



European Federation of Nurses Associations

EFN UPDATE

January-February-March 2022

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

As 2021 comes to an end and a New Year dawns, it is a time to reflect on the unprecedented challenging times and our many achievements in order to plan for a brighter future. It is evident that COVID-19 is our ongoing reality with a resurgence of numbers in many countries. The EFN, in solidarity, is committed to redoubling our

efforts to support our nurses at the frontline, our most valuable and precious resource.

The European Union (EU) is aware that a stronger Europe-wide coordination is required in relation to health, with more investment to build the foundations for a more resilient health system and better preparation for possible future health crises. The EFN is proactively contributing to the European Union being more responsive and better prepared for any health emergency. A priority is to stabilise health care systems and enhance quality and safety of care by investing in recruitment and retention of nurses with appropriate remuneration and improved working conditions. The shortage of nurses is a deteriorating crisis with an estimate 30% of our already reduced nursing workforce leaving the profession due to the enormous burden and difficult working conditions that have been neglected for years. The EFN has lobbied for EU leadership to address the critical shortage of nurses and invest in building robust and resilience healthcare systems. Investing in nursing strategies for retention and recruitment of nurses is a vital pillar to ensuring the building of a healthier, safer, fairer, resilient, and more sustainable health systems.

In 2022, the EFN will continue to ensure every opportunity is taken to make sure nurses' voices are represented and heard. The EFN, in partnership with all our NNA members, is committed and determined to ensure that EFN EU policy agenda which includes education, workforce, quality and safety, remain priorities on national and EU political agendas. In parallel, the EFN continues to work on a number of EU projects uniquely contributing the perspective of nurses as end-users in order to develop fit-for-purpose solutions that can be effectively implemented. We live in the hope that the New Year and the many lessons learnt will bring significant change and an optimistic future.

With every good wish for the season and peace and happiness for the New Year.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President



News from EFN

EU nurses receive special recognition from the European Citizen's Prize



The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the added value of the nursing workforce to the European healthcare ecosystems – working at the frontline of care, providing the evidence that nurses' competencies are central to the functioning of healthcare systems in the EU. On its 50th Birthday, the EFN was invited to

receive the [European Citizen's Prize](#) 2021, on behalf of all the European nurses for their instrumental role, relentless and exceptional commitment to working on the frontline during the COVID-19 crisis providing care 24/7 at the bedside of patients, in the most difficult and unprecedented circumstances, risking their own lives and that of their loved ones. *"Many Europeans, mostly in the health sector, undertook heroic efforts to fight the pandemic and help those in need. While many of us were kept at home, our doctors and nurses were sent to the frontline. The European Parliament wants to thank the healthcare community for getting us through this crisis and for saving so many lives."* said European Parliament Vice-President Dita Charanzová, Chancellor of the European Citizen's Prize.



Conference on the Future of Europe



In the context of the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), EFN Secretary General, Dr Paul De Raeve, was invited as expert to share his knowledge and

expertise with the citizens participating in the European Citizens' Panel, on ["Climate change, environment and health"](#). Bringing the nurses' voice to the panel, he focused on the theme "Reinforce the healthcare system" which is part of the stream "Caring for all". His key message was "We are not prepared, unless we are all prepared", showing that health is a top priority for the European Citizens. The European Citizens' Panels are a key feature of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Four European Citizens' Panels are organized to allow citizens to jointly think about the future they want for the European Union. 800 randomly selected citizens, representative of the EU's sociological and geographic diversity, are taking part in a deliberative process of three sessions to shape the future of the European project, to deliberate and formulate a set of recommendations for the Union's three institutions to follow-up on. It is a unique and timely opportunity for European citizens to debate - among themselves as well as with the EU and national institutions, civil society, social partners and other stakeholders - on Europe's challenges and have a say on the priorities for the years to come.

