

European Commission Consultation on the [European Year of Skills 2023](#)

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The COVID-19 pandemic changed all social patterns and strongly changed the way we work. The pandemic made everyone more aware of the essentiality of nurses work and all healthcare professionals to manage and tackle health crises. In a constantly changing labour market that is increasingly globalized, digital, robotic and green, the need to build and acquire new skills has become fundamental.

In her State of the European Union Address, Ursula von der Leyen 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. On an EU-wide basis, policies must be developed and rapidly funded and implemented to secure enough nurses to allow progression and expansion of nurses roles that are required in an evolving health service, as well as the safe provision of professional nursing care at every level of health care delivery.

During the COVID-19 pandemic years, nurses have demonstrated their vital role in running healthcare with tireless commitment and professionalism, and the health sector was identified as an important industrial ecosystem to partner up with, under the Pact for Skills. Due to the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on health systems and the strong engagement of health stakeholders and industrial players, as well as the great potential of digital technologies for the sector, the Pact calls on industry, employers, social partners, public authorities, education and training providers, employment agencies, etc. to work together and commit to invest in training for all working age people across the Union. It is time to take this up and make change happen!

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. As example, building of capacity and investments in digital skills and digital literacy for citizens, patients and healthcare professionals are key for the digital transformation of healthcare, and nurses have a central role to play in this. General care nurses need digital skills to plan, organise and implement nursing care, to empower individuals, families and groups, to give advice, instruct and support those needing care, evaluate nursing care and analyse the care quality and comprehensively communicate professionally!

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. Therefore, the EU needs to invest in nurses and nursing to get better outcomes. We need to build the resilience of the nursing workforce! Frontline nurses are key to build resilient healthcare systems in the EU.

Representing 36 national nurses associations and 3 million nurses in the EU and having principle 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights Education high on its policy agenda, the EFN looks forward to the 2023 European Year of Skills and key EU developments. The EFN will ensure to position nursing more central to health policy and ensure that nurses can use their skills, education and training to their full capacity. Upscaling skills, LLL/CPD, skills empowerment are key for nurses, especially linked to the Advanced Practice Nursing (APN). Investing in advanced roles for nurses, with special regard to the APN and nurse prescribers, will positively increase access to healthcare services for EU citizens. An advanced role with the appropriate skills-mix, will future proof the design of an effective, responsive, dynamic and sustainable frontline workforce composition, as set out in the EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1 (https://efn.eu/?page_id=8220).

Annexe: [EFN Input to EU Consultation on European Year of Skills 2023 - November 2022](#)