



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

January-February-March 2023

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

With the end of another challenging year, we can reflect on the many positive achievements, including the 115th EFN General Assembly held in Slovenia on 13-14 October 2022. The General Assembly was a great opportunity to discuss in person the extraordinary contribution made every day by nurses across the European Union (EU) within fragile and resource challenged health systems. We focused on the next steps to continue to support nurses to deliver effective, safe and appropriate nursing care for all European citizens. The EFN members endorsed three key EFN Policy Statements on [ILO Guidance of Nursing Profession Data](#); [Nursing Planetary Health](#); and [European Care Strategy](#).

I had the privilege to be invited by the European Commission Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to chair a session at the "[High-level Conference COVID-19 lessons learned and looking ahead to ensure a stronger EU Health Security Framework](#)" held on 22-23 November 2022 at the European Convention Centre Luxembourg. The co-hosts Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety and Paulette Lenert, Minister of Health of Luxembourg, opened the two-day event. Chaired by Sandra Gallina, Director General of the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety John F. Ryan (Deputy Director General DG SANTE) presented the new regulation on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU. It is commendable that the final building blocks of the European Health Union which is a key part of the Commission's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and future public health emergencies have been adopted including:



- Regulation on Serious cross-border health threats
- Regulation on the extended mandate of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and
- Emergency Framework Regulation to provide extra powers to the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority ([HERA](#))

This legislation coupled with the [Regulation](#) on the extended mandate of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in March 2022 will improve the EU's capacity in the vital areas of prevention, preparedness, surveillance, risk assessment, early warning, and response. I chaired the session "Responding to COVID-19", that facilitated the views of nurses, physicians, patients and health professionals from long-term care facilities. The panel articulated that throughout the pandemic, healthcare professionals reported the structural and organisational barriers and challenges that prevented the full actualisation of health professionals' impact on many fronts. While providing care in diverse settings, the toll of relentlessly delivering care during this unprecedented time has impacted the health and wellbeing of the healthcare workforce which impacts significantly on the care provided to patients. The need for increased attention to the emotional, financial, and physical recovery of the healthcare workforce and the structure and resourcing of the health system is a matter of great importance if healthcare systems are to fully recover and proactively prepare for the next crisis.

The EFN is also co-chair of the *Supporting Ukraine, Neighbouring EU Member States and Moldova Network*, taking the lead on the theme

"mutual recognition of professional qualifications". It is mainly focussed on the development of bridging courses in Poland for Ukraine nurse refugees together with many stakeholders including the Polish Nurses' Association, the regulators, the Universities and the Polish Government. The Ukraine Health Minister supports these developments as the bridging courses will facilitate the capacity building of future nursing leaders returning to Ukraine to rebuild the healthcare ecosystem.

Within this context, digitalisation is one of the EFN priorities. In the healthcare sector, digital tools can be of added value and a great support for the nurses in their daily work. This ambitious can only be achieved through the involvement of nurses in the co-creation and co-design of these digital tools and in the digitisation of the healthcare systems/sector. With digitalisation high on the agenda, the EFN is therefore a key partner in [BeWell](#), a 4-year EU project that started in July 2022 with a view to upskilling and reskilling the nursing workforce, in this digital context, to ensure the delivery of quality care to patients and to enable them to be better prepared to face future challenges. The launch of the Partnership Manifesto on the Pact for Skills: Large Scale Partnership for the Health Ecosystem, will be key for the BeWell consortium.

The EFN will continue to monitor the policy and political developments on [Antimicrobial Resistance](#) (AMR) as this is one of the current greatest challenges, representing a real and concrete threat to the society. The increase in antimicrobial resistance is the result of years of misinformation that have led to the spread of this AMR. Nurses are [central allies](#) in the prevention by spreading reliable information, as they are the most trustful healthcare professionals and the closest to patients. In addition, EFN is very engaged and committed to supporting the work of the Commission in relation to global vaccination.

On the COP27, the EFN will continue focussing on Nursing Planetary Health. Nurses can play a leading role in implementing planetary health from the individual and organisational (behaviour change) to the global level (policies and governance). Planetary health proposes an interdisciplinary, holistic and comprehensive approach to analyse and respond to the health impacts on our planet that are mediated by social, economic and political factors. Nurses have a [key role](#) to play in the co-design and implementation of [planetary health solutions](#).

