



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

Biannual 2026 (I) – April 2026

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

On 1st January 2026, the Republic of Cyprus has assumed the rotating [Presidency of the Council of the EU](#), until June 2026. The Cyprus presidency marks the end of the trio of presidencies that was opened by the Polish presidency, and followed by the Danish one. In these trio presidencies we mainly focused as EFN on the Nursing Action with a specific attention on Safe Staffing Levels, Mentorship and Mental Health.

Mental health is one of the priorities of the [2026 Cyprus EU Presidency](#), which puts it, including its link with digitalisation, high on its ambitious programme. In this backdrop, EFN has led the publishing of an opinion paper, titled [Frontline Perspectives and Emerging Solutions for Strengthening Healthcare Workforce Well-Being](#), which comes at the right moment for EU policymakers to better understand the urgency of tackling the mental health crisis of the healthcare workforce.

Furthermore, the EFN policy statement on the MMF provided input to the Cyprus EU Presidency as the negotiations for the next [EU Multiannual Financial Framework \(MMF\)](#) are ongoing. Importantly, the EMPL-SANT Joint INI Report on the Health Workforce makes reference to the MFF, calling on the Commission and Member States to ensure adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding for healthcare, and the healthcare workforce specifically.

Moreover, the Cyprus Presidency prioritised the implementation of the [EU Preparedness Strategy](#), with a focus on strengthening the EU's and Member States' preparedness and resilience to manage any disaster, in which [the nurses' involvement](#) is key. It also aims to strengthen the European dimension of housing policy, building on the [European Affordable Housing Plan](#), and any subsequent Commission initiatives and legislative proposals, which are extremely important for nurses. For this reason, the input of the EFN Members to the April 2026 General Assembly Tour de Table on Housing is particularly important, as it will allow EFN to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current situation in the EFN Member States, and work with the European Commission to tackle the crisis.

Furthermore, as Health and Safety at work is a priority for the Cyprus Presidency, it will continue the work on the 6th revision of the [Directive on carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic substances](#) for the prevention of negative effects on human health, of particular relevance to frontline nurses, who are often exposed to hazardous substances. EFN has in partnership with the European Biosafety Network (EBN) worked on this topic to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of EU legislation.

The Cyprus Presidency will be followed by the Irish Presidency in July 2026, marking the beginning of a new trio of presidencies that will feature the Lithuanian and Greek presidencies. EFN and EFN members will continue lobbying the EU Presidency agenda, especially on education, EU Health Workforce and Quality and Safety, including Digitalisation.

Finally, I would like to thank all the EFN members for the fruitful discussions and valuable outcomes of the EFN General Assembly, held online today.

With my warmest regards,

Dr Aristides Chorattas,
EFN President

News from EFN

EFN Spring General Assembly

The 122nd EFN General Assembly, which was originally set to be hosted on 16-17 April 2026 in Cyprus, was instead held online on 16 April 2026 due to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East and Gulf Region. The EFN members discussed key EU developments that have an impact on the nursing profession, as the Professional Qualifications Directive, Advanced Practice Nursing (APN), recognition of qualifications of third country nationals, EMPL-SANT INI Report on the Health Workforce. In this context, the EFN members discussed and approved some key EFN Policy Statements, namely on [New Models of Care](#), and [EU Global Health Resilience Initiative](#), and shared positive national developments. The EFN took this opportunity to collect data from its 38 Members NNAs on housing crisis, and how this impacts the nurses' willingness to leave the profession or seek employment abroad. The next EFN General Assembly will take place in Austria, on 15-16 April 2026.

EFN Members' visits to Brussels

↳ The Danish Nurses Organisation



The [Danish Nurses Organisation](#) came on an official visit to Brussels, presenting an opportunity for the EFN Brussels Office to connect with them and discuss important nursing issues at the Danish and European level. DNO Board took the occasion to meet

in the European Parliament their Danish MEPs, including Stine Bosse (Renew), Marianne Vind (S&D) and Kira Marie Peter-Hansen (The Greens/EFA), and discuss ongoing actions by the European Parliament towards addressing the nursing workforce challenges, including the [Own-Initiative Report \(INI\) on the Health Workforce](#). Their DNO's timely engagement ensured the support of key MEPs during the amendments phase of the INI Report drafting!

