



EFN Position Statement on Continuity of Care

Different backgrounds define the development of healthcare in the European countries. With the aim of having a collaborative approach, the **Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare EU Directive (2011/24/EU)** provides rules for facilitating the access to safe and high-quality cross-border healthcare, calling on Member states to enhance cooperation between healthcare providers and institutions at all levels (national, regional and local) to ensure safe, high-quality and efficient cross-border healthcare specifying joint planning, mutual recognition of standards, interoperable ICT systems and practical mechanisms to ensure continuity of care.

However, as a starting point, the continuity of care must also be organised and encouraged within the national and regional health systems of the European countries to make a broad collaboration in cross border healthcare possible. Therefore, it is necessary to implement care pathways within and across organisational, disciplinary and country boundaries to ensure continuity of the healthcare process.

Nurses have a crucial role in ensuring the continuity of care as the nursing profession is a fundamental link between the hospital sector, primary care sector and social services, establishing the bridge to enhance continuity of care and promote more dynamism within the health systems. The EFN believes that several efforts must be made to allow the nursing profession to deliver the continuity of care and asks for:

- Patient records which are accurate, comprehensive, up to date, understood, standardised, accessible, secure (respecting data protection and informed consent) and rapidly available¹ in the appropriate language.
- Clear understanding about the exchange of necessary and relevant health care information between the different levels of care².
- Community care facilities (Primary care centres) equipped with interoperable eHealth services to support channels of communication among healthcare professionals and effective mechanisms for information sharing³.
- Adoption of a common nursing terminology to document nursing care, such as International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP), integrated in patient records, in order to ensure quality of care, patient safety and nursing sensitive outcomes^{4,5,6,7}.
- Clear identification of roles and responsibilities defined for health professionals including advanced roles for nurses⁸.
- High standards of cooperation, active flows of communication, team working and multidisciplinary approach within integrated delivery systems. Integrated approach of service planning, financing, organisation and implementation.
- A competent, well-motivated and sustainable professional workforce to encourage capacity building when taking up innovative solutions^{9,10,11}.

¹ RCN. *Nursing content of eHealth records*. 2010.

² Braaf S, Manias E, Riley R. *The role of documents and documentation in communication failure across the perioperative pathway*. Literature review. *Int J Nurs Stud* 2011.

³ RCN Position Statement. *Measuring for quality in health and social care*.

⁴ *Nursing content: what is written or entered into the record that reflects the nursing contribution to patient care and outcomes of that care*- Royal College of Nursing.

⁵ Griffiths P, Jones S, Maben , Murrells T. *State of the art metrics for nursing: a rapid appraisal*, London. 2008.

⁶ Keenan GM, Yakel E, Tschannen D, Mandeville M. *Documentation and the Nurse Care Planning Process*. In: [Hughes RG](#), editor. *Source Patient Safety and Quality: An Evidence-Based Handbook for Nurses*. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2008 Apr. Chapter 49.

⁷ Laitinen H, Kaunonen M, Astedt-Kurki P. *Patient focused nursing documentation expressed by nurses*. *J Clin Nurs*. 2010 Feb;(3-4):489-97.

⁸ Delamaire ML, Lafortune G. *Nurses in Advanced Roles*. 2010.

⁹ Wilson S, Bremmer A, Hauck Y, Finn J. *The effect of nurse staffing on clinical outcomes of children in hospital: a systematic review*. *Int J Evid Based Healthc*. 2011 Jun;9(2):97-121.

¹⁰ Kane RL, Shamiyan T, Mueller C, Duval S, Wilt TJ. *Nurse staffing and quality of patient care*. *Evid Rep Technol Assess*. 2007 Mar;(151):1-115.

¹¹ Aiken LH et al. *Nurse forecasting in Europe (RN4CAST): Rationale, design and methodology*. *BCM Nurs*. 2011 Apr 18;10:6.

- Health, educational and workplace policies that ensure necessary education and training requirements for the health workforce to support continuity of care.
- Services tailored to individuals' needs towards a holistic and integrated approach to empower patients and for the benefit of the management of patient care.
- Continuity of communication and information between primary and secondary care, and health and social care.

The implementation of the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare is therefore central in promoting clear models of continuity of care combined with innovative solutions. It is essential that appropriate funding is provided to ensure success. Member States could now take this opportunity to invest at home in their national and regional health systems by making an effective use of the funding available (Structural Funds) to make citizens feel safe in the whole care process, be it at home or crossing borders.

The [European Federation of Nurses Associations \(EFN\)](#) was established in 1971 and is the independent voice of the profession. The EFN consists of National Nurses Associations from 34 EU Member States, working for the benefit of 6 million nurses throughout the European Union and Europe. The mission of EFN is to strengthen the status and practice of the profession of nursing for the benefit of the health of the citizens and the interests of nurses in the EU & Europe.

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