



ESNO CONGRESS 2026

Bio book of Congress Speakers,
Contributors, ESNO experts, Board
and Policy officers' team.

About ESNO CONGRESS 2026

The 8th ESNO Congress, held 4–6 June 2026 in Rome, convenes European nursing leaders to advance specialist practice, education, and policy. Under the theme “Mutual Goals, Many Pathways,” it promotes harmonised qualifications, leadership, and innovation, positioning specialist nurses as central to sustainable health systems and Europe’s future healthcare workforce.

https://www.esno-congress.eu/esno_rome_2026

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About ESNO:

The European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) is the official recognised non-profit organisation and the goal is to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and co-operation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisations and its constituent members. ESNO represents the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations to the wider European community in the interest of the public health. Members of ESNO consist of individual European specialist nurses' organizations.

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www.esno.org

secretariat@esno.org

Speakers

MEP Andra Kulja



András Tivadar **KULJA**, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Member, Hungary - Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt (Hungary) **and Shadow Rapporteur – INI Report on the Health Workforce, European Parliament**

András Kulja serves as a Member of the European Parliament, where he is actively engaged in shaping European health policy with a strong focus on workforce sustainability and system resilience. As Shadow Rapporteur on the own-initiative (INI) report on the health workforce, he plays a key role in advancing discussions on how Europe can better prepare, support, and retain its health professionals.

His work reflects a clear understanding that the future of healthcare in Europe depends not only on systems and structures, but on the people delivering care. In this context, András Kulja has shown strong engagement in promoting a balanced and inclusive approach to the health workforce, recognising the growing importance of nurses, particularly in advanced and specialist roles.

He advocates for policies that strengthen education, professional recognition, and career development, ensuring that health professionals are equipped and empowered to respond to evolving health challenges. His contribution to the INI report highlights the need for integrated, forward-looking strategies that connect workforce planning with quality of care, patient outcomes, and long-term sustainability.

Through his role in the European Parliament, he supports the positioning of health professionals as key actors within the broader European agenda, contributing to preparedness, recovery pathways, and the resilience of health systems across Member States.

Milena Angelova



Vice-President, Employers' Group (Group I), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Milena Angelova serves as Vice-President of the Employers' Group within the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), where she plays an active role in shaping European dialogue between policymakers, civil society, and professional sectors. In this capacity, she brings a strong and consistent voice to discussions on the future of Europe's health workforce.

She is widely recognised for her advocacy for professionals working across health systems, with a particular interest in the role of nurses at advanced and specialist levels. Her work highlights the importance of recognising these professionals not only as part of service delivery, but as essential contributors to quality of care, system efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

Within the EESC, she has supported initiatives that strengthen education, professional development, and the positioning of health professionals in policy frameworks. She also

connects these priorities to the broader European agenda, including engagement with the Council of the European Union, encouraging stronger integration of health professionals within civil society structures.

Her approach reflects a clear commitment to ensuring that nurses and other health professionals are empowered to contribute meaningfully to recovery pathways, preparedness strategies, and the resilience of European health systems.

Barbara Mangiacavali – Italy



Presidente Federazione Nazionale Infermieri FNOPI, DSS ASST Nord Milano

Barbara Mangiacavali is the pre-eminent figure and strategic leader of the nursing profession in Italy, distinguished for her transformative leadership in healthcare governance and policy. Since 2015, she has served as the President of the Italian National Federation of Nursing Professions Orders (FNOPI), the state subsidiary body coordinating 102 provincial associations and representing over 460,000 nurses.

Since February 15, 2019, she has held the position of Socio-Health Director at ASST Milano Nord. Her previous leadership roles include serving as Socio-Health Director at ASST Bergamo Ovest and as Director of the Nursing and Technical-Rehabilitative Service (SC Sitra) at the Fondazione IRCCS Policlinico San Matteo in Pavia. Her distinguished professional profile is anchored by an extensive academic background: she holds two Master of Science degrees — in Nursing and Midwifery Sciences and in Administration and Public Policy — along with a Level II University Master's in Health Law and Management. Furthermore, she has earned advanced managerial certifications for both Complex Structure and Healthcare Company Directors.

Under her presidency, the Federation was awarded the Medal of the President of the Republic. Mangiacavali has been instrumental in spearheading the reform that established three clinical specialized Master's degree programs (Primary Care, Neonatal Care, and Intensive Care), aimed at ensuring specialized career pathways. As an authoritative member of ministerial advisory boards, she continues to steer the healthcare system toward care models focused on proximity and personalization.

Beatrice Mazzoleni



Beatrice Mazzoleni is a key figure in the nursing profession, distinguished for her leadership in professional governance, academic education, and institutional relations at both national and international levels.

She currently serves as a National Board Member of the Italian National Federation of Nursing Professions Orders (FNOPI), with a mandate for European and International Affairs. Additionally, she is the Vice President of the European Nursing Council (ENC) and Director of Nursing Degree Programs at Humanitas University in Milan.

