### Violence against health care

A recent [report](#) has been published on "[Violence against health care: Current practices to prevent, reduce or mitigate violence against health care](#)" which evaluates the perceptions of violence against health care during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies good practices implemented to prevent, reduce or mitigate incidents according to country's circumstances and health personnel's perspectives. The report shows the persistence of violence against health personnel in all respondents' sites, with a higher frequency of incidents after the coronavirus pandemic started; as well as that practical solutions to prevent it do exist, as raising awareness in communities about violence against health personnel, next to developing new legislation to protect them. It is also clear that better and more robust system for reporting, monitoring and analysing data is required to allow for a better understand the extent of this trend and take appropriate decisions.

### Less trust in the National Institutions

According to a report published by [Eurofound](#) - "[Fifth Round of the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey: Living in a new era of uncertainty](#)", which looks at how life has changed in Europe over the past two years, the trust in national institutions has decreased in all member states. Even people who previously expressed higher levels of trust have become less confident, with social media emerging as a key driver of declining trust. Unmet healthcare needs and poorer mental well-being are another key factor, with an increase across the EU affecting almost one in five respondents (18%). Next to highlighting the heavy toll of the pandemic, this report also sheds light on a new uncertain reality caused by the war in Ukraine, record high inflation and sharp rises in the cost of living, providing the most up-to-date picture for policymakers as they respond to these challenges, alongside recovering from the pandemic. It shows also that the challenges brought on by the crisis, which will mark the 2020s, places huge pressure on national and supra-national institutions to have the support of its citizens.

### The role of Civil Society for strengthening the rule of law

According to the [report](#) published by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights ([FRA](#)), despite positive developments, civil society continues to face numerous challenges ranging from harassment to restrictive laws. Thus, the need for Europe to ensure safety and healthy workplace for civil society. Every day, at the workplace, there are episodes of abuse and mistreatment that does not allow workers to carry out their profession safely. The nursing profession is one of the most exposed to these risks. This is inadmissible. Protecting nurses means protecting ourselves, our health and our healthcare system. Don't forget it! The report also provides examples of how civil society organisations engage in tackling disinformation and corruption, and in enhancing media literacy as well as in raising awareness of rule of law issues; presents national, international and EU tools and guidelines supporting civil society organisations; highlights persisting challenges civil society continues to face across the EU.

### Nursing workforce in Ireland

A new publication Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, entitled '[A System Dynamics Model of Nursing Workforce Supply](#)' aims to inform policymakers on the appropriate student intake for nurses in Irish higher education institutions. According to the report, 46% of the nurses in Ireland received their education abroad. However, Ireland has committed to attaining self-sufficiency in health workforce requirements through the training of adequate local staff as part of the [WHO Code of Practice on International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#). It is essential to invest in nurses' education and to train the nurses of the future and ensure the resilience of the entire healthcare system.

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