

# Activity Report

European Federation of Nurses' Associations  
Working Year 2023



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## Abbreviations

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▪ <b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
▪ <b>AMR</b>	Antimicrobial Resistance
▪ <b>APN</b>	Advanced Practice Nurse
▪ <b>BeWell</b>	BluePrint alliance for a future health workforce strategy on digital and green skills
▪ <b>BoD</b>	Board of Directors
▪ <b>CED</b>	Council of European Dentists
▪ <b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
▪ <b>CPME</b>	Standing Committee of European Doctors
▪ <b>DG CONNECT</b>	European Commission Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
▪ <b>DG GROW</b>	European Commission Directorate-General Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
▪ <b>DG RTD</b>	European Commission Directorate-General Research and Innovation
▪ <b>DG SANTE</b>	European Commission Directorate General for Health and Food Safety
▪ <b>Directive 2013/55/EU</b>	Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC & 2013/55/EU)
▪ <b>ECDC</b>	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
▪ <b>EDSA</b>	European Association of dental students
▪ <b>EFN</b>	European Federation of Nurses' Associations
▪ <b>EFNNMA</b>	European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations
▪ <b>EHDS</b>	European Health Data Space
▪ <b>EHR</b>	Electronic Health Records
▪ <b>EMSA</b>	European Medical Students' Association
▪ <b>ENRF</b>	European Nursing Research Foundation
▪ <b>ENSA</b>	European Early Career Nurses and Nursing Students' Association
▪ <b>EPSA</b>	European Pharmaceutical Students' Associations
▪ <b>EU</b>	European Union
▪ <b>EUHPP</b>	EU Health Policy Platform
▪ <b>EXCOM</b>	(EFN) Executive Committee
▪ <b>FEMM</b>	European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
▪ <b>H2020</b>	Horizon 2020 programme (EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation)
▪ <b>HERA</b>	European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority
▪ <b>HOPE</b>	European Hospital and Healthcare Federation

▪ <b>ICN</b>	International Council of Nurses
▪ <b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
▪ <b>IMMUNION</b>	Improving IMMunisation cooperation in the European UNION (EU project)
▪ <b>LLL</b>	Lifelong Learning
▪ <b>LIBE</b>	European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
▪ <b>MEP(s)</b>	Member(s) of the European Parliament
▪ <b>NNA(s)</b>	National Nurses Association(s)
▪ <b>NGO(s)</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
▪ <b>NSA</b>	Non-State Actors (in WHO)
▪ <b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
▪ <b>OSHA / EU-OSHA</b>	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
▪ <b>PGEU</b>	Pharmaceutical Group of European Union
▪ <b>Smart4Health</b>	Citizen-Centred EU-EHR Exchange for Personalised Health (H2020 project)
▪ <b>SOLP</b>	EFN Strategic & Operational Lobby Plan
▪ <b>SORP</b>	ENRF Strategic and Research Plan
▪ <b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
▪ <b>WHO RC</b>	World Health Organization Regional Committee for Europe
▪ <b>WG</b>	Working group
▪ <b>WP</b>	Work Package

## Executive Summary

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Post-COVID-19 pandemic, 2023 was another difficult year for the nursing profession, with nurses massively leaving frontline nursing care. The end of the COVID-19 pandemic has left the healthcare services all over Europe in critical condition and in particular the nursing profession due to severe nursing shortages, exacerbation of violence against nurses and worsening working conditions. The demand for financial constraints in healthcare services led to unfavourable for the nurses' decisions taken by politicians and healthcare stakeholders, e.g., low salaries, cut of nursing positions, demand for healthcare personnel with minimal educational level replacing nurses' posts. All putting at risk nurses' safety, wellbeing, accountability at the workplace, as well as patient safety and quality of care.

Nursing shortages worldwide has spread a wide process of recruitment from other countries leading to unethical processes. In dealing with the issues, some governments see solutions in lowering the length of nursing education and even reducing the competencies nurses need in order to practice safely and qualitatively. These disastrous ideas will have consequent effects into the future of the nursing profession and will lead to more infringement procedures from the European Commission towards the Member States.

Furthermore, working conditions, despite being already at their worst ever state, will further deteriorate, further jeopardizing nurses' autonomy and status within the healthcare services and society. It is therefore crucial to join forces to find solutions that are feasible, that retain nurses' level of education and that can help deal with the shortage crisis. This is what the EFN and its members have been trying to do over the years. The work done so far on key EFN policy agenda topics linked to Education, Workforce, Patient Safety and Quality of Care - in line with the [EFN SOLP 2021-2027](#), will be taken forward as will the collaborations that have been established with healthcare and other nursing organisations.

In terms of **Education**, the EFN continued in 2023 to support the developments of the nursing profession linked to patient needs and care demands in line with the [Directive 2013/55/EU](#), the [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#), and the EFN Working Group on **Advanced Practice Nurse (APN)**, working on an APN Roadmap. This work will continue in 2024. Furthermore, 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. As such, the EFN followed in 2023 the EU developments on lifelong learning/continuous professional development, with an [EFN Policy Statement on lifelong learning](#), approved by the EFN members at the EFN October 2023 General Assembly. The EU-Directive 2013/55/EU provides the education requirements to become a general care nurse. In addition, it emphasises the high priority of lifelong learning/continuous professional development. Therefore, it is key to create opportunities for nursing professionals to continue their professional development and maintain high quality and safe standards for patient care.

When it comes to **Workforce**, the EFN has for long highlighted the need for EU Institutions and Member States to adequately address the growing registered nursing shortages. COVID-19 injured the nursing profession, with frontline nurses now massively resigning due to exhaustion, unsafe working conditions, and unacceptable low salaries given general care nurses' lifesaving responsibilities. Consequently, nurses are moving from full-time to part-time jobs or leaving the nursing profession, not even waiting for the date of their pension entitlements. As such, in 2023 the EFN continued following on these developments, calling on the EU institutions and the national governments to take this seriously and take concrete actions now! To get concrete data to provide them, the EFN conducted a survey in 2022, with the results published in 2023, that show that the current situation in most countries reflects staffing requirements that remain predominantly at minimum levels rather than **safe staffing levels**, due to lack of political priority, decentralised governance, nursing workforce deficits, and perceived high costs. Therefore, to continue bringing the nurses' voices on this huge concern to the EU level, the EFN October 2023 General Assembly discussed and approved and [EFN Policy Statement on Safe Staffing Levels](#), calling for concrete actions to be taken to tackle this crucial issue. The EFN members decided to establish a **working group on safe staffing levels**, that will look at how to advance this debate further. The EFN is following closely the [Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning \(HEROES\)](#) – an EU project that started in February 2023 and is aiming to improve countries' capacity for health workforce planning to ensure future accessible, sustainable and resilient health systems through a process of mutual learning and exchange of good practices.

**Violence against women/nurses** is another key topic for the EFN when it comes to workforce. Nurses, mostly women, experience many forms of violence at their workplace, in comparison with other professions. Most violence being perpetrated by patients and visitors with evidence that this worsens in disaster and conflict situations. It is crucial to protect our nurses and support them through the development of policies, initiatives, and legislation at national and European level. Having it high on its policy agenda, the EFN followed this very closely in 2023, and in particular the developments for the [Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), and the [Council of Europe Istanbul Convention](#). The EFN having [collected data in 2021 on this](#), and having a [clear position](#), is making sure the nurses' voice is heard at EU level, and is taken into account in these EU policy developments.

As regards **patient safety and quality of care**, the EFN continued in 2023 to follow and lobby some key topics, as:

- ✎ **Vaccination**, through the [Coalition for Vaccination](#), that brings together European associations of healthcare workers, and relevant students' associations in the field, and aiming to support the delivery of accurate information to the public, through key [meetings](#), [publications](#), [joint statements](#), or advocacy campaigns, such as the [Immunisation Week Campaign](#), undertaken in April 2023 - **EFN posts reached more than 14.500 people** with 384 interactions with EFN. The EFN was a key partner in the EU project 'Improving IMMunisation cooperation in the European UNION' ([IMMUNION](#)), that ended in March 2023, and was working closely with the Coalition for Vaccination.
- ✎ **Digitalisation**, with the considerations at the European Commission on the [AI Act](#) and [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS). Continuing to follow on these developments at EU level, the EFN continued to be part in 2023 of the [eHealth Stakeholder Group](#) that provides advice and expertise to the European Commission, particularly on topics set out in the Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care. The EFN is there providing EFN nurses' views on digital/EHDS key developments and contributing to its crucial discussions. The EFN followed closely the developments on EHDS, building on some alliances with key EU Stakeholders who provided the European Institutions with some [joint statements](#) calling on them to take the healthcare professionals' concerns into consideration. Believing this is an important step forward that needs to include the nurses' views and expertise, the EFN October 2023 General Assembly, discussed and approved an [EFN Policy Statement on European Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#), that will allow the EFN to continue lobbying the EU institutions on this topic in 2024.

Furthermore, the EFN believes that digital tools are an added value and a great support in nurses' daily work. But this can only be achieved through their involvement in the co-creation and co-design of these tools. As such, the EFN continued to be a key partner in the **EU project on Electronic Health Records: Smart4Health**, that came to an end in February 2023; and is a key partner in **BeWell**, aiming to **upskilling and reskilling the nursing workforce**, through the development of a **green and digital skills strategy** for the health ecosystem to be implemented at a local, regional, national, and European level ([Pact for Skills](#)).
- ✎ **Planetary Health**, through participating in some key EU meetings, and providing the [nurses' views](#) on this development. Climate change is part of our daily routine and can no longer be underestimated. Nurses' can make the difference in this. Having it high on EFN policy agenda, the EFN will continue to follow this in 2024.

Next to these crucial points, the EFN had the opportunity to lobby the EU institutions on other key issues, as:

- ✎ **Global Health Strategy**, aiming of improving global health security and ensuring better health for all. The EFN welcomes this development and followed it closely in 2023, namely by taking part in the [Global Health Policy Forum](#) meetings bringing nurses' views to the debate, based on the [EFN Policy Statement on the European Global Health Strategy](#), approved by the EFN April 2023 General Assembly. The EFN welcomes this unique opportunity to engage as the strategy is being developed and implemented and will follow on its advancements in 2024.
- ✎ **HERA Civil Society Forum**, acting as a [contact point](#) between the [European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority](#) (HERA) agency and civil society, and aiming to get regular input, views and opinions. In 2023, the EFN participated in those meetings, bringing in nurses' views, expertise and experience, in the 3 working groups created under the Forum – 1/ Future of HERA; 2/ Identified health threats; 3/ Training programme and information (that the EFN together with HOPE is leading). Those working groups have been discussing on key points, as the future of HERA, AMR, or design and implementation of training programs, with some policy documents developed.

- ↪ **European Year of Skills 2023**, which [represents](#) a key starting point for having a workforce with the skills that are in demand to contribute to sustainable growth, leading to more innovation and improving companies' competitiveness. Next to attending some key events, and being part of the BeWell project, the EFN discussed this at its General Assembly in April 2023. The EFN members welcomed the designation of 2023 as the European Year of Skills. The EFN believes that to create a robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem and be better prepared for future challenges, upskilling and reskilling nurses is crucial. The April 2023 EFN General Assembly approved an [EFN Policy Statement on the European Year of Skills 2023](#), so that the EFN could continue lobbying the EU institutions on this key topic.
- ↪ **EU Pact for Skills**, [aiming](#) to mobilise all relevant stakeholders to reflect and decide on the measures to be undertaken to adequately skill health professionals. Next to participating in some key meetings, the EFN is part of the [Pact for Skills large-scale partnership](#), coordinated by the European Commission and BeWell project. [This partnership is aiming to](#) create and implement a shared model for the skills development of the health workforce in Europe.
- ↪ **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**, that the EFN continued to follow closely in 2023. Nurses are [central allies](#) in prevention and are recognised as the most trustful healthcare professionals in disseminating reliable information on [AMR](#). Recognised as a key stakeholder in this development, the EFN is now part of the European Commission expert group on AMR One Health Network, as expert, bringing in nurses' expertise to the debate. In this context, and seeing the [EU One Health approach](#) as key on the AMR advancements, the EFN October 2023 General Assembly discussed and approved an EFN [Policy Statement on AMR One Health Approach](#) that recognises nurses' leadership in this. The EFN signed a [Joint Statement](#) on WHO [European roadmap on antimicrobial resistance](#) together with other EU Stakeholders, that was presented to the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, in Kazakhstan, in October 2023. Finally, as in previous years, the EFN participated in some key EU meetings all over the year, and took part in the [European Antibiotic Awareness Day](#) held on 18 November, through its social media channels raising awareness on this key policy topic. The **EFN posts reached 8.000 people** and more than 169 people reacted to EFN posts.
- ↪ **Mental Health** has been key on EFN policy agenda in 2023, considering that with COVID-19, nurses have paid a high price with their mental health being highly tested. The EFN [believes](#) that it is now time to take concrete actions. The European Commission has understood it and adopted in June 2023 [a new comprehensive approach to mental health](#). The EFN will follow on these developments in 2024. As every year, next to participating on some events, the EFN participated in the [World Mental Health Day 2023](#), through a social media campaign on its channels aiming to raise awareness on this crucial topic. The EFN posts reached around 9.460 people and more than 228 people interacted with EFN posts.
- ↪ **Value-based healthcare** - With the nurses leaving the profession massively, it is crucial that the developed EU health policies reflect the nurses' expertise to better structure fit-for-purpose solutions and initiatives in the healthcare sector. As such, it is now crucial to have a long-term strategy for moving from low-value based to high-value based healthcare systems. We still have many challenges ahead to make sure that the health and social care ecosystems in the EU are more efficient spending, cutting on unnecessary bureaucracy and outcomes oriented, safeguarding quality of care and patient safety.

The EFN is a very trusted EU stakeholder in the EU lobby arena and is seen as key partner in the work with and towards the EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament and Council). Over the last year, the EFN has been advocating for the promotion of empowered and skilled EU nurses, through participating on key EU projects, EU and EFN members' meetings, European Commission initiatives, alliances building, publishing EFN articles and policy statements, participating on key social media campaigns, etc. that all led to a next step in the nurses' empowerment and leadership. But more needs to be done. More than ever, it is crucial for nurses to engage and proactively influence and contribute to EU health and social policies, in such a difficult period for all. Nurses' engagement in policy design is crucial to ensuring EU policies fit-for-purpose. The European Parliament elections in 2024, and the upcoming new European Commission, that we hope will make the difference for the nurses and the health systems in Europe, will be a real next opportunity to make change happen!



## Foreword

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Dear EFN Members,  
Dear Colleagues

2023 has been another very difficult year for all of us, and in particular for our nurses. It is heart-breaking to see them massively leaving the profession, and thus creating a human resource gap. It is not anymore about the intention to leave the profession. It is a silent resignation as never seen before.



Increased workloads during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, disproportionate and unattractive remuneration, difficult working conditions, exacerbation of violence against nurses and impact on the mental and physical health and well-being of the nursing workforce, led in 2023 to an exodus of frontline nurses.

Post-COVID-19 coupled with decades of underinvestment, the daily risk to patient safety and poor working environments to deliver the quality of care, make it impossible for nurses to stay in the profession. Unfortunately, this will lead to healthcare systems in the EU collapsing. Thus, the complex health challenges across the EU makes it imperative to develop innovative and accessible European tools and mechanisms to analyse, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the solutions across the health and social care ecosystem. It is urgent to make change happen, for the safety of the patients. Not taking action will put patients' safety at risk.

Over the year the EFN and its members have been calling on the European Institutions and the national governments to take immediate action to prioritise the welfare of nurses and patients alike, highlighting the importance of the healthcare system reforms to ensure cost-effectiveness and their sustainability. This is now a key priority to avoid health systems collapsing. It is crucial to break silos and take a holistic approach to health and wellbeing at European and global level. This implies that health should be included in all policies.

As such, it is key to increase and strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the different actors and key stakeholders. This implies the recognition of the key role of health stakeholders, in particular nurses who position centrally to strengthen healthcare systems. In 2023, the EFN has mainly targeted EU policies on violence against nurses/women, digitalisation, education, patient safety and quality of care, workforce, aiming to supporting frontline nurses and ensuring their expertise and voice is heard by the EU Institutions. And we start seeing the effects of this relentless work next to the decision makers. Nurses are finally heard!

We really hope you will enjoy reading this EFN Activity Report, that provides an overview of the daily lobby efforts of EFN in 2023. These achievements would not be possible without our National Nursing Associations and frontline nurses' commitment, expertise, collective insights, engagement and positive support which we genuinely value and appreciate.

Looking forward to continuing our collaboration on behalf of all nurses in 2024.



*Dr Aristides Chorattas*  
*EFN President*



*Dr Paul De Raeve*  
*EFN Secretary General*



## I. EFN KEY LOBBY PRIORITIES

The EFN continues to dive and inform European policy development and implementation within the framework of the [EFN Strategic and Operational Lobby Plan 2021-2027](#) (EFN SOLP) that is strategically aligned to a number of important European policies and process including, for example, the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) Principles (namely principles 1 'Education'; 6 'Wages'; 16 'Healthcare'; and 18 'Long-Term Care'); – the monitoring of the [European Semester](#), in particular the [Country Specific Recommendations](#), through which the European Commission aims to support the EU Member States to achieve their commitments. In 2023, the EFN continued to build on the achievements of previous years and focused on three major key policy areas: [Education](#) (under the lead of EFN Professional Committee), [EU Workforce for Health](#) (under the lead of EFN Workforce Committee), and [Patient Safety and Quality of Care](#) including [digital health](#) (under the lead of EFN Public Policy Committee).

### 1. EDUCATION

#### ➔ [Directive 2013/55/EU, Annexe V](#)

The [Directive 2013/55/EU](#) continues to be high on the EFN policy agenda. In 2023, the EFN continued to follow-up on these developments linked to the education of nurses, including the development of Annexe V of the Directive regarding the minimum educational standards for nurses that is under revision.