With a robust background that integrates clinical experience in pediatric critical care with extensive administrative expertise, Mazzoleni has played a central role in advancing professional standards and educational innovation in Italy. During her tenure as National Secretary of FNOPI — a position she held for over a decade — and as former President of the Nursing Professions Order of Bergamo, she spearheaded critical systemic initiatives, including the development of Family and Community Nursing models and the promotion of advanced university-level nursing specializations.

At Humanitas University, she coordinates cutting-edge pedagogical projects, such as the integration of proxemics and communication laboratories designed to enhance experiential learning and the humanization of care through the conscious use of body language and relational skills. A member of the Steering Committee for the National Plan for Chronic Diseases and Ministry of Health technical working groups on task shifting, she actively contributes to the definition of national health policies. She holds a PhD in Nursing Sciences and Public Health from the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" and is the author of numerous scientific publications focused on professional autonomy and the evolution of healthcare delivery models.

Wendy Budin - USA



Dr Wendy Budin, Professor, Entry to Baccalaureate Practice, Rutgers University, School of Nursing Newark, New Jersey, United States

She is a distinguished nurse scientist, educator, and global advocate for maternal and newborn health. As Professor at the Rutgers University School of Nursing, she has built an internationally recognised career advancing evidence-based maternity care, breastfeeding support, and early family bonding. Her research has focused on optimising perinatal outcomes, promoting skin-to-skin care, and strengthening compassionate, family-centred clinical practices.

Dr Budin has held leadership roles within major professional bodies, including the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, contributing to policy, education standards, and professional development initiatives. As a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, she is widely acknowledged for translating science into practice and for mentoring the next generation of nurse leaders.

Her work bridges clinical excellence, education, and global health advocacy, reinforcing the essential role of specialist nurses in improving outcomes for women, infants, and families worldwide.

Siobhan O'Connor- Ireland



Global Director of the AI Nurses Network | Senior Lecturer at King's College London | Sigma Liaison to the United Nations | Adjunct Associate Professor at Western University, Canada.

Dr Siobhan O'Connor is a nurse academic and digital health scholar whose work sits at the intersection of nursing, technology, and health system innovation. With a background spanning clinical nursing, research, and higher education, she has developed an international profile in health informatics and the digital transformation of care delivery.

Her scholarship focuses on integrating digital technologies into healthcare to enhance patient outcomes, strengthen nursing practice, and support workforce development within an evolving health ecosystem. Dr O'Connor contributed to research on electronic health records, artificial intelligence, virtual care models, and digital competencies for nurses, emphasising the importance of nurses as co-creators — not merely end-users — of technology.

She is currently based at King's College London, where her work advances digital literacy, innovation adoption, and leadership in nursing, supporting the profession's readiness for data-driven and technology-enabled healthcare futures.

Susan Gennaro - USA



Professor at Connell School of Nursing, Boston College Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, United States

Professor Susan Gennaro is an internationally recognised nurse scientist, educator, and academic leader whose work has significantly shaped maternal and child health research, education, and policy. Her scholarship has focused particularly on improving outcomes for vulnerable women, infants, and families, addressing health disparities through evidence-based interventions and community-centred care models.

She served with distinction as Dean of the Boston College William F. Connell School of Nursing, where she advanced academic excellence, research capacity, and global nursing partnerships. Professor Gennaro is also Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Nursing Scholarship, the official journal of Sigma Theta Tau International, one of the world's leading nursing honour societies.

A Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, she is widely respected for her leadership in translating science into practice, mentoring emerging scholars, and strengthening nursing's contribution to global maternal and child health equity.

Silvia Fung – Hong Kong



President, The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing & Midwifery, Hong Kong SAR

Professor Silvia Fung is a distinguished nurse leader, academic, and advocate for advanced practice nursing whose influence extends across Asia and the global nursing community. With a career spanning clinical practice, higher education, and professional leadership, she has played a pivotal role in strengthening advanced nursing competencies, specialist roles, and professional standards.

Professor Fung is widely recognised for building strategic bridges between Eastern and Western nursing traditions, fostering international collaboration in education, research, and workforce development. Her work has contributed to the harmonisation of advanced practice frameworks and the elevation of nursing leadership within evolving health systems.

She currently serves as President of the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing, where she leads initiatives on accreditation, specialist training, and professional recognition. Respected worldwide, Professor Fung continues to champion innovation, excellence, and global partnership in advancing the role and impact of specialist and advanced practice nurses.

Jackie Rowles - USA



Associate Professor of Professional Practice Texas Christian University School of Nurse Anesthesia Director Advanced Pain Management Fellowship.

Professor Jackie Rowles is an advanced practice nurse, educator, and internationally respected leader in pain management and nurse anaesthesia. With a career dedicated to clinical excellence, education,

and professional advocacy, she has played a pivotal role in strengthening the recognition and regulation of nurse anaesthesia worldwide.

She serves in senior leadership roles within the International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists (IFNA), where she has championed high standards in nurse anaesthesia education, competency-based training, and professional mobility. Her work has contributed to expanding advanced nursing roles in diverse health systems, particularly in settings where access to safe anaesthesia remains limited.

Professor Rowles' advocacy focuses on improving patient safety, ensuring equitable access to anaesthesia care, and advancing global standards for advanced nursing practice. She is widely respected for her commitment to strengthening professional autonomy, education, and regulatory frameworks that support sustainable, high-quality care worldwide.

