



EFN European Election Manifesto

The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) represents over 6 million registered nurses across Europe. As the European Parliament is set to enter a new mandate, we want MEPs to champion appropriately educated, paid, supported and developed nursing workforce operating in fair working conditions to deliver people-centred care and promote health in the EU.

Ahead of the European Parliament Elections due to take place in June 2024, EFN are calling for political party groupings and MEP candidates to prioritise:

Invest in Education: European registered nurses are highly educated, and their skills are in demand across the world. Our competent and knowledgeable nurses must be supported through access to continuous professional development. Nurse education, in line with Directive 2013/55/EU, must reflect modern day nursing and enhance the profession's ability to shape and deliver effective and high-quality care to patients. Nurses in the future must have career pathways such as specialist nurse, and advanced practice nurse. The EU institutions and national governments need to make sure that this Directive is a safeguarding Directive setting a minimum level of high-quality nurse education.

Safe Staffing: In order to tackle the current registered nursing shortage across the EU, it is essential that work-life balance measures to retain registered nurses, especially newly graduated nurses, in the profession are addressed. Securing a sustainable and safe level of nursing workforce must be a priority for the European Union. All Member States must take a long-term approach to workforce planning, with registered nurses being the integral and integrated element of future health workforce planning.

Better Wages: It is no doubt that the level at which nurses are remunerated is one of the key factors affecting their job satisfaction and the attractiveness of the nursing profession. Future efforts need to focus on unpicking the elements that lead to poor salary conditions for nurses, to command better pay for frontline nurses which is at the heart of the recruitment and retention challenges that taunt health services across the EU and Europe. Nurses' wages are key central to the delivery of the European Social Pillar. Protect nurses right to take industrial action.

Empowerment of Nurses: Empowerment of nurses is essential for them to be resilient and capable of providing high quality care to people. Therefore, nurses need to have better access to Information, Support, Resources, and Opportunities for further professional development. People centred care, with safe, healthy and attractive working environments for all nurses are needed for their development across Europe, with a focus on supporting education, professional practice, research, workplace policies and incentives. Within this policy context, one example that the EU needs to ensure is a zero-tolerance approach to violence against nurses to eradicate all forms of abuse, and to strengthen at EU level the responsibility of the employers to provide safe working environments.

Nurse managers and management: Nurse managers are an important part of the solution to many problems that governments face today. Many health systems have been reformed but not designed to secure quality and safeguard health care. As such, there is a need for scaling up nurse management capacity at the national, regional and EU level, in all health sectors. Nurse managers, as change agents, play an important role, as their task includes planning, organising, directing and controlling, and through their leadership they create quality service and patient safety.

The Current Nursing Landscape in Europe

Frontline nurses in the EU have been profoundly affected by the repercussions of working during the COVID-19 pandemic. They face exhaustion, moral distress due to ethical and ontological effects, low pay relative to their life-saving responsibilities, and unfavourable working conditions. Consequently, there has been a massive exodus of frontline nurses, which has far-reaching implications for the healthcare system.

Therefore, **EFN members call to action for safe staffing levels, better pay and working conditions to deliver safe and appropriate nursing care across the EU and Europe.** Amid growing concerns of dire working conditions and a shortage of nurses in all EU Member States, the WHO ethical recruitment guidelines must be adhered to when recruiting from non-EU countries.

Grounded in the latest international research, EFN offers solutions for recruiting and retaining European nurses, which is vital for access to healthcare services and providing high quality and safe patient care. To ensure timely and accessible healthcare for European citizens, efforts must be made to increase the availability of qualified professional nurses. The European Pillar of Social Rights and Directive 2013/55/EU are built on the fundamental premise that increasing to the appropriate numbers of well-educated, registered nursing professionals are central to implementing EU health policy for the benefit of all citizens.

The EFN Members urge EU politicians and policymakers to take immediate action to focus on developing EU legislation to improve recruitment and retention of domestically educated nurses, safe staffing levels, and prioritise the welfare of nurses and patients alike. For the EFN, it is vital that MEPs can ensure fit-for-purpose nursing workforce policies to improve retention of nurses, and the attractiveness of nursing as a career, by the provision of fair pay and better conditions of employment during the European Parliament term 2024 - 2029. Failing to recruit and retain frontline nurses into the nursing workforce will render the EU and Europe ill-prepared for the years ahead.

The EU Institutions, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of Ministers, should mandate Member States to invest in building a resilient nursing workforce.

Act now!

Invest in Nurses and Nursing to Save Lives!

For more information visit: www.efn.eu - Turn over to read our detailed call to action.



EFN call to action for MEP candidates!

Invest in nursing education at European and National level

The EFN calls on MEP candidates to ensure that the EU's modernised [Mutual Recognition on Professional Qualifications Directive 2013/55/EU](#) is adequately transposed to national education programs to further develop nursing education curricula and ensuring nurses have the right competencies to shape and deliver effective nursing care. A modernised and harmonised EU curriculum is essential to ensuring effective free movement of nurses across the EU and patient safety.