Together with [CPME](#) (Doctors) and [PGEU](#) (Pharmacists), the EFN met [DG GROW](#) to discuss on Mutual Recognition Professional Qualifications, minimum training requirements, and Infringement procedures, as well as shortages of nurses, doctors, and pharmacists, and the impact on patient safety and patient outcomes. It was made clear to DG GROW that shortage of healthcare professionals cannot be solved by lowering down education/training requirements. It is crucial to invest in high qualified frontline healthcare professionals.



The EFN followed and welcomes the new European Commission [Skills and Talent Mobility package](#), under the [2023 European Year of Skills](#). This package includes as key proposal the [European Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals](#), with a clear recognition of the Directive 2013/55/EU as attracting qualified nurses from non-EU countries to help address the nursing shortages. This must be done without compromising skills and qualification (cf. [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#)) and be sensitive to the risk of brain-drain. Enhanced collaboration with third countries will ensure swift and effective information sharing, supporting high levels of trust. In its lobby meetings with DG GROW, the EFN made clear that facilitating the recognition of qualifications and validation of skills gained in non-EU countries [has to be in line with the Directive 2013/55/EU](#) as minimum requirements, especially the 4.600 hours and the article 31 with 8 competencies. The EFN supports the right to migration, but the potential consequence of brain drain must be addressed. The European Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals (November 2023) is very important for all nurses of Europe, as it outlines concrete measures and targets for Member States to streamline skills recognition for non-EU nationals. But it must align with the WHO [Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#) to prevent targeted recruitment from fragile healthcare systems. Investing in nursing and strategies for recruitment and retention is a vital pillar to ensuring the building of a healthier, safer, fairer, resilient and more sustainable health systems with capacity for any unexpected crises

#### ➔ [Advanced Practice Nursing](#)

In 2023, the EFN continued its developments on [Advanced Practice Nursing](#) (APN). Believing on the importance of the [APN](#) for the delivery of positive health outcomes, the EFN has been committed to ensuring the nursing profession evolves effectively in response to patient needs and care demands in line with the [Directive](#)

[2013/55/EU](#) and the [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#), reviewed in 2023 to include the latest developments of the EFN Working Group on APN.

After discussing and the EFN approving the Short-Medium-Long Term APN Strategy/Work Plan, looking respectively at educational, workforce and quality & safety aspects, the next step is to have a roadmap toward developing APNs, likely to be of special value to those countries wishing to establish or further develop APNs. The EFN Working Group on APN has now prepared a first draft Roadmap, including some examples on culture, practice and legislation change, that was discussed by the EFN members at the EFN October General Assembly, Spain. This will be taken forward in 2024 with further developments from the EFN Working Group on APN.

In 2023, the EFN published an article on APN, entitled "[Advanced Practice Nursing in Europe – Results from a pan-European survey of 35 countries: Empirical Research Quantitative](#)" (October 2023), providing insights into the EU's advanced practice nursing in long-term care.

### ➡ **Lifelong Learning / Continuous Professional Development**

The European Commission has been working with EU Member States to support and reinforce the development of key competencies and basic skills for all, from an early age and throughout life. From the nursing profession perspective, 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. In 2023, the EFN continued to follow this development at EU level. Discussed at the EFN October General Assembly, the EFN members approved an [EFN Policy Statement on lifelong learning](#), calling the EU and the EU Member States to provide opportunities for nurses to access LLL/CPD as an integral part of a nurses' career pathway. This new EFN Policy Statement will allow the EFN to continue in 2024 exploring with the other EU sectoral professions (doctors, pharmacists, midwives, dentists) what progress can be made in the coming years, especially through the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (Principle 1 - Education, training and life-long learning).

The EFN will continue to follow on these key topics in 2024.

## **2. EU WORKFORCE FOR HEALTH**

### ➡ **Safe Staffing Levels**

The EFN has this point high on its policy agenda and has been for many years lobbying the EU Institutions on this issue, highlighting the need for the EU Institutions and national governments to adequately address the growing registered nursing shortages. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the [critical shortage](#) of nurses and other healthcare professionals and is now severely impeding the functioning of healthcare systems in the EU, Europe and around the world. The cuts in the health budget and cost saving measures introduced during the 2009 financial crisis continue to significantly impact the nursing profession with reduced staffing levels, cuts to wages and challenging working environments. Meanwhile, since this time the demand for healthcare has risen.

Taking this very seriously, the EFN has collected data on nursing staffing levels in 2022, with a [report](#) launched in 2023, that was discussed at the EFN April 2023 General Assembly, in Croatia. The report examines the current landscape of nurse safe staffing levels legislation across the EU and Europe and shows that there is still significant room for progress when it comes to comprehensive, mandatory nurse-patient safe staffing levels laws. Many EFN members requested to advancing this debate, including having an EFN Policy Statement on this topic to support the EFN and the NNAs lobby work towards the EU and the EU Member States. This was taken forward at the EFN October 2023 General Assembly, in Spain, with the EFN members discussing and approving the [EFN Policy Statement on Safe Staffing Levels](#), that calls on the EU decision-makers to legislate safe nurse staffing levels to protect patients and nurses; establish agreements to protect nurses from liability when safe staffing levels are missed due to shortages; and to invest in nursing education and make the profession more attractive.

Next to that, due to the ongoing situation in most EU countries, and the growing concerns on working conditions and shortage of registered nurses, and the ethical implications of recruiting nurses from non-European countries that also face workforce shortages, many EFN members requested to advancing this debate with the establishment of an EFN Working Group (WG) on Safe Staffing Levels. The WG, created in October 2023, is aiming to consider the available data on nursing safe staffing levels and focus on the number and classification of nursing professionals. This group is seen as a good opportunity to clarify the data and be more precise on the number and have more information from the NNAs and the governments. Its work started with a first meeting in December 2023, to discuss the members discussions and decisions taken at the EFN October 2023 General Assembly. They will focus on the next steps in 2024. The EFN Members believe that the EFN can support the NNAs by lobbying for safe staffing at EU level and giving NNAs tools to lobby at national level.

Furthermore, on the occasion of the [World Patient Safety Day](#), on 17 September, the EFN took this opportunity to [call](#) on the EU Institutions and the national governments to take adequate actions to protect the most vulnerable: to support the frontline health professionals that provide direct patient care, including recognising the added value of the nursing profession to the healthcare sector, to improve nurses' salaries, working conditions, and ensure safe levels of staffing delivering good quality care and patient safety. It is key policymakers take immediate action to prioritise the welfare of nurses and patients alike. Europe has substantial room for progress on comprehensive legislation, supportive methodologies, and accountability guidance to enable safe nurse staffing levels.

The EFN has a clear mandate from its members to develop safe staffing guiding principles to protect patients and nurses. Meaningful recruitment and retention efforts must accompany attempts to implement safe nurses staffing levels in the EU and Europe. As such, this will be high on EFN policy agenda also in 2024.



Finally, in this context, the EFN is following closely the Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning ([JA HEROES](#)) – running from 01/02/2023 to 31/01/2026 (36 months) as key stakeholder in the project “Stakeholder Forum” where national and European stakeholders are regularly updated on the project activities and can discuss key issues arising during the project. The project aims to improve the countries' capacity for health workforce planning to ensure a future accessible, sustainable and resilient systems, focusing on 4 main areas: 1/ databases, data collection, analysis, linkages, sources, on health workforce supply and demand; 2/ forecasting tools and planning methodologies to address health workforce future challenges; 3/ development and enhancement of skills and capacities for effective management of the health workforce planning systems at national and regional levels; 4/ stakeholders engagement for a successful and sustainable health workforce governance. Over the year, the EFN participated in the project meetings as the kick-off meeting in February 2023, or the first Stakeholder Forum, in October 2023 where the participants were informed on the project progress and key actions.

#### ➔ **Violence and harassment against nurses**

Violence against nurses/women is an issue of growing international concern, with the problem accentuated during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. As over the last years, the EFN continued in 2023 to highlight this major concern for nurses, who are mostly women. Nurses on the frontline caring and delivering services in complex and challenging environments are far too often exposed to many forms of violence at their workplace as verbal, emotional or physical (including sexual) violence. The number of nurses experiencing such violence is alarming and appalling. And these have increased, especially during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.



[Violence and harassment against nurses](#) are not new and is totally unacceptable, as it has an enormous negative impact on nurses' psychological and physical well-being and on their job motivation, with nurses' leaving the profession. This puts the quality of care and patients' safety at risk. Therefore, ensuring a safe working environment is key, and a zero tolerance to violence is an absolute requirement. The EFN has

violence against women/nurses high on its policy agenda, having followed in 2023 the ongoing developments at EU level, as the [Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), and the [Council of Europe Istanbul Convention](#) that was [ratified](#) on 28 June 2023, by the EU. The Convention entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023. The [Istanbul Convention](#) is the first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards specifically to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims of violence and punish perpetrators. EU accession to the Istanbul Convention is one of the priorities in [the EU 2020-2025 gender equality strategy](#). The [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) reaffirms the commitment to proposing new rules to put an end to gender-based violence against women.

The European Commission has also established a common EU helpline number for victims of violence against women - 116 016 - connected to national helplines through which support services for victims are provided. So far, 15 member states have committed to connecting their existing helpline for victims of violence against women to this number.

In 2023, the EFN continued to follow-up on this debate and bring in the nurses' voice whenever possible by attending some key EU meetings as:

- **European Parliament LIBE-FEMM Joint Committee meeting**, on 12 January 2023, for the presentation of the report on **violence against women**, aiming to strengthen the protection of the women victims of violence and minors.
- **European Parliament LIBE-FEMM Plenary Session**, on 14 February 2023, where the [Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) was discussed and analysed. According to this Directive, new measures have been introduced to strengthen the protection of women who are victims of violence and minors.
- **Webinar on “Stepping up the prevention of Violence against Healthcare Workers”**, on 13 March 2023, to [identify](#) opportunities to better address the increasing violence against healthcare workers. WHO estimates that up to 62% of healthcare workers have experienced workplace violence. Verbal abuse (58%) is the most common form of non-physical violence, followed by threats (33%) and sexual harassment (12%). Between 8% and 38% of healthcare workers suffer physical violence at some point in their careers. Violence and harassment affect all healthcare professionals, especially nurses and it is unacceptable. This meeting has been an opportunity for discussing different possible solutions to address this issue and prevent future violence on nurses and healthcare professionals.
- **Policy Dialogue on “Protecting our Caregivers: Comprehensive Strategies for Eliminating Workplace Violence”**, on 26 July 2023, to [discuss](#) violence in healthcare, especially in the nursing work environment. Assaults against nurses are continually increasing and need greater attention and immediate action. This political dialogue aimed to guide nursing actions towards a better and safer future.
- **Launch of the Women's Health Parliamentary Interest Group**, organised by the European Institute of Women's Health (EIWH) on 23 October 2023, for the [presentation](#) of this interest group which aims to increase the commitment on gender equity in health, to support policies for women health and to ensure that women health become a policy priority.

The EFN members were informed on the ongoing developments on this topic at the EFN General Assemblies, through the EFN [Updates](#), through [EFN Website Homepage](#), and through EFN Briefing Notes (*available only to the EFN members*). The EFN published an article entitled [“Workplace Violence Against Nurses: Challenges and Solutions for Europe”](#) (October 2023), *based on the outcomes of the EFN mapping exercise on the challenges and solutions related to violence against nurses*.

The EFN will continue to work on this crucial topic in 2024, and to inform the EFN members on regular basis on its developments.

### 3. PATIENT SAFETY AND QUALITY OF CARE

#### ↳ Vaccination

Despite the demonstrated benefits of many kinds of vaccination it remains a controversial issue due to misinformation, restricted access, health illiteracy and cost. Europe is the region with the lowest confidence in vaccination in the world, and a very significant number of Europeans do not have the correct information on vaccination. Therefore, the major challenge for national immunization systems across Europe is to ensure Europeans have the correct information on vaccination and to increase confidence in and among healthcare professionals. The consequences of low uptakes of certain kinds of vaccination can be damaging to the health and economic welfare of vulnerable citizens across Europe, and by extension to their families and wider communities. Nurses play a key role in this contributing in many ways to immunization, ranging from educating parents, supporting mothers and their infants as well as administering vaccines. As the largest professional group of the healthcare professions, nurses are the frontline staff largely responsible for delivering [safe and effective vaccination](#) programmes to communities across Europe, yet rarely getting formal recognition for this life-saving endeavour.



Having it high on EFN policy agenda, the EFN continued in 2023 to follow on these developments, namely through the [Coalition for Vaccination](#), of which the EFN is one of the co-chairs, together with [CPME](#) (Doctors) and [PGEU](#) (Pharmacists), and who has proved that effective collaboration lays at the core of successful vaccine communication. Convened by the European Commission in 2019 based on [the 2018 Council recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases](#), the Coalition for Vaccination brings together European associations of healthcare professionals and relevant student associations in the field (including ENSA). It aims to support delivering accurate information to the public, combating myths around vaccines and vaccination, and exchanging best practices on vaccination.

Some of the key achievements for the Coalition for Vaccination in 2023, in which the EFN actively participated:

- ▶ The [Annual Meeting of the Coalition for Vaccination](#) took place on 24 October 2023 with the aim to brief the members of the coalition on the current and future activities on vaccination. next to the regular meetings, held internally (between the 3 co-chairs), as well as with other members of the Coalition and the European Commission.
- ▶ A joint statement on the [autumn-winter vaccination season 2023-2024](#), published in October 2023 as one of the outcomes of the annual meeting that took place on 24 October, in which the European healthcare professionals urge to make influenza and COVID-19 vaccination easily accessible particularly to high-risk population groups such as people with co-morbidities, the immunocompromised, the elderly and pregnant women.
- ▶ The publication in March 2023 of an article entitled "[Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, midwives, support workers and students lack confidence in vaccine advocacy: Policy messages from a pan-European analysis](#)" based on the survey undertaken next to health professional in 34 European countries, as part of the [IMMUNION](#) EU project. The article shows that there is a clear need for additional training on several aspects of vaccination for healthcare professionals in Europe.
- ▶ [1st Coalition for Vaccination Conference](#), held in Brussels on 17 January 2023 - that brought together around 100 healthcare professionals and policymakers, including the students ([ENSA](#), [EMSA](#), [EPSA](#), [EDSA](#)), to reflect on past years' achievements and plan for the future. The conference showed **the power of collaborative work and partnerships to make the difference to lifelong vaccination for everyone**. The meeting discussed points will guide the efforts of healthcare professionals in the next few years, from all healthcare professionals joining forces to boost immunisation, to adapting vaccine communication strategies to the target groups and making use of available tools to better communicate with patients.





- [Immunisation Week Campaign](#), that took place from 23 to 29 April 2023, through the co-chairs' social media and through participation in some key events, as the ECDC immunisation week kick off meeting. This year campaign reminded us about the importance of timely routine vaccination and [why we need to catch up](#) on any missed or postponed vaccines and booster doses. It is key to provide COVID-19, FLU, POLIO, etc. booster shots for adults, especially the vulnerable ones and elderly; to raise awareness on the key role of vaccination in prevention and in saving lives; to help healthcare professionals to roll out vaccination campaigns and support them to increase uptake of routine immunisations. Launched across Europe simultaneously on EFN, CPME, PGEU social media channels - the campaign on EFN social media (@EFNBrussels - [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) - key words: #EIW #EuropeanImmunisationWeek #Nursesforvaccination #getvaccinated) **reached more than 14.500 people and 384 interactions with EFN.**



Next to the Coalition for Vaccination, the EFN was a key partner in the EU project 'Improving IMMUnisation cooperation in the European UNION' ([IMMUNION](#)), working closely with the Coalition for Vaccination, that came to an end in March 2023. Building on learnings from vaccination efforts at national, regional and global, the IMMUNION project has been conceived and designed to strengthen the existing Coalition for Vaccination and to improve stakeholder collaboration to increase vaccine uptake across Europe. *For more information on this project, see page 35.*

Finally, the EFN participated in some other meetings linked to vaccination, as for example:

- **Final IMMUNION Consortium meeting**, on 14 February, where the results of the external evaluation of IMMUNION were presented, and which was an opportunity for all the partners to discuss on the recommendations to draw out from this evaluation looking back on the project, but also ahead to the future and long-term sustainability of outcomes and activities.
- **ECDC kick off meeting of the European Immunization Week 2023**, held on 24 April, in which the EFN President, Elizabeth Adams participated as keynote speaker. The [event](#) launched the immunization week 2023 under the theme “A lifelong approach to vaccination” with the aim to raise awareness of the importance of immunization for the general health and wellbeing of the European and wider population and to discuss actions against vaccine-preventable diseases and how communication plays a key role in promoting vaccination acceptance and uptake.
- **DG SANTE meeting with the co-chairs Coalition for Vaccination**, on 7 June, aiming to discuss how the European Commission can support the Coalition for Vaccination.
- **Preparatory meeting for Coalition Annual Meeting 2023**, on 11 September, to discuss the next steps after the IMMUNION project had expired.
- **EUHPP Live Webinar on “Working Together to Increase Uptake of Covid-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination”**, held on 25 October, in which the European Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and WHO/Europe

joined forces to raise awareness of the need to protect the most vulnerable over the autumn and winter period. It was stressed that vaccination remains our most effective measure, both in terms of public health prevention and response, and as such, national vaccination campaigns should focus on protecting the most vulnerable from the risk of infection and severe diseases.

It is key that the EU countries consider routine vaccination a priority for all age groups, as it is key to build trust in vaccines by being transparent and up to date with scientific evidence. Nurses have a key role to play in this. We should use their expertise and skills in this. As this is crucial point for the nursing profession, the EFN will continue to follow on this point and contribute to its development in 2024.

