



# 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, at the LINK university, 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](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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## Speakers

### MEP Andras Kulja, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)

#### Dr. András Kulja, Member of the European Parliament (MEP),



He is a medical doctor and an active advocate for strengthening Europe's health workforce. In the European Parliament he has been closely engaged in health policy discussions, with particular attention to the sustainability of healthcare systems and the recognition of healthcare professionals across Europe.

Dr. Kulja serves as **shadow rapporteur on the European Parliament's own-initiative (INI) report on the Health Workforce**, where he has contributed to advancing the debate on workforce shortages, education, and the strategic role of healthcare professionals in future health systems. A strong supporter of nursing, he promotes the recognition of specialist and advanced nursing roles, emphasising education, professional development, and meaningful inclusion of nurses in interdisciplinary healthcare teams. Dr. Kulja has actively engaged with the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) and participated in several of its events. ESNO is therefore honoured to welcome him to contribute to the opening ceremony of the ESNO Congress in Rome 2026.

### Dr Milena Angelova, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)



Dr Milena Angelova has been serving as Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association since 2002 and as SGL Europe Vice-President 2011-2025. She's been a Member of the European Economic and Social Committee since 2007. Member of the Bulgarian Economic and Social Committee since 2006, and its Vice-President for 2025. In June 2022, Dr Angelova was appointed Bulgarian SME Envoy.

She has thirty years of successful track record in representing the interests of the business community at EU and national level regarding important topics such as sustainable development and CSR, SME promotion, innovation and knowledge transfer, skills, future of work, etc. Associate professors on Marketing and Sustainable Development at the Economic Research Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

## Wendy Budin - USA



Dr Wendy Budin, Professor, 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 optimizing 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.

## Sylvia Fung – Hong Kong (China)



President of the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing & Midwifery, Hong Kong.

Professor Sylvia 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 Anaesthesia and 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 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



Professor, 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.

## Ann Marie Mauro - USA



Joan Hansen Grabe Dean & Professor, Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing at Hunter College

Dr Ann Marie Mauro PhD, RN is a nationally recognized expert in the health professions, distinguished for her leadership in nursing education, academic governance, and programme development. With an extensive background spanning both academic and administrative domains. She has played a pivotal role in strengthening institutional quality, accreditation standards, and educational innovation.

As former Dean of Nursing and Health Studies at Monmouth University, Dr Mauro led major accreditation initiatives and oversaw the establishment of a state-of-the-art clinical simulation laboratory, enhancing experiential learning and competency-based training. She currently serves as Director of the Nursing Education Program and 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 has held national governance roles advancing nursing science, research leadership, and higher education excellence.

## Annemarie Bergsma - Netherlands



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

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



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 the USA.

## Peter Preziosi PhD, RN, CAE, FAAN - USA



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

Peter Preziosi, PhD, RN, CAE, FAAN

As President and CEO of TruMerit, Dr. Preziosi leads global efforts to strengthen health systems by improving career development and mobility for healthcare workers worldwide. Under his leadership, TruMerit has enhanced its global profile to help health workers with career mobility. He serves as President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO). Before joining TruMerit, he led standards development and credentialing at the World Health Organization’s WHO Academy. He is a registered nurse with nearly 30 years’ experience across business, government, and nonprofits. He holds a PhD in health policy from Penn, is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and a Certified Association Executive.

## Rodrigo Gouveia- USA



Rodrigo Gouveia is Chief Global Affairs Officer for TruMerit, a nonprofit organization serving the global community of healthcare professionals by providing services for career mobility, professional development, and care model evolution. In that role, Rodrigo leads the organization’s global affairs strategy, building relationships, advocating for better policies, and providing thought leadership. Rodrigo has extensive experience in nonprofit leadership and management, global policy, and international affairs. He has represented organizations at the United Nations and its agencies, the G20, the World Bank, and the European Union, among others. He has developed engagement and development strategies for international organizations, governments, and NGOs in a variety of topics such as sustainable development, global health, climate change, and social economy. Throughout his career, Rodrigo has held advisory roles on several regulatory agencies. Rodrigo has a Master’s degree in Law, from the University of Lisbon, Portugal, and a Master’s degree in Public Affairs, with honors, from the University of Missouri, USA.

## Sophia Chan – Hong Kong - China



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 specializes 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 OPI Rome — 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.

## Barbara Mangiacavalli – Italy



President Federazione Nazionale Infermieri FNOPI, and nurse leader in the DSS ASST North Milan Trust.

Barbara Mangiacavalli has served as President of the National Federation of Nursing Orders (FNOPI) since 2015, leading and coordinating Italy's 102 provincial nursing regulatory bodies. Alongside her national presidency, she has held senior executive roles in healthcare management, including Director of Social and Health Care at ASST Milano Nord since 2019, following previous leadership functions at ASST Bergamo and Fondazione IRCCS

Policlinico San Matteo in Pavia.

