



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

Biannual 2024 (II) – October 2024

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

We are in the middle of the Hungarian EU Presidency, which will run until the end of December 2024. Hungary has been leading the European Agenda, in continuation to the work done by the Belgian EU Presidency between January and July 2024, in particular with regard to the Council Conclusions on the health workforce strategy. Taking up their seat at the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the aftermath of the EU Elections which led to the elections of a new European Parliament

and a new College of Commissioners, including a new Commissioner for Health, which will be soon confirmed, the past months have been very busy in Brussels.

While Health has not been the highest political priority of the Hungarian EU Presidency, the EFN has still attended several high-level meetings, including one on Mental Health and Triple Planetary Crisis organised in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and Mental Health Europe, to which the EFN attended as speaker. At the conference, the EFN had the opportunity to represent the nursing workforce, working towards maintaining the needs and challenges of the health workforce as a high political priority for the EU. In particular, great emphasis was placed on providing the investments necessary to ensure that the health workforce has the resources needed to continue providing high levels of patient care at times of heightened crisis, while supporting the mental health of frontline healthcare professionals, ensuring their resilience.

While the work with the Hungarian EU Presidency is still ongoing, the EFN is already looking forward to our future priorities, with particular focus to the upcoming Polish EU Presidency, which, contrarily to the Hungarian EU Presidency, has vouched to make healthcare one of its top political priorities. But this is not all, as we are already in contact with the Danish and Cypriot presidencies of the Council of the European Union which will follow the Polish one, to maintain healthcare high in their political agenda. We are being very clear with them: investing in the domestic EU nursing workforce is the only way to ensure the Safe-Staffing Levels which are key to patients' safety and the resiliency of the European Health systems. Without this, we cannot hope to be ready to face future health crises. For this, it is key to protect [Directive 2005/36/EC](#)!

Finally, I would like to thank all the EFN members for their commitment and hard work to make the October EFN General Assembly in Warsaw a success. The EFN members endorsed key policy statements and shared their good practices on 'Continuous Professional Development', and 'Ethical Recruitment'. The EFN office, the Executive Committee and me personally are committed in safeguarding nurses and the nursing profession in the EU and Europe and work hard in achieving the best for EFN and its members.

With my warmest regards,

Dr Aristides Chorattas
EFN President

News from EFN

EFN Autumn General Assembly



The EFN Members met in Warsaw (Poland) for the 119th EFN General Assembly, where key EU policy topics, having a huge impact on nurses and the nursing profession were discussed, as: the EU elections with a new European Commission & European Parliament in place; EFN Advanced Practice Nurse developments; Continuous Professional Development/Lifelong Learning. The EFN members discussed and approved EFN Policy Statements on '[Co-designing the EU Health and Care Workforce Strategy](#)', '[Ethical Recruitment and Empowering Domestic Nursing](#)', '[Nurses' economic power and leadership to develop circular societies](#)', '[Improving frontline nurses' time for direct patient care with digitalisation & responsible AI](#)'. Investing in high quality nursing care brings a trickle down of benefits which leads to healthier societies and economic prosperity, health systems resiliency, a reduction in inequalities and an increase in social justice. Next to that, post-covid, and with the nurses leaving massively the profession, it is key to invest in digital and responsible AI innovation, to support frontline nurses in gaining more time for direct patient care. The discussions and Policy Statements endorsed by the EFN Members are key to achieve the EFN policy objectives and developments, as outlined in the [EFN SOLP 2021-2027](#), to impact the EU policy process. The EFN also took the opportunity to collect key data on Continuous Professional Development (CPD), in the context of the challenge of transferring CPD credits across European countries; as well as on ethical recruitment, given the importance of influencing politicians to address nursing recruitment and retention issues on a national level – it is key for the EFN, to have a view on the EU best practices to influence the EU institutions with concrete outcomes/data, and to advance the EU health



