



EFN Policy Statement on the Long-Term Care Workforce Challenges

Long-Term care is one of the core principles of the European Commission's [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Therefore, in December 2022, the EU adopted the [Council recommendation on long-term care](#), based on the [Commission's Communication for a European Care Strategy](#). The recommendation emphasises the importance of supporting healthcare workers (non-qualified staff), improving their working conditions, as well as addressing the shortage of the long-term care workforce. Building on this, [Commissioner Mînzatu expressed full commitment](#) towards the implementation of the Council recommendation, and for addressing long-term workforce challenges as a core component of the new [Quality Jobs Roadmap](#), the new Commission's flagship initiative that aims to promote quality jobs in the EU, set to be presented by the end of 2025. EFN welcomes the European Commission's initiatives on long-term care, however it remains concerned by the lack of focus on the role and needs of registered nurses within the long-term care workforce.

We are seeing an increasing trend of healthcare services moving out of hospitals and closer to the citizens. This is due to both demographic changes with more elderly citizens and an intention to create a more cohesive, efficient, and accessible healthcare system. In this context, the role played by registered nurses in the delivery of high-quality, safe, and accessible long-term care cannot be underestimated. Health care services in the long-term sector, including in the community setting and care homes setting, should be provided by interdisciplinary teams, with nurses, including Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs), playing a key leadership role. Furthermore, as a quality assurance mechanism, Safe-Staffing Levels, taking into account adequate skills-mix between APNs, registered nurses, Health Care Assistants and other health care workers, should be implemented across the EU and Europe.

However, due to severe shortage of registered nurses especially employed in full-time positions within the long-term care sector, currently, the European long-term care workforce is mainly composed of Health Care Assistants and other health care workers, the majority of whom are women, many of whom lack formal training.. As revealed by Commissioner Mînzatu, 26.4% of women in the Europe work part-time due to care duties (vs 6.4% of men), and this is impacting also on the nursing workforce, as it is mainly female based. Furthermore, 7.7 million women in Europe do not work due to unpaid care duties. In fact, as revealed by an [Eurofound report](#), long-term care remains largely provided by migrant women, who work in undeclared care roles with poor social protections and a high risk of exploitation.

Therefore, addressing the long-term care workforce shortages requires a two-pronged approach. On one side, the shortage of nurses within the long-term care sector, including in the community setting, must be urgently addressed, including by means of the development and implementation of Advanced Practice Nursing across the EU and Europe, and by establishing Safe-Staffing levels legislation which takes into account skills mix.

On the other side, adequate opportunities for upskilling and reskilling non-qualified staff should be created, with appropriate supervision, and resulting in correct pay terms. Furthermore, their safe working conditions should be assured, and upskilling and reskilling should not lead to non-qualified staff being used as a substitute for registered nurses at times of shortages. Furthermore, the structural challenges preventing informal carers, the majority of whom are women who are not remunerated, from receiving adequate institutional and social protection must be addressed, and high-quality education and training programmes must be provided to them to improve their qualifications, and protect the quality and safety of long-term care in the EU and Europe.

Therefore, the EFN is calling on the EU Institutions and the EU and European Member States to:

1. Ensure the availability of enough nursing professionals in long-term care positions. As the nursing shortages continue to worsen throughout the EU, in all healthcare sectors, the long-term sector might end up left for last, which would lead to an increasing number of preventable unmet healthcare needs and adverse patients outcomes. This should be a priority of the Quality Jobs Roadmap, set to be published by the end of 2025.
2. Invest in the EU domestic nursing workforce capacity-building in line with the [Directive 2013/55/EU](#) and the updated [Annex V](#). Furthermore, invest also in high-quality in-service Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and specialised training, to ensure the availability of well-trained frontline nurses who can provide high-quality long-term care.
3. Develop and implement the role of [Advanced Practice Nurses \(APNs\)](#), in line with the levels of education and training, supervision and remuneration that is fit for this level of professionals autonomy. This is key, as APNs play a critical role in improving the efficiency and efficacy of the existing resources and the coordination of care at the frontline, thus strengthening Long-Term care and improving patients health outcomes.
4. Empower frontline nurses to work to their full scope of practice, including by awarding them [prescribing rights](#). Nurse prescribing in long-term care provides holistic continuity of care for patients but also enhances early diagnosis.
5. Make available high-quality education and training for non-qualified staff in order to improve their qualifications and protect the quality and safety of long-term care in the EU and Europe.

6. Tackle the structural challenges preventing informal carers from receiving adequate institutional and social protections. Informal carers must receive adequate recognition, and they must also receive adequate training.
7. To implement these policies, make adequate levels of EU financing available through existing and/or innovative funding streams, such as the [Recovery and Resilience Facility \(RRF\)](#) and [EU4Health](#). Furthermore, additional funding should be allocated in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which is undergoing revision, as the current one will expire in 2027.

Further readings:

- De Raeve, P. (2025) Navigating the EU nursing workforce crisis: Stop talking, start acting! Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Navigating-the-EU-nursing-workforce-crisis-July-2024.pdf>
- EFN Policy Statement on Co-designing the EU Health and Care Workforce Strategy (2024). Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-EU-Workforce-Strategy-Oct.-2024.pdf>
- EFN Policy Statement on Building and Sustaining a Resilient Nursing Workforce in the EU and Europe (2022). Available at: <https://efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EFN-Policy-Statement-on-Building-and-Sustaining-a-Resilient-EU-Nursing-Workforce-in-the-EU-and-Europe-April-2022.pdf>
- EFN Recommendations On Addressing The Underfunding Of Prevention And Long-Term Care (2019). Available at: <http://www.efn.eu/wp-content/uploads/EFN-Recommendations-on-Addressing-the-Underfunding-of-Prevention-and-LTC.pdf>
- Paul De Raeve*, Patricia M Davidson, Andreas Xyrichis and Pamela F Cipriano. The Ticking Time Bomb in the European Union Has Exploded: The Importance of European Council Recommendations on the Healthcare Workforce. *Iris J of Nur & Car.* 5(1): 2024. IJNC.MS.ID.000601. DOI: 10.33552/IJNC.2024.05.000601
- International Council of Nurses (2025). International Nurses Day 2025: Caring for nurses strengthens economies. Available at: https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2025-04/ICN_IND2025_report_EN_A4_FINAL_0.pdf

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