



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

July – August – September 2023

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,
Welcome to the summer edition of the EFN Update.

As my term of office as your President comes to an end, I wanted to sincerely thank all our EFN National Nursing Associations (NNAs) members for their unanimous support over the past 10 years. I have been so humbled and honoured to work on your behalf and that of

the nursing profession. Solidity and expertise are our strengths and in partnership with NNAs to collectively represent over 3 million nurses across Europe, this has been the greatest privilege of my career.

Europe's health systems are in the midst of a nursing workforce crisis. Every NNA has identified that poor working conditions, low pay, high workloads and lack of career opportunities are impacting the wellbeing and satisfaction of nurses across Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, leading nurses to leave the profession or consider leaving in unprecedented numbers. The ageing workforce, poor mental health support and challenges for attracting and retaining young people into the profession are also part of this equation. This crisis has been defined by the World Health Organisation as the [ticking timebomb](#). This situation is made even worse with the [episodes of violence](#) (not only verbal but also physical) that nurses experience in the workplace every day. The unprecedented shortage of nurses makes the health system ineffective and inefficient leading to failing health services with serious implications for the safety and outcomes for patients, health of Citizens and economic prosperity of Europe. At EU level the EFN is working on and targeting EU policies in relation to violence against nurses/women, digitalisation, education, patient safety and quality of care, workforce, supporting frontline nurses and ensuring their expertise and voice is heard by EU Institutions.

One element that the EFN is currently focussing on at EU level is the European Health Data Space, with the launch of a joint statement entitled "[Enabling effective secondary use of health data in Europe: specific recommendations for a potential opt-out mechanism for the EHDS](#)" that provides key recommendations underpinned by the European Commission's policy on the [European Health Data Space](#). EFN strongly believes that the secondary use of health data is essential to improve research and innovation in the healthcare ecosystem. Facilitating the access of health data to nurses and healthcare professionals ensures the implementation of cutting-edge care, and the latest evidence-based practice in frontline care.

In addition, EFN contribution to the [BeWell EU project](#) is going on, with the launch of the "[Pact for Skills: Large Scale Partnership for the health ecosystem](#)", that supports the twin transition to a green and digital economy. This ensures that the EU health systems are more competitive globally and enhance Europe's open strategic autonomy.

In a constantly changing world, new skills and knowledge are needed to improve healthcare systems and ensure effective quality care. Investing more in nursing education means having nurses better prepared and able to face future health challenges. It is a given that more digital skills are essential to use the [Artificial Intelligence](#) for improving nursing research and innovation activities.

These key priorities were endorsed by the EFN members in April 2023 in Croatia, at the [116th EFN General Assembly](#), with 3 key policy statements approved on the: [European Global Health](#)

[Strategy](#); the [European Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#); and the [European Year of Skills 2023](#). The EFN will continue to drive to address all these issues with the objective to improve nurses' working conditions and protect and enhance the health and well-being of patients and citizens.

Looking forward to meeting again in person in Spain at the 117th EFN General Assembly kindly hosted by the [Spanish General Council of Nursing](#) on 19-20 October 2023.

On behalf of the Executive Committee and the EFN Office we hope you have time over the summer to have a well-deserved break.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President

News from EFN

The 116th EFN General Assembly



The EFN National Nurses' Associations met in Croatia on 13-14 April 2023, for the [Spring EFN General Assembly](#), where they discussed on key political priorities at EU level, the current challenges that nurses are facing and the new proposed European Commission [Directive on combatting violence against women and domestic violence](#) – critically important for nurses/women. This EFN General Assembly took this opportunity to call for action on safe staffing in the nursing profession across Europe and to highlight the growing concerns on the working conditions and the huge nurses' shortage. Moreover, the EFN members underlined, once again, their ongoing support to Ukraine and to the Ukrainian nurses, still in the country and in the neighbouring countries.

