



EFN POSITION PAPER ON NURSES CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN SEMESTER

By the end of 2020 the EU wants to have achieved its growth strategy leading to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the areas of employment, research and development, climate, energy, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction. Challenges in different sectors but particularly in those related to health and social care lead to a disruptive restructuring, envisaging efficiency and sustainable solutions. Although the Member States have an extensive freedom in organising their health and social care systems, the European Union helps Member States to achieve the abovementioned goals by analysing the state of play of the ecosystem and bring in recommendations to improve the performance of the health and social care system. These are covered by the Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester, which year by year puts different recommendations for all Members States in the spotlight.

However, every single Member State is or will be struggling with the societal challenges if healthcare remains isolated from the social sector, and stays disease specific and medically dominated. All countries need to set a series of political priorities that reshuffle investments towards building a health and social ecosystem with a strengthened community care. Bringing care back to the community will be the main challenge in the coming years to reach a resilient health and social care ecosystem.

The EFN therefore advises national and European policy-makers, drafting input to the Commission, leading to Country Specific Recommendations, to acknowledge the importance of investing in health, with a more efficient health and social care funding allocation, better working conditions for the nursing workforce, especially frontline, building on existing integrated care ecosystems throughout the EU.

During the past five years, the EFN has been working in different sectors that contribute to the sustainability of health and social ecosystems. Firstly, on education, it is crucial and a safeguard for patients, the carers and the public in general, to have a high qualified and motivated nursing workforce operating frontline in EU health and social care systems in the EU and Europe. To that end, the EU Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC), which sets the minimum education requirements and competences at EU level, had to be properly implemented by January 2016. In order to support that, the EFN members developed an EFN Competency Framework that is helping nursing schools and universities to bring their nursing workforce up to the best quality, fit for practice. It is well known that research proved the link between the education of nurses and patient outcomes. Bringing evidence of the importance of a highly educated nursing workforce, including the creation of advanced roles frontline, into the national governments reports towards the European Commission is key for being reflected in the Commission Country Specific Recommendations.

It is therefore important the National Nurses Association has the opportunity providing input to the European Semester through their National Contact Points for the European Semester. Best practice examples on the contribution of nurses and nursing to a sustainable health and social care ecosystem is key. Nurses play a fundamental and indispensable role in the provision of long-term care. That recognition should be better acknowledged in the European Semester. There is a plausible movement towards the promotion of the value of health and social systems in which prevention and continuity of care and outcomes are of vital importance.

In this regard, the EFN, together with 23 partners in the health and social ecosystem, has recently developed 5 EU Guidelines on eHealth services used by nurses and social workers on key areas of prevention, clinical practice, integrated care and continuity of care, and nurse ePrescribing. The ambition to take a holistic approach to the delivery of care at local, regional and national level making full use of the Digital Single Market and the different opportunities of innovation, especially related to eSkills for frontline. Supporting frontline disruptive market-creating innovation and scaling-up the innovations are essential for more growth in the EU and Europe. The health and social integrated care ecosystem is a generator of innovation.

Integrated care refers to the management and delivery of health and social care services so that citizens receive a continuum of preventive and curative services, according to their needs over time and across the existing health and social ecosystems. The implementation of eHealth services for integrated care holds great potential for improving the quality and safety of care for individuals across the EU through ensuring continuity of care across primary and secondary health and social care sectors. This can bring substantial benefits for patients, citizens, carers and, health and social care professionals; patients, carers and citizens can be empowered to take more ownership of their health and conditions while professionals can be enabled to provide the high quality care they aspire.

The EFN and its members have the evidence that change can happen and that sustainable solutions for long term care can be implemented. We have tools and the champions in the fields to make change happen. The European Semester should serve as a tool to pick up these local good practices to help build more resilient systems of continuity of care throughout the EU.

Member States should take all this into account when planning their health and social care policies as this is the way that they will achieve the objectives that were set out on a European level. At the same time, the European Commission and Council are strongly urged to use the European Semester to promote sustainable investment that will benefit integrated care and continuity of care. This will on its turn reduce medical and hospitalisation costs which are a big strain on the budget of many Member States.

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