

## EFN PRESS RELEASE

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### NURSES CARING FOR EBOLA PATIENTS – ZERO TOLERANCE

**Brussels, Belgium; Geneva, Switzerland, 28 November 2014** – The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) call for full protection of the nursing workforce and zero tolerance towards circumstances that result in staff infection.

The International Summit on “Nursing and Ebola Virus” (27–28 October), along with DG Sanco\* meetings with the National Coordinators for Ebola (7 November) and with the health professionals (13 November), expressed the need for different levels of preparedness – general preparation, dealing with suspected cases and caring for known cases – in which “zero tolerance” of staff infection is key for concrete actions. Such preparedness should also include an escalating response scenario should a wider breakout occur in Europe.

In order to ensure health services providers are well organised and prepared for Ebola, the EFN and ICN call on the European Health Council, the Health Security Committee and the European Ministers of Health to take concrete actions by:

- Identifying an EU list of reference centres for Ebola and making sure a cost-effective network supports patients and staff safety.
- Setting out an agreed team composition related to patient needs but balancing the risks of burnout with the risks of exposing an unnecessarily high number of staff. It is important to look at patient-nurse ratios and outcomes.
- Making ECDC\*\* protocols “fit for practice” by bringing the nurses working with Ebola patients together with DG Sanco/ECDC to exchange practical experience in the operability of the ECDC protocols so that nurses throughout the EU can deploy adequate material to care for Ebola patients.
- Adopting, implementing and monitoring Ebola guidelines at national level, in close cooperation with the ECDC. The training for donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) of personal protective equipment is a priority which DG Sanco/ECDC should organise.
- Investing in the education and training of health professionals to deliver safe and high quality care. Continuous professional development is key for patient and staff safety, along with the appropriate and sufficient time and resources to access it.

- Combatting “stigmatisation” of those who care for Ebola patients. A Commission working group with the people concerned should develop a roadmap to immediately combat stigma in care, including provision for psychological support for healthcare workers and their families. We need to take care of those who care for Ebola patients.
- Transposing existing EU legislation on Biological Safety and Safety at Work into the daily practice of frontline staff and therefore using the available social cohesion funds (2014–2020) for skilling–up the nursing workforce.

The ECDC and DG Sanco should plan concrete actions throughout and with the nursing community to prepare nurses for the safe and adequate care of Ebola patients. Without appropriate resources and investments, and without a highly qualified, motivated and competent nursing workforce in the right numbers, no protective measures can sufficiently safeguard those who provide care for those who need care.

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*\*DG Sanco – Directorate–General Health & Food Safety*

*\*\*ECDC – European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)*

**For more information:**

- [Evidence report on the Spanish case of Ebola – Executive Summary](#)
- [Madrid Declaration on the World Summit ‘Nursing & Ebola Virus’](#)
- [Flash report – Workshop with health and other professions likely to enter into contact with Ebola patients \(13 November 2014\)](#)
- [Ebola: Commission organises meeting with European health professionals](#)

**Note for Editors:**

*The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) was established in 1971. The EFN represents over 34 National Nurses Associations and its work has an effect on the daily work of 6 million nurses throughout the European Union and Europe. The EFN is the independent voice of the nursing profession and its mission 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.*

*The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.*

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