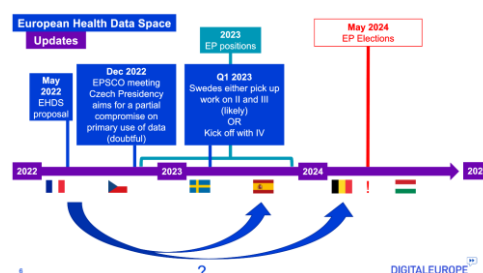
## ➔ **Digitalisation**

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](#), in June 2023, 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. 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.

The EFN followed on the European Commission [first report on the State of the Digital Decade](#) that provides an overview on the progress made towards achieving the digital transformation to empower a more digitally sovereign, resilient, and competitive EU and shows that we need to do more to bring forward the digital transition. The report assesses the EU's performance towards the 2030 objectives, focusing on digital skills, infrastructure and digitalisation of businesses and public services. Digital tools can have a positive impact on both patients/citizens and healthcare professionals, especially frontline nurses. But it is necessary to create the right digital instruments. Nurses have a key role to play in this. It is therefore important to listen to them and consider their experience and expertise!

Next to this, the EFN has been following closely the development on the [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS), which represents one of the central building blocks of a strong European Health Union, and could be transformative for EU healthcare ecosystems. The [EHDS](#) will allow individuals to check and use their health data in their own country or in other Member States, fostering the development of a interoperable EHR and digital healthcare ecosystem (cf. EFN involvement in the EU project [Smart4Health](#) that is now finished (*for more information on this project, see page 33*). Therefore, the EHDS represents a great opportunity for nurses and for all the healthcare professionals to have easier access to the health data of their patients, ensuring protection, high-quality care, and research.

Taking this further, the EFN October 2023 General Assembly, in Spain, discussed this topic and approved an [EFN Policy Statement on European Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#), calling for the development of specific implementation plans to put this regulation into practice across the Member States. A broad range of stakeholders, including the National Nurses' Associations, must be strongly involved from the outset of the process to guarantee the success of the EHDS that must align with all relevant existing horizontal and sectoral European laws and be supported to the national regulation in the member states. To avoid unnecessary bottlenecks, the EFN strongly recommends that a level of continuity is maintained building on nurses' expertise and experience.





The EFN developed together with [CPME](#), [CED](#), [PGEU](#) and [HOPE](#) a [joint statement](#) in June 2023, that calls on the co-legislators to respect ethical principles of patient confidentiality and professional secrecy, to exclude healthcare professionals from providing data again for secondary use, to bring clarity and certainty for liability of healthcare professionals in the electronic health record, and to provide financial compensation for digitisation costs. In December, another [joint statement](#) was sent to the MEPs on EHDS draft report before the final vote, urging them to take the healthcare professionals' concerns into consideration. As representatives of healthcare professionals, one of the main stakeholder groups that will be directly impacted by this Regulation, EFN, CPME, PGEU and CED expressed their regret regarding the exclusion of the wording on ensuring that healthcare practices that qualify as small enterprises are exempted from the secondary data obligations in the EHDS.

The EFN co-signed a [joint statement](#), in June 2023, together with 31 other EU health stakeholders, 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. The EFN co-signed a [multistakeholder statement](#), in December 2023, representing patients, health professionals, researchers and industrial actors in the healthcare ecosystem at both European Union and Member State level, and calling for legislative refinement of the EHDS. There remain serious problems with the EHDS. Stakeholders are concerned that if these problems are not addressed, then the EHDS may generate more risks than benefits.

The EFN continues to be part of the eHealth Stakeholder Group, providing EFN nurses' views on digital/EHDS key developments and contributing to its crucial discussions, together with the other key EU stakeholders

In addition, the EFN participated, in 2023, in some key meetings on Digitalisation/EHDS at EU level, as:

- [eHealth Stakeholder Group sixth Plenary Meeting](#), on 19 January 2023, where the proposed Regulation on the European Health Data Space was presented.
- [Webinar “The European Health Data Space: a risk or an opportunity?”](#), on 28 March 2023. The event aimed at exploring the challenges facing EHDS and possible solutions.
- [eHealth Stakeholder Group seventh Plenary Meeting](#), on 05 July 2023, in which the participants were provided with an overview on the European Commission work on EHDS.
- [The Impact of Digitalisation on Job quality and social dialogue in public services across the EU](#), organised by the European Social Observatory on 25 September 2023. The event focused on the challenges of digitalisation for public services in Europe – underlining the importance to launch a project which would allow to go in depth into the effects of digitalisation on the public services.
- [Health European Summit: Innovation in health for a brighter future](#), on 10 October 2023, where digitalisation and how AI can contribute to health was discussed. It was highlighted that it is important to empower people on digitalisation as it is only by involving people that it is possible to create trust around this key topic.
- [EHDS informal stakeholder group meetings](#) - several informal meetings over the year with regular updates on the ongoing developments on EHDS

The EFN will continue to follow on these developments with the main idea to engage nurses in the co-design for developing instruments and services which can really facilitate and help frontline nurses in their daily job and as end-users as this is done through the EU project [BeWell](#) on upskilling and reskilling the nursing workforce in this digital context. *For more information on this project, see page 30.*

## ➔ Planetary Health/Climate



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the interlinkages between the degradation of our environment and the health of our societies. However, policymakers often lack reliable data and concrete ways to measure the impact of environmental and climate change on citizens' health & well-being. Climate change is part of our daily routine and can no longer be underestimated. It is predicted that it will have a growing impact on public health in the coming years and, increasingly, will influence the sustainability and effectiveness of our healthcare systems. The [role of nurses](#) in the healthcare ecosystems

is key, not only in acting for reducing the impact of healthcare systems on the environment, but also in raising patients' awareness of this important and worrying issue.

As such, and as at the health level, nurses can facilitate the implementation of ecological transformation, the EFN has planetary health high on its policy agenda and has been following this development at EU closely. In order to keep up with the latest developments on the topic in 2023, the EFN participated in some key meetings as:

- **European Policy Centre roundtable on “Planetary Health”**, held in Brussels on 25 April 2023. The meeting brought together DG SANTE, the European Environmental Agency, MEPs and representatives from NGOs working on health and environment, to discuss the implementation of the Planetary health approach. The EFN had the opportunity to provide the [nurses' views on planetary health](#).
- **Webinar on “Are you ready for the next health crisis?”**, on 8 May, in which climate change was discussed as the next crisis to be faced and for which we need to be ready.
- **Follow-up meeting to discuss Global Health Policy Forum preparation**, on 17 July, in which the issue of climate change and its impacts on health was discussed.
- **Pre-RC73 side event - Launch of the Youth4Health Network**, on 25 September, in which the network underlined the key role of the young generation in facing climate change and in protecting the environment for a better future.
- **#EUHPP Live Webinar - Expert Talk: Climate-resilient Healthcare Systems**, on 5 October, in which the negative effects of climate change on health have been analysed and how the healthcare systems have negative impacts on climate change. Some solutions emerged such as tele-medicine and value-based healthcare for reducing the impacts of the healthcare system on the environment.
- **The One Health Conference**, on 13 November, aiming to discuss the future of “One Health” in Europe. In the last few years, we realized that the health of people, animals and the environment are not to be considered separate, but rather it is necessary to treat them with a “One Health” approach. Climate change has been a key topic, and the engagement of the healthcare professionals is seen as a key point for having a clear view on what is happening frontline and to put in place concrete actions for tackling this issue.

The EFN will continue following up on these Patient Safety & Quality of Care key points in 2024.

#### **4. OTHER KEY POLITICAL TOPICS EFN LOBBIED ON**

##### **a. Global Health Strategy**

COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated that a collaborative approach based on genuine partnerships is key to achieve progress at global level. It is only by working together that we can prevent the grave health, social and economic impacts the world has lived through. As such, EU governments, the European Parliament, academia and civil society, have called for a new strategy on the EU's role in global health. The European Commission took it further with a new [EU Global Health Strategy](#) launched in November 2022 that will steer the European community's action points up until 2030. Aiming to outline how the EU will respond to future pandemics and health threats, the strategy will be based on the EU's commitment to human rights and health equity, including women's health.

The EFN welcomes this new development but highlights the importance to build an EU Global Health Strategy that focusses on key topics for the nursing profession such as digitalisation and the health workforce shortages. The EFN welcomes this unique opportunity to engage as the strategy is being developed and implemented. Looking at this development closely in 2023, the EFN April 2023 General Assembly approved an [EFN Policy Statement on the European Global Health Strategy](#), that calls for breaking silos and taking a holistic approach to health and wellbeing at the global level, and include health in all policies.

Next to that, the EFN has been taking part in the Global Health Policy Forum meetings in 2023, that is looking closely at the development of the Global Health Strategy, namely its implementation, for which it is key to bring together the work and actions of Member States and EU institutions. The Forum believes that it is crucial to have

stakeholders engaged to ensure to have their input and advise, all the way to 2030, in terms of implementation and monitoring of the strategy, through a good mechanism to get stakeholders' feedback.

It is key to strengthen cooperation between the different actors, the need to increase and strengthen dialogue with key stakeholders at global level, and to support and include civil society in the development and the implementation of the strategy. This implies the recognition of the key role that health stakeholders, in particular nurses. The EFN will continue to follow on this development in 2024.

#### b. HERA Civil Society Forum

The [European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority](#) (HERA) agency, created in September 2020 and aiming to be an instrument to support better preparedness and response across the EU to further pandemics, made a step forward in its development with the establishment of the [HERA Civil Society Forum](#) that acts as a contact point between HERA and stakeholders representing patients, consumers, and healthcare professionals. This sub-group HERA Advisory Forum, in which the EFN is involved, is helping to ensure that the HERA Advisory Forum receives regular input, views and opinions from civil society stakeholders, on matters of health preparedness and response, with a focus on medical countermeasures. This supports the work of the Advisory Forum and contributes to its informed opinions and conclusions.



In 2023, the EFN followed closely the work for this sub-group, namely through being part of the 3 Working Groups put in place, and attending all their meetings:

- **Working Group 1 - Future of HERA** aiming to involve the Civil Society on the work of HERA. Shortages of nurses has been included in discussion paper on the future of HERA developed by the WG and adopted by the Civil Society Forum in November 2023. The [paper](#) recommends increased investment into health emergency preparedness and response in addition to closer integration of strategies on the EU level. The paper will inform the upcoming mid-term review of HERA's mandate in 2024.
- **Working Group 2 - Three identified health threats (Pathogens with pandemic potential, CBRN, AMR)** aiming to identify potential gaps within the identified 3 categories – The EFN is following (watching brief) the AMR debate in this WG, providing nurses' views and experiences of dealing frontline with AMR.
- **Working Group 3 - Training programme and information** aiming to involve Civil Society in HERA targeted training and information programmes to provide input on their design and implementation - EFN & HOPE are leading this WG. A [Statement](#) on "How to prepare health systems in the EU to be better prepared for unpredictable shocks, the example of nurses and general practitioners" - Nurses Education included in the policy document – was published.

A public consultation on the Review of HERA was launched by the European Commission (see here), and is open until 19 February 2024. The EFN will continue to follow on these developments in 2024, providing the nurses' views and expertise in the policy developments.

#### c. European Year of Skills 2023



In her [State of the European Union Address](#), Ursula von der Leyen stressed the importance of education and upskilling as well as the need to facilitate the recognition of qualifications. The [European Year of Skills 2023](#) represents a key starting point for having a workforce with the skills that are in demand to contribute to sustainable growth, leading to more innovation and improving companies' competitiveness.

The EFN welcomed the designation of 2023 as the European Year of Skills by the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and European Parliament. In a constantly changing world, the skills needed to ensure sustainable development are changing. 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. It is therefore key to position nursing as central in the health policy debates, and to ensure that nurses can use their skills, education, and training at full capacity.

Discussing this topic at the EFN April 2023 General Assembly, in Croatia, the EFN members stressed the need for having the right working conditions to attract workforce to the nursing profession, alongside the right skills; the need to respect nurses' competencies beyond skills; the need for a more technological understanding of healthcare, not a narrow focus on digital skills; and the need to ensure nurses' time is protected, with appropriate backfill, to allow participation in training. The EFN members discussed and approved an [EFN Policy Statement on the European Year of Skills 2023](#), that calls on the European Commission to take actions to promote more effective and inclusive investment in education and training to maximise the potential of the nursing workforce; align nurses' aspirations and skills with labour market opportunities, especially those arising from the green and digital transitions; ensure that nurses have suitable working conditions to utilise their skills and fulfil their responsibilities for quality and safe care.

Next to that the EFN is a key stakeholder partner in the [Pact for Skills](#) through the BeWell EU project that is aiming to establish the first Blueprint Alliance for the health ecosystem to create a skills strategy to be implemented at a local, regional, national, and ultimately European level through the Pact for Skills. *For more information on this project, see page 30.*

#### d. EU Pact for Skills

In her [State of the European Union Address](#) in 2022 and in 2023, Ursula von der Leyen stressed the importance of education and upskilling as well as the need to facilitate the recognition of qualifications. She made specific reference to shortages of nurses and doctors in the EU.



Taking this into account, the European Commission launched the [Pact for Skills](#) in 2020, the first of the flagship actions under the [European Skills Agenda](#) and is firmly anchored in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). The objective of the Pact for Skills is to mobilise all relevant stakeholders to reflect and decide on the measures to be undertaken in order to adequately skill health professionals. The health sector has been identified as a priority partnership to be launched under the Pact. The digitalisation of the healthcare ecosystem, in particular the [EU Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#), with promoting the skilling and upskilling of the health workforce is an important priority for the European Commission. It is key to develop an upskilling and reskilling strategy, giving the right skills to people to use the data, both health professionals and patients/citizens, and develop skill partnerships. From an EFN perspective, the upskilling and reskilling of our healthcare professionals, especially nurses, is key to create a robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem and to be better prepared for facing future healthcare crisis and challenges. The [Year of Skills 2023](#) provided a unique opportunity to push forward a skills revolution in Europe, making the upskilling and reskilling of all working-age adults the norm.

Taking this forward, a [Pact for Skills large-scale partnership](#), co-funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the [BeWell EU project](#) of which the EFN is a partner of, was created. At EU level, Large-Scale Skills partnerships (LSPs) set up a shared engagement model for collective action where major players in industrial ecosystems and value or supply chains, including associations, relevant public authorities and SMEs, commit to cooperate and invest to provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities for people of working age in the whole industrial ecosystem. Being a key development for the nursing professions, the EFN is now a [member](#) of the health partnership, that will create and implement a shared model for the skills development of the health workforce in Europe, with a particular focus on green and digital skills. It will establish a culture of life-long learning; ensure dialogue with and between health professionals; address the disparities among health and education systems; foster exchange of data on skills gaps and needs for existing and emerging occupations.

In 2023, the EFN actively participated in some key meetings linked to this topic, as:

- **Pact for Skills seminar on “Investing in upskilling and reskilling”**, held on 20 April 2023, that looked more broadly at the Pact for Skills as a platform to encourage further investment in upskilling and reskilling through public-private partnerships.
- **Pact for Skills networking event for potential members and non-member organisations**, organised by the European Commission on 25 May 2023. The aim of the meeting was to learn more about the Pact, its benefits and activities.
- **Pact for Skills: Large scale partnership for the health ecosystem – First partner steering committee**, held on 31 May 2023, and aiming to discuss the Partnership framework, organisational model and expected activities for 2023.
- **Peer-learning activity on “Defining and monitoring commitments for upskilling and reskilling”** that took place on 13 June 2023, aiming to strengthen participants' understanding and expertise in defining and monitoring commitments within the Pact for Skills.
- **Webinar on “The use of validation of non-formal and informal learning for upskilling and reskilling”**, on 19 September, which aimed to set the scene on the different EU initiatives to boost upskilling and reskilling of the health workforce and learn how validation supports upskilling and reskilling.
- **“Pact for Skills: Large-scale partnership for health ecosystem” 1<sup>st</sup> workshop**, organised by BeWell consortium in Brussels, on 22 November 2023. It aimed to engage for the first time with the members of the Large-Scale Partnership (LPS) for the health ecosystem, to provide a flash introduction on the work of BeWell and collect their expert feedback on key elements of the project's work.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Partnership Steering Committee meeting**, held on 29 November 2023. The participants were briefed on the concept of Theory of Change, on the obstacles and challenges, as what BeWell wants to achieve as that the healthcare professionals to be equipped with digital and green skills to protect and promote better human and planetary health.
- **Seminar on the “Use of skills intelligence tools to define upskilling and reskilling actions”**, on 6 December 2023. The seminar explored how the Pact for Skills members can leverage and contribute to the production of skills intelligence for defining effective upskilling and reskilling actions. Effective use of existing information is seen as key for the successful design and implementation of up- and reskilling actions.

Upskilling and reskilling our healthcare professionals, especially nurses, is key to create a robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem and to be better prepared for facing future healthcare crisis and challenges. The EFN has been engaged with the Pact for Skills to address the complexity of skills in the healthcare sector and is looking forward to its developments in 2024.

#### e. Antimicrobial Resistance

*“Tackling AMR is a public health priority and an economic necessity. The figures are concerning, showing that urgent and ambitious action is needed. We must work together, Member States, stakeholders as well as citizens to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to meet the agreed targets”, Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety*

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) continues to be a serious challenge, which needs to be addressed. Being at the top of the EU political agenda, it is also high on the EFN policy agenda. The [European Commission](#) estimates that antibiotic-resistant bacteria have been associated with the death of 35.000 people in the European Union, a number that has increased in recent years, and around €1.5 billion each year in healthcare costs and productivity losses. This could lead to 10 million deaths per year worldwide by 2050 if no action is taken. Even though some [data published](#) in November 2023 by the ECDC shows that there is some progress made between 2019 and 2022 towards the target to cut antimicrobial use in 20% by 2030, AMR cannot be considered as a “silent” enemy anymore. It is time to take action. And the European Commission has understood it, putting it high on its political agenda, and taking actions to advance this debate/development.