Vaccination hesitancy and low uptake of COVID-19 vaccination

The European Commission DG Santé, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) are currently carrying out activities to support EU Member States with low uptake of COVID-19 [vaccination](#). In this context, the European Commission organised on 29 November, a [Health Policy Platform webinar](#) for national health professionals' and students' associations with low uptake of COVID-19 vaccination, chaired by the Coalition



for Vaccination (lead by EFN, CPME, PGEU). The webinar was organised to understand the students in EU Member States with relatively low uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and explore options for support. The EFN Members from Bulgaria, Czech republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, countries that have low COVID-19 vaccination coverage and are currently in a particularly difficult situation, also in terms of pressure on healthcare systems, as well as ENSA (the nursing students association), shared their experience at national level regarding vaccine hesitancy, and gave some tips on how the European Commission could help support healthcare professionals in addressing it. The National Nurses Associations have been largely side-lined in the Recovery and Resilient Facility process, while the national plans are there to build resilience and to combat the ongoing and future pandemics. Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, stated that it is key to build resilient nursing workforce in the countries concerned. 30% of the nurses left the nursing profession. This is alarming, especially in eastern Europe where there was already a brain drain.

WHO High Level Experts Meeting on Quality of Care



On last 2-3 December, the [WHO European Centre of Excellence](#), created in April 2021, to support Member States' efforts to build safe, quality, effective and resilient health systems at

the heart of post-COVID-19 strategies, organised a [First "Meeting of Minds"](#) - a High Level Experts Meeting on Quality of Care in the WHO European Region in the post-COVID-19 era. The event was an opportunity to deliver concrete, action-oriented proposals in order for quality of care to be placed at the centre of achieving Universal Health Coverage in the WHO European Region Member States and beyond, and to discuss on the principles of new quality of care initiatives for the transformation of health systems and health promotion, prevention and protection cultures in the post-COVID-19 era. Invited as keynote speaker, Paul De Raeve, EFN Secretary General, shared EFN best practices on [violence against nurses](#) stressing the importance of the [Biological Agent Directive 2020/739](#) and the importance of the [Recovery and Resilience Plans](#) implementation connected to the [European Semester](#). We need a resilient nursing workforce, if not, systems will collapse! Covid-19 has shown the weaknesses and shortcomings of health systems and the need to create a more robust and resilient healthcare ecosystem capable of addressing future health crises. In this context, the role of nurses is vital to build a robust healthcare ecosystem able to ensure equity and high-quality care to patients.

News from the EU

European Commission Work Program 2022

The European Commission has adopted its [2022 Work Program](#), designed to rebuild a post COVID-19 Europe, and which defines an agenda for the next steps towards post Covid-19 Europe that is greener, fairer, more digital and more resilient. As part of the actions to address the challenges ahead and put the necessary building blocks in place for a better future for all Europeans, the main points of the programme are the European Green Deal; A Europe fit for the digital age; An economy that works for people; A stronger Europe in the world; Promoting our European way of life; and A new push for European Democracy.



State of Health in the EU: 2021 Country Health Profiles and Companion Report

In the context of the [State of Health in the EU](#), the European Commission has now published the Individual [2021 Country Health Profiles](#), adapted to the context and specificities of each EU country, which assess the strengths and challenges in their respective health systems, and the [Companion Report](#) that showcases some of the most significant trends in the transformation of health systems in the EU.

Recovery & Resilience Scoreboard

In the context of the [Recovery & Resilience Facility](#) (RRF), the European Commission launched the [Recovery & Resilience Scoreboard](#), a public online platform that provides an overview on the progress made in the implementation of the RRF as a whole, and of the individual [national recovery and resilience plans](#). It is key the EFN Members look at this and see how their countries are implementing their recovery and resilience plans.