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support to EFN and the extortionary compassion and care delivered by EU nurses every day. I wish you all a relaxing holiday season and hope that the new year will bring significant changes and an optimistic future.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President

News from EFN

115th General Assembly of the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN)



The EFN National Nurses Associations, representing over 3 million EU nurses, met physically for the first time on 13-14 October 2022, in Slovenia, for the Autumn EFN General Assembly, after 2 years of online meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EFN Members welcomed the Slovenian Chief Nursing Officer, Mojca Dobnik, who raised the current ongoing key

policy topics for nurses in Slovenia, as shortage of nurses, digitalisation, quality and safety.

Within the framework of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the EFN stressed the importance of the [Advanced Practice Nurse](#) (APN) for the delivery of positive health outcomes, with the EFN APN Working Group presenting some concrete outcomes, including the results of the meta-analysis of the data collected from the 36 EFN members. APN has a key role to play in building the resilience of the health and care system in the EU and Europe (ref. [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#)). As such, the EFN will continue developing this key topic with its members.

With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the [EFN](#), [ICN](#) and the [Polish Nurses Association](#) have been collaborating closely to support the Ukrainian nurses, namely by putting in place bridging courses for the Ukraine nurses' refugees in Poland. It is key to invest in Ukrainian nurses and nursing as it will strengthen the leadership and development of the nursing profession as part of the reconstruction of the Ukrainian healthcare eco-system after the end of the hostilities.

Finally, the EFN Members shared information on the activities/best practices/experiences linked to education, working conditions and quality & safety related to long-term care, including digitalisation, to support the design of the Council Recommendation on Long-term care, within the context of the new [European Care Strategy](#); and approved three key Policy Statements on [ILO Guidance of Nursing Profession Data](#); [Nursing Planetary Health](#); and [European Care Strategy](#) that will support the EFN in its lobby work.



Support and investment in Ukrainian nursing

Following up on the development of the bridging courses started when the war in Ukraine began, with the [EFN](#) and [ICN](#) supporting it since its very beginning, the [Polish Nurses Association](#) (EFN member), organised a [2-days conference](#) that brought together nursing polish leaders, Ukrainian nursing leaders and nursing students, University nursing teachers, EU and international nursing stakeholders, and the Polish



Ministry of Health, on 18-19 November 2022, in Warsaw, Poland. This was a big step forward to plan long term international support with the Ukraine nurse colleagues. Bringing 25 Ukrainian nursing leaders, and 20 Ukrainian nursing students from different places in Poland, to Warsaw was a huge endeavour, but we managed to do it. Having an extensive experience in bridging courses, Poland will provide dedicated support and education programs to enable adaptation and ensure competence and safety to work as a Registered Nurse to our Ukrainian nurse colleagues. The educational investment and support offered to Ukrainian nurse refugees will help ensure equal rights and enable them to function safely and competently in the Polish and EU labour market. It is key, with Ukraine being a candidate EU Member State, to invest in Ukrainian nursing as it will strengthen the leadership and development of the nursing profession as part of the reconstruction of the Ukrainian healthcare eco-system after the end of the hostilities. The [EFN](#) will continue supporting this development linking up with the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications ([Directive 2013/55/EU](#)), as the structure of the program will be entirely focusing on the implementation of the provisions in the Directive Article 31 (paragraph 7), and will be built with reference to the achievement of the 8 key competences of a general nurse.

BeWell EU Project - Creating a common vision!

The EFN is a key partner in [BeWell](#) EU project, an Erasmus+ 4-year EU project on digital skills aiming to build a movement of some key healthcare stakeholders for supporting, developing and implementing an EU strategy on upskilling and reskilling of the



European healthcare workforce, in the context of the [Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills](#). To advance the project developments to support nurses and nursing, the EFN participated at the [2-Days' Workshop](#) that took place in Brussels on 19-20 October 2022, where the project partners had the opportunity to create a common vision through establishing an EU roadmap for the strategy with concrete milestones to implement realistic targets. The EFN expressed the need to: 1/ focus on the nurses' working conditions as the main starting point for creating an impactful strategy, and on the social factors that bring nurses to leave the nursing profession massively; and 2/ to engage nurses as co-creators of digital skills and tools aiming to build fit-for-purpose solutions. The main challenge will be the disruptive and continuous evolving nature of digital technologies. Therefore, it will become an ambition for developers to try the right way to explain to healthcare professionals these new skills and use frontline nurses' "language".