In the context of the European Projects, the EFN members 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 COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, the role of nurses is essential. Being the largest group of the healthcare professionals, nurses' contribution is fundamental to achieve the ambitious goal of providing them the right tools and knowledge, which equates to better care for patients and a stronger healthcare ecosystem. It is therefore crucial to address nurses' shortage and to make this profession more attractive for young generation through the improvement of working conditions and better salary. If no action is taken, it is a whole health system that will collapse.

The EU Nursing Profession – It's time to act!

In the context of an unprecedented crisis that we are living, and which is affecting millions of healthcare professionals in Europe, including the nursing profession, and the healthcare systems due to an ageing workforce, poor mental health support, and



challenges in attracting and retaining young people into the nursing profession, [WHO/Europe](#) hosted a [high-level regional meeting](#) on 22-23 March to stimulate government actions to support and protect all health and care professionals. WHO/Europe recently defined this crisis as a [ticking timebomb](#).

From a nursing perspective, the lack of nurses is one of the greater issues, next to terrible working conditions, low salaries, lack of attention to mental well-being – making nurses leave the profession massively. To make sure to have and health ecosystem that is sustainable and resilient it is vital to listen to the nurses, and the other healthcare professionals, and make sure that any tool or policy is really fit-for-purpose. [IT IS TIME TO ACT!](#)

EFN SG interviewed by "Canal Enfermero – Consejo general Enfermería"

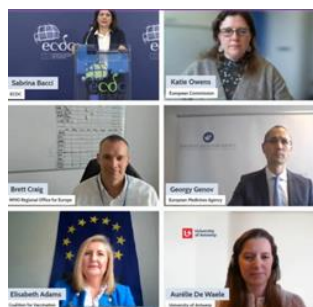


Paul De Raeve, EFN Secretary General, was interviewed by the "CANAL ENFERMERO – Consejo General Enfermería", from the Spanish General Council of Nursing, EFN member, to discuss on the challenges of the nursing profession after the COVID-19

pandemic. Paul De Raeve shed the light on the current situation of nurses, on the need to look at a big priority that is the nurses' shortage, and to analyse why our nurses are leaving the profession massively. The interview is available [here](#).

EFN co-chair in the EU Vaccination Coalition

As every year, the EFN, was once again, actively involved in the [European Immunisation Week 2023](#), with a campaign on its social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)), spreading reliable information on vaccination and through its participation in some key events. As co-chair of the [Coalition for Vaccination](#), EFN President, Elizabeth Adams, participated as keynote speaker in the [ECDC kick off meeting](#) of the European Immunization Week 2023. "It is key to listen to and discuss with hesitant people, clarifying information, debunking myths and tackling disinformation; and to build trust in vaccines by being transparent and up-to-date with scientific evidence. Every healthcare professional is valuable, and we should use their expertise and skills in this", said Elizabeth Adams. This year the campaign was looking at improving vaccine uptake in the context of the European Immunization Agenda 2030. Read more [here](#).



International Nurses Day 2023

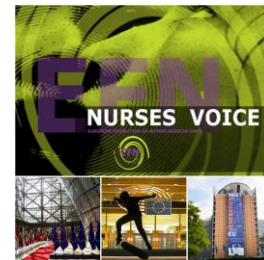


Celebrated around the world every year on 12 May, the birth date of Florence Nightingale, this annual event - The International Nurses' Day - provides an opportunity to reflect on the incredible contribution of nurses and midwives and recognises the vital lifesaving

work they do every day. However, the significance of recognising each and every nurse and midwife this year was all the more important with the ongoing health crisis impacted by decades of under investment. The EFN [marked](#) this day in solidarity with all the nurses and midwives, recognising the individual and collective efforts of nurses and midwives and humbly commending on their selfless commitment, professionalism and bravery to deliver excellence in healthcare to all in need. We know nurses and midwives make a world of difference to people's lives, and it is with humility that the EFN thanks each of them for all that they do.