New European Care Strategy

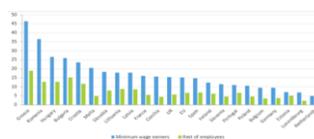
The health crisis caused by the coronavirus brought the work of formal and informal care workers centre stage in policy debates related to working conditions, including issues of gender and work-life balance. In this context, the European Parliament EPP Group has [called for a European Care Strategy](#), both to support carers in their work and to ensure that those receiving care or needing support are best provided for. As such, the European Commission's work programme for 2022 also foresees a Communication on a European care strategy, accompanied by the revision of the [Barcelona targets](#) and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on long-term care for Q3 of 2022. Aiming to contribute to the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and the subsequent adoption of a [new Directive on work-life balance](#), the new [European Care strategy](#), announced in the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen in her speech on the [State of the Union 2021](#), should offer a framework approach, taking into account commonalities between all types of care, and the [Gender Equality Strategy](#).

Stop violence against women!

In March 2021, WHO was releasing a [report](#) on "Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018" which was showing that 1 in 3 women across their lifetime are subjected to physical or sexual violence. In times of crises, this number increases, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and recent humanitarian crises, conflicts and climate disasters. A report from [UN Women](#) shows that 2 in 3 women reported that they or a woman they know experienced some form of violence. This 'shadow pandemic' continues to negatively impact our society and women's rights across Europe. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA) and the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#) (EIGE) [called on the EU and all Member States](#) to redouble their efforts to protect women's rights with concrete actions. In the health sector, most nurses are women and the problem of gender-based violence continues to be strong and entrenched. On this special day, the EFN also [called on the European Commission](#) to deliver impactful EU legislation with concrete measures to end gender-based violence. The EU institutions need to act now. Violence against nurses takes many forms, including death threats, punches, sexual harassment and verbal insults. Evidence on the frequency and impact of violence on nurses is accumulating, pointing to negative physical, mental, social and professional effects. We cannot tolerate this violence! It is necessary to take concrete actions to support women, let's not abandon them in this fight!



Minimum wages & Gender Gap



Despite the great strides made by the EU Member States on the minimum wages, there still seems to be a large gender gap. Eurofound published the [conclusions](#) of a study that show that while the number of employees earning the minimum wage has increased across Europe over the last decade, a clear gender divide emerges, with minimum wage earners more likely to be women. In the health sector this problem seems to be even more amplified. Nurses, who represent the vast majority of the health workers, are mostly women. Wages and precarious working conditions are the main causes for abandoning the profession. Furthermore, COVID-19 has shown that we urgently need to focus on the implementation of the European Social Pillar, with specific reference to the wages of the nurses, the education of the nurses, to make sure they stay in the profession and can contribute to

reaching better health outcomes, especially in long-term care, community care. A greater focus on the issue is essential to ensure the longevity of health systems.

Labour shortages: how to face it?

With the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the issue of labour shortages gained greater prominence on the EU agenda. However, the labour shortages phenomenon is seen as complex and transversal, cutting across different EU and national policy domains, including health, comprising many of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and policies linked to supporting labour mobility between EU countries and regulating access for third-country nationals. In this context, Eurofound published a [report](#) entitled "Tackling labour shortages in EU Member States" that identifies labour shortages, and reports on a series of political debates and public interventions putting forward some measures to make up for the lack of workforce such as support for greater geographical mobility, better working and employment conditions. In the health sector, every day, 3 million nurses in Europe work in precarious working conditions and with low wages. These conditions lead to many nurses leaving the profession. Labour shortages in the healthcare sector means inefficiency of the whole system, and putting in danger patient safety and quality of care.



AI in the Healthcare sector

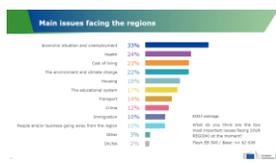
The Artificial Intelligence [report](#) in the healthcare sector, published by the European Commission, provides an overview of the national developments, the adoption and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and applications in healthcare across all Member States. This report shows that despite the initiatives undertaken by the EU in the last few years towards advancing the development and uptake of AI technologies to help EU citizens better monitor their health, receive better diagnoses and more personalized treatments, as well as live a healthier and more independent life, current situation in the EU shows that while most EU Member States that have developed AI strategies identify healthcare as a priority sector, there are no policies within those strategies targeting healthcare in particular. As such, to achieve its long-term objective of the effective implementation of AI in the healthcare sector the European Commission plans to work on a common legislation and policy framework to yield the benefits that AI can bring. From a nursing perspective, Artificial Intelligence can be an excellent ally to support nurses in carrying out their daily tasks. AI will never replace the nurses' commitment and work, but it could make their work easier!



