

# **SURVEY ON THE TRAINING OF GENERAL CARE NURSES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

This survey serves as a background document for the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposal to modernize the minimum requirements for general care nurse trainings.

Competent authorities of twenty six Member States<sup>1</sup> replied to the Commission's questionnaire between 18 April 2012 and 26 June 2012.

## **The current minimum training requirements for general care nurses**

In 1977, when the Member States adopted Directive 77/453/EEC, they decided to harmonize the minimum training requirements for general care nurse trainings. Each Member State is obliged to ensure that all general care nurse trainings in their territory fulfil these requirements. This serves as the basis of the automatic recognition of the general care nurse qualifications obtained in any Member State.

Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications repealed Directive 77/453/EEC. However, the harmonized minimum training requirements for general care nurses remained the same. They are stipulated in Article 31 of Directive 2005/36/EC. Each Member State is obliged to notify the qualifications that comply with these requirements. The Commission publishes these qualifications in Annex V. point 5.2.2 of Directive 2005/36/EC.

According to the provisions referred to above, the admission requirement to a general nurse training must be a minimum of ten years of general education attested by a certificate or diploma or an "equivalent examination".

The training must be given on a full time basis and comprise at least three years or 4600 training hours. Clinical training must constitute one half of the training and theoretical training one third.

The programme must include at least the subjects listed in Annex V. point 5.2.1 of Directive 2005/36/EC.

These minimum training requirements reflect the nursing education at the time of their adoption. In 1981, seven out of ten Member States set the admission requirements for nursing training at ten years of general education. Moreover, nursing education in all Member States was organized at vocational school level, with a practice oriented approach.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the replies in the Annex Greece has not sent the back a reply to the questionnaire.

<sup>2</sup> Working Document of the Advisory Committee on Training in Nursing of 29 April 1981 DG Internal Market and Industrial Affairs III/D/5

## **The actual training requirements in the Member States**

In the last thirty years, the overwhelming majority of Member States upgraded its national training requirements for general care nurses in order to better reflect the development of the profession.

### **Training level**

General care nurses in the Member States are trained at vocational schools, colleges or at universities (where there exist three qualification levels: Associate degree, BA degree and MA degree).

#### 1) Education of general care nurses only at the higher education level (colleges, universities):

The following sixteen Member States educate general care nurses only at university level: BG (BA degree), DK (BA degree), EE (BA degree), IE (BA degree), ES (Associate degree and BA degree), FR (Associate degree), IT (BA degree), CY (BA degree), MT (Associate degree and BA degree), PL (BA degree and MA degree), PT (BA degree), RO (BA degree), SI (BA degree), SK (BA degree and MA degree), SE (BA degree), UK (BA degree)

CZ and LT educate general care nurses at universities (BA degree) and vocational colleges.

FI educates general care nurses in vocational colleges.

#### 2) Education of general care nurses both at the higher education level and in vocational schools:

Five Member States indicated that they educate general care nurses both in vocational schools and at the higher education level:

BE in vocational schools and at universities at Associate degree and BA degree levels,

LT in vocational schools and at universities at BA degree level

HU in vocational schools and at universities at BA and MA degree levels,

NL in vocational schools and at vocational colleges

AT in vocational schools and at universities at BA degree level

#### 3) Education of general care nurses in vocational schools:

Currently LU and DE educate general care nurses at the vocational school level.

**Duration:**

Article 31(3) of Directive 2005/36/EC stipulates that the duration of the general care nurse training should be at least three years or 4600 hours of theoretical and clinical training.

**The number of training years:**

Currently all Member States comply with the three-year requirement.

DK, EE and FI have raised this requirement to three and a half years.

BG, IE, CY, LT, LV, LU, NL, PT, RO, SI raised this requirement to four years for some or all of their trainings.

**The number of training hours:**

Thirteen Member States (BE, BG, DE, IE, FR, CY, LV, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, RO, SK and the UK) indicated that all general care nurse training must respect both criteria of years and training hours. IT indicated that their training fall slightly short of the 4600 training hours (it is only 4500 training hours).

Six Member States (DK, EE, ES, PT, SE, FI) indicated the number of ECTS points that students must acquire by the time they graduate. LT indicated the number of ECTS points only for one of its training programmes. ECTS is currently implemented in different ways in the Member States.

CZ, LT, PL, SI, did not indicate the number of training hours or ECTS points for some or any of the training programmes.

**Admission to a nurse training**

Out of the twenty six Member States who replied to the survey, twenty two require at least twelve years of general education (BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, ES, FR, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE, FI, UK).

LU and MT require at least eleven years of general education.

DE and AT require ten years of general education. AT declared its intention to move for 12 years of general education in the next seven years.

FI applies equivalence solutions regarding nursing assistant trainings in order to compensate for the twelve years general education requirement.

### **Acquired competences after the completion of the general care nurse training**

Currently the Directive does not contain a list of competences that person who completed the nurse training should demonstrate to be considered as a fully qualified nurse. However, besides CY all the twenty five Member States who replied to the questionnaire indicated that they apply such a list of competences at national level.

### **Nurse assistants**

It is a general trend in Europe that some of the most basic support tasks which in the past were predominantly performed by nurses are now carried out by nurse assistants.

Twenty Member States (BE, CZ, DK, DE, ES, FR, LT, LV, HU, NL, AT, RO, SI, SK, FI, IE, IT, MT, SE, UK) stated that their national health care system employs nurse assistants. Sixteen of them (BE, CZ, DK, DE, ES, FR, LT, LV, HU, NL, AT, RO, SI, SK, FI) also indicated that they regulate this profession.

Annex I. General Care Nurse Trainings in the Member States

MS	Level of training	Duration of the training
Belgium (Flemish)	University – Associate degree*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
Belgium (French)	Vocational school*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
Belgium (German)	Vocational school*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
Bulgaria	University – BA*	4 years consisting of 4600 hours
Czech Republic	University*	3 years
	Vocational college*	3 years
Denmark	University – BA*	3,5 years (210 ECTS)
Germany	Vocational school	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
Estonia	University – BA*	3.5 years (210 ECTS)
Ireland	University – BA*	4 years consisting of min 4600 training hours
Greece		
Spain	University - Associate Degree*	3 years (180 ECTS)
	University – BA*	4 years (240 ECTS)
France	University - Associate Degree*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours
Italy	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4500 hours
Cyprus	University – BA*	4 years consisting of 4600 hours
Latvia	Vocational school*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours

	University – BA*	4 years consisting of 6400 hours (240 ECTS)
Lithuania	Vocational college*	3,5 years
	University- BA*	4 years consisting of 6400 hours (240ECTS)
Luxembourg	Vocational school	4 years consisting of 4693 training hours
Hungary	Vocational school*	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
	University – MA*	BA + 1.5 years
Malta	University – Associate degree	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
Netherlands	Vocational school (Quality level 4)*	4 years consisting of 6400 hours
	Vocational college (Quality level 5)*	4 years consisting of 6400 hours
Austria	Vocational school	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
	University*	3 years consisting of 4600 hours
Poland	University – BA*	3 years
	University – MA*	BA +2 years
Portugal	University – BA*	4 years (240 ECTS)
Romania	University*	3 or 4 years, but at least 4600 hours
Slovenia	University – BA*	4 years
Slovakia	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours

	University – MA*	BA +2 years
Sweden	University - BA*	3 years (180 ECTS)
Finland	Vocational college*	3.5 years (210 ECTS)
United Kingdom	University – BA*	3 years consisting of 4600 training hours

\* Admission requirement: at least 12 years of general education