EFN Policy Statement on Nurse Involvement in the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Development

Nurses, as end-users, must play a central role in co-designing the digital transformation of the healthcare systems in the EU and Europe, particularly in relation to the Electronic Health Record (EHR). However, without proper planning and involvement of nurses in the development and implementation process, there is the likelihood of an increased burden on the frontline nursing workforce. For the EFN, it is key that nurses are involved in the planning phase, ensuring that the digitalisation processes, leading to EHRs implementation, can support nurses' clinical practice, as well as lead to better health outcomes for patients, as if the likelihood of increased administrative burdens on nurses decreases, this will free-up time for direct patient care.

At the EU policy level, the [European Commission Recommendation on a European Electronic Health Record exchange format (C(2019)800) of 6 February 2019](#) was an important step forward to digitalise healthcare. Although the recommendations to enhance the interoperability and security of national health systems and support the secure exchange of health data across borders were not mandatory, they still acted as a catalyst for action, which culminated with the [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS) Directive. Under the EHDS, Member States and manufacturers must ensure the interoperability of EHR systems within the EU, by ensuring the seamless processing and transfer of health data, as well as by following several mandatory manufacturing requirements.

Within this professional and political context, the EFN reaffirms the importance of frontline nurses being involved in the conception, design, and implementation of the EHR systems that should support frontline nurses to achieve the best health outcomes in direct patient care. This will reduce the likelihood of adding administrative burdens, causing stress and burnout, pushing frontline nurses to leave the nursing profession.

Therefore, the EFN calls on the European Commission, National Governments, Digital experts and Industry to:

1. Fully implement the interoperability and manufacturing requirements for EHR systems set in the EHDS Directive. Particular attention should be paid to:

    -   Enabling EHR systems to interact with software applications and devices from the same or different manufacturers in order to transfer and receive personal electronic health data;

- Ensuring that the EHR is able to record logging information: identification of the specific individuals having accessed to personal electronic health data, categories of data accessed, time and date of access, and origin(s) of data. This will increase transparency and improve acceptance by both patients and frontline nurses.

2. Make sure that the EHR match the professional needs of frontline nurses as end-users and fit into everyday workflows without compromising care provision. As such, manufacturers and developers must involve nurses more extensively in their development and customisation, ensuring co-creation.

3. Invest in EU domestic nursing workforce capacity building in line with the Directive 2013/55/EU and the Updated Annex V - this will ensure that frontline nurses have acquired the baseline competencies required to ensure a smooth digitalisation of EU and European healthcare ecosystems.

4. Make enough time available for training frontline nurses and allied healthcare professionals in using a new EHR system before it is set-up on the ward. Furthermore, once implemented, ongoing optimisation and innovation, with appropriate clinically led support must be ensured, together with robust systems and processes in place to monitor quality and safety of care.

5. Make adequate funding available through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), as well as other existing funding streams like the Digital Europe Programme and Horizon Europe, or innovative funding streams, to ensure that healthcare facilities have the resources to adequately train frontline nurses in using new EHR systems. Furthermore, additional funding is needed to cover for the high costs of EHR software, hardware, maintenance and cloud storage.

6. Ensure that cross-border patients data exchange does not become an added burden on frontline nurses by integrating the International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP) – as part of SNOMED clinical terms (adopted at EU level), as the common terminology for nursing care data. The ICNP has been defined as a unified language for nursing. It is a compositional terminology for nursing practice that facilitates the development and cross-mapping of local terms and existing terminologies. The ICNP has been accepted in 2009 by the World Health Organization (WHO) as part of the WHO Family of International Classifications (WHO-FIC).

7. Encourage patients' involvement in verifying their health information by providing patients with easy access to their Electronic Health Records and by empowering them to report any discrepancy. This will foster greater patients' and citizens' trust and willingness to share their health data for better health outcomes!

Further readings:

- EFN Policy Statement on improving frontline nurses' time for direct patient care with digitalisation and responsible AI (2024). Available at: https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/EFN-PS-improving-frontline-nurses-time-for-direct-patient-care-with-digitalisation-responsible-AI-Oct.-2024.pdf

- EFN Policy Statement on the European Health Data Space (EHDS) (2023). Available at: https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EFN-Policy-Statement-onEHDS-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-CoDesigning-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-DigitalCompetencies-Nov.2019.pdf

- The Recovery and Resilience Facility. European Commission. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economicrecovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

- The European Semester. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/business-economyeuro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester_en

- The European Pillar of Social Rights. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1226&langId=en

- The Pact for Skills. Available at: https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en

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