Digital platform work and occupational safety and health

The European Agency for Safety and Health at work ([OSHA](#)) published a [report](#) examining the challenges facing digital platform workers and the impact of these safety and health. The report shows inadequate social protection and digital surveillance and greater job and income insecurity. The digitization process is involving more and more sectors, also the health sector, and this growing number makes it necessary to prioritize the protection of this category of workers. Check out the [policy brief](#) for the key points.

EU Health Policies updates



According to a [Flash Eurobarometer](#) on public opinion in the EU regions, published by the European Commission in November 2021, for 24% of Europeans the most important issue to address is health. The [data shows](#) that for 33% of the respondents of the survey, the most

important issue facing their region at the moment is the economic situation and unemployment, the cost of living (23%), and the environment and climate change (22%). 57% of respondents are satisfied with the measures taken by the European Union to fight the coronavirus pandemic, while 55% of respondents think that [NextGenerationEU](#) will be effective in helping to tackle the challenges facing the EU. Building a strong [European Health Union](#) is necessary

and essential to meet real needs and to make health systems more efficient, sustainable and equitable.

Third 2021 EAPM Presidency Conference

Reflecting on the nature of the EU presidency policies in the healthcare arena, the EAPM Presidency Conferences aim to act as major events in the European Parliament and European Commission legislations. During the virtual [conference](#) of the Autumn EU Presidency "Redefining the Unmet needs in Healthcare and the Regulatory Challenge" organised by [EAPM](#) (European Alliance for Personalized Medicine) the participants discussed on the European Health Union, which includes several key elements as: joint assessment of technologies, greater powers for European agency and for the European centre for disease prevention and control, the creation of the Authority for the preparation and response to health emergencies (HERA), the revision of the rules on cross-border health rules. France, who will have the upcoming EU Presidency (January-June 2022) wants to go further, with a "European public health policy that goes beyond health security" and by establishing a high-level expert committee to work on the broader health union and to make proposals. Another objective is to speed up the Commission's strategy, seen as necessary to formulate a patient-centred strategy to tackle the unmet needs in healthcare.

FRA: building diverse and inclusive workplace

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) presented the key results of [Fundamental Rights Report 2021](#) during a workshop of the advanced training course on "[Building diverse and inclusive workplaces in Europe](#)". This intensive course will guide participants for 12 weeks giving a European perspective on the different dimensions of diversity. It will take an intersectional approach and focus on dedicated legislative frameworks, policies and tools for diversity and inclusion: gender equality, disability, ageing, multi-ethnicity and racial discrimination.



Publications

"Improving access to healthcare measuring through more powerful measurement tools" report

"[Improving access to healthcare measuring through more powerful measurement tools](#)" is a report published by the European Commission which investigates on principle 16 of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), and provides a range of knowledge and experience to support European health policies with the aim of identifying valid tools and methods to assess the accessibility of health systems and integrate existing IDs.



Covid-19: convergence in health and healthcare in EU

[Eurofound](#) published a [Policy Brief](#) examining measures implemented by the EU to achieve upward convergence in health and health outcomes before the pandemic. The document shows that from 2008 to 2019, the health of the EU citizens improved and convergence in health outcomes was achieved, but disparities in public spending and provision of health services increased and the pandemic has increased the divergences.



Digital literacy for the elderly population

The "[ICT4Elders - Promoting ICT knowledge for the elderly people](#)" project implemented in the Czech Republic, Greece, Germany and Luxembourg made it possible to produce a [report](#) that aims to present the results of a research activity on "[Behavioural Analysis on the negative effects of Information Technology illiteracy on Elderly People](#)". The report provides the findings and a series of recommendations that promote the development of training and guidance programs on computer literacy for the older population.

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