The EFN believes that nurses have a [crucial role to play](#) in this, namely in informing and motivating the public, and preventing and managing the infections. Their role in [combating AMR](#) is key for patients' safety and for delivering high quality care. As nurses have closer and more frequent contact with patients and carers, and undertake the role of care coordinator, they are ideally placed to lead antimicrobial resistance reduction and antibiotic stewardship programmes. Spreading the right knowledge on the risks related to AMR is an essential step forward for building a better future and, to do so, nurses can be the best ally. In this context, the [EU One Health approach](#), aiming to tackle AMR more comprehensively on the basis of improved data collection, monitoring and surveillance is important. Aiming to bring the nurses' views into this development, the EFN has been selected as one of the Experts in the European Commission expert group on AMR One Health Network, that has as objective to facilitate mutual learning, share innovative ideas, build consensus, compare progress made in key areas and, where necessary, accelerate national efforts to tackle AMR.

Taking this into account, and the [Council Recommendation](#) on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a One Health approach, approved in July 2023 as part of the [pharmaceutical package](#), the EFN gathered from its members best practices on AMR One Health Approach, identifying the needs for policy initiatives based on developments led by nurses at national level, that will feed the developments in this network. The data collected shows that in all the EU countries the role of nurses is fundamental for tackling AMR, but it is often underestimated. *For more information, see page 45.*

Next to this, and to make sure that the EFN bring to the EU level the nurses' voice and concerns, the EFN October 2023 General Assembly discussed and approved an EFN [Policy Statement on AMR One Health Approach](#) that recognises that nurses' leadership and informed clinical decisions are central to ensuring safe and appropriate prescribing throughout the prescribing cycle and that cross-sectoral education and cooperation between nurses, pharmacists, doctors, veterinarians, dentists, and other healthcare professionals, in line with the One Health approach, is particularly important in the context of antimicrobial resistance.

The European Commission is designing policies within the concept of 'One Health for All, All for One Health', and the revision of the EU's pharmaceutical legislation provides an opportunity that cannot be missed. The upcoming Belgium EU Presidency (1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 - 30 June 2024) understood it. As such, it will make sure that AMR is kept high on the political agenda of the next European Commission building on the work of the Swedish and the Spanish EU presidencies. It will be key for the EFN to participate in this development and make sure nurses' views and expertise is taken into account in this.

Furthermore, the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe adopted a new [European roadmap on antimicrobial resistance](#), aiming to support countries in the Region to identify, prioritize, implement and monitor high-impact interventions to tackle AMR and accelerate implementation efforts. The Roadmap represents an important step towards strengthening Europe's collective response to AMR, with One Health Approach as a guiding principle. As a complex health challenge, AMR requires the engagement and coordination of all stakeholders. As such, several EU Stakeholders (including EFN) signed a [Joint Statement on the Roadmap](#), that was presented to the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe calling on the EU policy- and decisionmakers to keep the One Health Approach to AMR a priority on their agendas; to finance new evidence to provide harmonised solutions at local, national, and international levels; to increase support and renovate investments in civil society organisations, recognising the pivotal role they have in raising awareness, bringing expertise and innovative solutions, and advocating for policy change; to continue working together with the WHO European Regional Office and reinstate the importance of involving the people in tackling AMR, with health equity as guiding principle. This proved an excellent opportunity for Civil Society Organisations to showcase their cooperation and dedication to such important topic as AMR.

In 2023, the EFN attended some key meetings dealing with AMR, as:

- **"How healthcare professionals can be advocates for greener healthcare"**, organised by [HCWH Europe](#), on 16 January 2023, which focused on AMR and on the role of healthcare professionals to raise awareness on AMR. The event analysed how healthcare professionals can communicate and raise awareness on AMR, online and offline.

- **HERA Civil Society Forum Meeting**, on 15 March 2023, where the participants got an update on HERA latest developments and were presented a new way of working together by means of three working groups: 1) Future of HERA; 2) Three identified health threats (including AMR); and 3) Training programme and information. The EFN is part of the 3 working groups.
- **WHO AMR EXPERT - New AMR Regional Roadmap**, on 29 March 2023, which aimed to collect input and feedback on the new AMR regional roadmap.
- **High-level conference on “How to make progress on tackling AMR”**, organised by Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) and the Swedish Medical Association (SMA), on 27 April 2023. The [meeting](#) aimed at analysing solutions on how to tackle AMR. Representatives of the European Commission discussed the provisions for AMR included in the Revision of the EU general pharmaceuticals legislation.
- **EU Pharmaceutical Legislation – Stakeholder Dialogue**, on 10 May 2023, that discussed the main aim of [the pharmaceutical legislation reform](#) in which AMR and One health are 2 key goals. During the meeting, challenges and possible solutions to address AMR were discussed.
- **AMR high-level webinar ‘How can the EU support sustainable innovation and access to effective antibiotics?’**, 21 June 2023, to discuss the [Policy Brief](#) launched and the work of the European Commission on the initiatives within the [AMR recommendations](#) and within the [revised EU’s pharmaceutical legislation](#), including new mechanisms to encourage the development of innovative antimicrobial.
- **HERA Civil Society Forum Meeting**, on 30 June 2023, that focused on the work made by HERA for supporting the access to AMR medical countermeasures, some actions and key initiatives put in place on AMR.
- **AMR One Health Network meeting**, organised by the European Commission DG Sante, on 21 September 2023, which focused on the Council Recommendations on AMR, on the field in which AMR is an issue and the report from the subgroup established under the AMR One Health Network to formulate suggestions for AMR actions.
- **High-level Conference on One Health for All**, organised by the European Commission on 13 November 2023, to discuss the future of ‘One Health’. AMR was one of the key topics debated. Cooperation, collaboration and communication were the 3 points on which all the experts of this panel agreed on.
- **Stakeholder meeting on the Belgian EU Presidency**, on 13 November 2023, where the Belgian EU Presidency priorities were discussed. On AMR, the objectives of the Belgian EU Presidency are clearly to continue the work of the Swedish and Spanish EU presidencies on AMR; and discuss the EU AMR governance, development and implementation of effective, results-driven policy measures to optimise the use of antibiotics.
- **European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2023**, on 20 November 2023, an event organised by the ECDC to shed the light on the current situation of AMR, its cost effectiveness on the hospitals, the challenges and the possible solutions in a One Health approach perspective.

The EFN members were informed on the ongoing developments at the EFN General Assemblies, through the [EFN Updates](#), through [EFN Website](#), and through EFN Briefing Notes (*available only to the EFN members*). The EFN will continue to work on this crucial topic in 2024, and to inform the EFN members on regular basis on its developments.

Finally, as in the previous years the EFN participated in the [European Antimicrobial Awareness Day](#) on 18 November 2023 (coordinated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ([ECDC](#))), through EFN social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn – key words: #antimicrobialresistance #AMR #awareness) with key posts to raise awareness of the EU policy Makers, the EU Stakeholders, and the public in general, on this key policy topic. **EFN posts reached more than 8.000 people and 169 people interacted with EFN.**





## f. Mental Health

Mental health is an increasingly widespread issue and stigmatising those who suffer from it is the first step towards not taking care of it. And we can say that there is a huge stigma among mental health of healthcare professionals. Due to the strong pressures the healthcare system has been subjected in recent years, and even more with COVID-19, nurses have paid the highest bill, with their mental health highly tested due to increasingly complex situations and precarious working conditions in which they work. The aging of the nursing staff and the lack of young nurses put a strain on the proper functioning of healthcare systems that, in this way, risk to collapse. As a consequence, frontline nurses are massively leaving the nursing profession. The nursing profession is post-COVID-19 pandemic not attractive anymore for the young generation and the lack of nurses only increases the workload for those who remain in this profession, increasing levels of stress and burnout. Therefore, Mental health cannot be underestimated, and action needs to be taken now. As such, the EFN has this topic high on its political agenda, lobbying the EU institutions to take concrete actions.



Taking it to the next level, the European Commission adopted in June 2023 [a new comprehensive approach to mental health](#). This approach is a first and important step to put mental health on par with physical health and to ensure a new, cross sectoral approach to mental health issues, adding another pillar to the architecture of the European Health Union by both reinforcing ongoing work and opening new workstreams.

For the [EFN](#), it is key to put in place concrete actions for supporting nurses' mental health – such as: Combat the stigmatisation of nurses; Foster the co-creation and co-design with frontline nurses, concerning relevant political decision-making processes; Work closely with the nursing profession to develop policies that protect frontline staff from unnecessarily difficult or unsafe working conditions; Allocate funds to support frontline nurses; and Urgently adopt European comprehensive long-term strategies on mental health.

To make sure the nurses' views are taken into account in the policy process, the EFN attended some key EU meetings, as:

- [Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Stella Kyriakides](#) ***“Towards a comprehensive approach to Mental Health”***, on 22 February 2023, where young people could exchange on their experiences, and provide suggestions and insights into the ways we can truly move towards a new approach to mental health that truly delivers for all EU citizens.
- **A Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health in Europe: Plan, Act, Change**, on 21 March 2023, that [addressed](#) the European Commission's current efforts to develop a 'comprehensive approach to mental health'. The meeting stressed that mental health is a cross sector issue touching all policy areas from public health to employment, social affairs, gender equality. The strategy should therefore ensure mental health mainstreaming, exchange of good practices, research, robust data collection, etc. It is key to focus on prevention and early detection of mental distress.

- [WHO/Europe regional meeting on health and care workforce](#), on 22-23 March 2023, that discussed among other topics “protect health and care workers’ mental health and well-being”. Mental health and well-being of healthcare professionals is a key topic, with the healthcare sector being one of the most challenging sectors due to the working conditions, poor mental health, understaffed, high level of stressed. And this situation got worse with the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting called for the implementation of concrete solutions and policy actions to support healthcare professionals and students.
- [EuroHealthNet Roundtable “The European Semester – a tool to embed health, equity and well-being across the EU”](#) held on 26 April 2023, which aimed to exchange perspectives on the potential of strengthening health, equity and wellbeing in the European Semester. At policy level it is important to demonstrate how important mental health is for the well-being of the population. There is an opportunity to improve mental health in the semester - actions need to be taken to show that investing in mental well-being is a good way for being prepared for facing future health crisis.
- **Stakeholders’ webinar - A Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health**, on 21 September 2023, that provided an update on the new [Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health](#), and related actions on mental health and hear from the stakeholders, how they could support the implementation of the communication and of the 20 flagship initiatives.
- **Mental health in healthcare and veterinary professionals**, held on 26 October 2023, and that focused on the current mental health challenges, affecting specifically the healthcare and veterinary sectors in the EU. Invited as keynote speaker, EFN Secretary General explained that evidence shows that high workload, low staffing levels, long work shifts and low control over the job are factors associated with burnout among nurses and having a negative psychological impact on their wellbeing. Nurses’ mental health is at huge risk - and this means putting the entire healthcare system at risk.

Next to this, and as every year, the EFN organised in October 2023, on the occasion of the [World Mental Health Day 2023](#), a campaign on its social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn – key words: #wellbeing #mentalwellbeing #nurses #worldmentalhealthday) to raise awareness on this crucial topic. **The EFN posts reached around 9.460 people and more than 228 people interacted with EFN posts.**



In 2024, the EFN will continue to follow up on these developments and bring the nurses’ views and expertise to the EU level.

#### g. Value-based healthcare

One of the major challenges we face as a society is the rising cost of healthcare systems. In a well-functioning ecosystem, the creation of value for patients and citizens should be the main objective of all actors involved. Although the EU usually has a very economic approach towards value-driven health ecosystems, it is now crucial to have a long-term strategy for moving from low-value based to high-value based healthcare systems. To make an ecosystem value-based for all stakeholders, the right coordination is needed.



In any value-based healthcare system, nurses will play a key role in bringing up the “value”. They are to a large extent responsible for the collection of healthcare data, and their work is intimately linked to health outcomes and patients’ experience. As end-user and co-designer, the nursing profession believes that value-based health care is a promising concept (cf. [EFN Position Statement on EU recommendations on defining value in value-based healthcare](#) & [EFN Position Paper on Value-Based Health and Social Ecosystem](#)), but in order to have impact at the health system level, it must be applied to the key decision-processes that make up care delivery. In this context, the EFN followed this topic in 2023, attending some key meetings as the ‘[Value-Based Healthcare – What does it mean in different global markets?](#)’ that raised the need for the value-based healthcare to be a new method for understanding how to deliver high quality healthcare. In this process, data is seen as one of the key drivers, and technology (as Artificial Intelligence) could help on this by for example, getting data in a more efficient way, taking into account the users’ experiences. The involvement of patients, and frontline healthcare professionals, as the nurses, is essential to understand which priorities have to be improved in the healthcare sector. It is challenging, but essential to define what measures are needed to reach better outcomes. Hence, the EFN calls for more initiatives linking nursing to value-based approaches, leaving aside the traditional disease-oriented approaches, and putting the patient at the centre.

The EFN has already published policy statements on [value-based health](#), the need for [investing in health](#), and [patient empowerment](#) which the European Commission should take into account for developing EU policy tools to make EU policies fit-for-purpose. When creating new EU legislation for the implementation of value-based reforms across the European healthcare systems. The EFN will continue to follow on this development in 2024.

#### **h. War in Ukraine and conflict Israel-Gaza**

After COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health and well-being of the frontline nurses caring for those in need, in very difficult conditions to ensure patient care and well-being, was again put at stake, first with the ongoing war in Ukraine, and then with the conflict between Israel and Gaza.

As regards **Ukraine**, the EFN continued in 2023 to be one of the 3 co-chairs of the **EU Coalition on “Supporting Ukraine, neighbouring EU Member States and Moldova”**, together with the European Cancer Organisation (ECO) and the European Reference Networks (ERN), representing as such the 3 groups of health stakeholders. This network includes over 250 patient organisations, health professionals, NGOs and industry interested in sharing knowledge to avoid duplicating efforts, and aims to be an interactive tool to engage civil society and encourage discussion on public health issues, share knowledge and best practices and pool expertise, next to inform, through its regular meetings, on the ongoing activities undertaken by the European Commission in support to Ukrainian patients and health professionals, including the neighbouring countries hosting Ukrainian refugees. In this network, the EFN mainly focused on one specific area: recognition and support of the nursing profession. The need to have more nurses, midwives, physiotherapists is huge in Europe above all after COVID-19. Most of them are women and there is a huge number of Ukraine nurses and healthcare professionals who are not recognised in the other states as healthcare professionals. In that sense, we are losing the workforce.

With the **conflict Israel/Gaza**, the EFN members stood once again together to condemn these attacks. An [EFN statement was issued](#) in support to the nurses and many other healthcare professionals that have to continue their work under life-threatening circumstances, with many being injured or killed. The EFN and its members called for all parties to the conflict to respect the international principle of medical and healthcare neutrality, that the principle of human rights is upheld and protected, to protect and respect access to healthcare and ensure the safety of the population and the healthcare professionals (cf. [Geneva Convention](#)).

#### **5. Other EU Lobby opportunities for the EFN**

In 2023, the EFN took some other opportunities to lobby the EU institutions and to give voice to nurses and to their needs. Looking to the future, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine has increased the need for a European Health Union, stronger Europe-wide coordination, more resilient health systems and better preparation for possible future crises.

» **WHO Euro Roadmap - EFNMA-EFN-WHO Meeting series**

The EFN has been involved in those meeting series, represented by the EFN President, Elizabeth Adams, and later by Aristides Chorattas (new EFN President), which aim to support the implementation of the [Nursing and Midwifery WHO Euro Roadmap](#) focusing on four strategic priorities: Education, Jobs, Leadership and Service Delivery. In 2023, two meetings were organised on:

- **“Educating the Future Nursing and Midwifery Workforces – Challenges and Opportunities”**, on 25 January 2023, aiming to raise awareness of key challenges to providing quality education; Present examples of transformation of nursing and midwifery education; Reflect on the role of national nurses and midwifery associations in the implementation of [WHO Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021–2025](#).
- **European Nursing and Midwifery Week**, on 10 May 2023, aiming to discuss how to create a supportive working environment for nursing and midwifery (*ref. WHO [report](#) “Healthcare workforce in Europe: it is time to act”*).
- **Nurse and Midwife Migration – Mobility or Exploitation**, on 27 September 2023, which focused on how nurse and midwives’ migration contributes to mobility or exploitation.
- **Nursing and Midwifery students and early career Professionals**, on 6 December 2023. Experiences and expectations of the new generation of nurses and midwives should guide development of new recruitment and retention approaches. The event aimed at listening to the voices of the next generation of nurses and midwives and see what it will take for them to succeed as nurses and midwives and ultimately to keep them in the professions.

This is a good opportunity to collaborate closely with WHO on topics that are high on EFN policy agenda and to bring the EFN members’ views and experience to the debate.

» **Nursing Now Challenge**

Being part of the [Nursing Now Challenge Board](#), made up of global health experts, representing the WHO regions, Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, participated in the **Board meetings** that took place over the year, representing EFN and its members.

» **Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition**



Violence against healthcare workers, facilities and patients is one of the most serious and overlooked humanitarian challenges globally. The [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition](#) was founded in 2010 to address the under-reporting of attacks on health workers and facilities in conflict areas. The EFN members are represented by Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, member of the coalition with over 30 leading international non-governmental organisations. The [EFN Position Statement](#) “Nurses in Conflict Areas Need to be more Protected” (2016) provided the mandate for participation. Following on the work being done by the Coalition, EFN President participated in 2023 in the regular meetings of the Steering Committee. In addition, the Safeguarding of Health in Conflict published a [report](#) entitled “Ignoring Red lines – Violence against health care in conflict” which shows 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 – This is 45% more than in 2021.

