



EUROPEAN SPECIALIST
NURSES ORGANISATION

REPORT

ON THE ESNO DECLARATION

“Elaborating on the Role of
Specialist Nurses and
Advanced Level in
European Healthcare Towards 2030”

Brussels
10 October 2023

A Message from the President

“With great pleasure, I welcome you to this momentous occasion where we present a significant document, European Specialist Nurses Organisation 2023 Report. “Elaborating on the Role of Specialist Nurses and Advanced Level in European Healthcare Towards 2030” It reflects our collective nursing commitment to progress, innovation in health, and the betterment of our society. This in the challenges related to health workforce but also the shortage, retention and the European budgetary challenges ahead of us.

With this report, I am filled with a profound sense of pride and gratitude. The report we have assembled is not merely a collection of words and recommendations; it represents the culmination of tireless effort, dedicated teamwork, and a shared vision for a brighter future based on the outcomes of the ESNO World congress and the ESNO congress. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to every individual who contributed to this endeavor from the last few month, for their dedication and expertise have brought us to this pivotal in the European Parliament .

The journey from conception to completion has not been without its challenges, as meaningful change rarely comes without hurdles to overcome. Yet, it is precisely these challenges that have sharpened our resolve and strengthened our commitment to our shared goals. Today, we present not just a document, but Declaration, what implies, a call to all of us but also the policymakers and stakeholders alike, to embrace the recommendations it contains and work tirelessly to transform them into tangible policies.

In the pages that follow, you will find a ‘roadmap for progress’, a ‘blueprint for change’, and a testament to our ‘collective determination’. As we move forward in the nursing profession, in specialisations and advances roles, positions and responsibilities, let us remember that the true measure of success lies not only in crafting policies but in implementing them with passion, dedication, and a warm-hearted embrace of the positive impact they can have on the lives of those we serve.

I invite each of you to delve into the contents of this report, to engage in thoughtful discussion, and to take up the mantle of responsibility it carries. Together, we have the power to shape a better future for health with a sustainable health workforce as a fundament for the challenges ahead of us, and only with unity, determination, and a shared sense of purpose, we can turn these recommendations into realities that will benefit our society for generations to come.

Thank you for joining in this momentous occasion in the European Parliament, with the presentation of this report among distinguished guests, your unwavering commitment to progress, and let us embark on this journey together, with hope, optimism, and a deep-seated belief in the positive change we can create”.

Adriano Friganovic, ESNO president.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Friganovic', written in a cursive style.

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About ESNO

The European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) is a non-profit organization with a goal to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and cooperation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisations and their constituent members. ESNO represents the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations in front of the wider European community regarding public health. ESNO members are independent European specialist nurses' organizations and federations.

The following actions need to be carried out on European level to address the challenges nurses and specialist nurses are currently facing:



Executive Summary

Enhancing professional education within the healthcare community, supporting ongoing professional development, improving recognition of specialist nurses, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration are some of the key elements that we need to focus on to build a strong and resilient European healthcare workforce. Strengthening the nursing profession is fundamental to meet the future requirements in the fast-evolving high-quality care in the European healthcare sector. These observations are the foundation for this report, based on the inputs provided during the ESNO consultation, involving internal members, associates, and external guests, which took place during the World Café 2023¹. This consultation analyses the importance of these various factors and their implications for the healthcare workforce and for patient outcomes. For nurses and specialist nurses in Europe to excel in their roles and adapt to the evolving healthcare and society needs, it is essential that healthcare organisations **empower** them through prioritising ongoing education,

supporting career advancement and achievements, and creating a positive and healthy working environment. This report will also stress the importance of these elements to enable a positive move towards the **recognition of the specialist nurse profession** in the European context as a key instrument on the retention, to the background of nurse shortage and outflow of healthcare professionals. Additionally, the report will focus on other aspects and obstacles that the European healthcare workforce and specialist nurses currently face. Among these challenges, this document will address financial considerations, such as competitive salaries and benefits, and the integration of sustainability and digitalisation into educational programmes to further contribute to attracting and retaining skilled healthcare professionals. By taking a comprehensive approach to these factors, Europe and its Member States can build a **resilient and effective healthcare workforce**, ensuring the provision of **high-quality care and optimal patient outcomes**.

