**EFN input to the consultation on
possible priorities for research and innovation that could be supported by
H2020-SC1-Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing**

1) <u>What are the most urgent long to midterm ICT related **research** challenges and the expected opportunities in this domain (from a societal, individual, ICT, financial, organisational point of view)?</u>

In the last years, DG Connect has made enormous progress in supporting fieldwork on innovative technology as well as in developing further knowledge and expertise in the field of ICT deployment. However, looking at the health and social care sector, more research is needed to support GPs, nurses and social workers, to deliver high quality and safe care that is at the same time cost-effective for the health system. Therefore, from a research perspective, the priority should now go to the cost-effectiveness element, which implies evaluating and measuring care impact and patient/citizen outcomes. The Lancet journal has recently published a study on patient outcomes (Aiken, 2014), but the aspects related to the ICT and the consequently eSkills needed to use eHealth services in an efficient way was missing. Due to the new economic and societal challenges, reforms in all the interacting components of the health and social care systems are urgently required, shifting from an old medical to an innovative integrated care model, where the e-component needs to come in as a variable, or even as a co-variant. The research question should therefore evolve towards: "To what extent the deployment of eHealth services has a positive impact on patient outcomes" (Linda Aiken provides the evidence that better-educated hospital nurse workforces are associated with lower patient mortality).

Furthermore, building on the policy documents developed by the eHealth Stakeholder Group, it would be important to carry on research on eSkills needs and financial models:

- With regard to eSkills, the Directive 2013/55/EU on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (to be implemented by 2016) provides the legal basis to further work on the curricula of the health professionals in the EU. It will be crucial to analyse and figure out how eSkills will need to be integrated into the curricula and taught at the schools and to what extent ICT will impact on the working relationships between different health and social care professionals. Research can help to change and innovate the academic and higher school environments by engaging the right partners at different levels.

- Concerning financial models, most of the eHealth services currently used at national and local level in the EU are not supported by EU funds. Therefore, it is key to conduct research on new financial and cost-effective models that can be best deployed at local level, based on the good practices currently existing in the different EU countries (i.e. the ENS4Care project has

collected more than 120 best practices). Additionally, it is crucial to make full use of the Social Cohesion Funds to further work on the deployment of eHealth services in relation to cost-effectiveness. From the nursing care community the proposal should be built on the excellent work already done by Marina Lupari (Royal College of Nursing), who is specialised in calculating cost-effectiveness of the healthcare systems.

Finally, in the context of the ESCO initiative (DG Employment), the EFN has been working on the "nursing care continuum" (healthcare assistants, general care nurses, specialist nurses and advanced nurse practitioners). In order to deliver better patient outcome in a cost-effective way, it is key to conduct research on getting appropriate ratios and on measuring general and specific eSkills needed. Therefore, the research question could be: "To what extent does an eSkilled workforce have a positive impact on patient outcomes?"

2) <u>What are the most urgent short term ICT related **innovation** challenges and the expected opportunities in this domain (from a societal, individual, ICT, financial, organisational pint of view</u>)?

There are currently a large number of pilots funded by the EU which aim at up-scaling good practices, a process that welcomed the EFN. However, there is a tendency of each project coordinator to promote his/her own model as the best one, leading to a kind of protectionism ("my child is the most beautiful"). This trend does not help the further development of innovative services at EU level and does not provide support to nurses and nursing. Given the new challenges that healthcare systems have to face, it is crucial to focus research on topics such as elderly care and dementia, and to define how eHealth services should be deployed to tackle these challenges, rather than simply promoting and up-scaling pilots. The priority given by the EIP to the pilots in the last years has hindered the possibility to focus more on the concrete solutions to tackle the societal challenges, as education, workforce and quality of care. Therefore, the EFN would welcome more research in these fields and believes that the EIP should refocus its attention to get the full picture, by adopting a more systematic approach.

In light of this reflections, the EFN suggests not to focus on "integrated care" systems but on the "coordination of care" and the development and deployment of eSkills for health professionals, social workers and carers. The term "coordination" is often used without any exact referent and researchers tend to report lack of coordination without either indicating an empirical basis for their conclusions, or indicating what empirical findings they would accept as evidence of coordination (Bolland & Wilson, 1994). The process of ensuring effective and coordinated care between a range of health and social services has now become a well-known policy concern and priority in most developed countries (Allen, Griffiths, & Lyne, 2004), but more evidence is needed to strengthen health system reform instead of establishing one gatekeeper for one system.

3) <u>Are there specific **supporting measures** needed to underpin the overall set of activities?</u>

The EFN believes that the Thematic Network is among the most useful and flexible tools to make concrete changes possible, even in the research environment. Rather than inventing new research, it is important to bring researchers together in order to have a real exchange of knowledge and

expertise on fields of common interest, to find a common way forward that benefits the EU. In light of this, the EFN has developed the European Nursing Research Foundation (ENRF) that will work on the sustainability of the Thematic Network ENS4Care. As the evidence shows that care coordination interventions can result in better patient outcomes, more research is now needed on the impact of eSkills and eApproaches to deliver positive these outcomes with a multi and inter-professional team. Given the fact that standards of care coordination components do not exist, it is necessary to develop a set of components with the purpose of analysing care coordination interventions (McDonald et al., 2010, 2007). Through care coordination, nursing has the opportunity to demonstrate the impact of coordinated, high quality, cost-effective access to care on patients and citizens. An important step is to ask what nurses can do today to improve coordination for themselves, their patients and their healthcare settings. (Robinson, 2012)

4) <u>Are there areas of activities that would benefit from direct support to **SMEs**</u>?

SMEs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between hospital and community care and in supporting community care itself. In order to move forward to reform the health systems, it is necessary to compare the different models existing in the EU and to focus on their achievements and financial outcomes. The results of this analysis will provide the evidence of the positive impact of shifting from hospital care to community care, being care coordination the enabler for integrated care system. Within this context, it is crucial to take into consideration that the technology element (development of eHealth and mHealth services) is becoming central and therefore it is required to anticipate and study the eSkills needed by the entire health and social care workforce to fully use these new services (De Raeve et al., 2013; EFN, 2014).

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