Nursing Planetary Health



Nurses can play a [leading role](#) in implementing planetary health from the individual and organisational (behaviour change) to the global level (policies and governance), as well as in [co-designing](#) and implementing planetary health solutions. As such, the EFN followed the COP27 developments, with the EFN Members [calling](#) on the EU Institutions to: 1/ Facilitate and

co-create concrete nursing planetary health actions, led by nurses in advanced roles; 2/ Implement the nursing planetary health approach to protect the health of humans and the ecosystems on which it depends in all policies, primarily those related to the European Green Deal and with an emphasis on equity as a guiding principle; 3/ Promote multilateral and inclusive governance by including nurses in decision-making. This could be done by implementing a trans-sectoral planetary health policy framework; 4/ Finance nursing research and actions to ensure the participation of nurses in decision-making and implementation. It is key to invest resources in advanced roles in Nursing Planetary Health for improved prevention and planetary health promotion.

From its side, the [World Health Organization](#) shed the light on [COP 27](#) as a crucial opportunity for the world to come together and re-commit to keeping the 1.5 °C [Paris Agreement](#) goal alive. To tackle the climate crisis, the WHO stresses 4 key goals: Mitigation, Adaptation, Financing, and Collaboration. As stated by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, "Climate change is making millions of people sick or more vulnerable to disease all over the world and the increasing destructiveness of extreme weather events disproportionately affects poor and marginalized communities. It is crucial that leaders and decision makers put health at the heart of the negotiations". As the closest healthcare professionals to patients and the most trusted profession, nurses can play a vital role in spreading reliable information and in making change happen.

European Antimicrobial Awareness Day

One of the top ten global public health challenges of our time, and a key concern for the nurses and the nursing profession is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), being associated with the death of 35.000 people yearly in the European Union and one of the [top 3 health threats](#) identified by the Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority ([HERA](#)). In addition to participating in some key meetings, the EFN took part in the [European Antibiotic Awareness Day](#) and the event "[Preventing antimicrobial resistance together](#)" held on 17 November, and held an online campaign through its social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)) raising awareness on this key policy topic that continues to be a serious challenge, and that needs to be addressed. The Antimicrobial Resistance is a "silent" enemy, that continue to create severe health problems. The role of nurses, in combating AMR, is key for patients' safety and for delivering high quality care, as well as in reducing the demand for antibiotics, enhancing antibiotic effectiveness and encouraging a system wide approach to tackling AMR. To make it



work, we need to include the nurses' voice in the process and listen to what frontline. We cannot combat AMR if we don't know what happens frontline! AMR is not a "future pandemic", AMR is the current pandemic and if we do not act promptly, the situation will get worse and worse.

From its side, the European Commission conducted a [European survey on AMR](#) that shows that half of the European citizens believe that antibiotics kill viruses – being a great example of misinformation which fuels antimicrobial resistance – and that 23% of the Europeans have taken antibiotics in oral form in the past year, the lowest since 2009 (But this varies from 42% in Malta to 15% in Sweden and Germany), around 8% of antibiotics were taken without a prescription, and that a very large proportion of Europeans have taken antibiotics without justification (i.e. for viral infections or symptoms only). See [here](#) the European Commission Fact sheet accompanying the Opinion by the Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (EXPH).

The registered nurse shortage in Europe is a 'ticking time bomb'



Paul De Raeve, EFN Secretary General, published an [article](#) entitled "The registered nurse shortage in Europe is a 'ticking time bomb'" (published in [Health Europe Quarterly](#), Issue 24 – November 2022) which focuses on the issue of registered nurses' shortage and the consequences of political inertia. The

COVID-19 pandemic has shown that our European health services were not resilient enough. Therefore, at EU level, policies must be developed, rapidly funded, and implemented to secure enough nurses, and to expand their roles, increasingly required within evolving health services. The safe provision of professional nursing care is paramount to achieve optimal patient care, at every level of healthcare delivery. The article shed the light on the need for the EU Member States to invest in building a resilient nursing workforce to protect the Europeans citizens. Nurses are currently massively leaving the profession and the situation is becoming increasingly critical. Taking action to create better working conditions and make the nursing profession more attractive is essential for the smooth functioning of the healthcare eco-system and for the well-being of European citizens.