» **Some key meetings in which the EFN President strengthened the nursing lobby agenda/input:**

- ✓ **European Commission DG SANTE Study on the EU Council Recommendation on vaccines**, on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023. As the EFN is co-chair of the Coalition for Vaccination, EFN President was asked to provide nurses’ views on this topic to gain further insights into the way in which the needs relating to vaccination have evolved since the adoption of the Council Recommendation and Commission Roadmap. The study aims to support the European Commission in assessing (i) the relevance of each of the 28 actions in the “vaccination roadmap, taking the COVID-19 pandemic into account and (ii) the coherence and complementarity with other related policy initiative, as well as in (iii) providing the Commission with a set of recommendations on how the most relevant actions could be further developed and made sustainable to remain relevant on a longer term.



- ✓ **Florence Nightingale Foundation Global [Launch Event](#)**, held on 7 March 2023, which marked the launch of the Foundation international programme, aiming to develop one million nursing and midwifery leaders over the next five years. The charity is, for the first time, offering its scholarships and leadership development programmes to nurses and midwives who work outside of the UK.
  - ✓ **Webinar proposal Council Recommendations on vaccine-preventable cancers**, held on 23 March 2023. The Commission proposal for a [Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers](#) was announced in the [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#) and is part of a Prevention Package which includes an update of the 2009 Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments. The event was aiming to gather EU stakeholders' views on actions undertaken or needed at national and EU level to increase the uptake and the monitoring of HPV vaccination coverage rates, the access to HBV vaccination for all affected population groups and how to improve the monitoring of HBV vaccination coverage rates, in particular where there are data gaps.
  - ✓ **Forum to Address Attacks on Health Professionals**, held on 03 April 2023. Violence against health professionals is a significant problem, in the EU and globally, with implications for human rights and health systems. WHO estimates that up to 38% of health workers suffer physical violence at some point in their careers, and many more are threatened or exposed to verbal aggression. The [meeting](#) outlined possible U.S. National Academies' activities to address attacks against health professionals. Invited as keynote speaker, Elizabeth Adams, highlighted some points on emerging threats to health care professionals and activities that have been undertaken to address these threats in the EU.
  - ✓ **Launch of the ECDC's European Immunisation Week 2023 [digital event](#)**, on 24 April 2023. Invited as keynote speaker, EFN President, presented the work of the Coalition of Vaccination, co-chaired by EFN, PGEU and CPME, and the importance of supporting healthcare professionals communicate about vaccines. ECDC marked this year's European Immunization Week under the *"A lifelong approach to vaccination"* theme, emphasizing the crucial importance of vaccines for young children, and promoting the benefits of vaccination at different stages of life, including adolescents, adults, and elderly, and highlighting the importance of improving routine immunisation rates, closing immunity gaps, reaching those that missed vaccination and leaving no one behind.
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- ✓ **58<sup>th</sup> annual Florence Nightingale [Commemoration Service](#)**, held in London, on 16 May 2023, to celebrate nurses and midwives who continue Florence's legacy.
  - ✓ **Korean Nurses Association 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**, held in Seoul, from 22 to 24 November 2023. EFN President was invited as official guest for supporting the NNA in lobbying for a separate Nursing Act in Korea. As keynote speaker, the new elected EFN President, Aristides Chorattas, provided an overview on the Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (DIR55) and its implications in nursing practice, next to other directives influencing health and consequently nursing in the EU and EU member states. He stressed that the nursing act will help for a better planning for nursing for the management of health crises which impose an increase pressure on the health care services.

## 6. EFN Members' Lobby Opportunities

It is crucial for the EFN, as a Pan European Organisation, to continuously support and strengthen its relationship with its members by getting a real sense of what is important to them at national level. Taking part in national events is an ideal way of strengthening ties with the members but it is crucial for understanding the key issues at stake in Member States and offering, in return, the EU-level perspective. The EFN appreciates these moments with its members and continues investing in national, regional and local events that promotes the EU nurses' voice. But participating in meetings is not enough to get the political message through to national policy makers understanding the importance of the nurses' views and concerns in the policy process and in the daily clinical practice. As such, it is important for the members to get EFN support directly addressing to key political players to help them to push for their key concerns at national level.

### → Supporting letters



One of the ways for the EFN to support its members is through sending them supporting letters when needed on some key issues. The main topics are nurses' shortage, governments trying to downgrade the nursing profession, or working conditions. Nurses are a valuable resource and meeting their needs will allow them to stay within the nursing profession. Today, this is not the case, and nurses are massively leaving the profession. The European Union fully respects the contribution and potential of nurses to deliver on European wide health policies and initiatives. It is therefore crucial that national governments respect professional and regulatory dialogue as outlined in the Proportionality Directive (2018/958), requiring governments to engage with all concerned stakeholders, co-designing better working environments. Together we can achieve more, and it is key that political players respect the contribution of the nursing profession and continue to support frontline nurses.

### → EFN Members visiting Brussels and the EU Institutions

Bringing to Brussels NNAs delegations is a good opportunity for the EFN Members' NNAs to meet with their country EU representatives and learn more about the EFN political agenda, how this agenda is influencing and influenced by the EU Institutions, the outcomes achieved by EFN, and the role of the EU Institutions in relation to the EU health policy. The main topics presented on these occasions: the EFN's key priorities in the EU lobby process, including Directive 36/55 and the challenges for nursing education; the EU projects the EFN has been involved in, and the importance of investing in the EU lobby process. The EFN welcomes this initiative and pro-active attitude from EFN members. Not only as this increases the visibility and reputation of nurses at EU level but also because it shows that they are serious about their profession and the issues that have an impact on it. Therefore, the EFN members are encouraged to continue these efforts in 2024 in order to give the nursing perspective to the EU on key topics.

### → Participation in EFN Members' national events

- » **Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) Annual Delegate Conference**, held in Dublin, on 04 May 2023. Invited as keynote speaker, Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, raised the importance of representation at European Level. She highlighted that there are 21 million professionals active in the hospital and healthcare sector in Europe, including 7.3 million nurses/midwives in WHO European Region (57% of the health workers). 89% of nurses/midwives globally are female. She stressed the work done by the EFN at EU level, namely on the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), on the [EU Pact for Skills](#), on vaccination through the [Coalition for Vaccination](#), and the [lobby work](#) on Education, Workforce, Quality & Safety towards the EU institutions.
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- » **Cooperation conference "MEIE 100" organised on 10-11 May 2023, in Estonia**, by the Estonian Nurses Union. The EFN President, participated through a video message that opened the meeting, marking 100 years of development activities in nursing and other specialties in Estonia. The conference offered an overview of the fresh winds of health care, both in terms of digital developments, systemic changes and patient treatment, and brought together 70 leaders of healthcare developments, including nurses, physiotherapists, bio analysts, health system developers, midwives, radiology technicians and other healthcare experts, and more than 600 participants (all being healthcare professionals).
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- » **International Nurses' Day**, celebrated by EFN members on 12 May 2023. The EFN President participated in the celebrations of the Macedonian Nurses Association, and Moldova Nurses Association, through a video message.

- » **Albanian Order of Nurses Congress**, in Tirana - Albania, on 27 October 2023, that highlighted changes in the field of healthcare and that it is now time to coordinate efforts, ensuring and setting high standards for the profession. Invited as keynote speaker the EFN Secretary General gave an overview on who is EFN and what are its key policy priorities at EU level.
- » **Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) - 20th Anniversary International Nurses & Midwives Section Conference**, in Dublin, on 06 December 2023, aiming to recognise the contribution of migrant nurses and midwives to the Irish health service. Invited as keynote speaker, the EFN Secretary General stressed the need to have bridging courses, so migrants comply with Directive 2013/55/EU and as such are considered as EU nurses. The EFN members have extensive experience in the field of equalising the qualification levels of nurses through the system of supplementary studies.



### A. BEWELL – BLUEPRINT ALLIANCE FOR A FUTURE HEALTH WORKFORCE STRATEGY ON DIGITAL AND GREEN SKILLS



The 4-year [BeWell project](#), launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, and co-funded under [Erasmus+ programme](#) (Grant Agreement No 101056563) aims to form an alliance, to build a movement of all healthcare stakeholders supporting and committed to the development, implementation, and upscaling of the strategy on upskilling and reskilling of the European health workforce ; and to develop a green and digital skills strategy for the health ecosystem that can be implemented at a local, regional, national, and ultimately at the European level through the [Pact for Skills](#).

By addressing the existing skill mismatches and strengthening competencies, the project should enable the healthcare professionals to be better prepared to face future challenges and adapt to ever-evolving societal contexts. To reach this ambitious goal, the BeWell project will build comprehensive curricula and training programmes targeting all healthcare professionals, including students, health professionals and professionals of emerging occupations.



The EFN is actively participating in most Work Packages, as the development of the skills strategy (WP3), based on WP2 - mapping of existing upskilling and reskilling initiatives and upscaling analysis/findings, led by European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (Observatory) and the Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research (Nivel). The main purpose of WP3 is to produce a strategy for the European health ecosystem that has systemic and structural impact on reducing skills shortages, gaps and mismatches, as well as ensuring appropriate quality and levels of skills.

The EFN will take part of the development of the exploitation plan once the main results are achieved (WP4, WP5 and WP6). Moreover, having a huge network, the EFN is taking part in WP9 to deliver communication and dissemination activities. The EFN, representing 3 million nurses in EU and 6 million in Europe, is bringing the perspective of frontline nurses to the project with the goal of developing digital and green skills that can truly benefit nurses, healthcare professionals and the entire healthcare ecosystem.

The [consortium](#) consists of 24 beneficiaries and 5 associated partners from 11 countries with a geographical diversity that ensures the representation of different cultural, social, political, educational structures, values and traditions. The partnership brings together a substantial and diverse pool of leaders representing stakeholders in the health sector at regional, national, and European levels.

Consortium: [European Health Management Association \(EHMA\)](#), [ECHAAlliance \(ECHA\)](#), [EuroHealthNet](#), [Nuove Tecnologie della Vita Academy \(ITS\)](#), [Comite Europeen de coordination des industries radiologiques et d'informatique de Sante AISBL \(COCIR\)](#), [EIT Health EV](#), [University of Thessaly \(UTH\)](#), [European Health Telematics Association \(EHTeL\)](#), [Euromasc AS](#), [Wiener Institut für Arbeitsmarkt – und Bildungsforschung \(WIAB\)](#), [European Regional and Local Health Authorities ASBL \(EUREGHA\)](#), [Stichting Nederlands Instituut voor Onderzoek Van de Gezondheidszorg \(NIVEL\)](#), [DATEY Eyrych GMBH \(DATEY\)](#), [Universitatea Babes Bolyai \(UBB\)](#), [Università degli Studi di Bergamo \(UNIBG\)](#), [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [European Specialist Nurses organisation \(ESNO\)](#), [Cesi International \(CESI\)](#), [European Forum for Primary Care \(EFPC\)](#), [Pharmaceutical Group of the EU \(PGEU\)](#), [Medical University of Varna \(MU-Varna\)](#), [Biomedical Alliance in Europe \(BioMed Alliance\)](#), [INNLANDET FYLKESKOMMUNE \(FagInn\)](#), [European Federation of Nurses Associations \(EFN\)](#).

## » Project Meetings

Over the year, the EFN participated in several meetings linked to the project, as:

### i. Work Packages Meetings

Being involved in most of the project Work Packages (WPs), the EFN will follow closely their developments. As such, the EFN has been participating in all the regular teleconferences organised since the beginning of the project, providing the nurses' input whenever requested and where needed. The EFN will continue to do so in 2024.

### i. 1st Winter General Assembly Meeting

The project partners met online on 24 January 2023, to discuss on the project's progress done so far (including the completed Task/Milestones and the upcoming ones) and the project partners next steps/actions.

### ii. BeWell Design Meeting

The 2-Day's BeWell Design Meeting held in Brussels on 30 and 31 January 2023, focused on **WP5 - Design of core curricula and training programmes**, that follows 2 directions:

- ✓ The development of new curricula and training courses for the re-skilling and upskilling of the healthcare professionals focusing on green skills, digital skills and pandemic-related issues.
- ✓ The development of new curricula and training courses for students, healthcare professionals (nurses, doctors, operators, managers) and companies that will connect the needs of the health system and the companies.

Over 2 days, the project partners focused on the development of delivering methodologies for curricula and education & training programmes on urgent needs of the healthcare sector, based on information provided by WP2 first results, the methodology developed by WP5, the urgent needs matrices (WP4), and the questionnaires results (WP5) to establish a plan for the development of the training programs on urgent needs that will be tested during the pilot (WP6).

### iii. Future-proofing health professionals' skills for the digital transition event

The event "Future-proofing health professionals' skills for the digital transition" held on 21 March 2023, as part of a series of events taking place in the European Health Tech Summit, was hosted by MEP Kypouroupolos, at the European Parliament. As 2023 is the European Year of Skills, this panel focused on the challenges and opportunities that health professionals face in upgrading their skills and effectively using digital tools. The event mentioned the digital and green transitions, and the need for healthcare professionals to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in order to adapt to these changes.

### iv. Second General Assembly

The second general assembly meeting of the project took place on 19 & 20 June 2023 in Oslo, Norway. The 2-days meeting was dedicated to the presentation of the latest outcomes i.e., submitted deliverables, means of verifications, and ongoing activities of the project to and by the consortium partners. The project partners discussed the first draft of the Skills Strategy (WP3), which aims to address skill needs and gaps in the healthcare sector and to be implemented at a local, regional, national and at the European level, and focused on the Green Skills for frontline healthcare professionals. From an EFN perspective, it is important to facilitate and co-create concrete nursing planetary health actions, led by nurses in advanced roles. It is important to promote multilateral and inclusive governance by including nurses in decision-making by implementing a trans-sectoral planetary health policy framework. Moreover, the EFN and the other partners of the BeWell project discussed about the training



programmes and curricula. On WP5 deliverables, UTH created a training program on data protection and GDPR, while the University of Bergamo focussed on Big Data and Analytics. The aim of this course is to improve knowledge in clinical databases, database management, clinical data, data distribution.

#### v. 1<sup>st</sup> workshop of the Pact for Skills: Large-scale Partnership for the Health Ecosystem



This [event](#), aimed at engaging for the first time with [members](#) of the Large-Scale Partnership for the Health Ecosystem, to provide an update on the work of [BeWell project](#), and collect their expert feedback on key elements of the project's work – the Theory of Change underlying the [Digital and Green Skills Strategy](#), and the training curricula development activities.

#### » Deliverables

Below some of the 2023 deliverables developed by the consortium:

- [BeWell Skills Strategy](#) (Version 1) – Being one of the main outcomes of the project, this strategy will be developed until the end of the project, and aims to be implemented at a local, regional, national, and ultimately at the European level through the [Pact for Skills](#). A first version of it was launched in June 2023.
- [Skills Monitor](#) - Its goal is to provide an overview of upskilling and reskilling possibilities to empower the digitalisation and ecologicalisation of the health and care sector. You can contribute to it by clicking [here](#).
- [Newsletters](#) – published twice a year, it provides an overview of the most important news related to the project development.

For more information on the project, please visit the project [website](#).

#### » Dissemination

##### << EU and EFN internal meetings

In 2023, the EFN presented the project at the:

- » EFN General Assembly April & October 2023
- » EFN Executive Committee meeting February & September 2023
- » Meetings with European Commissioners & MEPs (e.g.: with DG CONNECT, DG SANTE, DG GROW)
- » EU events in which the EFN participated, organised by EU Stakeholders, etc.

##### EFN Updates >>

The EFN uses its Newsletter (EFN Update) to spread information on the projects to its members and other key EU health alliances. In 2023, the EFN mentioned the project in its Updates of: [January-February-March 2023](#), [April-May-June 2023](#) and [July-August-September 2023](#).



##### << EFN social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram (@EFNBrussels)

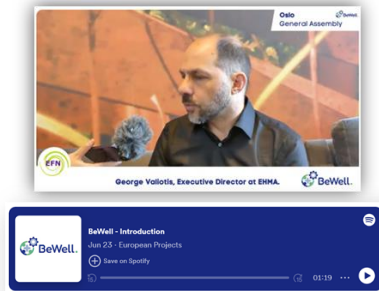
The EFN uses social media to spread information on the project, as on 30 January for BeWell Design meeting, on 20 June to highlight BeWell General Assembly, or on 22 November on the occasion of the workshop on “Pact for Skills”. Key words: #innovation #BeWell #nurses #skillsstrategy #greenskills #digitalskills. **EFN posts reached, in 2023, 20.156 people and 602 people interacted with EFN.** See more [here](#).





## EFN Website >>

To make the project visible, the EFN included a [section](#) dedicated to the project in its Website with some key information. Next to that, the EFN [Website](#) homepage is also important in this process of dissemination. When key, the EFN refers to the project there, as on 31 January 2023 [“BeWell Design Meeting – 2 fruitful days for EFN & partners”](#); or on 22 June 2023 [“BeWell Summer General Assembly”](#).



## << EFN Podcasts & Videos

In 2023, to support the dissemination of the work done in BeWell, the EFN developed a series of podcasts (with interviews done to the leaders of the project and WPs leads) that provided a view on the project developments. They are all available [here](#). Next to the podcasts, the EFN developed a video providing an overview on what is the project with some interviews from the project partners. The video is available [here](#).



## B. [ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS \(EHR\) - CITIZEN-CENTRED EU-EHR EXCHANGE FOR PERSONALISED HEALTH \(SMART4HEALTH\)](#)

### Smart4Health

Over the last 4 years, the EFN had been a partner in [Smart4Health](#) EU project, started in January 2019 and that came to an end in February 2023. Coordinated by UNINOVA (Instituto de Desenvolvimento de Novas Tecnologias (Portugal), under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreements No. 826117), the project brought together 18 partners from medical, social and technical sciences and industry. The project was aiming to put the citizen at the centre of the decisions taken as regards their own healthcare, by enabling the possibility of sharing health data with different clinicians, medical centres, local and international societies, for research activities as well as to engage directly with healthcare providers. Digitalisation of the healthcare systems in the EU and Europe was the protagonist in the exploitation of S4H outcomes.