¹ https://www.esno-congress.eu/general_info/esno_world_cafe_2023

Background to the report

In the post-COVID recovery phase, we have entered a very volatile situation in European healthcare, introducing many new challenges. Budget constraints in our hospitals, a big gap in the European east and west healthcare provision and an unprecedented outflow of professionals from the healthcare sector are impacting the constantly decreasing treatment options for patients in need. This also leads to an increase in the commercialisation of the health provision, thus creating greater access issues for patients.

We are pleased to see that the aspects of health workforce are a priority for the European Commission². However, while there are many initiatives to restore European healthcare systems, too often the voice of nurses is overlooked, and solutions are ignored. This has triggered a lot of discussion, debates, and led to proposals of constructive alternatives which were presented and examined during the ESNO World Café 2023. This comprehensive report is a summary of the outcomes of this debate, created with the intention of presenting the precise issues at stake and offer recommendations to the policy makers at national and European political levels.

In addition, the outcomes of the discussions during the ESNO Congress of 8 and 9 June 2023 are embedded in this report. During this event, the nurse's response to the European "six megatrends" according to the EU EUVECA program³ were discussed and led to recommendations to the European and national healthcare policy makers.

Finally, this document is also an extension of the elements described in the WHO "Bucharest Declaration"⁴ on the healthcare workforce as well as a response on the outcome of the survey on Specialist Nurses in Europe⁵.

² https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-workforce_en

³ [Link to EUVECA](#)

⁴ <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/bucharest-declaration>

⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35326913/>

Chapter 1 - The reality of nurse shortages and how nurse leadership can be instrumental

Enhancing nurses' professional education and promoting lifelong learning are essential components in ensuring the successful execution of the nursing profession and the delivery of qualitative care. During the consultation event gathering members, associates and stakeholders, **education and training** became a cornerstone of every discussion; we must prioritise professional growth to improve staff retention.

By prioritising ongoing education and learning opportunities for specialist nurses, healthcare organisations can empower their workforce to continuously update their knowledge, skills, and competencies. By participating in lifelong education programmes, workshops, conferences, and online courses, specialist nurses can enhance their clinical expertise, stay up to date on the latest advancements in science, expand their knowledge base, and stay informed about current best practices applied in other Member States, such as the ability for nurses to prescribe medicines. As medical **knowledge and technology evolve rapidly, it is essential to engage in lifelong learning** to stay competent and provide safe, effective care. This will improve staff retention in the healthcare workforce and ultimately benefit patients and healthcare systems.

Lifelong learning is not limited to acquiring new knowledge; it also encompasses the

development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. In September 2021, Health First Europe (HFE) and the European Health Management Association (EHMA) launched a report entitled ***Essential skills for a resilient and effective European health workforce***⁶. This document highlighted the need to integrate four types of missing skills, including communication and educational programmes. These skills are essential for healthcare workers to effectively collaborate with interdisciplinary teams, advocate for patients, and make informed decisions in complex healthcare environments. In the same line as HFE's and EHMA's report, the European Specialist Nurses Organisations, through the World Café event, wants to promote lifelong learning, which encourages a mindset of curiosity, adaptability, and continuous improvement, thus enabling those in healthcare to respond to challenges and changes with confidence and resilience.

⁶ <https://healthfirsteurope.eu/publication/publication-essential-skills-for-a-resilient-and-effective-european-health-workforce/>

Moreover, enhancing and promoting **leadership**⁷, according to the global standards in healthcare, will have a direct impact on the quality of care provided to patients. Caregivers who engage in ongoing education programmes such as accompanying mentorships or clinical trials are better equipped to apply evidence-based practices, integrate research findings into their clinical decision-making, and provide patient-centred care. They also possess a deeper understanding of disease processes, treatment modalities, and preventive measures, allowing them to deliver safe, efficient, and individualised care to their patients.

