



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

April-May-June 2021

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

It is a year since the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in many European countries. It has been unprecedented as we all have been impacted, with many experiencing the sad loss of family, friends and colleagues or experience serious illness. Our members, across Europe, have been on the frontline putting their lives at risk and facing relentless workloads with significant impact

on their physical and mental health, wellbeing and lives. A glimmer of light has commenced with the COVID-19 vaccination process proceeding in almost all the EU Member States with the vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, those with serious underlining health conditions and those at the highest risk of exposure such as, front-line healthcare workforce. It is anticipated that the vaccination strategy will reduce the mortality rate and this in turn will support the planning and pathway to return to nearer to normal life later in the year.

The EFN Members have highlighted many lessons learned from the pandemic, and we continue to lobby the European Commission to ensure that all the political decisions are future proofed resilience for our healthcare systems and our profession. To drive improvements in decision making, the EFN has been participating in key meetings with the European Commission, including, for example: 1/ The European Commission [meeting](#) with the Co-Chairs of the Coalition for Vaccination (which the EFN is co-chairing in the representation of the nursing profession) on the acquisition and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines across EU countries, raising the challenges they are facing on the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines for the EU; 2/ the [high-level event](#) organised by DG Santé to discuss on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic for a stronger health security framework. Currently, the European Commission is preparing the main elements of the future new EU Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, to be proposed by the end of 2021; 3/ The [high-level meeting](#) with Commissioners Schmit (Jobs and Social Rights), Breton (Internal Market) and Kyriakides (Health and Food Safety) on the [Pact for Skills](#) on the health ecosystem, recognising the importance to drive innovation and to leverage all the opportunities to support workers. Upskilling and reskilling of health professionals to create a digital healthcare system is vital to the future. Invited as keynote speaker, I emphasized the importance of incorporating into the Pact for Skill initiative Directive [2013/55/EU](#) and in particular the implementation in all EU Member States of [article 31](#).

Other positive news is that the EFN has been acknowledged as Official Campaign Partner of the '[Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load' campaign 2020-22](#)' run by EU-OSHA. The main aim of the campaign is to create a safe workplace to improve trust and safety in all workers. It is an ambitious and important goal for improving the working conditions for all healthcare professionals, above all nurses, with more equipment and greater safety. This campaign is a fundamental starting point to create a place where nurses and all the healthcare workers feel safe and protected.

Finally, we are organising the 112th EFN General Assembly on 15 April 2021, once again it will be online due to COVID-19. This will be the opportunity to discuss important topics for the nursing profession and approve key policy papers, on education, workforce and digitalization. All of which will be important tools to inform EU health policies in line with our Members priorities. It is key that the EU institutions embrace nurses with their knowledge and expertise

to build resilience. There is no resilience without nurses and there are no nurses without resilience. Our Members have endured a traumatic and challenging year on the frontline, and it is essential that EU Institutions drive innovative policy change with nurses to support nurses with the tools to make a real difference to healthcare delivery across Europe for all citizens. Awards, applause and nice social media messages are appreciated; however, real commitment and action is needed to ensure nurses have better working conditions and appropriate salaries so we can recruit the next generation into the nursing profession and retain the current exceptional nurses in the profession. Recruitment and retention are an essential element of building resilience.

I am so looking forward to meeting with you online in April in order to listen to your views that will shape our advocacy work and drive the workplan to deliver on our strategic objectives for all our Members.

Please take good care and stay safe.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President

News from EFN

European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

On 4 March, the European Commission set out its ambition for a strong Social Europe that focuses on jobs and skills for the future, paving the way for a fair, inclusive and resilient socio-economic recovery through the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#). The EFN members has been following the development of the Action Plan very closely, linked to the European Semester, with a specific focus on 4 principles: education, wages, access to healthcare and Long-Term Care. However, Covid-19 has shaken up the priorities, with resilience coming upfront. But what does resilience mean for 3 million nurses in the EU. Will this action plan support sustainability and resilience of the healthcare sector? The EFN highlights the importance of concrete actions to build resilience, especially linked to the digitalisation of the healthcare sector, focussing on better working conditions, so nurses can stay in their profession. It is now time to act!