It is fundamental for the EFN to give to nurses the right digital tools, which can really facilitate frontline services and as such lower down the workload of frontline nurses. As project partner, the EFN was representing nurses as end-users, facilitating a co-design with nurses' representatives, and assisting in the implementation of the project's outcome. All over the project, the EFN made sure that the nurses' views were integrated in the project [developments](#) that would be fit-for-purpose for the end-user. The EFN was responsible for dissemination activities at the EU level, undertaken through EFN [Updates](#), EFN [Website](#) (With a [web page dedicated to the project](#) and through news on the EFN Website [Homepage](#), and through a [video](#) & a [podcast](#), available on EFN Website [podcasts page](#) & [videos page](#)), EFN social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)) – Key words: #smart4health, #digitalisation, #ehealth, #innovation, #nursesengagement, #digitaltools), and through participating in key EU meetings, where the EFN could raise awareness on the project developments. **EFN posts published at the end of the project (February 2023) reached 8.000 people and 200 people interacted with EFN.** See more [here](#).

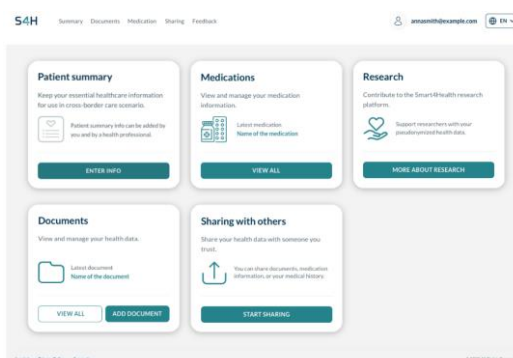
Consortium: [Instituto De Desenvolvimento De Novas Tecnologias-Associacao](#) (PT); [Hasso-Plattner-Institut](#) (DE); [Data4Life](#) (DE); [Healthmatrix](#) (DE); [University of Vienna](#) (Austria); [University Hospital Aachen](#) (DE); [Maastricht University Hospital](#) (NL); [Information Technology For Translational Medicine](#) (LU); [Knowledge Biz](#) (PT); [Elixir - Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine](#) (Lu); [Icahn School Of Medicine At Mount Sinai](#) (US); [Zs Unternehmen Gesundheit](#) (DE); [Ospedale San Raffaele](#) (IT); [Stiftung Hëllef Doheem](#) (Luxembourg); [EASPD](#) (BE); [European Federation of Nurses Associations](#) (BE); [Regiao autonoma da Madeira](#) - Secretaria Regional Da Economia,Turismo e Cultura (PT); [Laboratoire Virtuel Européen](#) (BE).

## » **Project Outcomes**

### ✓ **Smart4Health Citizen Health Data Platform**

It is important for all EU citizens to be able to access their own health data easily and securely within each EU Member State. With this in mind, Smart4Health developed a [prototype application](#) that allows users to access and manage their own health data in various settings, including at home, at the point of care, or while traveling, share it with trusted people (doctor, nurse, etc), and donate their health-related data throughout the EU.

The Smart4Health platform was developed taking into account citizen use cases ([CUCs](#)), based on everyday situations of citizens (hospital and care, at work, at the workplace, travelling and in daily life). These CUCs were tested by different user groups from the fields of nursing, physiotherapy or tourism and the results were the foundation for the continuous development of Smart4Health.



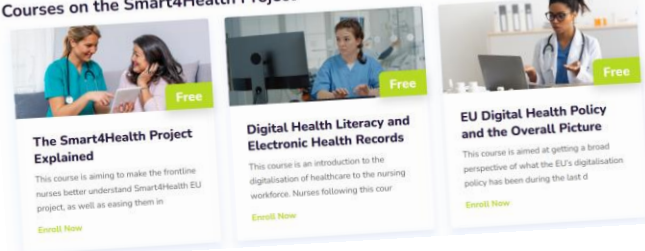
### ✓ **Smart4Health User Portal**

Next to this, the project developed the [Smart4Health User Portal](#) (the Citizen-facing web interface of the Smart4Health Citizen Health Data Platform), where the citizen can find several options as the 'Patient Summary', with all the personal health-related data stored in; 'Medication', with detailed information on the citizen personal medication; 'Documents', where any health-related documents can be uploaded.

### ✓ **Training and education**

In the course of the project, Smart4Health aimed to deliver effective training and education programs to citizens and to medical and research communities, to enable the uptake of the technologies developed by Smart4Health. These consisted in training and education [events](#) that targeted the different Smart4Health users, Health Days in different locations (as in Madeira, Brussels, Lisbon, Bordeaux, etc.) with different target groups, and in close proximity with different medical disciplines and with project partners to enable citizen engagement and to bridge stakeholders, and in the development of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), which allows unlimited participation and open access via the web.

#### Courses on the Smart4Health Project



healthcare professionals; 3/ EU digital health policy, the Smart4Health project, and the overall picture, to the nursing profession - Aimed to make frontline nurses, nurse students, and any other healthcare professionals, have an insight on the EU's digitalisation policy and the differences between the health digitalisation at national and EU level. These 3 MOOCs are now available on the [EFN courses platform](#) (with free access to all).

>> See [here](#) the other project Deliverables

>> See [here](#) the Key Exploitable Results (KERs) of the project

>> See [here](#) the project key Publications



## » Project Meetings

Before the end of the project in February 2023, the project still had some meetings as:

### i. Work Packages Meetings

Being involved in all the Work Packages, the EFN participated in the last meetings of some WPs, aiming to Update the partners on the running tasks, and update on partners contribution, and discuss the Deliverables preparation to be submitted to the European Commission in February 2023 (M50), as: WP1 (Citizen- and Professional-User participation: user requirements and performance criteria), on 13 January 2023; WP2 (4HealthPlatform data layer implementation) & WP3 (4HealthNavigator portal: services and applications layer implementation), on 6 February 2023; WP4 (Citizen Use Cases: Citizens' health in daily life, work, and healthcare settings), on 11 January 2023 and 08 February 2023; WP6 (Dissemination, Exploitation, Sustainability and Communication) on 25 January 2023.

### ii. Final General Assembly



The EFN participated in the final project meeting, that took place on 23-24 February 2023, in Madeira. The project coordinator and WPs' leads gave an overview on the project final developments and deliverables to be provided to the European Commission. Pedro Ramos, Regional Secretary of Health of Madeira stated that: *"We believe in digital, we believe in care"*. This is a key message for the entire healthcare sector and for nurses, as digital innovations and technologies can really facilitate the frontline activities.

The EFN took this opportunity to interview some of the key partners of the project to better understand how to use the results of Smart4Health for the future, the next steps and progress on

this digitalisation process which encompasses the healthcare system in the EU. To see the video click [here](#), and to listen to the podcast click [here](#).

The Smart4Health consortium aimed to empower each individual, increase their digital health literacy, and accompany EU citizens on their way to explore and make the most beneficial use of each personal EHR. It is now essential to follow innovation, to collect health data and to use it to improve research & innovation in the healthcare sector. In this context, nurses can play a key role as the closest healthcare professionals to patients. In this path of innovation and digitalisation, it is essential not to leave anyone behind!

## C. "IMPROVING IMMUNISATION COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION" (IMMUNION)



Co-financed by the European Union Health Programme (2014-2020) under grant agreement No. 101018210, [this 2-year project](#), launched in April 2021, came to an end in March 2023.

Bringing together members of the [Coalition for Vaccination](#), and partners working on vaccination across the EU, the project worked on improving vaccination confidence and uptake, with a focus on underserved populations, by delivering better vaccine education to healthcare professionals and better information to the general public. This was done through various training materials, tools and resources on vaccine communication and confidence, through strengthening collaboration with the media on vaccination. This helped to have a better understanding of the drivers of vaccine inequalities, and to enhance the visibility of the [Coalition for Vaccination](#) and its advocacy campaigns, strengthened media reporting on vaccination, and liaised with other projects to boost communication on immunisation.

As a partner in this project, the EFN made sure that nurses' views and expertise were integrated in the co-creation of fit-for-purpose solutions/deliverables 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.

The EFN was responsible for dissemination activities at the EU level, undertaken through EFN [Updates](#), EFN [Website](#) (With a [web page dedicated to the project](#) and through news on the EFN Website [Homepage](#)), EFN social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) – Key words: #vaccination, #coalitionforvaccination, #IMMUNION), and through participating in key EU meetings, where the EFN could raise awareness on the project, as meetings with European

Commissioners & MEPs (e.g.: with DG CONNECT, DG SANTE), EU Stakeholders, and EFN internal meetings as EFN General Assemblies and EFN Executive Committee meetings.

Consortium: [EurohealthNet](#) (BE) – Coordinator; [Standing Committee of European Doctors](#) (CPME) (BE), [Pharmaceutical Group of European Union](#) (PGEU) (BE); [European Federation of Nurses Associations](#) (EFN) (BE); [University of Antwerp](#) (BE); [Europa Media](#) (HU); [Euractiv Poland](#) (PL); [Istituto Superiore di Sanità](#) (ISS) (IT); [Institutul National de Sanatate Publica](#) (INSP) (RO); [Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) (CDPC) (LT); [Prolepsis Institute](#) (GR); Vienna Vaccine Safety Initiative (VIVI) (DE).

## » **Project Outcomes**

From training courses and communication tools to advocacy and communication campaigns to raise awareness, the project delivered over 2 years various resources and opportunities to improve public health in the EU.

These include:

### ✓ **IMMUNION Project Booklet**

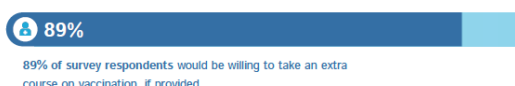
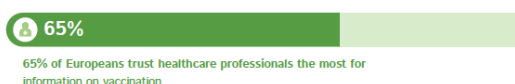
The [IMMUNION booklet](#) provides an overview of the project results. It includes an overview of the training tools and resources designed to support health professionals in their vaccine communication efforts, the advocacy campaigns that were launched or joined by the Coalition for Vaccination members, as well as fruitful collaborations with other organisations and related initiatives.



### ✓ **Vaccine Communication Toolbox**

The [IMMUNION Vaccine Communication Toolbox](#) provides a set of information material as videos, factsheets, communication materials and articles that help health professionals and health authorities raise awareness on immunisation. The tools, that can be filtered according to language, disease, target audience and document type, address a variety of population groups, and focus on different vaccine-preventable diseases. It [focuses](#) primarily on four countries - Greece, Italy, Latvia, and Romania - but it also includes resources developed by international actors.

### ✓ **Survey of Healthcare Professionals**



In 2021, the Coalition for Vaccination co-chairs ([CPME](#), [PGEU](#), and [EFN](#)) carried out a [survey](#) to learn more about healthcare professionals' needs on vaccine training. Over 3.200 professionals from across professions (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, midwives, dentists) and 35 European countries replied to the survey. 89% of the respondents said they would welcome additional training on

vaccination, with online training courses being the preferred type of support. 54% of the respondents feel very confident in answering questions about vaccines. A [research article](#) drawing from the conclusions of the survey was published in March 2023, in Ecricon. Authored by Paul de Raeve and Elizabeth Adams from [EFN](#), Alison Maassen and Alba Godfrey of [EuroHealthNet](#), Markus Kujawa of [CPME](#), Jan de Belie and Ilaria Passarani of [PGEU](#), and Andreas Xyrichis, Senior Lecturer at [King's College London](#), the article highlights that further research is needed to understand the missing link between the efforts of international health agencies to develop information materials and their use by health professionals.

### ✓ **All-inclusive Curriculum on vaccines/vaccinology**

The [curriculum](#), developed as part of several international projects including the EU Joint Action on Vaccination and IMMUNION, has a total of 8 modules, including a detailed module on vaccine communication. Since its publication, the curriculum has been used, reviewed and adapted, according to the current needs of healthcare providers. All materials, including background documents and recordings, are freely available. Stakeholders are invited to develop their own EU/national/local training courses based on the available materials.

### ✓ **Statements & Campaigns**

Throughout the project, the Coalition for Vaccination has [raised awareness](#) of the importance of immunisation in dealing with vaccine-preventable diseases through initiating or taking part in communication campaigns. The common goal of these campaigns was to reduce vaccine mistrust, combat myths, and widen the reach of evidence-based information about



vaccines. To amplify its messages and reach new audiences, IMMUNION [joined forces](#) with other EU-funded projects, forming a network of vaccination projects collaborating on specific issues.

✓ **IMMUNION Final General Assembly**

On 16 January 2023, IMMUNION held its final General Assembly, which was the first time all the partners met together in person. Bringing together 52 participants, the meeting discussed the project activities, and reflected on the successes and challenges of the project.



>> All the resources developed during the project are available on the [Coalition for Vaccination website](#).

### III. BUILDING ALLIANCES

Building alliances and creating partnerships with key organisations to work on particular issues has been the top priority for the EFN, as this is a means of strengthening civil society in the policy-making process and to get successful outcomes not only at EU level but also at national and local levels. In 2023, the EFN continued this process of building alliances and strengthening the ones already established with the key EU non-state stakeholders built up throughout the years. Building alliances is a good way to work closer to the EU Institutions and get nurses' voice and message across their lobby agenda.

#### ➤ Sectorial Professions' Organisations

For the last 20 years, the EFN has been collaborating very closely with the sectorial professions' organisations based in Brussels, working on common topics, as Education (DIR55), Workforce, and Patient Safety and Quality of Care, including digitalisation - the 3 EFN main lobby topics, and participating in the same EU projects, as [BeWell](#), etc. In 2023, the EFN continued this good collaboration through regular meetings with the EU Health Stakeholders as: The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union ([PGEU](#)), representing community pharmacists at EU level; The Standing Committee of European Doctors ([CPME](#)), representing the national medical associations across Europe; The Council of European Dentists ([CED](#)), representing the dentists and promoting oral health in Europe; The European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy / Physiotherapy ([ER-WCPT](#)) representing the physiotherapy profession at European Level; and the European Midwives Association ([EMA](#)), representing midwifery organisations and associations at EU level. The EFN is looking forward to continuing, in 2024, this important collaboration in the EU lobby arena, to build strong alliances to jointly push for quality of care, patient safety, and health system reform.

Next to these NGO's, the EFN continued its close collaboration with the following organisations:

#### ➤ European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA)



[EU-OSHA](#) is the European Union information agency for occupational safety and health, and its work contributes to the European Commission's [Strategic Framework](#) on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027 and other relevant EU strategies and programmes. As the Official Campaign Partner of 'Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2023-25 - [Safe and healthy work in the digital age](#)', the EFN continued to work closely with OSHA in 2023 to create a safe workplace to improve trust and safety for all the EU healthcare professionals, namely through some meetings, and a campaign on EFN social media channels from 23 to 27 October 2023 (Key words: #DigitalWorkSafety; #DigitalTransformation; #safeworkplace; #EUhealthyworkplaces). The EFN looks forward to continuing to strengthen this close collaboration in 2024.

#### ➤ European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE)



Representing hospitals, [HOPE](#) aims to promote improvements in the health of citizens throughout Europe, fostering efficiency, effectiveness and humanity in the organisation and operation of hospital and healthcare services. As with the sectorial professions' organisations, HOPE has been collaborating closely with EFN in the EU lobby arena, over the years, in many topics: Education, Patient Safety & Quality of Care, including eHealth, workforce, including professionals' mobility, new skills, Cross-Border healthcare, just to name a few. In 2023, the EFN and HOPE have been collaborating namely on HERA, as leads of the WG3 (*For more information on HERA, see page 18*). The EFN is looking forward to continuing this close collaboration with HOPE in 2024.

#### ➤ European Public Services Union (EPSU)



The EFN has always valued a solid partnership with social partners, particularly with regards to creating common positions, evaluating the implications of health policies for health care services, and monitoring the implementation of key legislation at national level. In 2023, the EFN and EPSU continued their dialogue, sharing views and experiences on issues that are of key concern to both parties, namely on: staff shortages - for which a [joint statement](#) was submitted to the WHO RC73 on the Framework of Action on Health and Care Workforce, and on Social Dialogue – a key priority in the Belgium EU Presidency agenda. The EFN looks forward to continuing to strengthen this close collaboration in 2024.

### International Council of Nurses (ICN)



Representing the nurses worldwide, and having an observer status in EFN General Assemblies, the [ICN](#) has been collaborating with EFN on some nurses and nursing key topics for many years. In 2023, the EFN and ICN continued their good collaboration, namely through ICN participation in EFN General Assemblies and EFN participation at the 29<sup>th</sup> ICN Congress, in June 2023, in Canada, where Wendy Preston, from the Royal College of Nursing, represented EFN, providing an overview of EFN WG latest developments on [APN](#), and where Aristides Chorattas, as EFN Vice-President, provided an overview on universal health coverage at the Euro Regional Session that included common EFN/ICN concerns as [Workforce](#); [preparedness](#) for future pandemics; [Planetary Health](#). The EFN will continue this close collaboration in 2024. Other topics of common interests in 2023 relate to the war in Ukraine – support to Ukraine nurses' refugees and still in Ukraine, ILO, patient safety, safe staffing levels. The EFN looks forward to continuing this close collaboration in 2024.

### MedTech Europe



Bringing together companies from across the medical technology sector to champion what MedTech believes is the future of healthcare - Community Care, [MedTech Europe Community Care Sector Committee](#) was in contact with the EFN, and other European Organizations, on the topic of the AI Act, for which a joint healthcare stakeholder statement was developed together with other 10 organisations and published in June 2023 (*For more information on this, see page 15*). The EFN looks forward to continuing this close collaboration in 2024.