↳ The Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia

The visit by the [Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia](#), represented by the President, Ms. Anita Prelec, who is also EFN Treasurer, was an important occasion to discuss key issues with the EFN Brussels Office, including the EU-enlargement process to the Western Balkans and the implementation in these countries of the [Directive 2013/55/EU](#).



Furthermore, Ms. Prelec, together with the EFN Brussels Office, met with MEP Irena Joveva (Renew, Slovenia), shadow rapporteur for the INI Report on the Health Workforce in [EMPL](#). During this meeting, several important topics were discussed, including national achievements of the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, with the approval in Parliament of the first legislation on nursing and midwifery, and the ongoing compromise negotiations for the INI on the Health Workforce in the European Parliament EMPL-SANT Committees.

↳ The Norwegian Nurses Organisation



The [Norwegian Nurses Organisation](#) Board visited Brussels to meet with the EFN Brussels Office, as well as other key Norwegian National Stakeholders, especially the

Norwegian Permanent Representation in Brussels. In their visit to the EFN Brussels Office, the NNO Board had the opportunity to hear presentations by the EFN on the ongoing nursing lobby priorities at European level, by MEP Maria Ohisalo (The Greens/EFA), shadow rapporteur for the INI Report on the Health Workforce in EMPL; by the European Commission DG HERA on ongoing actions on European Preparedness; and by EU-OSHA on the upcoming Safe Workplaces campaign for the period 2026-2028.

Towards an EU Strategy for Women's Health

EFN is one of the signatories and supporters of the [Manifesto "Towards an EU Strategy for Women's Health"](#) developed by the [European Institute of Women's Health](#) (EIWH), that was launched in the European Parliament under the sponsorship of the Co-Chairs of the European Parliament's Women's Health Interest Group reflecting strong political support at EU level. The Manifesto puts forward several key recommendations for the development of an EU Women's Health Strategy, including clear targets for improving cardiovascular health in women in the EU Safe Hearts Plan; addressing women's health inequalities in the upcoming European Anti-Poverty Strategy, including women (nurses) living in poverty; dedicated funding in the next EU long-term budget MFF; a strong approach on health promotion; a focus on mental health and return to work after long-term sickness; and putting health equity for women at the centre.



On the other hand, the European Commission recently presented its new [Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030](#). The Strategy, that aims to step up the actions initiated under the [2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights](#), embeds gender equality into every aspect of life, online and offline, from education and health to work and public life, and addresses modern threats such as cyberviolence and AI-related risks, which particularly affect women.

KEEPCARING Project



In the context of the [KEEPCARING EU Project](#), EFN has led the development of an [opinion paper](#), titled "Frontline Perspectives and Emerging Solutions for Strengthening Healthcare Workforce Well-Being", which was published in the Iris Journal of Nursing &

Care. The paper brought together frontline perspectives from nursing leaders and post-graduate nurses, insights from [EU policy developments](#), and the [WHO Europe mental health findings](#), to identify and tackle the growing challenges faced by healthcare professionals, including burnout, chronic stress, staff shortages, and psychosocial risks. Importantly, these developments are linked to the [KEEPCARING Project](#), which brings together scientific, clinical, technological, and end-user partners to co-create practical, evidence-based tools that support mental well-being, organisational support, and psychological safety in hospital settings.

The EFN also published a [Podcast](#) on 'EFN key role in KEEPCARING project: Ensuring that nurses' voices are well integrated in the project activities and results', that highlights the work being conducted in KEEPCARING Project, and how EFN is contributing to ensuring that nurses' voices are well integrated in the project activities and results.