Jasper Tolarba - Philippines



EdD, DNP, MSN, M.Ed., RN, CGNC, CNE, NPD-BC, FACHE, FESNO, FSIEN, FFNMRCIS, FAAN | United Nations Liaison | Endowed Chair | Global Health Practitioner | Fulbright Research Scholar | Global Nurse Consultant | Founder of SIENNA

Professor Jasper Tolarba **PhD, RN** is a recognised leader in international nursing education, accreditation, and academic leadership. His work has been instrumental in advancing quality assurance frameworks and strengthening global standards in nursing education across diverse institutional and regulatory environments.

With a background spanning higher education governance and international programme development, Professor Tolarba has contributed to the design, evaluation, and accreditation of nursing curricula that support workforce readiness and professional excellence. His efforts promote cross-border academic collaboration, institutional partnerships, and the harmonisation of competency-based education models.

Through his global engagements, he supports professional mobility and capacity-building within the healthcare workforce, reinforcing the role of education as a cornerstone of system sustainability. Professor Tolarba's leadership continues to influence policy dialogue, institutional strategy, and international cooperation, fostering high-quality nursing education aligned with evolving global health needs.

Annamaria Bagnasco - Italy



University Researcher, Department of Health Sciences, University of Genoa.

Professor Annamaria Bagnasco **PhD, RN** is a leading Italian nurse academic and researcher whose work has contributed significantly to the advancement of nursing science, education, and healthcare innovation. Based at the University of Genoa, she has developed a strong academic portfolio centred on evidence-based practice, professional development, and the strengthening of patient-centred care models.

Her research explores how nursing knowledge, education systems, and workforce competencies influence care quality and health outcomes across diverse clinical settings. Professor Bagnasco is particularly engaged in promoting research-informed education and fostering leadership capacity within the nursing profession.

Actively involved in European research collaborations and academic networks, she contributes to cross-border knowledge exchange, innovation in nursing curricula, and the visibility of nursing scholarship. Her work reinforces the strategic role of nurses in improving healthcare delivery, advancing professional standards, and supporting sustainable health systems throughout Europe and beyond.

Anne Marie Mauro - USA



Dr. Mauro is Joan Hansen Grabe Dean and professor at the Hunter Bellevue School of Nursing, Hunter College, The City University of New York, and a national expert in the health professions with a strong background in academic and administrative leadership. As former Dean of Nursing and Health Studies at Monmouth University, she led major accreditation efforts and established an interdisciplinary simulation lab. She is currently previously served as Director of the Nursing Education

Program and a visiting professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. A fellow of several leading professional academies, she also served as president of the Eastern Nursing Research Society and held national governance roles in nursing science and education.

Annemarie Bergsma - Netherlands



Nurse | Educator | PhD Candidate at Wageningen University Learning and adaptation in complex transitions | Founder De Duurzame Verpleegkundige (The sustainable Nurse)

Annemarie Bergsma **MSc, RN** is a nursing expert specialising in environmental health, sustainability, and the ecological transformation of healthcare systems. Her work sits at the intersection of clinical practice, environmental responsibility, and health policy, where she advocates for sustainable workplaces and climate-conscious models of care delivery.

With a strong focus on implementation, she supports healthcare organisations in reducing their environmental footprint through waste reduction strategies, circular resource use, and greener procurement practices. Annemarie is actively engaged in European programmes and cross-

sector collaborations that address the climate impact of the health sector while safeguarding care quality and workforce wellbeing.

She is widely recognised for empowering nurses to take leadership in green innovation, positioning the profession as a key driver in sustainable health system transformation. Her work reinforces the vital link between planetary health, patient safety, and the future resilience of healthcare delivery.

Christine (Garcia) Pabico (USA)



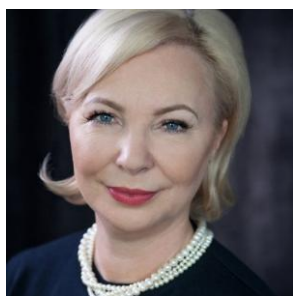
Sr. Director, Pathway to Excellence and Well-being Excellence Programs at the American Nurses Credentialing Center

Dr Christine Garcia Pabico **PhD, RN, NE-BC, FAAN** is a senior nursing leader and executive with over 25 years of experience advancing professional practice environments, workforce wellbeing, and organisational excellence. She serves as Director of the Pathway to Excellence® Program at the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), where she leads initiatives that recognise healthcare organisations committed to positive nursing workplaces and high standards of care delivery.

Board-certified as a Nurse Executive, Dr Pabico has dedicated her career to fostering healthy work cultures, strengthening clinician engagement, and building high-reliability organisations that support patient safety and staff retention. Her leadership bridges credentialing, governance, and professional development.

Beyond ANCC, she serves as President-Elect of the Philippine Nurses Association of Metro DC and contributes to leadership development and community initiatives that reinforce nursing practice, representation, and long-term workforce sustainability.

