



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

October-November-December 2021

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

I hope that you all had a very good summer and that you are now rejuvenated to face the challenges of this second semester.

On your behalf, we have remained focused on driving the principles enshrined in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) to inform fit for purpose EU policies, including education, and guaranteeing better access to healthcare for all EU citizens/people, in parallel with creating better working conditions for the 3 million nurses throughout the EU.

Challenges for the healthcare systems all over Europe cannot be underestimated with nursing education remaining a central priority concern for the EFN, against the policy direction of some governments persisting to downgrade nursing education that is the key to quality and safety of healthcare for all the citizens of Europe. The correct implementation of the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications ([Directive 2005/36/EC](#)), and the publishing of Annexe V (Art.31) in the coming months, continues to be our focus within our collective EFN policy agenda.

Therefore, it has been a privilege to be part of the OECD Forum on Equity in Education, with Miguel Angel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Education, and Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General of the OECD. The OECD published its annual Education at a Glance Report. The COVID-19 crisis has provided a stark reminder of the immense value of and need for professional education, including those on the frontlines of the pandemic. The pandemic has shed light on the disconnect between the contributions of essential professionals to the common good and the wages, working conditions and societal recognition earned in return. Aside from better rewarding these professions, the development of educational policies should recognise them as important career choices for individuals. The OECD Forum attracted about 1500 participants, representing governments, parliaments, academia, business, civil society, and media.

It is clear that the EFN will continue to focus on education, workforce and quality and safety, with digitalisation as a cross cutting item to achieve better health outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to continue to demand that EU Institutions support and promote the work of 3 our members and their nurses in the EU and ensure fair working conditions to support the delivery of the best healthcare outcomes for all.

The EFN Members will have the opportunity to discuss these ongoing political challenges during the EFN General Assembly that will take place in ZOOM on 14 October. This is an important meeting to ensure we reflect EFN Members' opinions, priorities, expertise and ideas to inform and shape the EFN lobby actions towards the EU Institutions.

Elizabeth Adams
EFN President

"Investment in nursing education and strategies for recruitment and retention is a vital pillar to ensuring the building of a healthier, safer, fairer, resilient and more sustainable health systems with capacity for future unexpected crisis."

Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, OECD Forum, 17 September 2021.

News from EFN

EFN to continue lobbying the EU for better health-nurse outcomes

Following up on the very positive meetings we had during the first half of the year, the EFN will continue working on its key objectives, making nurses, the nursing profession and nursing leadership drive change in any health and social care ecosystem throughout the EU. The EFN will continue focussing on driving the principles enshrined in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) to inform fit-for-purpose EU policies, including education, workforce and quality and safety – with digitalisation as a cross cutting item to achieve better outcomes for health and the nursing profession, and guaranteeing better access to healthcare for all EU citizens/people, in parallel with creating better working conditions for the 3 million nurses throughout the EU. Challenges for the healthcare systems all over Europe cannot be underestimated, namely in these very difficult times we are leaving in for already a year and a half due to COVID-19 pandemic. The EFN and its Members are committed and determined to ensure that EFN EU policy agenda priorities on education, workforce, quality and safety, remain high on national and EU political agendas, and will continue lobbying the national governments and the EU institutions to make sure the nurses' voice is heard and taken into account in any of the key health developments. The EFN will also continue focussing on the EU projects it is involved in, as [InteropEHRate](#), [Smart4Health](#), [IMMUNION](#), bringing the nurses', as end-users, views to the development of fit-for-purpose deliverables.

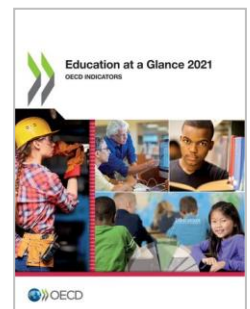
EU4Health Work programme 2022

The EFN participated in the [Webinar](#) organised by DG SANTE on 10 September 2021 to explore and build on the outcomes of the [consultation](#) organised during the summer, and to reflect on the priorities, strategic orientations and the needs to be addressed through the EU4Health annual work programmes, in particular the 2022 EU4Health Work Programme, to be adopted by the end of 2021 or early 2022. [EU4Health](#) is the Union's response to the pandemic and will go beyond the crisis response and readiness to address healthcare systems' resilience. It will also provide funding to eligible health organisations and NGOs from EU Member States, or third countries associated to the Programme.