### World Health Organisation (WHO)



Over the last 20 years, the EFN has been engaged with WHO Europe in different ways, as: by having an observer status in WHO Regional Committee (RC) meetings, by participating in several WHO & WHO RC meetings, and by contributing to consultations/debates, to make sure that the nurses' views were taken into account in the debate. WHO EFNNMA is having an Observer status within EFN General Assemblies. Aiming to continue and strengthen this close collaboration with WHO & WHO Forum, namely on Health systems reform, Digitalisation, Primary care, and Nursing workforce, the EFN has been looking closely at these developments and is participating in the WHO Regional Committees' meetings. Next to EFN being an official partner of the WHO European Region, the EFN Secretary General, Paul De Raeve, is part of Roster of Experts of the [WHO Digital Health Technical Advisory Group](#), a group that harnesses the power of digital health. The EFN is part of the [WHO Consortium of non-state actors](#), and of the [WHO Civil Society Commission](#) aiming to strengthen dialogue, foster collaboration and provide recommendations to support WHO's Secretariat in its engagement with civil society at global, regional, and national levels to achieve health for all.

In 2023, the EFN had/organised some meetings with WHO, as:

- **WHO Leadership Dialogue meeting on [Global Health Diplomacy](#)**, that brought together key policy actors as diplomats, academic experts, EU officials, public health specialists and civil society representatives to exchange views on how to build a healthier and fairer future. This was a good opportunity for the Belgium EU Presidency to highlight its political priorities, with health as a top priority in its agenda.
- **WHO-EFN-EFNNMA meetings series**, designed to support the implementation of the [Nursing and Midwifery WHO Euro Roadmap](#) by focusing on each of the four strategic priorities for development: Education, Jobs, Leadership and Service Delivery. *See more on these meetings on page 26.*
- **73<sup>rd</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe**, October 2023. Even though the EFN was not present in Kazakhstan, the EFN made sure that the nurses' voice was part of the policy topics/debates, through:
  - ➔ Attending the [WHO Pre-RC73 side-events](#), that were held in September and October 2023, on key topics as: [European Quality of Care and Patient Safety Status Report - State of Play and Future Prospects](#); [Launch of the Youth4Health Network](#); Supporting health leadership for the present while developing health leadership for the future; NSA engagement opportunities for the 73rd session of the WHO Regional Committee; [The Emergency Medical Teams Initiative in the WHO European Region: taking the Global 2030 Strategy to the regional, subregional and national levels](#); [Briefing on the Health Systems Conference: Trust and Transformation](#).

↳ **Joint statements**, to show EU Stakeholders' cooperation and dedication to key topics that deserve concrete attention and action as a priority:

1. [Joint Statement by PSI-CPME-EFN on Workforce](#) (agenda item 4 on "Framework for action on the health and care workforce in the WHO European Region 2023-2030") calling on to ensure that healthcare professionals are not subjected to conditions in which they are worried about their patients' safety or their own economic or health situation.
2. [Joint Statement by ICN-EFNNMA-ENC-EFN on workforce](#) (agenda item 4 on "Framework for action on the health and care workforce in the WHO European Region 2023-2030") calling on the Member states to develop robust regulatory mechanisms to ensure the competence and professional development of nurses and midwives based on the EU directive the mutual recognition of professional qualifications.
3. [Joint Statement by WONCA Europe and other Non-State Actors, including EFN, on Shortage of European Primary Care Workforce](#) (agenda item 4 on "Framework for action on the health and care workforce in the WHO European Region 2023-2030") calling on policymakers to endorse initiatives aimed at alleviating the burdens on primary care practitioners and effectively resolving the scarcity of primary healthcare personnel.
4. [Civil Society Joint Statement on the Roadmap on antimicrobial resistance](#) (agenda item 5 on Roadmap on antimicrobial resistance for the WHO European Region 2023–2030) calling on governments, international organisations, and the private sector to keep the One Health Approach to AMR a priority on their agendas, and on the WHO European Region Member States to promote the prudent use of antibiotics in all sectors by investing into independent public research on the development of new antibiotics, and into innovative solutions for prevention, diagnostic and treatment strategies, and to supporting cooperation between public and private actors by providing incentives for innovation and by setting fair, goal-driven conditions for collaboration.

The EFN looks forward to continuing this close collaboration in 2024.

## V. A FUTURE FOR EVIDENCE BASE POLICYMAKING

### A. EUROPEAN NURSING RESEARCH FOUNDATION



Founded by the EFN in 2013, within the context of the increasing emphasis placed on nursing research at EU level to secure reliable evidence from which to base future workforce decisions, the European Nursing Research Foundation (ENRF) is aiming at making the bridge between evidence and policy-making process and act as a contact point for EU policy-makers and politicians, and analysing and compiling what already exists in terms of nursing research in the EU Member States, in order to convert existing data into evidence-based advocacy for the EU policy-making process.

Although 2023, was another challenging for the nurses, the [ENRF continued its work](#) of setting the future of the EU nursing research, building on the work started in the previous years. Nursing research and researchers are key to move from EU research fragmentation and the lack of coherence towards impactful and outcome-oriented research outcomes with a key focus on exploitation.

#### ↳ [ENRF Governance body](#)

The ENRF Board of Directors (BoD) is responsible for defining the policies and priorities of the Foundation in accordance with its mission, vision and constitutional aims, included in the [ENRF strategic plan \(2021-2024\)](#) (SORP) that contains a set of values, content and theme for the Foundation to work on. The ENRF [governance body](#) is currently composed by three Directors, and the ENRF Secretary General, Paul De Raeve:

#### - **Founding EFN Director and ENRF President:**



Anne Marie Rafferty  
*King's College London – UK*

#### - **EFN Directors:**



Izabella Uchmanowicz  
*Wroclaw Medical University – Poland*  
ENRF Vice-President



Andreas Xyrichis  
*King's College London – UK*  
ENRF Treasurer

#### - **ENRF Secretary General:**



Paul De Raeve

#### ↳ [ENRF activities](#)

In 2023, the ENRF continued taking forward its activities, even though reduced, in compliance with the agreement of the October 2019 EFN General Assembly, in Greece, and in the context of rethinking the future of the Foundation. Which meant for the ENRF Office the circulation of less Newsletters, less Briefing Notes, attending less meetings, no social media, etc. But



keeping always the EFN members, the ENRF Board of Directors and the ENRF Reference Points informed on the key developments for nursing research, and developing some key documents as agreed by the EFN Members in 2019.

### i. Evidence Based Policy Briefs

Over 2021 and 2022, the ENRF developed 6 key Policy Briefs: [Care left Undone](#); [Digitalisation](#); [Nursing Mentorship](#); [Advanced Practice Nursing](#); [Nursing Planetary Health](#) and [Violence Against Nurses](#), with their own recommendations. These Policy Briefs are now being used to support the EFN lobby work towards the EU institutions and the ENRF developments. They are all available on [ENRF Website](#).



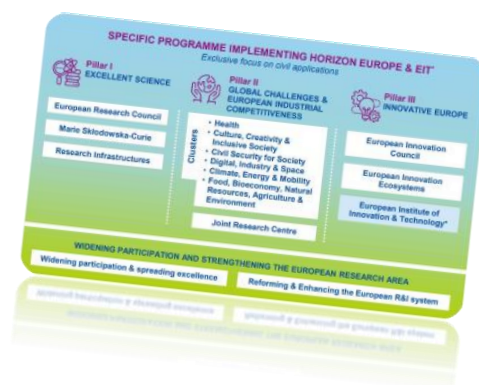
### ii. Stakeholder & Policy Mapping

In 2021 and 2022, the ENRF developed the ENRF Stakeholder & Policy Mapping providing an analysis of the EU policy actors, networks and funding agendas in order to influence research policy and support EFN work, based on the [ENRF SORP \(2021-2024\)](#). In January 2023, the EFN Directors agreed to draw out an exploitation plan linking the [6 ENRF Policy Briefs](#) and the ENRF Stakeholder Mapping process, with targets and people to meet and have a dialogue with, in connection with the [EFN SOLP](#) & [ENRF SORP](#). The [ENRF Stakeholder & Policy Mapping](#) was thus updated to include this overview and identify the key priorities to focus on to influence the research policy process of the European Commission.



### iii. Health & Research EU agenda

As in the previous years, and as part of it [SORP 2021-2024](#), the ENRF followed closely the developments on the health & research EU agenda, and in particular [Horizon Europe](#) - EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a [budget of €95.5 billion](#), knowing that nursing research can bring a strong contribution to the EU Health Research Programme focusing on improving health conditions across all the EU Member States through better prevention, access, and treatment. To ensure that the nurses' researchers and the EFN Members are prepared for the new Horizon Europe calls, namely under "[Cluster Health](#)", the ENRF followed closely these developments, participating in some meetings at EU level on the topic, and reporting the key information on this to the ENRF nurse researchers and the EFN members through **ENRF Briefing Notes** (sent by email & available on [ENRF Website](#)): [Horizon Europe – Cluster 1](#) (02/06/2023); [UK researchers to join again Horizon Europe in 2024](#) (20/09/2023); **through the ENRF Website homepage**: [Horizon Europe – Cluster 1: Research info days](#) (09/01/2023); [Horizon Europe Health single stage calls for proposals](#) (06/02/2023); [Horizon Europe Proposal – How to succeed](#) (16/05/2023); [Horizon Europe – A world of opportunities](#) (22/05/2023); [Guide to EU Funding - 2023](#) (28/06/2023); [Horizon Europe: London and Brussels have a deal!](#) (08/09/2023); **and through the ENRF Newsletters** (sent by email & available on [ENRF Website](#)): [May 2023](#). Using Horizon Europe funds to boost, support and improve nursing research is a great opportunity to create a more resilient healthcare system.



### iv. Alliance building

Building alliances and creating partnerships, next to strengthening the ones already established with key EU stakeholders and EU policy decision-makers is key for an organisation to grow and to achieve concrete outcomes. Contributing to an efficient information flow, the ENRF looked, in 2023, at building reliable alliances with key EU health and social Stakeholders, and policy and decision-makers, to ensure that nursing research gets higher on the EU Research and Innovation Agenda, and participated in some key EU meetings as: the [Research Seminar on "Labour and skills shortages in the EU"](#), on 17 January 2023, where recent research on labour and skills shortages and skill forecasts in the EU were discussed; [Talking Europe with Marc Lemaître, Director General of DG Research and Innovation \(DG RTD\)](#), on 22 May 2023, where the DG

RTD work and future activities, including the Digital Education Action Plan, the New European Bauhaus, the EU Green Deal, and Horizon Europe where discussed; Horizon Europe Info Day, on 1st June 2023, that focused on the [Cluster 1 on “Health” Work Programme for 2024](#), and informed the participants on the funding opportunities available, put in place by the European Commission to support and improve the healthcare sector; or the Health European Summit: Innovation in health for a brighter future, on 10 October 2023, where innovation and digitalisation of health systems were discussed.

## v. Communication

Crucial to enhance effectiveness, communicating on the ENRF activities is key for making it visualised, to get the message across, and to engage ENRF reference points to the work of the ENRF, making the Foundation more visible, especially at EU level. In 2023, in order to share important information on nursing research at EU level, the ENRF continued to use its [Website](#), namely its homepage, to publish key information, next to its [Briefing Notes](#), and [Newsletters](#), sent to the ENRF Reference Points and the EFN Members.

### » Revision of the ENRF Communication Material

In January 2022, the ENRF Board of Directors approved the review of the ENRF communication materials (Newsletter, Activity Report, Briefing Notes, etc.) by an external company, to show the impact of ENRF. At their meeting in January 2023, the ENRF Directors discussed and approved the reviewed material, being used since then.

## vi. Board of Directors meetings

In 2023, the ENRF Board of Directors met on:

- **11 January (Online)** - to reflect on the work done so far, and on the activities to be done in 2023, focussing the ENRF SORP, the development of the ENRF Stakeholders & Policy Mapping, the ENRF Communication tools' review, and the future of the ENRF review.
- **12 July (Online)** - To discuss on the Due Diligence Report conducted by Aurion (a Brussels' law company), and to prepare the joint ENRF BoD/EFN Executive Committee meeting of 12 July 2023, aiming to brief the EFN Executive Committee the outcomes of the Due Diligence Report and next steps.



## vii. EFN Executive Committees & General Assemblies

As done since its establishment, the EFN Executive Committee and General Assembly were, in 2023, continuously informed on the ENRF ongoing developments, as well as on the ENRF Directors' reflections on the future of the Foundation reported to and discussed at the EFN Executive Committee meetings and General Assemblies.

The joint ENRF BoD/EFN Executive Committee meeting held on 12 July 2023, discussed the future and sustainability of the Foundation, including the Due Diligence Report, and recommendations from the ENRF BoD to the EFN EXCOM. The EFN October 2023 General Assembly was informed on the outcomes of the Due Diligence Report

and recommendations and were asked to discuss/decide on the future of the ENRF.

## viii. Future of the ENRF

Following on the ENRF BoD/EFN EXCOM meeting on 12 July, the EFN EXCOM discussed and approved some options, recommendations and next steps, at their face-to-face meeting in Brussels, to bring to the EFN October 2023 General Assembly, in Spain, where the EFN members were asked to discuss and decide on the future of the Foundation. Based on the overview on the different options provided by the EFN Vice-President (on behalf of the EFN EXCOM) and from a more legal perspective, by the EFN lawyer, the EFN Members voted unanimously for the dissolution of ENRF. The EFN members believe that nursing research is key, but the ENRF's mission to use research to influence EU policymaking, is something the EFN is already doing in its daily lobby work. Therefore, there is no need to have two organisations doing the same.

## ↳ Conclusion

After difficult pandemic years, the challenges frontline nurses are facing, and the emerging needs, are huge. If we consider today that nurses are massively leaving the profession due to bad working conditions, low salaries, high workloads, or poor mental health support, this takes another dimension. In this context, research and innovation play a key role in maintaining and promoting the health of European citizens while fostering the development of quality, efficient, and safe healthcare services delivery. From a nursing research perspective, investing in research and innovation is investing in Europe's future. For the ENRF, the work stops here, but it is clear that research will continue to be a main driver for policy developments, not least in the health sector. The EFN will make sure this key component is taken into account in any health development.

## V. EFN DATA COLLECTION

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To gather quantity and quality evidence, the EFN uses data collection (through email, online surveys, or during the EFN General Assemblies with the Tour de Table item) as key component in its daily lobby work. The information shared by the EFN Members strengthens EFN position statements, EFN daily lobby work with the EU institutions, and members lobby work at national level. This allows to provide the EU institutions, and key EU stakeholders with up-to-date information/data to take informed decisions and consider the next steps on crucial topics, and make sure that the EU health policies reflect the nurse's reality to better shape fit-for-purpose solutions and initiatives in the healthcare sector. In 2023, the EFN collected data on two key topics under to influence the EU policy discussions and decision-making process:

### **Education/training curricula targeting digitalisation, sustainability and resilience (April 2023)**

The changes and continuous pressure on healthcare systems have shown how crucial digitalisation, resilience and sustainability of our healthcare systems are for patient safety and quality of care. Given the nurses' role as key end-users, nurses input to the developments are essential, namely when focussing on fit-for-purpose systems/tools. The data collected during the EFN General Assembly in April 2023, in the Tour de Table, shows that in some countries digitalisation is included in the nurses' education, and in some others, initiatives are being undertaken at the NNA level, including online courses, online resources, or free access to scientific databases. Sustainability, including green skills, and resilience are furthermore perceived as key, being prioritised in some EFN members' countries educational settings for nurses. For the EFN members, of which some of them were involved in the design of the education/training curricula, it is time to act, and the focus should be on digital skills' development and on developing digital literacy among nurses. The report is available on [EFN Website](#).

### **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR - One Health Approach)**

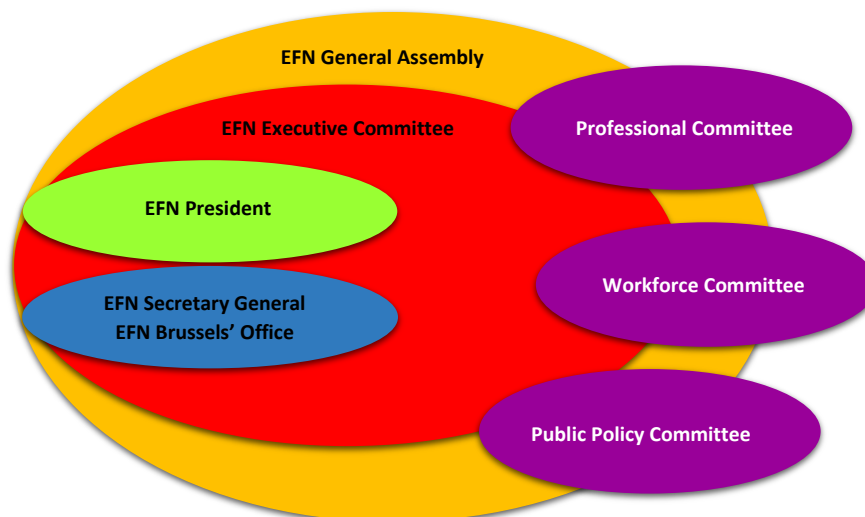
Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) represents one of the most current critical concerns of public health. The European Commission estimates that antibiotic-resistant bacteria have been associated with the death of more 35,000 people in the EU/EEA and it has significant costs for the healthcare systems. As such, at the October 2023 EFN General Assembly, the EFN members were requested to provide best practices on AMR One Health Approach, identifying the needs for policy initiatives based on developments led by nurses at national level, aiming to foster a common understanding and promote the implementation of the One Health concept. The data collected shows that in all the EU countries the role of nurses is fundamental for tackling AMR, but it is often underestimated. Thus, the number of nurse prescribers is still too low, and, in some countries, more and more are expected to be needed in the not-too-distant future. The data collected highlights that in many countries, there are no specific policies implemented for the protection of nurses exposed to antibiotics. Therefore, nurses' input to AMR strategy and developments is crucial to have "fit for purpose" policies to combat AMR at all levels. The report is available on [EFN Website](#).

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## VI. EFN GOVERNANCE

### A. EFN STRUCTURE

The EFN governance structure consists of the General Assembly, which includes 36 National Nurses' Associations, supported by the Executive Committee, the Professional, Workforce and Public Policy Committees, and the EFN Brussels Office.