Professor Izabella Uchmanowicz - Poland



Editor: Journal of Clinical Nursing (JCN), Professor at Wroclaw Medical University, Poland, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery

PhD, MBA, FESC, FHFA, PFSC (Poland). Professor Izabella Uchmanowicz is Dean of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery at Wroclaw Medical University, Poland, and a full professor of health sciences. She is an internationally recognized leader in cardiovascular and geriatric nursing, with more than two decades of experience in academic leadership, clinical practice, and interdisciplinary research.

Her work focuses on heart failure, frailty, multimorbidity, cognitive decline, and patient-centered self-care, with a strong emphasis on nurse-led and digitally supported models of care. She has led major national and European research projects, including OPUS and Horizon Europe programs, and has supervised more than 20 PhD candidates. Professor Uchmanowicz has authored over 500 peer-reviewed publications and is among the World's Top 2% Scientists (Stanford Ranking, 2024). She serves as President (2022–2024) and Past President (2024–2026) of the Association of Cardiovascular Nursing and Allied Professions (ACNAP) of the European Society of Cardiology, and holds editorial roles in leading international journals including the Journal of Clinical Nursing, European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing, European Journal of Preventive Cardiology and ESC Heart Failure

Rosaria Alvaro - Italy



Professor Rosaria Alvaro **PhD, RN** is Full Professor of Nursing Science at the University of Rome Tor Vergata and one of Italy's most influential figures in academic nursing. Her career has been dedicated to advancing nursing education, health systems development, patient safety, and quality of care, positioning nursing as a scientific and strategic pillar within modern healthcare.

She is widely recognised for her extensive contributions to national and international leadership initiatives, supporting the evolution of nursing roles across clinical, academic, and policy domains.

Professor Alvaro has authored and contributed to a substantial body of scientific literature, strengthening the evidence base underpinning professional practice and education.

Actively engaged in policy development and curriculum design, she promotes advanced nursing practice and competency-based education frameworks. Her work continues to reinforce the scientific foundations, societal relevance, and system-level impact of the nursing profession in Italy and across Europe.

Joyce Fitzpatrick - USA



Director at Marian K. Shaughnessy Nurse Leadership Academy
Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing CWRU - USA

Professor Joyce Fitzpatrick **PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN** is an internationally renowned nurse scholar, academic leader, and author whose career has had a profound influence on nursing education, research, and leadership worldwide. She has served in senior academic roles at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University, where her work has advanced doctoral education, faculty development, and global

academic collaboration.

A prolific author and editor, Professor Fitzpatrick has contributed extensively to nursing literature, shaping discourse in areas such as leadership, mental health nursing, and professional development. She is a former President of Sigma Theta Tau International, the global nursing honour society, where she championed research dissemination and international partnership.

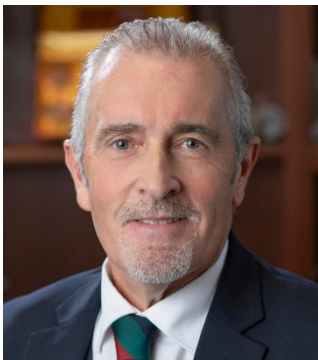
Her career reflects a sustained commitment to strengthening nursing scholarship, mentoring future leaders, and advancing the profession's scientific and societal impact across the global health landscape.

Mateja Španić Ometlić - Croatia



Mateja Španić Ometlić is a legal and public procurement professional with extensive experience in the healthcare and medical devices sector. She serves as Head of Legal and Public Procurement and Procurator at Pharmamed-mado d.o.o. and Markomed d.o.o. in Zagreb, and holds director positions at Publicatio Medica d.o.o., a scientific publishing company based in Split, Croatia and Rauché Medical Dooel in Skopje, North Macedonia. Through her role at Publicatio Medica d.o.o., she actively contributes to the development and advancement of scientific and professional publishing in healthcare. Publicatio Medica is the publisher of World of Health, the official peer-reviewed, open-access journal of the European Specialist Nurses Organization (ESNO), which serves as an international platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, research dissemination, and professional excellence in healthcare. She holds a Master of Law degree from the University of Zagreb and passed the Croatian Bar Exam in 2018. Her professional expertise includes public procurement of medical products, regulatory compliance, healthcare legislation, and quality management systems, supported by ISO 9001, ISO 13485 and ISO 14001 internal auditor certifications and continuous professional development.

Thomas Kearns - Ireland



Professor Thomas Kearns, EdD FAAN MA FFNMRC SI MED BNS RNT RGN RPN

Thomas Kearns, Professor of Nursing at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ireland, retired in 2023 after serving as Executive Dean (2014–2023) and now co-directs the Global Innovation and Leadership Academy, which hosts the Faculty’s WHO Collaborating Centre. With extensive experience in nursing regulation, policy, and higher education across national, EU, and global levels — including a stint as interim CEO of the International Council of Nurses (2017–2018) — he founded the European Centre of Research Excellence (22 partners) and RCSI Hospital Group’s Centre for Nursing and Midwifery Advancement. He serves as Trustee of the Florence Nightingale International Museum (2021), leads WHO’s global Quality Rights Education Programme for nursing and midwifery, and is drafting a WHO Euro Technical Brief on nursing regulation. In 2025, he was appointed Knight of the Order of Merit by Romania, and joined the boards of Peamount Healthcare and TruMerit in Ireland.