Choosing to challenge - the EU Gender Equality Strategy

This year's theme to mark International Women's Day on 8 March was ["Choose to Challenge"](#): 'from challenge comes change' and 'we can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality'. The European Commission [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#), presenting key objectives and actions, was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The health crisis turned into a social and economic crisis.

The same holds for more [women in politics](#). According to the [Gender Equality Index 2020](#), the current situation highlights deeper problems regarding gender balance in political institutes. In 20 Member States, women account for one third of total members, while in 3 countries the percentage of women is only 20%. Nurses play a prominent role both in health and in politics.

On the occasion of the International Women Day, Eurostat also published some [statistics](#) on health workers in the EU, that show that in the third quarter of 2020, 14.3 million people aged 15 and over were employed in health occupations in the EU, representing over 7% of employed people and almost 4% of people aged 15 and over. These health jobs include medical doctors (1.8 million), nurses, midwives and their associates (4.4 million, out of which 2.7 million are associates = 30% of the health workers), personal care workers (3.9 million), and other health professionals and associates (4.1 million). All working at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year. The statistics also show that women are a majority with 78% of

health workers (ranging 61% in Greece to up to 90% in Estonia and Latvia), while men are only 22%.

The European Parliament also adopted a [report](#) on "The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period" (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality - Rapporteur: Frances Fitzgerald), which examines the impact of COVID-19 on the EU citizens, and calls on key actions in areas as domestic violence, healthcare structures and operations, work life balance, redistributing caring responsibilities and Europe's role in the world, as well as measures for the recovery period. The report calls for comparable data on gender, domestic violence, national recovery plans, healthcare, sexual rights and European assistance strategy, as a step forward to better understand how to act on gender equality issues in the EU.

As EFN represents 3 million nurses in the EU and 6 million nurses across Europe, with a vast majority of the workforce (92%) composed of women, the EFN argues that EU Member States still need to introduce many reforms to address the gender-gap existing across many European countries and address the long-standing inequality between women and men, both as providers and as recipients of care.

Electronic Health Records (EHR)

The EFN is the end-user representative in 2 EHR projects under H2020. Read more about their last developments: [InteropEHRate](#) and [Smart4Health](#).

News from the EU

Update of User guide for Directive 2005/36/EC

The European Commission has published an update of [its User Guide to the Directive 2005/36/EC](#) on recognition of professional qualifications, that uses a simple Q&A format to explain how to have professional qualifications recognised in another EU country.

Health Systems Performance Assessment report

The European Commission has released a [report](#) prepared by an EU expert group on health systems assessment entitled "Assessing the resilience of health systems in Europe: an overview of the theory, current practice and strategies for improvement". The report sets out the theoretical concept of 'resilience of health systems' and provides a summary on the assessments of the resilience of the health system carried out by European countries, next to an analysis on the implementation of the improvement strategies and the related assessment framework. Importantly, the report presents several options which the Member States can consider in order to improve the quality of their evaluation methods for the Resilience of Healthcare system. For more information see [here](#).

The roadmap on the European Health Data Space

The European Commission has published a [Roadmap](#) to get information on the context, the principal problems and the main objectives which the European Health Data Space (EHDS) will take on to reach the 3 core objectives: 1/ Guarantee the access, the share and the use of Health Data → Policy options: Establish a legal and governance framework to allow the access and the exchange of Data; Reduce technical barriers for the use of Data; Allow the control by patients and citizens to their own Health Data; 2/ Encourage the creation of a single market in Digital Health which includes digital health services and products → Policy options: Remove obstacle to ease the right circulation of digital health services and products; 3/ Improve the development and the circulation of digital health services and devices, also those which include the AI → Policy options: Analyse the rules related to the use of data-intensive services. A new EHDS legislative proposal will be published in Q4 of 2021. Click here for more information on the European Commission communication on the [European strategy for data](#).

European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA)

The European Commission published its initial [impact assessment](#) for the planned European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), outlining policy options aiming to set up a new EU authority, followed by a Roadmap (to which the EFN provided [input](#)). The need for coordinated action in Europe has emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic to react to health emergencies. **A European**

HERA is a fundamental tool to reinforce the European Health Union. This will be a central element in strengthening the European Health Union to give a better response to the health threats and to be more prepared to face future pandemics at EU level.