agenda. The EFN members welcomed the new elected Executive Committee 2024-2026 ready to work towards advancing the nursing profession and the health policy agenda at EU level: EFN President: Aristides Chorattas (Cyprus Nurses & Midwives Association); EFN Vice-President: Patricia Marquis (Royal College of Nursing – UK); EFN Treasurer: Yves Mengal (FNIB – Belgium); and 4 Members: Zuzana Tomášková (Czech Nurses Association); Dorthe Boe Danbjørg (Danish Nurses Organisation); Tony Fitzpatrick (Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation); João Paulo Carvalho (Ordem dos Enfermeiros (Portugal)). The next EFN General Assembly will take place in Brussels, on 10-11 April 2025.

Hungarian EU Presidency

Since 1st July 2024, Hungary took over the EU Presidency. The Hungarian EU Presidency's health political priorities relate to: 1/ Cardiovascular health; 2/ Transplantation and organ donations; 3/ The Pharma Package; 4/ The implementation of the EHDS; 5/ Mental Health and the state of the Poly-Crisis; 6/ Rare Diseases; 7/ Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR); next to focussing on strengthening the future of cohesion policy and addressing demographic changes. Among these priorities, the EFN is following closely Mental Health and AMR developments.



Linked to the presidency, the EFN was invited as a keynote speaker at the [High-Level Policy Dialogue on Mental Health and the Triple Planetary Crisis: A call for action](#) that took place on 7 October 2024, and which brought together representatives from the EU Member States (including policymakers, national experts, and health attachés), EU Commission officials, and EU stakeholders, including youth representatives. The EFN, representing the health workforce, brought the nursing perspective into this very important session addressing the psychological impacts of climate-related and environmental emergencies. The EFN stressed the importance to invest in the resilience of the nursing workforce through education to respond to health emergencies, conflicts and wars, natural disasters, etc. Increasing the qualification of the nursing workforce saves lives! We have the evidence of decades of nursing research outcomes, globally.



EU Projects

The EFN is currently involved in some key EU projects, bringing nurses' views, experience and expertise to their developments.

- **BeWell** - Next to following all the project regular meetings, the EFN attended its **3rd General Assembly** held on 19-21 June 2024, in Bergamo (Italy), which was a good opportunity to meet face-to-face with the other partners and discuss the current state of play of the project, and its next steps. One of the key developments of this project is the first version of the **Skills Strategy** setting out six strategic objectives to support the upskilling and reskilling of the health and care workforce; and its **Open Public Consultation** on the development of a future Skills Strategy (in several languages) – to take part in the consultation, click [here](#).



- **KeepCaring**, that just started (July 2024) – aims to provide, over the next 4 years, solutions to improve wellbeing among the healthcare professionals and students, by reducing burnout and improving the number of health care students entering the workplace. With a consortium of 20 partners from 11 countries, the partnership brings together a pool of leaders representing stakeholders in the health sector at regional, national, and European levels. One of the first project tasks, in which the EFN will be involved in, will be to collect data on the risks and protective factors for resilience among the EU healthcare professionals.



- The EFN is also a key partner in **ICUData4EU** EU project, aiming to address the challenges that Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are facing, such as aging society, combined with a shortage of

specialized staff, with the possibility to also address crisis situations, as future pandemics or wars. Combined with governance mechanisms allowing secure cross-border access and use of ICU datasets, related tools and resources, the ICU Data Space is aiming to be fully interoperable with the [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS). The project will also support the objectives of [Digital Europe programme](#) with regards to deployment of Artificial Intelligence and the Best Use of Digital Capacity and Interoperability, as well as the promotion of Cybersecurity and Trust, and Advanced Digital Skills.

- Finally, the EFN is also a key partner in **WHO EU Nursing Action** EU project (under the [EU4Health programme](#)), aiming to support Member States in retaining nurses in their health systems and making the profession more attractive to nurses, building on the [WHO Framework for Action on the Health and Care Workforce](#). Among other activities, the EFN will – through the expertise of the EFN Members – lead the development of a Policy Brief on Safe-Staffing Levels, focused on sharing positive examples from the EU and the globe that can be used by countries in EU.