Peter Preziosi USA



President and CEO, TruMerit, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Peter Preziosi **MBA** is an international healthcare executive and strategic leader specialising in global nursing credentialing, workforce development, and professional standards. As President and Chief Executive Officer of TruMerit, he leads initiatives that advance competency-based certification, career mobility, and quality assurance across the global nursing workforce.

With a background spanning healthcare management, credentialing systems, and international partnerships, Mr Preziosi has been instrumental in strengthening frameworks that support workforce sustainability and patient safety. His work focuses on aligning certification with evolving health system needs, enabling nurses to demonstrate skills, specialisation, and readiness in increasingly complex care environments.

He collaborates extensively with professional associations, regulators, and education providers worldwide, advocating for harmonised standards and global recognition of nursing qualifications. His leadership contributes to building a resilient, mobile, and highly competent nursing workforce equipped for future healthcare challenges.

Sophia Chan – Hong Kong



School of Public Health, The University of Hong Kong

Professor Sophia Chan is a distinguished nursing leader, academic, and public health policymaker based in Hong Kong. She currently serves as Senior Advisor to the President's Office and Director of the Primary Health Care Academy at the University of Hong Kong, supporting strategic development in primary care, research, and workforce capacity building.

Her career uniquely bridges academia and government. From 2017 to 2022, she served as Secretary for Food and Health — the equivalent of Minister of Health — of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, becoming the first nurse appointed to this ministerial role. During her tenure, she led Hong Kong's COVID-19 response, advanced primary healthcare reform through the establishment of District Health Centres, and spearheaded major initiatives including the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy and development of the Chinese Medicine Hospital.

An internationally recognised nurse scientist, Professor Chan specialises in public health, tobacco dependency management, and primary healthcare systems. With more than 240 peer-reviewed publications, her work continues to integrate science, policy, and education to strengthen population health and nursing's global influence.



Maurizio Zega - Italy

Maurizio Zega **MSc, RN** is a prominent Italian nursing leader and policy advocate, recognised for his contributions to professional regulation, workforce development, and health system strengthening. He serves in a senior leadership capacity within FNOPI — the National Federation of Nursing Orders in Italy — where he supports national strategies on professional standards, education frameworks, and the evolution of nursing roles.

With a background combining clinical expertise and institutional governance, Mr Zega has been actively engaged in advancing regulatory recognition, competency development, and interprofessional collaboration across the Italian healthcare landscape. His work contributes to reinforcing nursing's visibility within policy dialogue and organisational reform.

He is also involved in European and international professional platforms, promoting exchange on regulation, mobility, and workforce sustainability. His leadership reflects a strong commitment to strengthening the professional identity, autonomy, and societal impact of nursing within modern health systems.

Julia To Dutka - USA

Chief, Global Health Workforce Development Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Julia To Dutka **MHA, BSN, RN** is an international nursing leader specialising in credentialing, certification systems, and global workforce mobility. She serves in a senior leadership role at TruMerit, where she contributes to advancing competency-based recognition frameworks that strengthen professional standards and support quality care delivery worldwide.

With a background in nursing practice and health administration, Ms To Dutka has been actively engaged in the development and implementation of certification programmes that validate specialist knowledge and clinical expertise. Her work focuses on aligning credentialing systems with evolving healthcare needs, enabling nurses to demonstrate capability, enhance career progression, and support patient safety.

She collaborates with professional associations, regulators, and academic institutions internationally, promoting harmonisation, professional mobility, and workforce sustainability. Her leadership reinforces the importance of trusted certification infrastructures in building a resilient, future-ready global nursing workforce.

Benjamin Slaugh - USA



Director of International Relations at TruMerit, United States

Benjamin Slaugh **MBA** is a healthcare executive and global workforce strategist with expertise in credentialing systems, certification development, and professional standards in nursing and allied health. He serves in a senior leadership capacity at TruMerit, where he supports the advancement of competency-based certification frameworks that strengthen workforce quality, mobility, and patient safety.

With a background in healthcare management and organisational leadership, Mr Slaugh has contributed to the design and expansion of international credentialing programmes that recognise specialist expertise and align professional qualifications with evolving health system demands. His work focuses on building scalable certification infrastructures that support employers, regulators, and professionals alike.

Through global partnerships with professional associations, education providers, and policy stakeholders, he advocates for harmonised standards and sustainable workforce development, reinforcing the strategic value of certification in strengthening healthcare delivery worldwide.

Theo Koutroubas - Belgium



Professor Theo Koutroubas, Senior Policy Advisor at the European Nursing Council (ENC), is a European policy scholar and governance expert with extensive experience in health professions regulation, public administration, and institutional leadership. He is a strong promoter of representing nurse regulators at the highest levels of the European Union, actively engaging with EU institutions and policy platforms to ensure the regulatory voice of nursing is structurally embedded in European decision-making.

In his role, he contributes to strengthening regulatory dialogue, professional standards, and cross-border cooperation in nursing across Europe, with particular attention to the Directive on Professional Qualifications and the transparency of professional recognition frameworks.