Agreement on the EFS+

The European Commission announced an historical [agreement](#) reached between the European Parliament and the EU Member States on the proposal of the European Commission for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) with a total budget allocated of €88 billion. The ESF+ will be a key financial element to implement the [European pillar of social rights](#), to support jobs and to create a more equal and socially inclusive society. It will provide the necessary resources to all the EU Members States to recover from the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Now it will be key to see how much EU funds will be used for the resilience of the nursing workforce!

Green Paper on ageing

The European Commission published a [Green Paper on Ageing](#) to launch a policy debate on the challenges and opportunities of Europe's ageing society and aiming to implement political actions to face up demographic change in the EU, including digital technologies. The Green Paper takes a life cycle approach which considers the global aging consequences and highlights on the personal and social implications of aging. The European Commission will put in place an action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights which includes healthy lifestyles, pensions, a large workforce to support healthcare and long-term care for the elderly. To provide your input to the consultation open until 21 April, click [here](#).

The European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)

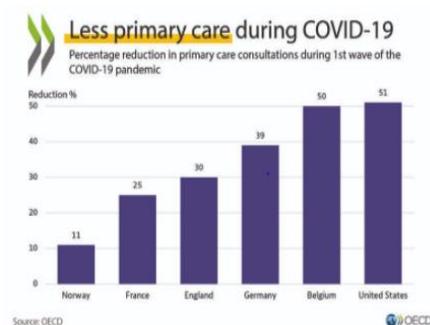


The European Union has made €100 billion in loans available to the EU Member States to save jobs and protect individuals from unemployment. The [SURE](#) instrument is a key element that supports part-time work programs and similar

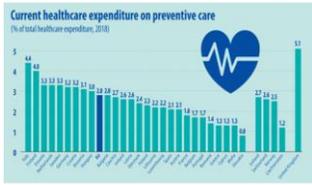
measures to address the negative economic and social consequences of this pandemic. The Commission has proposed a total of €90.6 billion in financial support to 19 Member States. €53.5 billion has already been [disbursed](#) to 15 Member States. Other Member States can still submit requests to receive financial support under SURE.

How Primary Care can help the Healthcare system

Over the last year, European health systems have been modified, being equipped to deal with health emergencies related to the Covid-19 pandemic. All that placed in the background people suffering from chronic diseases who are not only more exposed to the risk of contagion from Covid-19, but who are more vulnerable and subject to daily health complications. Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of placing [primary health care](#) at the core of health systems. Strengthening primary health care is essential to reduce the indirect negative health impact of COVID-19, as well as alleviating the burden on hospitals. The innovations and new technologies introduced to deal with the serious emergencies due to Covid-19 have to be maintained to ensure greater resilience of health systems without forgetting the importance and the need to have a robust, quality and long-lasting primary care system period.



Healthcare expenditure on preventive care



It is important to know, especially in a pandemic period, how much money is invested in [preventive care](#) to avoid or decrease the number of diseases and their consequences. Eurostat recently published some figures that show that on average, in the EU, public and private spending

on preventive care is 2.8% of total health expenditure, according to the data recorded in 2018, with higher numbers in Italy (4.4%) and Finland (4.0%) and lower figures in Slovakia (0.8% of total health expenditure), followed by Greece, Cyprus, Malta (all 1.3%) and Romania (1.4%).

Health Data in the light of GDPR

The European Commission DG Santé published a [study](#) on "Assessment of the EU Member States' rules on health data in the light of GDPR", which analyses possible differences and identify elements that could influence the exchange of [health data](#) between the EU Member States and examine EU actions in support of the use and the exchange of health data. The study shows the need for a more harmonized approach between Member States as regards technical infrastructure, data quality, digital skills and the improvement of the ability to use health data.

European Citizens Initiative: further extension achieved

On 19 February 2021, the European Commission decided to add 3 months [extension](#) to the [European Citizens' Initiatives](#) that were in the process of collecting statements of support on 1 February 2021, due to the Covid-19 ongoing challenges. Through the European Citizens Initiatives, EU citizens can have a direct impact on the future of Europe.

