



POSITION PAPER ON SYNERGY BETWEEN DIRECTIVE 36, BOLOGNA and EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Nurses in Europe and indeed across the world are rising to the challenges associated with demographic change and shifting health care needs. Nursing has been at the vanguard of development in terms of freedom of movement for several decades in Europe. Nurses are increasingly mobile and, as a result, will benefit from the greater portability of qualifications and alignment of educational programmes that the Directive 36, the Bologna Agreement and the European Qualification Framework potentially provide. But these three processes live their own life and synergies are urgently needed.

The revision report of the Directive 2005/36/EC, by 2012, is a unique opportunity to build these synergies between these three processes. Therefore, EFN, ENSA, ESNO and ICN believe that:

- One European level of basic or first level professional qualification is needed followed by a second level, master of Sciences, and third level PhD. Therefore, a secondary level education is required to commence a first-level nursing education programme as the first level nursing programmes (RN Bachelor) need to guarantee the acquisition of basic competencies (ICN) and will cover at least three academic years (minimum bachelor level). The curriculum must be based on research and skills. To make all this happen, the Director of the nursing faculty must be a nurse in a position of university professor.
- The qualification of the nursing professor and nurse educators are actually fairly critical if comparability of the nursing education at EU level is taken forward. Those who deliver must be able to deliver to the same standard. There are some major inconsistencies within the EU and within Member States. Some countries require nurse educators to have registration as a nurse but do not worry about the rest of their qualifications being in nursing. Others insist that their professors must have PhD in nursing.
- Clarity is needed over the role and credit that practice based education hours will secure in any revised system leading to academic and register nurse award. Therefore, EFN, ENSA, ESNO and ICN call for the development of tools to facilitate the conduct of models of learning outcome assessment. This needs to happen under a broad scope structure and as credits for practice is a major issue, it is not only how it can be achieved but also how it can be measured and what might be an acceptable measure.
- Across Europe not all nurses are educated to degree level at the point of initial registration and not all qualifications carry the same credit tariff. Care will need to be exercised in defining and measuring the competencies to make sure that this diversity can continue or, alternatively, there is a managed transition to an all degree position across Europe. The issue of access pathways and bridging courses is therefore essential for providing opportunities. It is important to consider any impact that these changes will have in terms of workforce composition or agreements that have been reached in terms of articulation of Further Education Provision with that in the Higher Education sector.
- In order to safeguard quality of care and patient safety, the EU needs highly qualified and high number of nurses. Qualified nurses in all Member States benefiting from the mutual recognition procedure. Any health system reform in the EU and Europe need to support and facilitate a qualitative and equitable health service by a strategic contribution to the development of a sufficient, effective, competent and motivated workforce of nurses.
- A European Accreditation mechanism and cross border validation and review of all nursing schools, public and private, is critical in making sure comparable standards in education are achieved in all EU Member States as currently standards of education vary across a 'band width' within Member States. The "indicators and benchmarks" need to be developed and agreed on through a well designed stakeholder approach ensuring that front line clinical staff, regulators, government chief nurses, professional organisations, employers and patients are fully engaged. The EU needs to get this right by learning from International experiences.

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD), post-graduate specialisations, lifelong learning (LLL) and nursing career development are central to respond to society challenges. Bologna offers a structure and therefore European Union legislation need to set out a clear framework to assist harmonising the outcomes between European countries. Therefore, the fundamental principles of CPD and LLL must be grounded in the European Union legislation, and followed through by Member States and the healthcare professionals working in the health system. Work needs to be done in comparing and defining and agreed 'Masters level' in terms of an integrated theory and practice career such as nursing. The Bologna Follow-up Group needs to be reminded of this for the Bologna meeting in 2009.
- The Commission needs not only to facilitate cooperation and collaboration but also provide the best conditions for building synergies between the three educational processes leading to clarity and optimal use of financial and human resources. By doing this, the 2010 target goals for Member States education systems can facilitate the implementation of the Lisbon strategy for Growth and Jobs. Therefore, together with DG Internal Market, DG Sanco, DG Regio and DG Research specific and realistic strategies need to be put in place by implementing a programme of properly funded research and policy development in this whole area and it will take a co-ordinated stream of projects to get it right.



The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) was established in 1971. The EFN represents over one million nurses and is the independent voice of the profession. The mission of EFN is to safeguard the status and practice of the profession of nursing and the interests of nurses in the EU and Europe.

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The European Nursing Student Association (ENSA) is a pan-European organisation for cooperation between national nursing student organisations or colleges of nursing in Europe to discuss both practical and theoretical parts of the nursing education. The main aim of ENSA is to promote the highest possible standard of education for European nursing students so that, accordingly, the highest possible standards of nursing and health service for individuals are promoted and maintained, unrestricted by conditions of race, creed, colour, politics, and social status.



The goal of the **European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO)** is to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and co-operation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisation and its constituent members in order to represent the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations to and within the European Federation of Nurses (EFN) and the wider European community.

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The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 129 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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