



## EFN Policy Statement on improving frontline nurses' time for direct patient care with digitalisation and responsible AI

The EFN believes in the need to invest in digital and responsible AI innovation, to support frontline nurses in gaining more time for direct patient care at a time of serious health workforce staff shortages. This EFN Policy Statement builds on the European Health Data Space (EHDS) (2023), on the EFN Position Statement on Nurses Co-Designing Artificial Intelligence Tools (2021), and on the EFN Policy Statement on Nurses Digital Competencies (2019),

COVID-19 caused an enormous toll on frontline health workers, leading to many registered frontline nurses to leave the profession. Despite this, the European Institutions and the Member States seem convinced that the best way forward is that of austerity. As previous periods of financial crisis have demonstrated, healthcare budgets are usually the first to be reduced. In this line, certain Member States have shown that they intend to downgrade nursing education, and create a less expensive “nursing” workforce to fill the serious gaps, breaching [Directive 2005/36/EC](#), amended by [Directive 2013/55/EU](#).

In this setting, where the trend is observed that legislators would rather downgrade the nursing profession which already faces serious limitations due to staff shortage, preventing adequate levels of direct patient care, a possible solution may be found in digital innovations and responsible AI. These tools can help free up time for healthcare professionals, improve their work environment, reducing stress and errors, and letting them focus on patients. A reduction of the administrative burden, in line with increases in digitalisation, automation and AI, can unlock an increase in the capacity of health systems.

However, for this to be possible, adequate interventions are urgently needed from the European Institutions and the Member States. A serious concern is that the uptake of these innovative tools will become an added burden on frontline registered nurses, reducing the already limited time for direct patient care. Moreover, if these tools are not

developed in accordance to the needs of frontline registered nurses, there will also be the risk that they will worsen job satisfaction levels, pushing even more registered nurses to leave the profession.

Therefore, the EFN calls on the European Institutions and the Member States to:

- Support the uptake of innovative digital tools and responsible AI by educating the frontline registered nurses/students through adequate academic curricula and upskilling and reskilling opportunities through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Life-Long Learning (LLL).
- At a time of budgetary constraints, the European Commission can play a unique role by incrementing funding levels for national educational programs, in line with the European Pillar of Social rights and the Pact for Skills. Specifically, the funds provided via the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) will be of essential importance.
- Involve frontline registered nurses as end-users in the co-creation of Digital tools and responsible AI. This will ensure that they are created in accordance with daily practice needs, but ensuring that it is used within the frame of ethical conduct ensuring their uptake and proper implementation.
- Work towards a successful, quick, and tangible implementation of the EHDS, which will speed up innovations in the area of Digital Health and provide crucial support to frontline registered nurses at a time of serious staff shortages.
- To enable nurses to use harmonised common language in the E - Health and electronic health systems, and to ensure that harmonization of International Classification for Nurses Practice (ICNP) during the implementation of the EHDS
- AI use should be responsible and environmentally sustainable

The successful implementation of these recommendations will ensure that Digital innovations and responsible AI will lead to supporting frontline registered nurses in improving the time for direct patient care, without resulting in an added burden and without diminishing job-satisfaction levels. In this way, we can help futureproof the European health systems against the state of permacrisis which is already afflicting it, and that is only destined to worsen.

## Further readings:

- EFN Policy Statement on the European Health Data Space (EHDS) (2023). Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-EHDS-April-2023.pdf>
- EFN Position Statement on Nurses Co-Designing Artificial Intelligence Tools (2021). Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/EFN-PS-on-Nurses-Co-Designing-Artificial-Intelligence-Tools.pdf>
- EFN Policy Statement on Nurses Digital Competencies (2019). Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-Nurses-Digital-Competencies-Nov.2019.pdf>
- The Recovery and Resilience Facility. European Commission. [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en)
- The European Semester. [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester_en)
- The European Pillar of Social Rights. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1226&langId=en>
- The Pact for Skills. [https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en)

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