### B. EFN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As the EFN governing body, the General Assembly meets twice a year to discuss the important issues related to the EFN lobby work that can influence the nurses and the nursing profession at EU and national levels, to discuss and endorse key Policy and Position Statements, and to work on several EU projects.

The EFN General Assembly is constituted by:

- ↳ **Members** - drawn from the [National Nurses' Associations](#) from the twenty-seven EU Member States + Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, UK, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia.
- ↳ **Observers** - International Council of Nurses ([ICN](#)); World Health Organisation ([WHO](#)); and the European Nursing Students Association (ENSA).

To view the full list of the EFN Members, updated on regular basis, please visit the [EFN Website](#).

In 2023, the EFN Members on 13-14 April 2023, in Croatia, for their [Spring General Assembly](#), and on 19-20 October 2023, in Spain, for their [Autumn General Assembly](#). The minutes of the General Assemblies are not publicly available. The EFN Members can access them via the [Members' section of EFN Website](#). In 2024, the EFN General Assembly will meet on 11-12 April, in Brussels, and on 17-18 October, in Poland.

### C. EFN COMMITTEES

Constituted in 2006, in order to prepare and facilitate the EFN lobby process towards the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (EU Presidency), the three EFN Committees meet twice a year during the EFN General Assemblies in order to discuss and produce recommendations to the General Assembly on the steps forward to achieve concrete outcomes related to specific issues. In 2023, the 3 Committees discussed/approved the following key documents/topics:

- **Professional Committee:** Led by Wolfgang Kuttner, from the Austrian Nurses Association, the Professional Committee discussed and approved in 2023: [Advanced Practice Nurse \(APN\) Strategy/Work Plan and Roadmap](#), [EFN Policy Statement on the European Global Health Strategy](#), [EFN European Election Manifesto](#), [EFN Policy Statement on Lifelong Learning and Continuous Professional Development](#).



- **Workforce Committee:** Led by Aristides Chorattas, from Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association, the Workforce Committee discussed and approved, in 2023: [Advanced Practice Nurse \(APN\) Strategy/Work Plan and Roadmap](#), [EFN Policy Statement on the European Year of Skills 2023](#), [EFN European Election Manifesto](#), [EFN Policy Statement on Safe Staffing Levels](#).
- **Public Policy Committee:** Led by Monika Azman, from Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, the Public Policy Committee discussed and approved in 2023: [Advanced Practice Nurse \(APN\) Strategy/Work Plan and Roadmap](#), [EFN Policy Statement on the European Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#), [EFN European Election Manifesto](#), [EFN Policy Statement on AMR One Health Approach](#).

## D. EFN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The [EFN Executive Committee](#) is constituted by seven members: President, Vice-president, Treasurer and four delegates elected by the EFN Members National Nurses' Associations. They meet at least twice a year (in between each General Assembly) to discuss key issues for the EFN, to prepare recommendations for the General Assembly, and to follow-up on the General Assembly decisions. An extraordinary Executive Committee meeting usually takes place the day before each General Assembly to set up the last recommendations for the meeting, and anytime needed to take any urgent decision or discuss a key topic.

### a. Meetings

In 2023, the EFN Executive Committee met several times: on 2 February (Online) and 7 September (in the EFN Office, in Brussels) for their regular meetings, and on 12 April 2023, in Croatia, and on 18 October 2023, in Spain, for their extraordinary meetings. In 2024, the Executive Committee will meet for their regular meetings on: 1<sup>st</sup> February and 3 September.

### b. Elections

At the Autumn EFN General Assembly held on 19-20 October 2023, in Spain, the EFN members elected the following members of the EFN Executive Committee, as per EFN Constitution & Internal Regulation: **EFN President:** Aristides Chorattas, Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association (Cyprus) (49 votes in favour, 3 abstentions); **EFN Treasurer:** Yves Mengal, Fédération Nationale des Infirmières de Belgique (FNIB) (Belgium) (43 votes in favour, 10 abstentions); and **2 Members of the Executive Committee:** Dorthe Boe Danbjorg (DNO) (38 votes in favour); and Tony Fitzpatrick (40 votes in favour), for a two-year term 2023-2025.

Following Aristides Chorattas election as President, and thus not finishing his term as Vice-President (2022-2024), elections for this empty position will take place online in January 2024, as replacement from January to October 2024 when elections for the new term will take place.

As a result, the new Executive Committee is constituted as follow:



**President:** Mr Aristides Chorattas, Cyprus Nurses and Midwives Association, Cyprus



**Treasurer:** Mr Yves Mengal, Fédération Nationale des Infirmières de Belgique (FNIB), Belgium

#### Four Executive Committee Members:



**Mr Wolfgang Kuttner**, Austrian Nurses Association, *Austria*



**Ms Dorthe Boe Danbjørg**, Danish Nurses Organisation, *Denmark*



**Mr Tony Fitzpatrick**, Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, *Ireland*



**Ms Monika Azman**, Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, *Slovenia*

#### E. EFN BRUSSELS OFFICE

In 2023, the EFN Brussels Office, consisting of the Secretary General, the Secretary, and the Communication & Social Media Advisor, supported by consultants in the area of Accounting, Social Security System, Web and IT management, Legal Affairs and on specific policy areas, especially during the EFN General Assemblies, continued focussing on implementing the EFN Strategic Lobby Plan 2021-2027.

Having a proactive approach to setting the EU health and social policy agenda by influencing the major policy initiatives from the European Institutions, which in turn impacts on nurses and the nursing profession, is the core business of EFN. Translating this political journey into the 'language' of the EFN members, through the EFN Updates, Press Releases and Briefing Notes, bridges the distance between Brussels and the governmental capital of the Member States where national policies are developed. Informing and keeping the EFN members up to speed is essential in putting them in an advanced position vis-à-vis their national governments. But equally important is the engagement of the EFN members in the Brussels' lobbying process 'to put a human face to policymaking'.

As such, having an EFN Office in Brussels equipped with highly educated and motivated staff, and empowering members to exchange views on specific EU policy areas, thus enabling them to go back home with the capacity to influence national governments is, in fact, the 'raison d'être' of EFN.



**Paul De Raeve**  
EFN Secretary General



**Fatima Pereira**  
EFN Secretary



**Alessia Suma**  
EFN Communication  
& Social Media Advisor

## VII. COMMUNICATION

For the EFN, it is essential that its members have the necessary information, knowledge and experience to take informed decisions on the key issues related to the nursing profession, not only during the EFN General Assemblies, but also when an item is being discussed and/or needs urgent attention, decision and/or action. In order to be as reactive and proactive as possible, the EFN Brussels Office regularly provides the EFN members with up-to-date information on the most recent items discussed at EU level, through updates, briefing notes, press releases, position statements, and articles. Most of these documents are made available to the public via the EFN Website: [www.efn.eu](http://www.efn.eu)

### EFN Website

The [EFN website](http://www.efn.eu) is used as a key communication channel to disseminate information to the EFN members, the EU health stakeholders, key decision-makers, and the public in general. Updated on regular basis, the EFN Website reflects the EFN on-going activities and most relevant information showing the dynamics and impact of EFN on EU policymaking.



### Social Media

Social media is nowadays an important tool to share and exchange information within the EU lobby arena. In order to be more visible in the social media network and to get EFN messages closer to the European stakeholders, the MEPs, the European Commission representatives, and the nurses all over the EU, the EFN is using [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/efnbrussels); [Twitter](https://twitter.com/EFNBussels); [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/efnbrussels) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/efn-europe). Overall, we can say that in 2023, **EFN social media campaigns reached 282.756 people from all over the world**, with a top of 118.294 people on LinkedIn, 114.294 people on Facebook, 39.099 people on Twitter, and 11.069 people on Instagram. **11.659 people** interacted or reacted to it, with a top of 6.346 reactions on Facebook, followed by LinkedIn with 3.509 reactions, then Twitter with 1.297 reactions, and Instagram with 507 reactions (See [here](#) the *EFN Social Media Summary report for 2023*). See below more details.

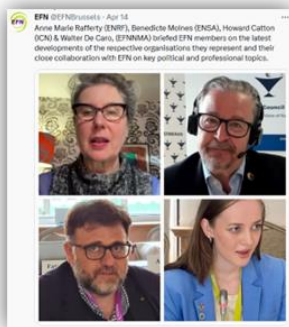
#### EFN Facebook: /efnbrussels

The EFN Facebook account has 3.300 followers. In 2023, the EFN was quite active on Facebook, with many posts published, with a **top of views** reached with the one published on 13/04/2023, seen by **20.180 people**, followed by the one on 10/10/2023, seen by **4.715 people**, and the one on 10/10/2023, seen by **3.587 people**.



#### EFN Twitter: @EFNBussels

The EFN Twitter account has currently 1.495 followers. In 2023, the EFN was quite active on Twitter, with many tweets, and a **top tweet** published on 14/04/2023, **seen by 4.034 people**, followed by the one published on 22/11/2023, seen by **1.051 people** and the one on 16/04/2023, seen by **614 people**.



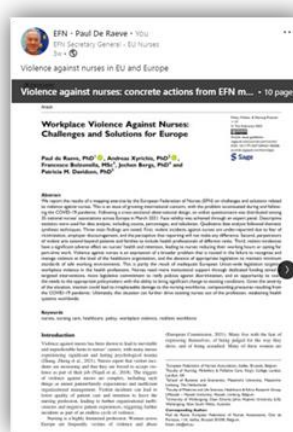
## 📌 EFN Instagram: @efn\_brussels

As for Facebook & Twitter, the EFN is using Instagram to publish the most relevant information. The EFN Instagram account has currently 333 followers. In 2023, the EFN was quite active on Instagram, with a **top post** published on 20/10/2023, **seen by 119 people**, followed by another one on 10/10/2023, **seen by 97 people**, and one on 20/10/2023, **seen by 94 people**.



## 📌 LinkedIn: @EFN - Paul De Raeye

Finally, the EFN is using LinkedIn to publish the most relevant information. The EFN LinkedIn account has currently 15.495 followers. In 2023, the EFN was quite active on LinkedIn, with a **top post** published on 22/11/2023, **seen by 4.112 people**, followed by another one on 15/11/2023, **seen by 2.653 people**, and one on 16/11/2023, **seen by 2.744 people**.





### ➤ EFN Podcasts

In 2023, the EFN introduced the EFN podcasts in its communication strategy. Publicly available on [EFN Website](#), these podcasts aim to make the audience aware of the EFN work at European level by leading or participating actively in EU Projects and giving the voice to nurses to tell us a bit more on their experience in the ground in some key subjects. So far, the EFN has published several podcasts under 3 different themes: **1/ “Nursing Themes”** – with already 3 podcasts on key nursing topics “Nurses’ Workforce & NCD in Europe”, “Mentorship”, and “Workforce”; **2/ “Nurses’ voice”** - aiming to give a direct voice to the frontline nurses’ experience in the healthcare ecosystem post-covid – with 3 testimonies published; and **3/ “EU Projects”** – with several podcasts done with BeWell project leaders/WP leads, and Smart4Health (on the occasion of the end of the project).

### ➤ EFN Videos

Being used for some years now as a communication tool, the EFN published in 2023 several videos, namely on the EU projects Smart4Health and BeWell, two interviews made by EFN Secretary General, and some frontline nurses’ testimonies on their experience as frontline nurses. These are available on [EFN Website](#).

### ➤ EFN Update

On regular basis, when significant lobby information is available, the EFN publishes its [Update](#), a newsletter that makes reference to the main information for nurses and the nursing profession within the European Union and to the key issues to influence the European Institutions. These ‘Updates’ keep the EFN Members and other key EU health alliances informed about the EFN policies, actions and relevant EU initiatives. In 2023, the EFN published 4 Updates: [January-February-March 2023](#); [April-May-June 2023](#); [July-August-September 2023](#); [October-November-December 2023](#). All the EFN Updates are available at: [https://efn.eu/?page\\_id=875](https://efn.eu/?page_id=875)

### ➤ EFN Press Releases

Another approach that the EFN is using to communicate with the EU lobby arena is through its press releases. The [EFN Press Releases](#) provide the EFN members and other key EU health actors, with information on key topics that the EFN believes are important to share, at a crucial moment. These are seen as a good way to reaffirm EFN views/position on a particular topic next to the EU Institutions and the EU stakeholders. All the EFN Press Releases are available at: [https://efn.eu/?page\\_id=882](https://efn.eu/?page_id=882)

### ➤ EFN Policy Statements and Position Papers

The [EFN Policy Statements and Position Papers](#), highlighting the EFN members views on specific issues, and approved by the EFN General Assembly, are crucial for the EFN’s lobby work next to the different EU Institutions and EU Stakeholders, and to support the EFN Members in their daily lobby work at national and EU level. In 2023, the EFN members adopted the EFN Policy Statements on: [European Global Health Strategy](#) (April 2023); [European Year of Skills 2023](#) (April 2023); [European Health Data Space \(EHDS\)](#) (April 2023); [Lifelong Learning and Continuous Professional Development](#) (October 2023); [Safe Staffing Levels](#) (October 2023); [AMR One Health Approach](#) (October 2023). All the EFN Policy Statements and Position Papers are available at: [https://efn.eu/?page\\_id=833](https://efn.eu/?page_id=833)

### ➤ EFN inputs to the European Commission Consultation Processes

Answering European Commission consultations is a great opportunity to increase the EFN visibility and making sure the nurses’ voice is heard at EU level. As such, the EFN always provides input to the European Commission consultations when seen relevant. Unfortunately, in 2023, no major EU consultations were made available for the EFN to provide input. Only two public consultations were seen relevant to provide input to: [Public Consultation on Stakeholders’ Targeted Consultation EU4Health Annual Work Programme 2024](#) (April 2023); [eHealth Network draft guideline on the electronic exchange of health data under Cross-Border Directive 2011/24/EU - Hospital Discharge Reports](#) (June 2023). All the EFN contributions to the European Commission consultation processes are available at: [https://efn.eu/?page\\_id=873](https://efn.eu/?page_id=873)

### ➤ EFN Articles

Publishing [articles](#) is a good way for the EFN to increase the visibility of nurses and the nursing profession at European level, to strengthen the EFN’s position on a range of key policy issues, and to increase the impact of the EFN messages and their



potential influence on the policy design. In 2023, the EFN published the following articles: [Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, midwives, support workers and students lack of confidence in vaccine advocacy](#) (March 2023); [EU pipeline legislation and exploitation of EHDS and AI](#) (May 2023); [Workplace Violence Against Nurses: Challenges and Solutions for Europe](#) (October 2023); [Advanced Practice Nursing in Europe – Results from a pan-European survey of 35 countries: Empirical Research Quantitative](#) (October 2023); [Keeping Nurses into their Job](#) (November 2023). All the EFN articles are available at: [https://efn.eu/?page\\_id=2258](https://efn.eu/?page_id=2258)

#### ➤ **EFN Briefing Notes**

The [EFN Briefing Notes](#), available only to the EFN members via email and/or the members' section of EFN Website, provide specific information on key lobby topics that may influence the EFN members' national policies and daily lobby work. In 2023, the EFN published some Briefing Notes on key items: BeWell Design Meeting on upskilling and reskilling of the European healthcare workforce (January 2023); Directive on Violence against Women (February 2023); WHO High level Meeting on Health and Care Workforce (March 2023); new AMR Roadmap for the WHO European Region 2023-2030 (March 2023); EP IMCO vote on EHDS draft opinion (May 2023); Joint Statement on EHDS Opt-Out (June 2023); Swedish EU Presidency Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting (June 2023); European Parliament vote on AI Act (June 2023); Joint statement on EHDS and EU Institutions Negotiations (June 2023); AMR Swedish EU Presidency high-level meeting (June 2023); COVI special Committee report "COVID-19 pandemic lessons learned and recommendations for the future" (July 2023); Pact for Skills - the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning for upskilling and reskilling (September 2023); ECDC workshop "Effective communication around the benefit and risk balance of vaccines" (October 2023); Coalition for Vaccination Annual Meeting & EUHPP Webinar (October 2023); OECD Report Health at Glance 2023 (November 2023); European Commission recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals (November 2023); EHDS Vote in ENVI-LIBE Committee (November 2023); EHDS vote in EP plenary session (December 2023). Next to these EFN Briefing Notes, the EFN Members received [ENRF Briefing Notes](#) (available publicly) on key topics for nursing research that can be of interest to them.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

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Being a nurse is not only a career choice but a life-long commitment which requires access to high-quality education and training. In a context in which nurses have been the most affected category especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to restructure and to move to the right direction to promote inclusivity and response is essential. The safe provision of professional nursing care is paramount to achieve optimal patient care, at every level of healthcare delivery.

It is vital that the EU Institutions and the national governments take adequate actions to support the frontline health professionals that provide direct patient care, including recognising the added value of the nursing profession to the healthcare sector, to improve nurses' salaries, working conditions, and ensure safe levels of staffing delivering good quality care and patient safety.

The EFN really hopes that the upcoming (Belgium and Hungary) EU Presidencies, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament, will broaden the dialogue on the key challenges for nurses and nursing to make things happen from a legislative and professional perspective, for the safety of the citizens/patients, as not reacting will put healthcare and patients' safety at risk.

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The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) was established in 1971. The EFN represents over 36 National Nurses Associations and its work has an effect on the daily work of 3 million nurses throughout the European Union and 6 million in Europe. The EFN is the independent voice of the nursing profession and its mission is to strengthen the status and practice of the profession of nursing for the benefit of the health of the citizens and the interests of nurses in the EU and Europe.

**Contact Details:**

Address: Clos du Parnasse, 11A - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

Tel.: +32 2 512 74 19 - Email: [efn@efn.eu](mailto:efn@efn.eu)

Web: [www.efn.eu](http://www.efn.eu)

Contact Person: Dr Paul De Raeve, EFN Secretary General

Registration Number: 476.356.013

Transparency Register: 87872442953-08

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