

12 May – International Nurses’ Day



The **International Nurses’ Day** is celebrated every year on the 12th of May, the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. For the EFN, this year’s International Nurses’ Day, which comes less than a month before the European Elections and the formal EPSCO health meeting, is a great opportunity to reflect on how the EU has positively influenced the nursing profession in the past 20 years, and to raise awareness towards the great work that still needs to be done.

Twenty years ago, on 1st May 2004, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became EU Member States. Their accession to the EU has not only facilitated economic growth and development, but has harmonised the nurses’ education, facilitating the free movement of nurses within the European Single Market. As a result, salaries and working conditions for nurses in Eastern Europe have improved!

What has made this possible? [Directive 2005/36/EC](#), with Annex V, and its amendment, [Directive 2013/55/EU](#). These EU directives have harmonised the recognition of competences of EU nurses, ensuring high educational standards for better care outcomes, and enabling nurses’ freedom of movement in the EU.

Twenty years since enlargement, in the wake of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine and the granting of candidate status to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, in addition to the current six Western Balkan countries, these Directives, together with the [recent Commission recommendation on third country mobility](#), become even more important for the EFN and its members.

June is a key month for the future of healthcare in the EU: between the 6 and 9 June, EU voters, including 3 million nurses, will be called to the ballots to elect the next European Parliament, while on the 21 June, EU health ministers will be meeting in Brussels at the formal EPSCO health meeting, to discuss the priorities on healthcare of EU governments for the upcoming legislature. As both will strongly impact nursing and nursing education in the EU, the EFN and its Members have advanced [a set of clear demands](#):

1. Enlarge the EU for further harmonisation of nurses' education in Europe, and preserve the current Directives regulating the nursing profession which are fundamental for nurses' professional development.
2. Invest in the domestic nursing workforce and Safe Staffing Levels: the unethical recruitment of foreign nurses to EU Member States is not the solution to nurses' shortages. Instead, make the nursing profession more attractive through better salaries and work conditions. This way, we can ensure Safe Staffing Levels. "[The Ticking Time Bomb in the European Union has Exploded](#)" offers concrete policy recommendations on how to tackle urgently the shortage of nurses in the EU.
3. Continue the work towards the development and harmonisation of [Advanced Practice Nursing \(APN\)](#) in the EU, which is key to future proofing the health frontline workforce.
4. Build on the achievements of the current legislature, such as the [Directive on Combating the Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#), expanding it to ensure the safety of nurses on the workplace.

Nurses, make your voice heard and your vote count at the upcoming European Elections! In the meantime, the EFN will continue to follow closely the developments in the EPSCO health council, to ensure that nursing and nursing education in the EU will be protected!

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