

## EFN PRESS RELEASE

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### International Women's Day

**8 March** – The International Women's Day aims celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievement of women all over the world. But the truth is that even if a lot of efforts have been undertaken so far, a lot remains to be done. Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on the progresses made over the years and call on for a real change at all levels, to make sure that gender parity becomes finally achieved.

We all know that poor salaries, unsatisfactory working conditions and 'no say' in decision-making processes, particularly for frontline staff, often leaves women feeling isolated, disempowered and unappreciated. As nurses, with a workforce of 95% of women, this is a key issue and we cannot ignore this real need for change at all levels, including in the health systems, and even more when we know that women in society can play a key role in the [design of policies](#) that can transform the health and social care systems in the European Union, specifically through designing systems that drive better and measurable health and social outcomes.

The Lisbon Reform Treaty considers gender equality among its key values and objectives, but to date, health and social care reform has been largely blind to its impact! It has failed to sufficiently identify the distinct [health needs](#) and experiences of women (and men), analyse the factors that contribute to that difference and respond accordingly. Without such analysis, health system reform can miss important opportunities to promote gender equality, and also negatively impact on women's (and men's) health. Furthermore, women are overrepresented in lower paid and informal [care-giving roles](#), and have been disproportionately affected by human resources' policies that fail to consider their professional needs in employment contracts, incentives and career advancement opportunities. Though, building gender equality in health and social systems improves their functioning and responsiveness with the goal of improving health outcomes.

It is, therefore, time to act and take real actions to make the difference! Many Member States are introducing reforms of the health and social sector designed to improve the relevance, sustainability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the current 'silo system', which is not sensitive enough towards gender. Policy-makers and politicians have here a golden opportunity to ensure that the reform process addresses the problems of the long-standing inequality between women and men, both as providers and as recipients of care.

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*Please contact Dr Paul De Raeve, Secretary General of the European Federation of Nurses Associations, for more information. Email: [efn@efn.be](mailto:efn@efn.be) – Tel: +32 2 512 74 19 – Web: [www.efnweb.eu](http://www.efnweb.eu)*