EU4Health Stakeholders' Conference



Following this closely, the EFN attended the [EU4Health Stakeholders' Conference](#) held in Brussels in June 2024. This was a good opportunity for the European Commission (DG SANTE) to share and discuss with key stakeholders, including EFN, on the results of the EU4Health stakeholders

consultation, on the lessons learned, and on the implementation and future developments of the [EU4Health programme](#) (aiming to build a strong European Health Union by supporting legislative and non-legislative Union health priorities). Participants, including EFN, stressed the importance of the EU4Health programme to advance key projects that will improve the health of European citizens; and their support to the new [EHDS Regulation](#), underlining the need to enhance its implementation since it aims at allowing primary and secondary use of health data. This was also the occasion for the Hungarian Permanent Representation, to provide an overview on the key priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency in the field of Healthcare.

ICN Congress Helsinki

The [International Council of Nurses \(ICN\)](#) together with the [Finnish Nurses Association](#) (a member of EFN) are organising the **30th ICN Congress**, in Helsinki, in June 2025, under the theme *"Nursing power to change the world"*. This will be for the EFN, and its members (who are also members of ICN), a good opportunity for empowerment through sharing knowledge, expertise and leadership. For the EFN, it will be key to provide some insights on some key EU policy topics as: mental health, recruitment & retention, and digital & green skills.



News from the EU

Artificial Intelligence - Implementation of the AI Act



As part of the EU [digital strategy](#), the EU is aiming with this [AI Act](#) (that entered into force on 1st August 2024) to ensure better conditions for the development and use of this innovative technology.

The European Commission is now working on codes of practice for Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) models and on guidelines to explain different parts of the AI Act, that will protect fundamental rights, democracy, the rule of law and environmental sustainability from high-risk AI, while boosting innovation. It thus sets the basis for the development of responsible AI which can support the work of frontline nurses, while ensuring human oversight over high-risk

AI tools. The EFN sees Artificial Intelligence and digitalisation as a real support to nurses in their daily frontline job, and is thus following this development very closely, through participating in some key events and providing nurses' views on this. It is key that AI/digital innovation is done in collaboration with frontline nurses (co-creation). Nurses, as end-users, cannot be ignored in this process!

The European Commission welcomes international declaration on the fight against antimicrobial resistance

Meeting for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the UN member countries, including EU Member States and the EU, [committed](#) to concrete actions to address AMR across all sectors, through a One Health approach that acknowledges that human, animal and environmental health are intrinsically linked. Although the [Declaration](#) is seen as a strong signal of the global consensus on the necessity to address this serious global health threat, more frontline actions need to be upscaled! The EFN, as appointed expert to DG Sante, recognises that complacency, poor prescribing practice, and the overprescribing of antibiotics are still major factors in the emergence and challenges of AMR and patient safety. [Nurses' leadership](#) and informed clinical decisions are central to ensuring safe and appropriate prescribing throughout the prescribing cycle. Nurses are recognised for their expertise in supporting patients with medication compliance, monitoring prescription decisions, reducing prescribing errors and engaging in medication reconciliation actions. Even if things are now moving now politically, frontline still needs concerted action and implementation of all these EU recommendations and plans.



The Evidence - The European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention ([ECDC](#)), published a [report](#) that shows that, each year, around 4.3 million patients in the EU/EEA acute care hospitals acquire at least one healthcare-associated infection. An increase was observed for antimicrobial use compared to previous surveys. A particular concern is that 1 in 3 microorganisms detected in healthcare-associated infections were bacteria resistant to important antibiotics, thus limiting options for treating infected patients. It is therefore clear that accelerating progress to manage antibiotics better can only be done by involving and engaging frontline nurses, bedside health professionals and supporting them with concrete stewardship actions.