Into EU Policy Priorities within EFN

One of the key policy developments that the EFN is following closely is violence against women and namely the [Council of Europe Istanbul Convention](#) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which recognises gender-based violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination, and that was [ratified](#) on 28 June 2023, by the EU. The Convention will enter into force as regards the European Union on 1st October 2023. This is crucial for the EFN as most of the nurses are women and are everyday victims of violence in the workplace (verbal and/or physical). In this context, and to make sure to have [nurses' views](#) heard at EU level, the EFN collected data from its members on the real-life evidence from the nursing frontline across 26 countries, with a [report](#) being published, that provides a clear overview on the current situation at the frontline, in terms of concerns, difficulties and challenges. This report also provides reliable information on best practices and initiatives to protect nurses in their workplace.



Another key political [priority](#) for the EFN is digitalisation, with the considerations at the European Commission on the [AI Act](#) - having the potential of giving individuals the confidence to embrace AI-based solutions, including AI-enabled digital health services and tools. Taking this development to the next level, the European Parliament [adopted](#), on 14 June, by 499 votes in favour, 28 against and 93 abstentions, the world's first set of [comprehensive rules](#) to manage Artificial Intelligence (AI) risk and promote uses of AI that is fully aligned with EU rights and values, including human oversight, safety, privacy, transparency, non-discrimination and social and environmental wellbeing. The next step will be triologue negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

In this context, and to make sure nurses' voice is heard at EU level, the EFN co-signed together with 10 other key EU health stakeholders a [joint statement on the EU AI Act](#), calling the EU Member States and decision-makers to strongly consider the impact the proposal will have on the EU health ecosystem, act mindfully and engage with the broad range of stakeholders. The success of AI in Europe largely depends on end-users. These will only use AI tools if they are involved as co-designers of these technologies from the start.

Next to this, the EFN has also been following closely the development on the [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS), and developed together with [CPME](#), [CED](#), [PGEU](#) and [HOPE](#) a [joint statement](#) that comments on the European Parliament tabled amendments, highlighting 4 areas of common concern: 1/ Respect higher ethical principles of patient confidentiality and professional secrecy; 2/ Exclude healthcare professionals from providing data again for secondary use; 3/ Bring clarity and certainty for liability of healthcare professionals in the electronic health record; 4/ Provide financial compensation for digitalisation costs. The EFN is now looking forward for the next steps, as nurses can bring a lot to this development. Finally, the EFN, together with 31 other EU health stakeholders, co-signed a [joint statement](#) sharing views on specific recommendations for a potential opt-out mechanism in the future EHDS. The EHDS will be a success only if Member States dedicate sufficient resources to the development of infrastructures able to establish a true interoperability between different national data and digital frameworks.

BeWell General Assembly in Oslo



As partner of the [BeWell EU project](#), the EFN participated in the Summer General Assembly and the Design Meeting for WP5 that took place in Oslo, from 19 to 21 June 2023. The key ambition of BeWell is to develop a green and digital skills strategy for the health ecosystem that can be implemented at local,

regional, national, and ultimately at European level through the Pact for Skills. The General Assembly was a good opportunity for all the partners to have an overview on the latest developments in all the work packages and discuss the next steps and tasks.

The EFN also took this opportunity to interview some of the project partners on the project developments, and how it can help to identify the skills currently nurses need in the health care system, to reverse the massive trend of resignation of frontline nurses, and how the project will involve frontline nurses in this process. Listen the podcasts [here](#).

News from the EU

MEP Pernille Weiss - EU Pharma Directive new rapporteur

MEP Pernille Weiss (EPP, Denmark) was appointed as the European Parliament's rapporteur for the [EU Pharma Directive](#). As a nurse, she has a profound understanding of the healthcare sector's complexities and can, therefore, have a forward-looking and balanced approach to ensure the innovation and competitiveness of the European healthcare system. Furthermore, her commitment to boost innovation and competitiveness in the life science markets could improve the EU's pharmaceutical industry, delivering greater benefits to patients. The EFN wishes Pernille Weiss every success and looks forward to working with her to improve the healthcare system and conditions for nurses.