Professor Koutroubas also serves as Director-General of CEPLIS (European Council of the Liberal Professions) and is Professor at UCLouvain, further reinforcing his bridge between academia, professional governance, and EU policy. Through his connections with professional alliances and regulatory networks, he fosters strategic collaboration between regulators, professional bodies, and European institutions. Widely respected for his analytical insight and diplomatic leadership style, he continues to play a pivotal role in advancing coherent governance structures that support a competent, trusted, and future-ready nursing workforce across Europe.

Dr. Mario Degan - Italy



Dr Mario Degan **PhD, RN** is Nursing Director of the University Hospital of Padua, one of Italy's leading academic medical centres, where he provides strategic leadership across clinical nursing services, workforce development, and organisational innovation. His role encompasses the governance of nursing practice, quality assurance, and the integration of evidence-based care within a complex university hospital environment.

With a professional background that bridges clinical expertise and executive management, Dr Degan has been instrumental in advancing professional standards, multidisciplinary collaboration, and patient-centred care delivery. He has supported initiatives in education, research integration, and competency development, strengthening the role of nurses within academic health systems.

Actively engaged in national and European professional dialogue, his leadership contributes to the modernisation of nursing management, reinforcing workforce sustainability, clinical excellence, and the strategic value of nursing in high-performing healthcare organisations.

Blerina Duka - Albania



Blerina Duka **MSc, RN** is a nursing leader and National Nurse Lead in Albania, recognised for her contributions to professional development, workforce strengthening, and the advancement of nursing within national health system reform. Her leadership bridges clinical practice, policy engagement, and organisational coordination, supporting the strategic positioning of nurses in Albania's evolving healthcare landscape.

In her national role, she contributes to shaping professional standards, education pathways, and competency development, while advocating for greater recognition of nursing expertise in care delivery and health policy. She is actively engaged in European collaboration platforms, fostering cross-border knowledge exchange and aligning national nursing priorities with broader regional developments.

Committed to empowering the nursing workforce, Ms Duka promotes leadership opportunities, capacity-building initiatives, and sustainable professional frameworks, reinforcing the role of nurses as key drivers of quality care, system resilience, and public health advancement.

Dyanne Affonso - USA



The American Academy of Nursing is pleased to announce Dyanne D. Affonso, PhD, RN, FAAN, Honorary President, Centre of Excellence, OPI (**Ordine delle Professioni Infermieristiche di ROMA**) and Professor Emerita & Former Dean, **University of Toronto**, will be honored as a Living Legend at the 2025 Health Policy Conference. Dr. Affonso is an unwavering force committed to advancing nursing science, social justice, and health care leadership around the globe. Dr. Affonso's pioneering work in maternal health, mental health, and health equity has shaped policy and education worldwide. Her

groundbreaking research on postpartum depression (PPD) led to PPD's inclusion as a women's health priority by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Affonso's global impact is evident through her Malama Community Health Program, which addresses disparities in maternal and child health care among Native Hawaiians and multi-ethnic women in Hawaii, which was also implemented in other culturally diverse communities, including British Columbia, Canada among First Nations peoples. Dr. Affonso's global influence is vividly seen through her pivotal role in the co-founding and collaboratively leading Centers of Excellence for Nursing Scholarship in Italy, Ireland, and Albania where she has fostered leadership, research, and clinical innovations.

Judith Shamian - Canada



President Emerita International Council of Nurses, Global Citizen, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Dr Judith Shamian is an internationally renowned nursing leader whose career has shaped global nursing policy, leadership, and professional advancement. She is Past President of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Order of Nurses, as well as President of the Canadian Nurses Association. She has also held academic appointments as Professor of Nursing at the University of Toronto and leadership roles within Health Canada and Mount Sinai Hospital.

Dr Shamian's work has consistently focused on elevating the global position of nurses, advocating for stronger leadership influence, expanded professional autonomy, and policy recognition of nursing's system value. Her academic preparation includes a PhD from Case Western Reserve University and a Master of Public Health from New York University.

Widely honored for her impact, she remains a powerful voice advancing nursing leadership, empowerment, and global health system transformation.

Arthur Olesch - Germany



Artur Olesch is a digital health journalist, founder of aboutDigitalHealth.com, blogger, editor-in-chief, correspondent, content writer, lecturer.

Artur Olesch is a digital health journalist, media entrepreneur, and global thought leader in healthcare innovation and transformation. He is Founder of aboutDigitalHealth.com, a leading international platform covering digital health trends, artificial intelligence, health technology, and system innovation. Working as a blogger, editor-in-chief, correspondent, content writer, and lecturer, Mr Olesch has built a recognised voice in translating complex technological developments into accessible insights for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and industry leaders. His work highlights the intersection of technology, care delivery, and workforce transformation, with a particular interest in how digital solutions reshape clinical practice and patient engagement. Through interviews, publications, and global event moderation, he connects innovators, clinicians, and decision-makers, fostering dialogue on the future of healthcare. His contributions support informed adoption of digital tools and strengthen cross-sector understanding in an evolving health ecosystem.

Danielle Lehwaldt - Ireland



Dr Daniele Lehwaldt is an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, academic, and international leader in advanced nursing practice development. She serves as Associate Professor at the Dublin City University, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health, contributing to postgraduate education, research, and leadership formation.

