



## EFN Position Paper on “Investing in Health”

Investing in health and social care is a key strategy for EU’s recovery<sup>i</sup>. EU citizens’ values and principles are closely linked to health and social care: solidarity, equity and participation. Investing in people’s health and encouraging and promoting a healthy population are values in themselves, as they promote a healthy workforce able to actively participate in the labour market.

The EFN emphasises the need to foster the added value of health as a driver of well-being, productivity and growth, particularly relevant in a context of economic and financial downturn. Influencing people’s health can be achieved by promoting a healthier lifestyle for individuals and communities through the increase of their health literacy and the positive influence on their determinants of health, such as physical environment, social network or equitable access to health and social services. As the health workforce is the main factor, investments in health need to be accompanied by investments in integrated care systems and in its workforce.

Nurses contribute in their daily work to achieving and strengthening these objectives. The financial crisis has triggered cuts in healthcare spending compromising patient safety and quality of care<sup>ii</sup>. However, despite the difficulties imposed, nurses contribute to innovation by implementing new efficient ways of delivering healthcare<sup>iii,iv</sup>. Building on these ‘frontline’ examples, the EFN encourages the Commission and Member States to strengthen a healthier Europe by promoting evidence based strategies that invest in education of the health workforce, appropriate workforce composition, a sufficient number of qualified professionals, integrated care services supported by eHealth services and community care that supports citizens’ empowerment.

The EFN members calls on the Commission, the European Parliament and National Governments (Council of the European Union) to:

- Invest in the education of the nursing workforce to facilitate their further development of knowledge, skills and competences. This will allow them to make the best use of the available evidence to deliver safe, effective, efficient, personalised, and integrated services of high quality. The Single Market Act empowers Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications through its legislative framework. Implementing the Acquis into the national legislation and nursing education curricula needs to have the ambition of being inclusive towards the entire nursing workforce. As such, education becomes the facilitator for free movement.
- Ensure an appropriate workforce strategy with the right skills and grade-mix and anticipatory needs to meet the needs resulting from societal challenges. Established recruitment and retention measures including improved and safe working conditions, career advancements, and fostered opportunities for Continuous Professional Development need tailored implementation with the support of the European Social Funds. Gender sensitivity is for these designs essential to get the desired outcomes. The continued focus on strengthening the EU health workforce and determining and forecasting the nursing workforce needs to sustain into an EU Sector Skills Council ensuring a cost-effective and long term approach to system redesign.
- Strengthen primary care and support the communities by enhancing the development of advanced roles for nurses have proved to play a crucial role in the management of long-term care, and in promoting citizen’s and patient empowerment<sup>v,vi</sup>. Nurses play a central role in shifting traditional healthcare approaches towards integrated care. Investing in health infrastructure, including eHealth and ICT solutions, fostering a transformational change in the health system, and reinforcing the shift

from a hospital-centred model to community-based care and integrated services are urgently needed.

- Increase prevention and health promotion activities and incorporate health literacy in citizens' empowerment strategies. Prevention is key in personalised healthcare, in contributing to populations' health, and implies the adoption of citizen-centric approaches. Nurses are uniquely placed to act as a health coach and to help managing chronic diseases by supporting and promote healthy lifestyles and boost prevention in healthcare from a life circle approach.
- Reduce health inequalities by deploying community care and using innovative practices and ICT tools that have proved to be effective. Collaborate in partnership with other Members States where good practices available are making use of technology to support the needed variation in the way health and social work is organised and delivered in the hope of addressing health inequalities more effectively. Use of EU Funds to actively support the transformation of national systems in efficient integrated care systems. Improving access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality healthcare is a key investment.
- Strengthen and promote research and the collection of evidence on the sustainability of health systems, on the benefits of health promotion and prevention, on the equal access for all citizens, on cost effectiveness and on citizens' empowerment. Bringing this evidence upfront by facilitating research knowledge excellence networks will foster the dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers and will help provide concrete solutions to reform health and social care systems. Reinforce on evidence based nursing research to allow nurses to be highly skilled, motivated and qualified to respond flexible and creatively to changing needs.
- Encourage innovation at the bedside by up-scaling good practice examples of innovative nursing care that safes money and improves patient outcomes. Promote innovation, but not only from a technological point of view but from an organisational perspective, orienting services and resources to end-users' needs and ensuring it brings genuine benefits and sustainability. Innovation should not be only economy driven, but should aim at providing better quality of care for all.
- Nursing is a predominantly a female profession in most places of the EU. To promote equity and decrease discrimination, adequate financing of nursing care and independence of the nursing profession according to their competences should be part of any strategy including health professionals.

In the period of austerity and EU criticism, the EFN believes that joining and pooling forces towards achieving change for the individual citizen will make an overall difference. The EFN remains committed to reinforce the collaboration with the EU Civil Society, the professional associations and EU key stakeholders to further orient the policy-makers and politicians in choosing the strategies with the biggest impact for the health and well being of the people living in Europe when investing in health.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2013) Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion –including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020. Brussels.

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<sup>ii</sup> EFN (2012). Caring in Crisis. The impact of the Financial Crisis on Nurses and Nursing. June. Brussels.

<sup>iii</sup> EFN (2012). Caring for the Future – Cost effective Integrated Care models. May. Brussels.

<sup>iv</sup> Lupari M (2011). Innovation Award Royal College of Nursing. [online]  
<http://frontlinefirst.rcn.org.uk/sites/frontlinefirst/index.php/innovation/entry/marina-lupari>

<sup>v</sup> Lupari MT (2011). An investigation of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a case management approach for older people with multiple chronic conditions within a community healthcare setting. [online]  
[http://www.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/484275/MarinaLupariFullthesis2011.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/484275/MarinaLupariFullthesis2011.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Royal College of Nursing (2012). Advanced nurse practitioners. An RCN guide to advance nursing practice, advanced nurse practitioners and programme accreditation. London, 2012