The EFN is seeking MEPs support to guarantee access to Life-long Learning and Continuous Professional Development, to ensure the nursing workforce has the opportunity to update skills to remain "fit for practice", in the 21st century, allowing nurses to easily adapt to changing needs, societal challenges and new and innovative treatments and technology. Nurses are active participants in the expansion and application of evidenced based knowledge, effective practice and therefore need to be supported with resources and standardise national on-going education frameworks to deliver excellence in health care for all citizens.

Only by appropriate investment in education will the EU and Europe achieve improved patient outcomes and more efficient integrated care as both are dependent on the qualifications of nurses, the largest single professional group in healthcare. Invest in nursing education and increase all efforts to make nursing education attractive to students and enrolment in undergraduate studies. Increase nursing undergraduate places. The challenges in nursing education must be addressed to increase the number completing their studies and attracting more people into the profession, thus minimizing nursing shortages.

Ensure optimal wages, fair working conditions and health workforce capacity building!

Frontline nursing is key in guaranteeing timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health and social care of good quality. However, nurses face exhaustion, moral distress, low pay relative to their life-saving responsibilities, and unfavourable working conditions not least exacerbated due to the impact and repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, there has been a unprecedented exodus of frontline nurses, which has far-reaching implications for citizens accessibility to the healthcare systems in the EU and Europe. The shortage of nurses has resulted in bed and unit closures, increased waiting times, compromised patient safety, reduced quality of care, and even patient transfers to other EU countries.

In order to meet the challenges of the healthcare system, workforce capacity building needs to maximise the contribution of the entire nursing workforce with appropriate data and understanding of the roles of registered nurses, specialist nurses and advanced practice nurses, in addition to healthcare assistants, and how they can work together and with other health professionals to collectively improve healthcare system. Coupled with this is optimal remuneration and robust tools to ensure appropriate and safe staffing levels, and skill mix must become a political priority within the EU institutions as lives and optimal care of our citizens are at risk.

Any strategies need to consider how to retain experienced nurses and how to make nursing an attractive and rewarding choice for future generations seeking careers which improve people's lives and are valued by society. This also implies policies tailored on women needs to overcome unsatisfactory working conditions, particularly for frontline staff, that often leaves women feeling isolated, disempowered, and unappreciated. As the largest health professional group nurses are in pole position to contribute to the solutions of these complex problems and therefore must be incorporate in all phases of the policy cycle which will ensure policy implementation.

Life-long Learning & Continuous Professional Development

Lifelong learning (LLL) and continuous professional development (CPD) are pivotal in shaping a sustainable future for the healthcare sector. Insufficient investment in these areas deprives the nursing workforce of essential skills necessary to meet the increasing demands and complexities of patient care. To address workforce shortages, the retention crisis of frontline nurses, and the challenges posed by rising workloads, inadequate remuneration, and unattractive working conditions, it is imperative to prioritise opportunities for nurses such as to engage in digital and green upskilling and reskilling. By placing a strong emphasis on the physical and mental well-being of the workforce, upskilling and reskilling initiatives can cultivate a future-ready adaptable healthcare workforce, contributing to the modernisation of the healthcare sector.

Digital and green upskilling and reskilling initiatives are indispensable to empowering nurses to actively participate in the digital and green transition within the healthcare ecosystem. Through initiatives like the Pact for Skills, the nursing workforce can gain a comprehensive understanding of digital and green solutions, thereby enhancing their digital literacy. This, in turn, enables nurses to optimise their time and daily work organisation, reduce administrative burdens, improve record-keeping, make evidence-based decisions, increase patient engagement, address health inequalities, and enhance cost efficiency in healthcare systems. As resilient and sustainable healthcare systems continue to evolve, digital and green skills will play an increasingly critical role in improving people's healthcare experience, driving technological and sustainable innovation, and creating better working conditions for the nursing workforce.

Stop Violence against Nurses

Violence against nurses has grown into epidemic proportions during COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, EFN members believe that national and EU initiatives to support women should consider severe prison sentences, legal sanctions against perpetrators of violence. Although the EU Victims' Rights Directive (EC 2012/29/EU) and strategy (EC COM/2020/258) offer better protection from violence and harassment, the European and international institutions should look at the achievements to date alongside current risks and discuss the next steps forward in strategic cooperation between EU institutions and Member States, International Organisations, NGOs, and researchers in combatting gender-based violence. Thus, the EFN members are calling for all the member states to ratify the ILO convention 190 on violence and harassment. Nurses must be protected and supported through the development of policies, initiatives, and legislation at the national and European levels. Given the severity of the situation, inaction could lead to irreplicable damage to the nursing workforce with more frontline nurses leaving the nursing profession.

Invest in Nurses and Nursing to Save Lives!