Clinically grounded in advanced practice, her expertise spans complex patient management, integrated care delivery, and the expansion of nursing autonomy within multidisciplinary health systems. She is Lead of the International Council of Nurses Advanced Practice Nursing Committee, supporting global dialogue on role implementation, competency frameworks, and regulatory recognition. A strong advocate for nurse prescribing, Dr Lehwaldt promotes expanded scope of practice as a means to improve access to care, system efficiency, and patient outcomes. Through research, policy engagement, and education, she continues to advance the visibility and strategic value of advanced practice nurses worldwide.

Ilaria De Barbieri -Italy



She is past President of the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association / European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA) and a committed leader in renal nursing. With extensive experience in nephrology, she has played a key role in advancing education, professional standards, and cross-border collaboration. She actively advocates for the recognition of specialised nursing within the EU health ecosystem, emphasising the value of renal nurses in managing complex, long-term care pathways.

Through her leadership, she supports competence development, knowledge exchange, and the positioning of nurses as essential contributors to high-quality, patient-centred care.

ESNO team

Adriano Friganovic (Croatia) – ESNO president



Adriano Friganović **MSc, RN** is a Croatian nursing leader and intensive care specialist recognised for his contributions to critical care nursing, professional leadership, and international collaboration. He serves in senior roles within clinical practice and professional organisations, advocating advanced competencies, patient safety, and workforce resilience in high-acuity settings. Actively engaged in European nursing initiatives, he supports education development, specialist recognition, and cross-border knowledge exchange. His work highlights the strategic role of nurses in emergency preparedness, quality improvement, and multidisciplinary care delivery, reinforcing the importance of leadership and expertise in strengthening modern, responsive healthcare systems.

Alessandro Stievano (Italy) – ESNO vice president



Alessandro Stievano is currently the Chief Nursing Officer for Italy and Vice-President of the European Specialist Nurses Organization (ESNO). He is also a professor in nursing for the University of Messina - Italy, and an adjunct professor at Case Western University (USA). He received an Honorary Fellow ad Eundem from the Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery - Royal College of Surgeons - Dublin (Ireland) in 2016 and a fellowship at the American Academy of Nursing (2018). He is the author of publications on a national and international level.

Patricia Burga (Italy) - Board Member



Patricia Burga **MSc, RN** is a European nursing leader and specialist in gastroenterology and endoscopy nursing, actively contributing to professional development and clinical excellence across the field. She is engaged with the European Society of Gastroenterology and Endoscopy Nurses and Associates (ESGENA) and serves as a Board Member of the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO). Based in Padua, she combines clinical expertise with organisational leadership, supporting education initiatives, competency development, and international collaboration. Her work promotes specialist recognition, patient safety, and quality standards in endoscopy care, while strengthening the visibility and impact of specialist nurses within multidisciplinary European healthcare systems.

Julie Dugmore (United Kingdom) – ESNO treasurer



Julie Dugmore **RVN, MSc** is a veterinary nurse leader and European advocate for professional development, education, and workforce recognition within animal health and comparative care domains. She is actively engaged with the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), where she contributes to cross-professional dialogue and the inclusion of veterinary nursing perspectives within broader specialist nursing discussions. With a background in clinical veterinary practice and organisational leadership, she supports initiatives that strengthen competency frameworks, professional standards, and lifelong learning. Her

work highlights the interconnectedness of human and animal health, promoting collaboration aligned with One Health principles while advancing the visibility, expertise, and societal value of veterinary nurses across Europe.

Ber Oomen (Netherlands) – ESNO executive Director



Ber Oomen is Executive Director of the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), where he leads European strategy on specialist and advanced nursing development, workforce sustainability, and professional recognition. With a background in nursing, policy engagement, and organisational leadership, he has been instrumental in positioning specialist nurses within EU health policy, education frameworks, and innovation programmes.

His work focuses on advancing competency-based education, vaccination and infection prevention initiatives, digital health transformation, and cross-border professional collaboration. He has initiated multiple European platforms, publications, and congress initiatives that strengthen nurse leadership and visibility across health systems.

Through partnerships with EU institutions, professional bodies, and industry stakeholders, Mr Oomen advocates for structured career pathways, regulatory recognition, and investment in specialist nursing as a cornerstone of resilient, future-ready healthcare in Europe.

Josefine Declaye (Belgium) – ESNO senior Policy Officer



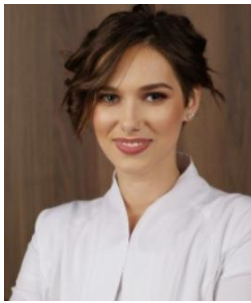
Josefine Declaye is an intensive care nurse and emerging European nursing leader actively engaged in professional development, digital innovation, and specialist practice advancement. Through her involvement with the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), she contributes to initiatives that strengthen critical care competencies, workforce resilience, and the integration of technology within high-acuity care environments.

With a clinical background in intensive care, she combines frontline expertise with a strong interest in digital health solutions, simulation, and virtual learning approaches that enhance preparedness and patient safety. She has been involved in European

discussions exploring how innovation can support nurses as co-creators of healthcare transformation.

