



EFN Policy Statement on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

In the European Commission [formal proposal](#) for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU's long-term budget for the period 2028–2034, healthcare expenditure has been downsized to one of several thematic areas under a new European Competitiveness Fund, and a dedicated programme for healthcare promotion and prevention such as EU4Health is totally missing. This could have disastrous consequences for the stability and resilience of the EU Healthcare systems, and is therefore a scenario that can and must be avoided at all costs.

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

1. Prioritise healthcare funding in the next MFF, with particular attention paid to the nursing workforce. Investing in health systems and in the nursing workforce on which they depend is not just a moral duty, but also an opportunity for long-term growth and stability which would otherwise be lost.
2. Continue funding existing healthcare funds, including EU4Health and the [health cluster of Horizon Europe](#), but take it one step further by developing a new dedicated EU fund to focus on EU domestic health workforce capacity building and development. This is key to ensure the quality and safety of patients care in the EU – healthcare is not just a matter of competitiveness, and it should therefore not be relegated to being simply one of several thematic areas within a new EU Competitiveness Fund, as proposed by the European Commission!
3. In the development of the new dedicated fund, learn from previous good practices, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), through which some Member States have invested in initiatives meant to support their domestic health workforce, showing that it can be done!
4. Involve nurses and their representatives, such as EFN, at all stages in the planning and coordination of funding opportunities for EU health workforce capacity building and development, to ensure that they are tackling the most urgent frontline needs of EU nurses.
5. Empower the frontline deployment of the next MFF by financing concrete initiatives that support the development of highly educated and trained EU nurses, in line with the

[Directive 2013/55/EU](#), otherwise EU healthcare systems will collapse and we will not be prepared for the next crisis!

The justification for continued investment in the nursing workforce is clearly expressed in the [International Council of Nurses \(ICN\) 2025 International Nurses Day Report](#), “a 1% increase in nurse density correlates with a 0.02% increase in life expectancy. Each additional year of life expectancy contributes significantly to national economic prosperity, with a corresponding 2.4% increase in economic growth” (ICN, 2025). More broadly, the report also shows that “every dollar invested in health systems can generate a \$2–\$4 return”. Therefore, investing in the nursing workforce is necessary for the stability and resilience of EU and European healthcare systems, and by not investing in the nursing workforce, policymakers would be missing a key opportunity for EU economic growth and stability at a time of great uncertainty.

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>
- 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

Please contact Dr Paul De Raeve, Secretary General of the European Federation of Nurses Associations, for more information. Email: efn@efn.eu – Tel: +32 2 512 74 19 – Web: www.efn.eu

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