



## EFN Policy Statement on the European Year of Skills 2023

The EFN welcomes the designation of 2023 as the European Year of Skills by the European Commission, Council of the European Union, and European Parliament. President von der Leyen emphasized the importance of a skilled workforce for growth in her State of the European Union [Address](#) on 14 September 2022. Equipping the EU workforce with necessary skills ensures socially just green and digital transitions.

The EU leaders' [Porto Declaration](#) from May 2021 commits strongly to upskilling, reskilling, and improved employability. The declaration welcomes the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan's ambitious targets of 60% adult participation in yearly education and training and an employment rate of at least 78% by 2030. Achieving these targets will require significant efforts to support more women and young people in the labour market.

To create a robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem and be better prepared for future challenges, upskilling and reskilling nurses is crucial. In addition to fundamental nursing skills, nurses can build capacity in digital skills to contribute to the digital transformation of the healthcare ecosystem. Digital skills can enable general care nurses to better plan, organize, and implement nursing care, communicate professionally, empower individuals, families, and groups, provide advice, instruction, and support to those needing care, evaluate nursing care, and analyse care quality outcomes (Directive 2013/55/EU). These nursing competencies must be respected to ensure quality and safe care.

The 2023 European Year of Skills provides a unique opportunity to address the shortage of staff by increasing investment in professional education and upskilling. However, due to the shortage of healthcare professionals, nurses often lack the opportunity to engage with available digital technologies. In the health sector, skills in data analysis and digital collaboration are high in demand, with a further surge in

demand expected by 2030. Nurses require protected time and appropriate backfill to participate in training and engage with such opportunities without compromising patient care.

While digital transformation can pose a challenge for nurses, reskilling and upskilling efforts should not exclusively focus on digital skills. Fundamental skills of communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, organization, and leadership are crucial for the transition from a disease-centred to a person-centred approach. Modernizing nurse education to embed digital skills in existing training initiatives as supportive of fundamental nursing skills could be beneficial.

The EFN welcomes the European Commission's coordinated measures, including the concerted efforts at local, regional, national and European levels to enhance synergies between existing policy frameworks and financial instruments promoting opportunities for upskilling and reskilling. The EFN supports the European Commission actions to address labour shortages and achieve a better skilled health workforce in the Union by:

1. Promoting more effective and inclusive investment in education and training to maximise the potential of the nursing workforce; and, supporting frontline nurses in managing job-to-job transitions, active ageing, and taking advantage of new labour opportunities like advanced practice nursing.
2. Aligning nurses' aspirations and skills with labour market opportunities, especially those arising from the green and digital transitions. Special emphasis should be placed on recruiting and retaining nurses in the healthcare sector and improving working conditions, given the workforce shortages experienced across all countries in the EU and Europe.
3. Ensuring that nurses have suitable working conditions to utilise their skills and fulfil their responsibilities for quality and safe care.

The EFN believes that 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 high qualified frontline nurses must be prioritised. The EU needs to invest in nurses and nursing to build resilient healthcare systems in the EU that are well prepared for the next crisis.

## Further readings:

- [European Skills Agenda of 2020](#)
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – [European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) (COM(2021)274 final)
- [The 2022 Strategic Foresight Report](#) (COM(2022)289 final)
- [EFN Competency Framework](#)
- [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#)

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