Fewer young people want to become nurses in half of OECD countries

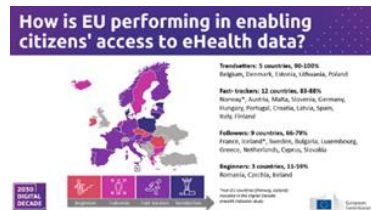
According to a recent [OECD publication](#), the interest of 15-year-old students in pursuing careers as nurses has decreased in at least half of the OECD countries between 2018 and 2022. This reduction was particularly marked in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. In many countries, the public image of nurses during the pandemic was mixed: on one hand, frontline healthcare professionals were portrayed as "heroes" in recognition of the hard and dedicated work and the risks they take, while on the other hand the heavy workload and difficult working conditions resulted in high job dissatisfaction and nurses massively leaving the profession (30% of the European nurses left the profession and 20% of the nurses' students at EU level decide to not go on with their studies). The data collected by the EFN on newly registered nurses leaving the profession or not practicing nursing after graduation, at the EFN April 2024 General Assembly, held in Brussels, shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation for all nurses throughout the EU and Europe, and that the main reasons why **newly registered nurses do not practice nursing after graduation include low wages, the increased workload and work strain, and the unsuitable working**



conditions and environment. Investing in a highly skilled domestic nursing workforce is the only way to ensure the resilience of the European health systems.

Publications

Digital Decade 2024: eHealth Indicator Study



The EU [eHealth Indicator Study](#) report published in July, presents the latest results of the assessment on EU27 countries' (plus Iceland and Norway) state-of-play towards delivering the Digital Decade's eHealth target of 100% EU citizens having access to electronic health records by 2030. According to the report, the top five best performing countries in the EU-27 are Belgium (100%), Denmark (98%), Estonia (98%), Lithuania (95%) and Poland (90%). These are followed by 12 countries ranging between 83-88%: Norway, Austria, Malta, Slovenia, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Croatia, Latvia, Spain, Italy, Finland. Then there are 9 countries which are ranging between 66%-79%: France, Iceland, Sweden, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Greece, Netherlands, Cyprus, Slovakia. Finally, 3 countries, which are well behind, ranging between 11-59%: Romania, Czechia, Ireland. The biggest improvement over the last year was observed for France (+25 points), Portugal (+23 points), Slovakia (+20 points), and Germany (+17 points). The study emphasises the **need to ensure population-wide access to electronic health record data**, and that the health data available on the access service should comprehensively reflect the various types of data collected about patients from the various types of healthcare providers they use.

World health statistics 2024: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals

The [World health statistics](#) report is the annual compilation of health and health-related indicators, being published by the World Health Organisation since 2005. The [2024 edition](#) reviews more than 50 health-related indicators from the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and [WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work](#), and highlights the findings from the Global health estimates 2021, notably the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. This year's edition places emphasis on the great contribution of the health workforce to [Universal Health Coverage](#) (UHC), and how changes in health workforce density are the most impacting on UHC. As such, it is crucial that national governments must invest in a highly educated domestic nursing workforce to ensure fair and equitable access to healthcare delivery.



Global Patient Safety Report 2024



The World Health Organisation published the [Global Patient Safety Report 2024](#) that provides a comprehensive overview of patient safety implementation worldwide, and explores the progress countries are making in shaping safety in health care through implementing policies, strategies, and initiatives. Some of the key findings: One-third of the reporting countries have developed National Plans for Patient Safety; and One-fourth of the reporting countries have incorporated a patient safety curriculum in education programs for healthcare professionals. Nursing education stands out as the most progressive field, with 67% of countries acknowledging the incorporation of patient safety principles into their nursing education programmes. This reflects a global recognition of the critical role that nurses play in ensuring patient safety; and around one-fourth of the reporting countries have established national targets on reducing healthcare-associated infection rate.

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