News from the EU

European Parliament - EMPL-SANT Joint INI Report on the Health Workforce

For EFN, the EMPL-SANT Committees have an important file for all nurses in the EU and Europe, but we expect still 2 upcoming shadow rapporteurs' meetings in April and May, with a Committee vote in June and probably a plenary vote in July 2026, if negotiations go well. The Joint Own-Initiative Report (INI) on "An EU health workforce crisis plan: sustainability of healthcare systems and employment and working conditions in the healthcare sector" will support the development of the nursing profession in the years to come. The final approval of the report in the European Parliament is an important milestone for EFN, which has proactively engaged in the drafting process of this INI report since the very early stages, leading to concrete and evident results, including the support of the European Parliament towards further EU action on Safe Staffing Levels, the protection of the nurses' professional title, and support for Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) development and harmonisation in the EU. This is just a first step, that will support the EFN lobby work towards the European Commission and the Council of the EU in the next 5 years.

European Parliament - HOUS INI on the Housing Crisis in the European Union



In March 2026, the European Parliament Plenary adopted [the Own Initiative Report \(INI\) of the European Parliament Special Committee on Housing \(HOUS\) on the Housing Crisis](#) in the European Union, with 367 votes in favour, 166 votes against, and 84

abstentions. An important achievement for EFN, as the INI report addresses the housing challenges of the health workforce, calling on the EU Member States to pay particular attention to the needs of the health workforce as a strategic and essential segment of the workforce. This is key, as in many EU countries, nurses are living below the poverty line, forced to take up multiple jobs (up to 3 shifts a day in Romania and Bulgaria) to make a minimum living. Furthermore, as nursing is a mainly women-based profession, there is also an important gender component to the housing crisis, with many single women nurses finding themselves in a very vulnerable social context to bring up the children on their own. These challenges are compounded by declining real incomes, wage stagnation, in work poverty, and inflationary pressures across the EU.

European Parliament - EU Enlargement

The [European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee](#) commends Montenegro and Albania for their significant progress, Ukraine for its resilience and commitment to the EU path, and Moldova for decisively advancing on the EU accession path. It reiterates its call for qualified majority voting, instead of unanimity, at the intermediate steps in the enlargement process, such as the opening and closing of negotiating clusters and chapters. The EP called for an evaluation of enlargement policy to assess why some countries have made limited progress in legislating or implementation. The European Parliament addressed the



effective functioning of an enlarged European Union and calls for adequate pre-accession funding under the [new multiannual financial framework covering the 2028-2034 period](#). This is important for the nursing profession when they negotiate Chapter 3 of the Acquis, including compliance with Directive 2013/55/EU. Finally, Enlargement Commissioner, Marta Kos, poured cold water on Kyiv's ambition to join the EU by 1st January 2027, calling the timeline "impossible". Iceland, on the other hand, could move "really quickly" as a potential "special case".

European Commission - Skills Portability Initiative ongoing studies



Within the [EU Skills Portability Initiative](#), which aims to improve how people's skills and qualifications are used and accepted across EU Member States and, therefore, support professionals' mobility, address labour shortages, and boost competitiveness in the EU, the European Commission has launched 3 different actions. As the closest to the [EFN SOLP 2021-2027](#), EFN has been contributing to the European Commission studies under Action 2: 'Potential measures to facilitate,

modernise and expand recognition processes for regulated professions (Directive 2005/36/EC)' & Action 3: 'A potential legislative proposal for common rules to simplify procedures for the recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals'. In this regard, EFN has contributed to multiple surveys, interviews, and focus groups, conducted on behalf of the European Commission by EY and SPARK. In these occasions, EFN stressed the importance of fully implementing the Directive 2005/36/EC and that any EU action for the harmonisation of recognition of skills of third country nationals must be grounded in the same education and training requirements as those established for EU nurses in the Directive 2005/36/EC.