In addition to benefiting the patient and nursing communities, investing in nurses' professional education and lifelong learning contributes to the advancement of the nursing profession. Healthcare professionals that are well-educated and continuously learning are more likely to advance with their careers, take on more leadership roles and contribute to policy development and quality improvement initiatives. For example, when workers in healthcare engage in professional activities, they need to capture essential competencies and become proficient before undertaking them independently. Good educational programmes and lifelong learning will not only strengthen their core competencies but also give them the confidence to face new

challenges. Moreover, specialist nurses - in their leadership roles - can also serve as mentors and role models for their colleagues, inspiring a culture of lifelong learning within the nursing community and supporting the pursuit of advanced recognised degrees and certifications across the European Union.

In summary, by providing opportunities for continuous education, supporting professional development, and fostering a **culture of lifelong learning**⁸ throughout career pathways, healthcare organisations can empower specialist nurses to excel in their roles, adapt to the evolving healthcare landscape and deliver the highest standards of care to patients.

⁷ <https://www.icn.ch/how-we-do-it/nna-development-leadership-programmes/global-nursing-leadership-institutetm-gnli>

⁸ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/lifelonglearning/>

However, it seems clear that offering the opportunity to engage in continuous learning is not guaranteed. Improving oneself takes time, effort, and financial resources, that the employer might not always be willing to offer or to contribute to. Providing financial assistance and time to complete training programmes is just one aspect of effectively tackling the challenges of recruitment and shortage. In addition to these measures, addressing the issues of better financial and working conditions, as well as offering career opportunities, are essential for attracting and retaining leaders in the healthcare workforce.



*Improving financial conditions involves ensuring competitive salaries and benefits that reflect the workers' responsibility, knowledge, skills, and contributions to patient care. Adequate compensation not only recognises the value of specialist nurses' work but also serves as a motivator and incentive for them to stay in the profession. Besides, **good working conditions and financial stability** are not only good incentives but would also help to solve recruitment issues. Competitive salaries can attract new specialist nurses to join the workforce and help retain the*

experienced ones who might otherwise be tempted to leave for better-paying opportunities in other sectors or locations. Furthermore, these financial incentives can help alleviate the burden of student loan debt for healthcare workers and attract individuals who may have been deterred by the financial costs of pursuing a nursing career. In this respect, it also needs to be taken into consideration "It also needs to be taken into account that the nursing job is very demanding, and the burden can be difficult to bear for the families, which also requires specific consideration."

Nevertheless, financial incentives are not enough; creating a positive and supportive work environment is vital for nurse recruitment and retention. COVID-19 highlighted that the whole healthcare community was overworked and could not have an adequate work/life balance. Therefore, ensuring reasonable workloads, manageable shift schedules, and minimum staffing-patient⁹ ratios that allow the healthcare staff to provide safe and effective care should be a priority. As we know, overburdened workloads and staffing shortages contribute to mental health issues, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and increased attrition rates among the healthcare workforce.

*To offer satisfactory working environments, healthcare organisations should prioritise worker well-being by implementing evidence-based practices that promote a healthy work-life balance. This can include **flexible scheduling** options, offering opportunities for self-scheduling, and providing adequate rest periods between shifts. Additionally, fostering a **culture of respect, collaboration, and open communication** among healthcare team members contributes to a positive work environment and helps in putting a stop to shortages.*

Another crucial aspect of strengthening the nursing health workforce is to secure their leadership, as described in the International Council of Nurses¹⁰, by including their contribution in management and policy, at a local but also national and European level. To avoid big gaps at clinical level, it's crucial

to avoid small cracks at policy level. It has been shown by many examples from the nursing community that this is highly instrumental with a positive impact.

On this, it seems it requires a certain level of bravery in the healthcare sector to shift from the medical oriented health culture to the holistic care one. This transition will require time, as in the 50th and 60th healthcare was dominated by the care and wellbeing culture but shifted to medical and technical. It seems that this is now a leading trend, deeply rooted in our culture and society, while the current situation shows us that dominance on one level causes big void on the other side of the balance. Medical, care and tech require a harmonized and balanced culture.

On this all, there is a need to operate on a consensus and avoid further polarization or even competition.

⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32853457/>

¹⁰ <https://www.icn.ch/how-we-do-it/nna-development-leadership-programmes/global-nursing-leadership-institutetm-gnli>

Chapter 2: Progression of specialist nurses in European health and contribution to the six “Mega Trends”.