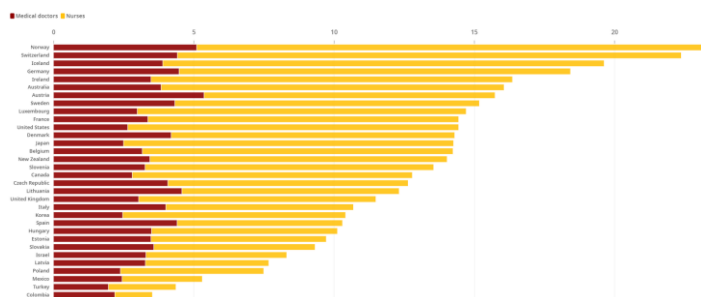
OECD Forum virtual event on Equity in Education

Invited as keynote speaker, Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, participated in the [OECD Forum](#) virtual event that took place on 17 September to discuss how COVID-19 is providing an opportunity for education systems to rethink their contribution to the kind of society we ultimately want to live in, analysing the educational response to COVID-19 and the measures taken to cope with learning challenges during the pandemic, in particular, to support the most vulnerable. The crisis showed that the future of education lies in providing valued and recognised path for everyone, including the nurses.

This event was organised on the back of the release of the [OECD's Education at a Glance 2021](#), that provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems across OECD countries and includes a focus on equity, investigating how progress through education and the associated learning and labour market outcomes are impacted by dimensions such as gender, socio-economic status, country of birth and regional location.



The OECD also published a [research](#) which indicates the number of doctors and nurses per capita by country.



According to this research, the countries which have a major number of doctors and nurses per population have a greater capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues. In countries with fewer doctors and nurses per population, the existing workforce remains being even more stretched in their attempts to address care demands arising from the COVID-19 crisis. For sure, this pandemic highlighted the vital role of nurses in the health eco system. It is therefore essential to find new resources and to create better working conditions to make stronger the health system.

WHO Regional Committee for Europe



The EFN participated in the [71st WHO Regional Committee for Europe](#), that took place on 13-15 September 2021. The online event brought

together Health ministers and high-level representatives of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region, partner organisations and civil society, to discuss the current health issues and set the direction for future activities. These included discussions around the [European Immunization Agenda 2030](#) and the [Mental Health Coalition](#); lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of emergency preparedness and response; opportunities to reorient health systems, reinvent primary health care and rethink health priorities in the post-COVID-19 era and in the light of future pandemics; strengthen WHO politically, technically and financially, making WHO/Europe fit for purpose, and optimizing its impact at country level.

EHFG 2021: Rise like a phoenix - Health at the heart of a resilient future for Europe

This year's [European Health Forum Gastein](#), that will take place on 27 September-1st October, will address crucial aspects around renewal, solidarity, innovation and resilience in health that are impossible to ignore as we move forward in a year very much still marked by uncertainty and crisis, but also with opportunity to put health and equity higher on all political agendas in a post-2020 world. The EFN Secretary General, Paul De Raeve, was invited to speak in the [session "Investing into our healthcare heroes: Supporting, training, and retaining the healthcare workforce"](#), led by the former Commissioner for Health, Vytenis Andriukaitis. This session will focus on key topics as how to retain healthcare workers and provide better, safer working environments, and how to tackle health personnel shortages and balance the commitment to [Universal Health Coverage](#) with free movement of health professionals. All topics that are, more than ever, crucial for nurses and the nursing profession, knowing that 30% of the nurses in Europe left the profession during this pandemic crisis.

News from the EU

The European Commission launches HERA

The pandemic showed how much being prepared is essential to face sudden challenges and prevent any future crisis. Planning and having fit-for-policies are fundamental to ensure that all Member States can respond to the upcoming crisis and save lives when the emergencies occur. Taking this into account, the European Commission launched

the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority ([HERA](#)) which aims to provide a coordinated approach to health preparedness. Set up as an internal Commission structure, fully operational early 2022, and its functioning being reviewed and adapted on an annual basis until 2025, when a full review will be carried out, HERA is seen as a huge asset to strengthen European health systems and get prepared for future crisis. Nurses are the backbone of the healthcare eco-systems. Therefore, we need a resilient nursing workforce in the EU to be better prepared for the next health crisis. Thus, following up these developments, and create synergies and collaboration with HERA, will be key for the EFN and its members.

