

EFN PRESS RELEASE

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116th General Assembly of the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN)



The EFN National Nurses Associations, representing over 3 million EU nurses, met in Opatija (Croatia) on 13-14 April 2023, for the Spring EFN General Assembly.

The EFN Members discussed priority policy and political developments at EU level, including the Short-Medium-Long Term actions for advanced practice nursing (APN) across the EU and Europe; the challenges related to safe staffing levels informed by data collected from the EFN members; and the new proposed European Commission Directive [on combatting violence against women and domestic violence](#) – critically important for nurses/women, as currently, no specific legal instrument exists at the EU level. The [EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025](#) found that gender-based violence and harassment have reached alarming levels, and remain under-reported and overlooked. As stated in [EFN Policy Statement](#) *“Violence and harassment against nurses is totally unacceptable as it has an enormous negative impact on nurses’ psychological and physical well-being and on their job motivation, leading to nurses’ leaving the nursing profession, putting the quality of care and patient safety at risk. Therefore, it is time to act! Nurses need to be protected from any kinds of gender related violence and discrimination.”*

The EFN General Assembly made a resounding call to action for safe staffing in the nursing profession across Europe. Amid growing concerns of dire working conditions and a shortage of registered nurses, many countries expressed a strong interest in advancing this debate. The meeting also highlighted the ethical implications of recruiting nurses from non-European countries that also face workforce shortages. The EFN General Assembly's recommendations, grounded in the latest international research, offer solutions for recruiting and retaining European nurses, which is vital for providing quality and safe patient care. The Assembly's message is clear: safe staffing is non-negotiable. The EFN Members urge policymakers to take immediate action to prioritise the welfare of nurses and patients alike.

The EFN members were also updated on the ongoing support of the Ukrainian nurses in the neighbouring countries. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the EFN and the Polish Nurses Association continue to collaborate closely to support the Ukrainian nurses, by developing and delivering EU bridging courses for the Ukraine nurses’ refugees in Poland. With the unprecedented displacement of refugees from Ukraine to neighbouring

EU countries, many professionals, in particular nurses, have been facing difficulties regarding the recognition of their qualifications. These bridging courses align with the European Commission policy by providing the pathway for Ukrainian nurses' refugees education upgrade to the EU level qualification standard (Directive 2013/55/EU).

The EFN members also reviewed the Pact for Skills related EU project - [BeWell](#) - an Erasmus+ 4-year EU project on digital and green skills, in which the EFN is a key partner similar to the role in the recently concluded EU projects [InteropEHRate](#), [Smart4Health](#) and [IMMUNION](#), in which nurses' views and expertise were integrated in the co-creation of fit-for-purpose solutions to support the end-user and enhance patient safety

As part of the [EFN Strategic and Operational Lobby Plan 2021-2027](#), the EFN Members discussed and approved two priority Policy Statements: EFN Policy Statement on the European Global Health Strategy; EFN Policy Statement on European Health Data Space (EHDS). Importantly, the EFN Members shared data on education and training initiatives at national, regional, local level, focusing on digitalisation, sustainability and resilience. These data are invaluable to contribute to the implementation of the EU Pact for Skills initiative.

All the EFN members agree that the number of nurses who are currently leaving the profession has never been so high. The nursing profession has critical political challenges in relation to salary, working conditions, mental health and lack of the work-life balance. The nursing profession is becoming increasingly less attractive than other professions and significant numbers of nurses, in particular the young generation, are leaving the profession in unprecedented numbers. It is crucial to protect, defend and listen to our nurses to better understand how to improve this situation, protect the quality and safety of health care and secure the resilience of the healthcare ecosystem.

The role of nurses is essential, as proven during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the majority of the healthcare professionals are nurses, their contribution is fundamental to achieve the ambitious goal to provide nurses with the right tools and knowledge, which equates to better care for patients and a stronger healthcare ecosystem.



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