

## Opening Remarks – Dr. Françoise Meunier

### European Health Workforce and Care Strategy Forum

Brussels, 4 November 2025

Good morning,

Distinguished colleagues, representatives from the European institutions, healthcare professionals, and friends,

It is a great pleasure and honour to open this European Health Workforce and Care Strategy Forum on behalf of Cancer Patients Europe. My sincere thanks to the **European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO)** for leading the organisation of this event, and to the **European Union of Private Hospitals (UEHP)**, the **European Care Home Confederation (E.C.H.O.)**, the **WHO Observatory on Health Systems and Policies**, and the **European Economic and Social Committee** for their collaboration and support. Across Europe, we face an acute shortage of healthcare professionals, especially in nursing and primary care. This is not only a workforce issue but also a health systems and patient issue. When healthcare staff are under pressure, patients feel it first, through delays, reduced access, and the loss of that human connection at the heart of healing. As a member of the Scientific Committee of Cancer Patients Europe, I have seen how patient well-being depends on the engagement of those who care for them. Healthcare professionals are partners in the patient's journey, offering continuity, compassion, and trust. Supporting them means protecting the quality and humanity of care and ensuring they are valued and retained within our systems.

In cancer care, workforce shortages and fragmented teams can undermine early detection, treatment, and survivorship. The discussions today, from retention and training to implementing the **WHO–EU Commission Nurse Action Plan** and the **Bucharest Declaration**, are vital to building resilient and patient-centred systems across Europe. When healthcare professionals are recognised and supported, they thrive and so do their patients.



Behind every policy are people: professionals who need recognition and patients whose lives depend on them. Investing in the health workforce is not a cost but an investment in Europe's most valuable resource, its people.

On behalf of **Cancer Patients Europe**, I thank the organisers for including the patient voice in this dialogue. Together, professionals and patients can build a fairer, healthier Europe.

Thank you, and I wish you all a productive and inspiring discussion.