State of the Union Speech

Speaking to the Parliament, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, [highlighted](#) the European Commission priorities for the year ahead, including continuing the vaccination efforts in Europe and strengthening the pandemic preparedness; leading the digital transformation that will create jobs and drive competitiveness, while ensuring technical excellence and security of supply; ensuring fairer working conditions and better healthcare, and creating more opportunities for Europe's youth to benefit from the European social market economy. Important for the nurses is the [European Health Union](#), as the European Commission is building a strong European Health Union, in which all EU countries prepare and respond together to health crises. The EU's ambition to strengthen Brussels' health powers is coming on the table. A new EU-wide health preparedness and resilience mission envisages an investment of €50 billion by 2027.

Report on transposition of transparent and predictable working conditions' Directive

The European Commission published a [report](#) highlighting the result of the discussions from the Expert Group set up to provide Member States with technical assistance and with a forum for discussing and facilitating the transposition of the Directive. The report intends to support the legislative work leading to the transposition in the Member States and EEA/EFTA countries of the [Directive \(EU\) 2019/1152](#) - direct follow-up to the proclamation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), aiming at improving working conditions by promoting more transparent and predictable employment, while also ensuring labour market adaptability.

Drawing light from the pandemic: A new strategy for health and sustainable development

Following on a [call to Action](#) in March 2021, the WHO Regional Office of Europe published a [report](#) of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development reflections on what worked or not in the COVID-19 response and in previous crises. The report provides some recommendations aiming to achieve seven key objectives to prevent other crises as the COVID-19 one, namely: Operationalize the concept of One Health at all levels; Take action at all levels of societies to heal the divisions exacerbated by the pandemic; Support innovation for better One Health; Invest in strong, resilient and inclusive national health systems; Create an enabling environment to promote investment in health; Improve health governance at the global level; Improve health governance in the pan-European region.



The [European Social Policy Network](#) (ESPN) launched a [report](#) that analyses (sub)national social protection and inclusion policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis [in 35 countries](#). It reveals an overall rapid reaction through the introduction of emergency measures that helped avert a massive social crisis. The report also highlights the weaknesses and gaps in existing social protection and inclusion policies, and the pressing need to address these. Although these measures were the main tools used to tackle the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, the report underlines their limited transformative potential for countries' social protection systems and proposes a series of specific actions that could be considered at national and/or EU level.

The EU cohesion policy in 2020



2020 was a very challenging and tough year in which all Europe faced difficulties, some Member States more than others. In this context, the [EU's cohesion policy's](#) support is essential to bounce back in the most equal way as possible. In this regard, the main questions are "How did cohesion policy respond to this challenge and what does it bring concretely for citizens? Which specific actions have been taken against COVID-19, the economic crisis and climate change? To what extent and how did EU funds reduce disparities and contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion?"

The [Annual Activity Report 2020](#) of the European Commission [Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy](#) (DG REGIO) provides some answers to these questions, including an overview of the role played by the DG in 2020. It also highlights that by the end of 2020, the total available envelope for regional policy of more than EUR 350 billion, was allocated to projects implemented under [2014-2020 programmes](#). And that the payment rate has continued to increase throughout the year reaching 52%. Over 2021-2023, these means will be topped up by EUR 50.6 billion under [REACT-EU](#), one of the largest programmes under new instrument [NextGenerationEU](#), to finance crisis repair and recovery measures. This funding is entirely new, being a top up to 2014-2020 programmes and additional to the [cohesion allocations 2021-2027](#), bringing the total envelope of the [Structural and Investment Funds](#) higher than current levels and becoming the highest single-policy grant instrument in the EU budget.

