



## EFN Policy Statement on Nurses Economic Power and Leadership to Develop Circular Societies

Building on the EFN Policy Statement on Nursing Planetary Health (2022), the EFN supports nurses' empowerment through and beyond professional development.

To build circular societies, we need strong nurse leadership, the empowerment of nurses, and recognition of their contributions, as they play a crucial role in driving change. Currently, nurses are regarded by the public as trustworthy and socially engaged health professionals. By providing high-quality care, they can advocate for lifestyle and behavioural changes in patients, which are directly connected to the development of circular societies—an essential driver of economic growth and progress.

By Circular Societies, we refer to *“a democratic, fair, and sustainable socio-ecological system that works in harmony with the natural cycles of the biosphere to improve human and planetary well-being for current and future generations”* (Calisto Friant, M., et al (2024)). In this context, nurses have the power to support society to progress, away from the traditional capitalistic definition of economic growth, which *“can be described as a linear system that continuously generates waste in terms of social injustice, poverty, alienation, exploitation, and conflicts over resources”* (Calisto Friant, M., et al (2024)).

Nurses are extremely competent healthcare professionals, as underlined by the 8 core competencies defined in EU Directive 2013/55/EU (Article 31). These competencies ensure that nurses have the skills to coordinate interdisciplinary teams and to take on leadership roles. The combination of the trust placed in nurses by patients and their competencies brings undeniable benefits for healthcare delivery, at social and economic levels, and links to empowerment and expansion of the nursing workforce.

As outlined in the ICN report – The Economic Power of Care (2024), investments in the nursing workforce are directly correlated with *“better health outcomes, economic savings and more stable societies”*. Furthermore, 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. To showcase

this, the ICN has outlined “*The Nurse Investment, Prosperity and Peace Chain*”. This chain graphically outlines the added benefits of investing in nursing, demonstrating that the effects of well-thought investments are not limited to the bedside, but that society as a whole is positively impacted. The positive ramifications clearly outsize the costs, as there is extensive proof that a resilient nursing workforce is correlated with a decrease in the rate of conflicts, an increased rate of sustainable economic growth, and diminished costs stemming from a decreased rate of mortality and preventable diseases. In fact, the last link of the chain is called “*Strengthening Social Unity, Advancing Peace and Cultivating Economic Growth.*”

Despite the evidence, the strong and positive societal impact of nurses in the context of Circular Societies will not be possible unless the EU and the Member States direct adequate investments towards the nursing workforce.

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

- Empower nurses through sufficient funding for education, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Life-Long Learning (LLL) based on projections of future health service and population needs. CPD should be factored into paid hours for frontline nurses with funds to cover the shifts of those CPD trainings. This is necessary so that nurses can develop the competencies needed to fully embrace their role as leaders of change in the healthcare ecosystem.
- Invest in the nursing workforce for safe-staffing levels, without which nurses cannot provide safe and effective patient care.
- Invest in Advanced Practice Nurses (APN), to increase the number of nurses in leadership roles which are linked to concrete societal improvements.
- Promote the image of nurses at the societal level through information campaigns which showcase the invaluable contribution of nurses to the development of circular societies.
- Give a greater voice to nurses to expand their advocacy activities beyond the healthcare settings. In line with the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021–2025, countries should ensure that nurses are represented by a chief nursing officer.

Implementing these recommendations will ensure that nurses are empowered through education and the provision of adequate resources. As clearly outlined, the positive implications from investing in nurses and empowering them to expand their advocacy activities both in and beyond the healthcare settings, are stronger than often, wrongly perceived. If we want to ensure that our societies continue to progress towards Circular Societies, we must invest in nurses.

### **Further readings:**

- EFN (2022), Policy Statement on Nursing Planetary Health, Available: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-Nursing-Planetary-Health-Oct.-2022.pdf>
- EFN (2023), Policy Statement on Lifelong Learning and Continuous Professional Development, Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-LLL-CPD-Oct.-2023.pdf>
- International Council of Nurses (2024), International Nurses Day 2024 – The Economic Power of Care, Available at: [https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2024-05/ICN\\_IND2024\\_report\\_EN\\_A4\\_6.1.pdf](https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2024-05/ICN_IND2024_report_EN_A4_6.1.pdf)
- Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System ('the IMI Regulation') (2013) (Online). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013L0055>
- Calisto Friant, M., Vermeulen, W.J.V. & Salomone, R. (2024) Transition to a Sustainable Circular Society: More than Just Resource Efficiency. *Circ.Econ.Sust.* 4, 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43615-023-00272-3>

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