Gender Pay Gap – the EU Parliament adopts new rules



The principle of [equal pay](#) is defined by the [TFEU Article 157](#). However, across the European Union, the [gender pay gap](#) is around 13%,

with significant variations among member states. In the last ten years, this [gap](#) decreased only minimally. Under the rules, [adopted](#) by European Parliament recently, pay structures to compare pay levels will have to be based on gender-neutral criteria and include gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems. Vacancy notices and job titles will have to be gender neutral and recruitment processes led in a non-discriminatory manner. This represents an important step forward for reaching gender equality. With most of the nurses being women, this is a key development for the nursing profession. Creating a fair environment that does not include unequal treatment and wages is necessary to create a better society.

European Health Union: a new comprehensive approach to mental health

Delivering on the commitment of President Ursula von der Leyen in the [2022 State of the Union Address](#), the European Commission is adding a pillar to the European Health Union - a [new comprehensive approach to mental health](#). With [20 flagship initiatives](#) and €1.23 billion in EU funding from different financial instruments, the European Commission will [support](#) Member States putting people and their mental health first. This EU action will focus on three guiding principles: 1/adequate and effective prevention; 2/ access to high quality and affordable mental healthcare and treatment; 3/ reintegration into society after recovery.



Guidance for the safe management of hazardous medicinal products at work



The European Commission published a [new guidance](#) providing important advice for both, employers and workers, on how to manage exposure to hazardous medicinal products (HMPs). HMPs may cause negative effects on workers exposed to them. As such, it is crucial to have proper management practices in place. The guide is non-binding, and the advice is provided without prejudice to national provisions, meaning it is adaptable to fit any specific legal country requirements.

Publications

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic – ECDC Report

The [new ECDC report](#) highlights how to be better prepared for future pandemics, namely by identifying 4 lesson areas, each one representing a critical component of the response to a health threat: 1/ Investment in the public health workforce; 2/ Preparing for the next public health crisis; 3/ Risk communication and community engagement; 4/ Collection and analysis of data and evidence. The report stresses the importance of investing in the public health workforce, and to recruit, train and retain public health professionals, and attract young professionals, especially as the current public health workforce is ageing; and to improve and invest in preparedness planning and the need for a formalised decision making and crisis management structure that supports intersectoral work.



Working conditions in the time of COVID-19

According to the report entitled "[Working conditions in the time of COVID-19 pandemic: implications for the future](#)" published by [Eurofound](#), the strict public health restrictions put in place due to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, changed working life. This report examines variation in job quality and identifies its positive association with well-being, health, work engagement and the financial sustainability of work. It highlights the divergences in the experiences of workers depending on workers' own attributes and their place in the workforce. This report also aims to derive lessons for the future. COVID-19 pandemic shed the light on the already terrible working conditions in which nurses work every day, but it also underlined the essential work of nurses in the healthcare sector. Nurses' shortage is a great issue for the society and the main reason are the working conditions made worse with the pandemic.

Data on cross-border patient healthcare

The European Commission DG Santé published a [report](#) presenting data on cross-border patient healthcare following [Directive 2011/24/EU](#) for reference year 2021. The report provides an overview of cross-border healthcare within the EEA and gives an overview on data quality, next to looking at the existence or nonexistence of systems of prior notification and the limitation of patient inflow. Healthcare that is subject and not subject to prior authorisation is also discussed.



Ignoring Red lines – Violence against health care in conflict

A [new report](#) published by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC), of which the EFN is a member of, documents 1.989 attacks and threats against health care facilities and personnel across 32 countries and territories in armed conflict and situations of political violence throughout 2022. The reported figures represent the most severe year of attacks against health care in the last decade globally. It is vital to take action to protect frontline healthcare workers around the world, enhancing legal protection for practice in conformance with medical ethics including repeal of laws that criminalise the provision of impartial health care based on the affiliation or political views of the patient.



The World Health Statistics 2023

WHO published the [World Health Statistics report](#), that presents the most recent health statistics for the WHO Member States (with data for 58 health-related SDG indicators, representing 198 countries and areas), and monitors the progress made towards the [health-related SDGs](#). It provides a comprehensive and comparable assessment of the population health and how it is changing.



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