



EFN Policy Statement on the Review of the ILO ISCO definitions and tasks composition

Over recent years there has been increasing concern across the global Nursing community that the ILO definitions do not reflect the changes that occurred in the health care field and the competencies required by the Nursing personnel. The realities of nursing practice and developments enhancing nursing practice and education have led to distinct nursing responsibilities and practice advancement roles that are not met by the ILO definitions and classifications. This has resulted in countries reporting data about the composition of their nursing workforce which are not valid, nor reliable, having negative impact on national workforce policies development and workforce planning.

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the scale of nursing shortages, the EFN strongly believes it is important to review the ISCO definitions and classifications as well as the antiquated task processes enabling a more precise composition of the nursing workforce in line with the EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1.

Although the task-based approach to ILO definitions is binding methodology for the ILO, and reference to educational preparation can be footnoted for further guidance, the task-based approach should be replaced with the legal definition of nursing and focus more on decision-making responsibilities of general care nurses compared to the other ISCO categories.¹

Therefore, the new ISCO version, to be agreed on in 2028, aiming at analysing and measuring oversupply and undersupply of nurses, should build on the recent ILO report on the General Survey on the International Standards related to Nursing Personnel, stating in Chapter 2 on Nursing Personnel definitions that: *“it is important for patient safety as well as for the nursing profession to be able to distinguish between the role of Registered Nurses and the equally valuable but different role of healthcare assistants”*. The report by the committee of experts also helpfully identifies some of the critical factors to be considered, including the use of clinical judgment, and concludes that the definitions of role and scope of practice of nursing need to reflect what is distinctly nursing and emphasising the importance of achieving clarity

¹ According to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) *“The nurse is a person who has completed a program of basic, generalised nursing education and is authorised by the appropriate regulatory authority to practise nursing in his/her country. Basic nursing education is a formally recognised programme of study providing a broad and sound foundation in the behavioural, life, and nursing sciences for the general practice of nursing, for a leadership role, and for post-basic education for specialty or advanced nursing practice.”* (ICN, 1987).

on the types of categories of nurses in each country as the basis of data collection, analysis and comparison. Futureproofing any changes would also require attention to developments concerning masters level preparation for nurses and developments with advanced practice nursing.

The EFN and ICN have formally requested amendments to the ILO definitions and guidance and have agreed to work with ILO to provide Nursing advice and bring forward proposals to amend the ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations. Specifically, EFN and ICN will seek to ensure that the group definitions and listed tasks for each of the four categories (ISCO-08) clearly make the distinction between professional and associate nurses. Within this context, it will be key to formulate the definitions based on nursing diagnosis, supervision of non-nursing staff and the decision to delegate to suitably qualified and competent non nursing staff certain tasks in line with Article 31 of Directive 2013/55/EU, relating to the eight competencies of the general care nurse and the WHO Global Competency Framework for Universal Health Coverage that ICN have advised on. Qualification is a critical factor in preparing the general care nurse with the clinical decision and judgment skills and competencies required to practice safely within their scope of practice, as approved by a competent nurse authority. This preparation must include the decision and responsibility associated with delegation and supervision of non-nursing assistant staff, for which there isn't a minimum qualification requirement, working as part of the nursing team.

The intent of the EFN and ICN approach is to secure amendments to the ILO ISCO code which will address the concerns of EFN members, and Nursing Associations around the world, that the future ILO definitions and tasks listed cannot anymore categorise or count people engaged in nursing who are not Registered Nurses but are counted as Registered Nurse within the Professional category. As such the collected data of the four ISCO categories definitions and tasks will not result in the inflation by countries of their Registered Nurse numbers, visualising the true extent of global nursing shortages.

Further readings:

- EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1 https://efn.eu/?page_id=8220
- EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1 Executive Summary <http://www.efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/EFN-Workforce-Matrix-31-Executive-Summary-May-2017.pdf>
- EFN-ICN Letters on ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the definitions of Nursing roles <http://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Letter-to-ILO-April-2022-ICN-EFN.pdf> & <http://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Letter-to-ILO-25-May-2022-ICN-EFN.pdf>
- The State of the World's Nursing 2020 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/nursing-report-2020>
- Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and

Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System ('the IMI Regulation')

- Sustain And Retain in 2022 and Beyond. The Global Nursing Workforce and the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.icn.ch/news/new-report-calls-global-action-plan-address-nursing-workforce-crisis-and-prevent-avoidable>

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EFN Policy Statement on ILO Guidance of Nursing Profession Data – October 2022