European Commission – The new EU Cardiovascular Health Plan

The European Commission has published the new EU Cardiovascular Health Plan, called the [Safe Hearts Plan](#). The plan puts forward a comprehensive framework to tackle Cardiovascular diseases, which are the leading cause of death in Europe, through prevention, early detection, and improved care. This is key, as up to 80% of cardiovascular disease is preventable and the plan aims to reduce premature cardiovascular mortality by 25% by 2035. The Safe Hearts Plan contains the 10 flagship initiatives: 1) A lifelong, personalised and digitally enabled prevention programme; 2) Empowering consumers through information on food processing in the EU; 3) Modernising tobacco control legislation; 4) Possible financial actions to support/fund public health actions in the field of primary prevention; 5) Proposal for a Council recommendation on vaccination against respiratory infections; 6) EU protocol on health checks for cardiovascular diseases; 7) Proposal for a Council recommendation on personalised treatment and monitoring of cardiovascular diseases; 8) Incubator for innovation and integration of AI and digital technologies in cardiovascular healthcare; 9) EU cardiovascular health inequalities dashboard; 10) Cardiovascular Disease Research and Innovation Roadmap.



European Commission - EFN EU Climate Pact Partner

The effects of climate change on public health are extremely serious and we are not currently ready to face this crisis that causes thousands of deaths every year (e.g.: air pollution causes [357,000 deaths](#) a year, and [62,700 people](#) died from heat-related causes in 2024). The Climate Pact's annual celebration represents a great opportunity to track progress towards tackling climate change, and strengthen the drive towards a cleaner, more resilient Union. This occasion gave EFN the opportunity to meet policymakers, experts and community leaders; and explore together with them the [future of climate](#) action from across Europe.

Important topics addressed during the annual event include: 1) the importance of making Europe climate resilient: protecting communities, societies and economies from extreme weather events, including by strengthening the climate resilience and preparedness of the health systems, for which frontline nurses play a key role; 2) Tackling climate disinformation, including by equipping frontline nurses with the right competencies to educate and inform citizens and communities; 3) Just and inclusive transition: which must also address the specific needs of the health systems and the health workforce; 4) Youth leadership, including the leadership of nursing students, which must be heard at local, national and EU level.

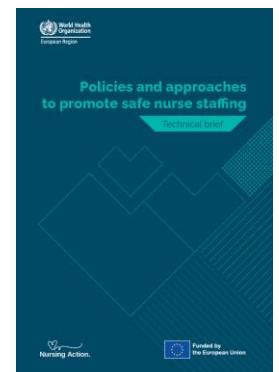


As a European Climate Pact partner, EFN will continue to work closely with the European Commission DG CLIMA as well as the whole Climate Pact Community, to ensure that the nurses' voice is heard loud and clear within the development and implementation

Publications

WHO Europe - Nursing Action's Brief on Safe Nurse Staffing

Recognising the critical contribution of the nursing profession to health systems, this [technical brief](#) sets out the case for investing in safe nurse staffing. Aiming to deepen understanding and accelerate action on safe nurse staffing by exploring strategic and operational approaches, tools and policy levers in Nursing Action countries and beyond in the WHO European Region, it includes the input from EFN ([EFN Policy Brief on Safe Staffing Levels - July 2025](#)) drafted based on the mapping of the EFN Members conducted in the context of Nursing Action. On the occasion of the launch of the brief, Tony Fitzpatrick, from the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) - EFN Workforce Committee Lead, and EFN Executive Committee Member, sent a very clear message to WHO Europe and to the Member States: we need an EU framework legislation on Safe Staffing Levels, based on article 153 TFEU, which gives the European Union competences on Occupational Safety and Health. This WHO technical brief will contribute to a range of activities as learning cycles, and twinning between countries.



EuroHealthNet's new Flashcard Tool

The European Pillar of Social Rights Flashcard Tool



SPSR FLASHCARD TOOL EUROHEALTHNET.EU

EuroHealthNet has developed a new [Flashcard Tool](#) which explains how each of the 20 principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights \(EPRS\)](#) connects to

public health, highlights concrete good practice examples from across the EU and Europe, and highlights relevant EU initiatives and resources. The tool is especially targeted public health professionals and policymakers. This is a very important resource as the EPRS is driving action that addresses the root causes of health and social inequalities.

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