Her professional training combines nursing science with healthcare management and public governance. She holds master's degrees in nursing and midwifery and in Public Administration from the University of Milan, complemented by further qualifications in business administration, health law, pharmaceutical regulation, and healthcare leadership.

A member of Italy's High Health Council since 2022, she received the National Gold Medal of Merit in 2023 for leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, recognising nursing's national contribution to crisis response and system resilience.

## 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 UC Louvain, 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



Mario Degan, MNS, 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.

## Blerina Duka - Albania



Blerina Duka PhD, 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, Dr 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 endorsed Dyanne D. Affonso, PhD, RN as a living legend for nursing. She is Professor Emerita & Former Dean, University of Toronto (Canada). 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 DigitalHealth.com, blogger, editor-in-chief, correspondent, content writer, lecturer.

Artur Olesch is a digital health journalist, media entrepreneur, and global 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 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 nursing, 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.

## Yakov Zhitomirsky - Israël



**Yakov Zhitomirsky, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N.**, is a clinical informatics leader who bridges the worlds of healthcare technology, academia, and frontline clinical practice. He currently manages global presales operations at iMDsoft, where he directs demo strategies and enhances the technical capabilities of international channel partners. Alongside his industry leadership, he lectures on Nursing Informatics and Innovation within the MA program at Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College.

Yakov's perspective is uniquely multifaceted, combining extensive experience in managing large-scale digitalization processes with a robust clinical background in critical care. His approach is grounded in solid nursing fundamentals and an ethical lens developed through years of service as an ICU nurse in major medical centers and global humanitarian field hospitals. With a Ph.D. in Information Science, Yakov is dedicated to ensuring that technological innovation remains both clinically effective and ethically driven.

He is also members of the ESNO Committee Digital and AI Committee and responsible for the program management.

## Nenad Zivanovic - Serbia



Nenad Zivanovic is a Master of Health Care from Belgrade, Serbia, working at the First Surgical Clinic, III Department for Colorectal Surgery, at the University Clinical Center of Serbia. He serves as a member of the working group and board for education, and as Serbia's delegate within WECT®. He is also Secretary of the Association of Stomach Nurses of Serbia. With more than 22 years of professional experience, he has contributed to the development of colorectal cancer screening in Serbia and participated in the writing of a book on ostomy care. Nenad has been actively involved as both

participant and organiser of congresses, seminars, and professional events. His professional approach is guided by the belief that innovation has value only when it serves people and contributes to a broader social impact.

## ESNO team

### Adriano Friganovic (Croatia) – ESNO President



Adriano Friganović PhD 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 organizations, 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 First 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) – ESNO second Vice President



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.

## Corinne Scicluna (Malta) – ENSO Secretary



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.

## Bart Cooreman (Belgium) second Treasurer



Bart Cooreman is Chief Executive Officer of the European Operating Room Nurses Association (EORNA) and an experienced nursing educator with a strong commitment to professional development, perioperative care, and international collaboration in healthcare. Throughout his career, he has been actively involved in strengthening nursing education, competency development, and the advancement of specialist nursing roles across Europe. With extensive experience in both clinical practice and organisational leadership, Bart has contributed to the development of educational initiatives, professional standards, and international exchange within the perioperative nursing community. His work focuses on connecting practice, education, and policy to support high-quality and safe patient care. He is recognised for his collaborative approach and his dedication to empowering nurses through knowledge-sharing, innovation, and lifelong learning. Through his leadership within EORNA, he continues to support the visibility and recognition of specialist nurses within the evolving European healthcare landscape.

## Cecile Dury (Belgium) Expertise Education and Science



Cécile Dury is President of FINA and a recognised expert in nursing education, scientific development, and professional advancement within healthcare. Her work is strongly focused on strengthening the quality of nursing education, promoting evidence-informed practice, and supporting the integration of science into clinical and professional nursing environments.

Throughout her career, she has contributed to the development of educational frameworks, competency-based learning, and international collaboration aimed at enhancing the position and recognition of nurses within modern healthcare systems. She is actively engaged in initiatives that connect education, research, policy, and clinical practice, with particular attention to innovation and sustainable workforce development.

Cécile is widely respected for her commitment to professional growth, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the advancement of nursing leadership. Through her role within FINA, she continues to advocate for high standards in education and scientific excellence as essential pillars for the future of nursing and healthcare.

## The Office and Operational team

### Ber Oomen (The 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

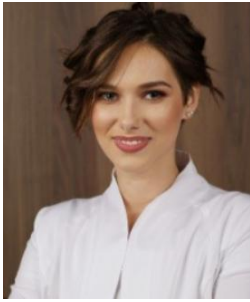


Josefine Declaye is an intensive care nurse and emerging European nursing leader actively engaged in professional development, digital innovation, and specialist practice advancement. Through her involvement with the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), she contributes to initiatives that 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 de Maria (Italy) – ESNO Policy Officer



Maddalena de Maria is an Italian nursing professional engaged in academic development, specialist education, and European nursing. 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 organizational engagement, Prof De Maria 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, Panagiota 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.

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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.