Long-Term Care Quality Assurance Policies

The impact of long-term care on the sustainability of the public finances in Europe has raised high political attention at EU level, and long-term care has become part of the social strategy of the European Commission, that included in [Principle 18 of the European of Social Rights](#) the right for everyone to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services. Therefore, ensuring quality long-term care accessible to all is essential. The main question around this topic is "How can we ensure and measure progress in achieving the right to affordable long-term care (LTC) services of good quality, as stipulated by the European Pillar of Social Rights?". This key [topic](#) is being discussed at the [Social Protection Committee](#) (SPC) - an exchange forum for EU Member States to improve access to social protection across Europe.

In January 2021, the [European Social Network](#) already published a [report](#) on long-term care, entitled "Putting Quality First - Contracting for Long Term Care" focusing on how the public procurement and policies are affecting the quality and the access to the long-term care services. In the last few years, the demand for long-term care for older populations increased. The EFN members are strongly engaged in contributing to deliver long-term care positive outcomes. As such, the EFN published, in 2018, a [report](#) providing nurses' frontline deployments and experiences of long-term care services provision in different countries in Europe with policy recommendations on the five key areas. The EFN will therefore continue following this debate closely.

Antimicrobial stewardship: short e-learning to deepen it

In August 2021, ECDC published a [course](#) (e-learning) focusing on Antimicrobial Stewardship which allows students to understand the challenges related to antimicrobial resistance and how antimicrobial stewardship can be used. This course is aimed at healthcare professionals responsible for prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections (HAI). It is an opportunity to deepen the topic of antimicrobial stewardship and to learn new skills and knowledge on this subject.



Fit For 55 Climate Package has been announced

On 14 July, the European Commission adopted the [Climate Package "Fit For 55"](#) which contains the legislative proposals to reach the [Green](#)

[Deal](#) objectives by 2030 and the [carbon neutrality](#) by 2050. All the briefings on climate actions in the different Member States are available [here](#) for consultation. A recent [report](#) published by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) explores the most up-to-date version of the climate system and climate change focusing on the last progresses in climate science, combining paleoclimate, observations, processes and global and regional simulations.

Publications

Protecting civic space in the EU



The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a [report](#) entitled 'Protecting civic space in the EU' that shows the [challenges](#) civil society [faces](#) across the EU, as: Worse working conditions; Limited freedom; Lack of funding; Lack of adequate information to get involved in decision making and public consultations. But the report also highlights positive developments and promising practices. These include authorities publicly acknowledging the importance of civil society work, fully involving civil society in policy development or reducing bureaucracy for NGO registration.

Labour shortages in the EU: what are the possible solutions?

The unemployment still seems to be an important challenge in Europe. Nevertheless, in some countries in the world, the fundamental issue is the labour shortage. This [report](#) published by [Eurofound](#) explores various approaches to identify causes related to labour shortages, including public interventions to promote a greater work mobility and to face the skills shortages and the low investments in new ones; and better working conditions as a solution to make up for the labour shortage - Improving working conditions for nurses could be the best starting point to retain them at work.

Upward converge in Gender Equality: at what stage is Europe?

In the last 10 years, Europe made slow progress in terms of Gender Equality. The results obtained are significantly different from one Member State to another. These differences have a major impact on the upward economic and social convergence of the European Union. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic risks nullifying the results obtained so far and to increase the inequality between the various member states. This [Policy Brief](#), published by Eurofound and EIGE, explores the patterns of convergence in gender equality measured by the [Gender Equality Index](#) in the Member States over the period 2010-2018. The thematic of Gender Equality is key for the nursing profession, being a profession with 92% of women. More information on Gender Equality is available on [EIGE](#) (The European Institute for Gender Equality) website.

"What the future for European Robotics?"

The robotics sector combined with the artificial intelligence are the key elements to drive the digital transformation in our societies and economies. According to the recently published [report of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre](#) (JRC) [conference](#) "What future for European Robotics?" organised earlier this year, a decisive, agile, horizontal, coordinated and multidisciplinary public intervention is needed to maximise the benefits of robotics, address its challenges and minimize the negative effects. Robots are seen as an opportunity but at the same time they can be a challenge. Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, stated that: "We expect robots to help our societies in achieving successfully the digital and green transitions and they are expected to have a concrete and direct impact on the daily lives of all the citizens (...). We need evidence-based policy in this field to understand the impact of robot interventions on human behaviour."



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