Publications

Estimating the health impact of vaccination

The Lancet published a [report](#) on the impact of a vaccination program in 98 low-middle income countries. What emerged from this research, analysing the impacts and positive effects of vaccination programs on citizens' health, is that 37 million lives were preserved thanks to the vaccine between 2000 and 2019, with a 45% reduction in deaths compared with the counterfactual scenario of no vaccination. The report shows that vaccination programs facilitate the reduction of mortality among children under the age of 5, and that the increase in vaccination campaigns and the creation of new vaccines will allow a 72% reduction in mortality.

Nurses are leading the fight against vaccine hesitancy

In this [podcast](#) published by Healthcare Finance, host Jonah Comstock caught up with Shawna Butler and Melody Butler, two nurses who shed light on the topic of vaccine resistance and vaccine hesitancy, and how nurses are at the forefront of addressing this crisis. One topic dealt with is the role of nurses in the healthcare innovation ecosystem. Moreover, they underline the importance of reassuring people who do not believe in the effectiveness of the anti Covid-19 vaccine and who are not sure they want to be vaccinated.

Minimum wages in 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a sudden and negative impact on economies and markets around the world. Against this backdrop, decision makers on minimum wages found themselves in an even more complicated situation, in difficult economic conditions, downward pressure on wages due to increased unemployment and uncertainty about economic projections for the future. In addition, the pandemic hindered the implementation of normal negotiation and consultation processes. The "[Minimum wages in 2021: Most countries settle for cautious increase](#)" report, published by Eurofound, clearly indicates the percentage figures for the increase in the legal minimum wage 2020-21.

"Education, healthcare and housing: How access changed for children and families in 2020"

Eurofound published a [Policy Brief](#) raising the negative effects that Covid-19 has add on access to health, education and assistance

services in all the EU Member States. It highlights that children suffered greatly from the restrictions experienced during the lockdown as closed schools and distance learning; difficult access to health care; housing insecurity. All of this took a toll on their mental health. Aiming to ensure that all children benefit from these resources, the European Commission will address the issue in 2021 with a [Child Guarantee](#) (one of the flagship social policy initiatives of the European Union) to improve the lives of children in need.

First results of the PAE in-depth Survey on Covid-19 and Chronic Pain

The [Pain Alliance Europe conducted a survey](#) to understand how the Covid-19 affected people with chronic pain. The study shows that covid had several impacts on the patient, on health behaviour, on the scheduled appointments, on access to resources. More information on the survey and the first results are available [here](#).

EU digitalisation

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) published a [press release](#) on "Greater efforts needed to equip all Europeans with basic digital skills" which highlights what the EU did to increase EU citizens' digital skills and what is planned under Horizon Europe 2021-2027. Today's world is becoming more and more digital and educating and training citizens in the use of digital tools is becoming a key priority, but little progress has been made by the EU in the digital literacy process of citizens in recent years. As Iliana Ivanova, the ECA member responsible for the review, said "The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of basic digital skills for citizens. We observe that adults with higher digital competence find jobs more easily; they also earn more than their less skilled peers. Our review shows that the EU has long recognised the importance of basic digital skills for all citizens but there is still a lot to be done. Now is the ideal time to shed light on this issue".

On the other hand, the introduction and advancement of digitisation within the healthcare system has led to a rapid increase in the data generated. The still poorly defined and standardized scenario of the health system is experiencing many challenges in the management and analysis of these data. In a world where data generation is a constant, the health system needs to be "educated" and routed in the management of health data to avoid being overloaded with information and to make it able of collecting only the useful and necessary information to the proper functioning of the entire system. This is key for nurses and collecting data which are never used increases the workload of nurses and as such negatively impact on patient outcomes. The published [Topol review](#) "Preparing the healthcare workforce to deliver the digital future" examines how clinicians and patients can be prepared for the digital healthcare innovations of the future.



ESN Publication on "Putting Quality First-Contracting for Long-term Care"

The aging of the population and changes in the family, the demands for long-term care, assistance and services for adults are growing in all European countries. The European Social Network has published a new report on quality of long-term care "[Putting Quality First-Contracting for Long-term Care](#)" that explains how public procurement and quality assurance policies can guarantee and insure access to long-term care.

Agenda

To view the upcoming meetings' dates, click [here](#).

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