



## EFN Policy Statement on Lifelong Learning and Continuous Professional Development

In support of the EFN Position Papers on Lifelong Learning (LLL) (2019) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (2015), aligned with the European Commission Pillar of Social Rights, the EFN supports the need to invest in education and skills as essential to sustain a high level of quality in nursing and care, which will have a positive impact on patient safety.

EU citizens have the right to comprehensive nursing, care and treatment, particularly with the increasing number of chronic diseases in our society and the importance of prevention and early intervention. It is precisely in such circumstances that well-educated and knowledgeable nurses with the most up-to-date evidence-based practice make a significant difference to assessing, diagnosing and administering appropriate and safe treatment for optimal health outcomes.

The EU-Directive 2013/55/EU provides the education requirements to become a general care nurse, in addition the Directive emphasises the high priority of LLL/CPD. Therefore, opportunities are required to be created for nursing professionals to continue their professional development and maintain high quality and safe standards for patient care.

Research says that LLL/CPD enhance the professional knowledge and skills for better patient care through improved care standards, how they communicate and collaborate with other professionals. Learning also increases nurses' career progression.

Promoting the LLL/CPD of nurses in the clinical context is fundamental, given its positive impact on patients, professionals and organisations.

The EFN welcomes the following recommendations that strengthen nurses' accessibility to LLL/CPD:

- Nurses access to LLL/CPD in all EU Member States should be mandatory (employers' responsibility), supported by appropriate structures, in accordance with the Member States obligation under the revised Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications. There needs to be in place, on national level, systematic career path structures, including regulation and formal acknowledgement, and pay rise alongside the growing responsibility.
- Nurses should have the opportunity to access LLL/CPD activities within working hours (with employers making sure to have enough nurses to cover those CPD

hours). Employers should support nurses to stay in the profession and ensure they have adequate career opportunities, with the content of the learning being flexible and tailored to the needs of nurses and the population health needs.

- Developments for example in IT or simulation must be incorporated in education and ongoing learning, as digital solutions can make a real positive difference to supporting LLL/CPD. Therefore, digital learning environments and digital media didactics can be designed as low-threshold access and must be an integral part of the nursing education and training curricula for all care settings. It is important, that educators and trainers also have digital skills and are able to generate digital learning units.
- In order to guarantee LLL/CPD as an integral part of a nurses' career pathway, the framework and operating conditions must be created, including for example, the availability of sufficiently university courses with the appropriate levels of staff to enable the enhancement of university learning environments within the healthcare environment.
- It is recommended that the national governments consult the National Nurses Associations regarding the development of national education and training programs. This is essential in order to be able to implement a national strategy regarding LLL/CPD. In addition, specifications are needed on how further education and training should be documented, for example documentation in a national register.
- EU-wide free movement of professionals is enshrined in the EU Directive 2013/55/EU and the free movement of nurses can only be guaranteed with nursing education being mutually recognised within and between EU countries.

Investing in the education of the nursing workforce, through LLL and CPD, is essential to ensure the nursing workforce is skilled and prepared to provide high quality and safe patient care that contributes to improving patient outcomes and the public confidence in the healthcare ecosystem.

#### **Further readings:**

- Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2018). Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC)
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- EFN (2019), EU Roadmap to advance Lifelong Learning. Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/EU-Roadmap-to-advance-Lifelong-Learning-April-2019.pdf>
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- European Pillar of Social Rights. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1226&langId=en>
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- Lera et al. (2020): Nurses Attitudes Towards Lifelong Learning via New Technologies. Asian/Pacific Island Nursing Journal, 2020, Volume 5(2), 89-102
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