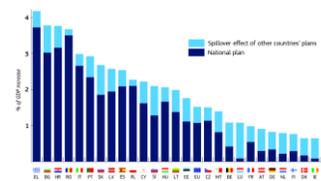
News from the EU

Directive on violence against women

Marking the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), on 25 November, the European Commission called for the adoption of the new [directive](#) on combatting violence against women and the EU's accession to the [Istanbul Convention](#) (a human rights treaty against gender-based violence of the Council of Europe signed by the EU in 2017, though still to be ratified). The new Directive proposal, that aims to ensure a minimum level of protection across the EU against such violence, regardless of whether it takes place online or offline, sets out targeted rules for the protection of women in order to strengthen the actions taken by the Member States. While all the Member States address violence against women and domestic violence in legislation, the scope and implementation vary greatly across the EU. Currently, no specific legal instrument exists at the EU level. Providing an ambitious set of measures for ending gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, the [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) confirms the commitment of the European Commission to do all it can to prevent and combat gender-based violence, support and protect victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. For the EFN, this is a key topic, [high on its policy agenda](#), as nurses are at the frontline of addressing many forms of violence, due to the role they play in keeping patients and communities safe. Nurses are themselves more likely to be exposed to verbal, emotional or physical (including sexual) violence at their workplace in comparison with other professions. The EFN will follow this development closely.



European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities



In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund - the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) - for the EU Member States, in the form of EU grants and loans. All Member States have submitted

a national recovery plan to the European Commission for review and to the Council for adoption. The first plans were adopted in July 2021, allowing for the release of 13% of the amount allocated to each State as pre-financing. Subsequent instalments will be paid out by the end of 2023 if States meet the interim targets set in their plans. The European Commission has just approved the preliminary assessment for a €3.6 billion payment to [Greece](#). See [here](#) an interactive map of the country-by-country plans, including amounts, timetables and priorities.

New EU strategy for enlargement

The MEPs [called](#) on the EU, on 23 November, to accelerate and reform its decision-making process for future [enlargement](#), referring in particular to abolishing the requirement for unanimity to advance the accession process in favour of qualified majority voting, and conclude the current negotiations before 2030. MEPs also suggested that in the reform [process](#) of candidate countries, backtracking should be sanctioned, and sustainable progress should be rewarded. The EFN will follow up on this development, having EU enlargement as a key topic in its [policy agenda](#).

Publications

Health at a Glance 2022 – It's all about nurses!

This 2022 edition of [Health at a Glance: Europe](#) focusses on strengthening the resilience of health systems, crisis preparedness and response capacity through targeted investments! The report extensively focusses on the nursing profession: **Increasing the retention rate of nurses in the profession is a growing concern to avoid exacerbating current and future shortages.** The report highlights that several countries have started to implement **more advanced roles for nurses** to improve access to care, including "nurse practitioner" roles. Advanced practice nurses can improve access to services and reduce waiting times. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought further attention to the pay rate of nurses and the need to ensure sufficient remuneration to attract and retain nurses in the profession. **Nurses are leaving the profession massively and this only increases the nurses' shortage, damaging the smooth functioning of the healthcare systems.** Low wages and dangerous or bad working conditions are among the major causes of leaving the nursing profession. Without nurses, healthcare systems are not resilient and cannot guarantee the delivery of quality care to patients.



The ETUI's list of hazardous medicinal products



ETUI published a [report](#) which aims to identify the hazardous medicinal products (HMPs), or hazardous drugs that fall under the legislative scope of the recently adopted Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic Substances Directive (CMRD – [Directive \(EU\) 2022/431](#)). The report focuses on the carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances to which healthcare professionals are exposed to. In

this regard, it is essential that nurses and healthcare professionals receive the right training to prevent the risks of adverse health effects. Taking care of those who care for others is an important step towards keeping healthcare systems functioning well.

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