Her work reflects a new generation of specialist nurses shaping the future of critical care through leadership, education, and cross-border collaboration within an evolving and technology-enabled health ecosystem.

Tihana Gaspert (Croatia) – ESNO policy Officer



Tihana Gašpert is a Croatian nurse whose work blends advanced clinical practice with a deep commitment to compassionate, evidence-based care. Her experience spans hematology, oncology, geriatric care, and long-term care, where she consistently advocates for psychological safety, ethical practice, and patient-centered communication. Through her academic and international engagement, she contributes to strengthening nursing education, developing professional frameworks, and elevating the role of nurses in multidisciplinary teams. She is

dedicated to mentoring emerging nurses and advancing the profession through research, collaboration, and inclusive leadership.

Kristian Civka (Croatia) – ESNO Policy Officer



Kristian Civka is a nurse anaesthesia specialist and European nursing leader actively engaged in advancing professional standards, education, and international collaboration in advanced practice nursing. Through his involvement with the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) and the International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists (IFNA), he contributes to initiatives that strengthen competency frameworks, patient safety, and specialist recognition in anaesthesia care.

With a clinical background in high-acuity and perioperative environments, Mr Civka combines practice expertise with organisational leadership, supporting education development and cross-border knowledge exchange. His work promotes harmonised training standards and professional mobility, reinforcing the critical role of nurse anaesthetists in safe surgical care delivery. He remains committed to advancing advanced nursing roles within resilient, high-performing healthcare systems.

Maddalena Demaria (Italy) – ESNO Policy Officer



Maddalena Demaria is an Italian nursing professional engaged in academic development, specialist education, and European nursing collaboration Link Campus University, Rome. She is active within the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), contributing to initiatives that advance professional competencies, leadership development, and cross-border knowledge exchange.

Affiliated with Link Campus University in Rome, her work bridges higher education and clinical practice, supporting the preparation of nurses for

evolving healthcare demands. She is particularly interested in strengthening specialist roles, fostering research-informed practice, and promoting innovation within nursing curricula.

Through her academic and organisational engagement, Ms Demaria supports the visibility and strategic positioning of nursing within European health systems, reinforcing the importance of education, collaboration, and professional recognition in delivering high-quality, patient-centred care.

Panagiota Tsikala (Greece) – ESNO Policy Officer



Panagiota Tsikala is a specialist renal nurse and European nursing leader actively engaged in advancing nephrology nursing practice, education, and professional collaboration. She contributes to the work of the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) and is closely involved with the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association / European Renal Care Association (EDTNA-ERCA).

With a clinical background in dialysis and transplant care, she combines specialist expertise with organisational leadership, supporting competency development, patient safety, and quality standards in renal services. Her engagement in European platforms promotes knowledge exchange, professional mobility, and the visibility of renal nursing within multidisciplinary care. She represents the ESNO in the European Medicine Agency (EMA)

Committed to strengthening specialist recognition and workforce sustainability, Ms Tsikala advocates for education pathways and collaborative frameworks that enhance outcomes for patients living with kidney disease across Europe.

European Nurse Experts

Rosario Caruso - Italy



Professor Rosario Caruso is an Italian nurse academic and research leader serving as President of the Federation of Nursing Specialists in Europe (FoNSE). He is also a leading figure within the Italian Association of Cancer Nurses (AAIO), advancing oncology nursing practice, research, and professional education. His scholarship focuses on patient-reported outcomes, workforce wellbeing, and quality-of-care measurement, strengthening the evidence base underpinning specialist nursing. Through his academic, clinical, and organisational leadership, Professor Caruso promotes harmonised competencies, professional recognition, and data-driven practice, reinforcing the strategic role of cancer and specialist nurses in delivering high-quality, person-centred care across Europe.

Vedrana Vejzovic - Sweden



Dr Vedrana Vejzovic is a nurse scientist and academic leader serving as Chair of the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) Science Committee. Her work centres on advancing nursing research, evidence-based practice, and the scientific foundations of specialist nursing across Europe. With a background in clinical care, academia, and international collaboration, she contributes to strengthening research capacity, publication development, and knowledge translation within the nursing profession. Dr Vejzovic is committed to fostering cross-border scientific partnerships and supporting nurses in generating and applying research that improves patient outcomes, professional standards, and healthcare system innovation.

Corinne Scicluna - Malta



Dr Corinne Scicluna is a senior nurse academic, specialist clinician, and European professional leader in skin and wound care. She serves as Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta, where she coordinates the master's degree in specialist nursing pathways, including the Skin and Wound Care programme. She was Malta's first Tissue Viability Specialist Nurse, leading the national development of this service.

Dr Scicluna is President and Founder of the Maltese Association of Skin and Wound Care and currently Chairs the Foundation of Nursing Specialists Europe (FoNSE). She is a former President of the International Skin Care Nursing Group and represents Malta across multiple global wound care and diabetic foot networks.

Her leadership background includes senior nursing management at Mater Dei Hospital and service development roles at St Luke's Hospital. Her academic and policy interests focus on advanced practice, specialist nurse recognition, and professional regulatory frameworks at national and European levels.

