



## EFN POSITION PAPER ON MOVING CARE TO THE COMMUNITY

Advancements in health technology have enabled the population to live longer, however more people are living with co-morbidities, non-communicable diseases and needing complex care interventions. At European level, politicians are placing attention on measures of health promotion and disease prevention that enable citizens to live longer, more independent and healthier lives. Bringing care closer to the citizens, preventing diseases and helping citizens in their self-management will contribute to the sustainability of health systems<sup>1</sup>. We know that investing in community services and the community workforce will help to deliver positive health outcomes and quality of care, improve cost-effectiveness and free hospitals to provide more acute and specialised care when needed.

Building a sustainable health and social care service for future generations implies moving care to the community, freeing hospitals to provide more complex, specialised and emergency care. A renewed focus on delivering general health care in the community implies an appropriately designed frontline workforce composition at the interface of health and social care services. This is instrumental in co-ordinating patient care pathways, including primary care, and promoting a healthier population that is empowered and able to live independently.

If EU Member States are to succeed in moving care out of hospitals and into the community there is an urgent need for a whole system and mind set change at the policy, practice and education levels. Integrated working by acute, community, primary and social care services is critical to reduce the fragmentation within the health and social care systems and deliver improved patient outcomes. As such, moving care to the community fosters the added value of health as a driver of well-being, productivity and growth, particularly relevant in the political context of boosting the social economy.

The EFN therefore calls on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to:

1. Ensure the frontline workforce is supported with EU funds to make change a success. Only 3% of the total budget of social cohesion funds reaches the health and social care sector. Changes take place at the micro level although the macro level foresees the budget allocation. Negotiations for budget allocations should be nursing sensitive;
2. Engage the nursing profession in the deployment of the European Digital Agenda to make EU policies “fit for practice”. The eHealth roadmap makes reference to ‘nursing and social care’ eHealth services, which should lead to practical changes in the health and social care system by collecting and sharing practices shown to be sustainable; and,
3. Strengthen nursing research by making upcoming Horizon 2020 programs focussing on accessibility and coordination of health and social care services so that the nursing and social care workforce is supported in carrying out safe and high quality services.

Furthermore, the EFN calls on the national/regional/local bodies to:

1. Invest in the education of general care nurses, ensuring they are competent to independently deliver high quality and safe care (art 31 of Directive 2013/55/EU). A strategic contribution to the development of a sufficient, effective, competent and motivated nursing workforce is key for successfully moving care into the community;
2. Foster a transformational change in the healthcare system by supporting the development of advanced roles in coordinating and integrating nursing and social care services;
3. Facilitate an optimal coordination and integration within and across the primary and secondary health and social care interface, by using ICT solutions that are ‘fit for practice’. ICT and mHealth need to support nurses and social workers to increase direct patient/citizen care;
4. Support the implementation of re-organisational pathways that are effective in increasing accessibility to health and social care. Nurses serve as the interface between acute and community care, focusing on health promotion, prevention, and self-management, and providing support to patients transitioning across secondary and primary care;
5. Strengthen nursing research knowledge and integrate research findings into health policies. This can become a Horizon 2020 success story, as EU citizens want change based on existing evidence for system-wide and sector specific reforms with an emphasis on accessibility and coordination of services. Horizon 2020 health and social care research should link the coordination of health and social care services with patient outcomes;

<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union (2013), "Reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems". Council Conclusions

6. Explore the shift of clinically appropriate services out of hospitals towards the community to ensure cost-effectiveness, patient empowerment and sustainability of health and social care services. This can lead to health care systems in the EU that are safe, of high quality, accessible to all citizens and with a highly motivated workforce;
7. Strengthen interprofessional working, which is of utmost importance for a successful, safe and quality healthcare system and which will ensure continuity of care;
8. Establish a workforce of nurses that is highly trained and is able to work independently at an advanced level; and equip these nurses working in the field with the appropriate resources; and,
9. Establish a reference system, which refers the patients at the right time to the right facility.

Finally, the EFN urges policy makers to not think only in economic terms: although care in the community does cost a significant amount of money, moving from acute to primary care is still the more desired option. ICT integration in health and social care services, an optimal design of the community health workforce composition and the guidance of existing research findings will facilitate change, encourage innovation at the bedside and will bring genuine benefits for health and social care system sustainability. The EFN believes that joining and pooling forces together to achieve change for the individual citizen will make an overall difference for realising the core EU values: solidarity, equity and prosperity.

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*EFN Position Paper – April 2015*

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