The sustainability of the European healthcare industry is mainly influenced by six “Mega Trends”¹¹ impacting the nursing profession which and their future contribution in the European health sector. It’s crucial to have these identified and make sure that these aspects are reflected in the evolution of professional development at all levels:

1. The **ageing population**, which will increase demands from elderly people that need more and often increasingly complex healthcare supply, at a time where the working population is decreasing. There will be fewer staff members as well as less public funding to meet the needs and demands for high quality care from the ageing population.
2. The growing importance of chronic disease and co-morbidity among patients, which is partly related to the demographic change, but also to lifestyle related conditions. The care and cure of patients often continues throughout the entire life, which calls for solutions where the patient becomes an active contributor in their patient journey through involvement, responsibility, self-monitoring, and a close and continuous dialogue with the healthcare professionals.
3. The information and communication revolution and the general digitalisation of the society, which is related to the introduction and uptake of healthcare technologies, the use of big data and artificial intelligence.
4. The introduction of personalised care is impacting health on three levels: microbiological treatment, genetic engineering, and biotechnologies. Personal story telling, where personal experiences are included in treatment, will become the norm. The social component of leading with personalized experiences will coincide with better health literacy and disease prevention.
5. The modern health consumer, which is related to the growing access to health information and health literacy and thus, their expectations to be informed and involved as well as their expectation to high quality care and cure.
6. The climate challenge, which is related to the growing requirements towards the sector to play an active role in relation to sustainable procurement and use of resources, e.g. heavy use of energy, water, chemicals, and plastic.

¹¹ <https://euveca.eu/about-euveca/challenge/>

Consequently, the healthcare sector has for several years been undergoing major changes becoming increasingly digitalized, streamlined, and focused on more staff and patient involvement and patient responsibility (in relation to their own health). This leads to maximum quality in care, patient safety, efficiency, all while staying sustainable. This rapid development puts a heavy demand on healthcare professionals and students to adapt their learning and competence development, into skills that are not traditional caring and curing skills. But these skills are increasingly related to e.g., digital skills, communication and collaboration skills, multidisciplinary understanding, innovation awareness, facilitator of change processes, coaching of patients to become empowered and improve their health literacy.

All these skills are part of the so-called 21st century skills, which are important for the professionals to sustain a good career, the labor market to be inclusive, and the healthcare sector to be sustainable through innovation and development.

Mobility of professionals in the Nursing and Care domain

Movement of workers in general is not a new concept, generations of people have been travelling from one Member State to another for work. However, as traveling and working abroad becomes a more attractive option, it seems to be still a challenge as some obstacles remain.

As part of the roadmap towards achieving recognition of healthcare leadership in the European context, developing an **EU harmonised framework for the recognition of diplomas and degrees** is a critical step to facilitate seamless mobility and ensure consistent standards across the continent. Despite the European directive on Professional

Qualifications¹², implementation has many obstacles. For the level of nurse's specialisation and advanced roles, this especially relates to the absence of updates of the Annex-V of this directive. Also, the European Professional Card (EPC)¹³, shows no elements in the spectrum of specialisations. Currently, healthcare professionals face obstacles when seeking to work in different

¹² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/system-for-the-recognition-of-professional-qualifications.html>

¹³ https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/professional-qualifications/european-professional-card/index_en.htm

countries within the EU due to varying regulations and requirements for the recognition of their qualifications. Indeed, as healthcare remains a Member State competence, there is a **lack of standardisation for nursing specialisations across the EU, which leads to mobility issues across EU**

Member States. The development of a harmonised framework would therefore establish a unified process for recognising diplomas and degrees, streamlining the mobility of healthcare professionals, including specialist nurses, across borders.

A harmonised framework for Specialist and Advanced Nurses

Creating such a **harmonised framework** would allow any healthcare professional to benefit from a more straightforward and efficient process of **having their qualifications recognised when seeking employment in different EU Member States.** This framework would establish **common criteria** and **standards** for evaluating diplomas and degrees, reducing administrative burdens, and eliminating unnecessary duplications of certification processes. As a result, healthcare professionals would experience a smoother transition between countries, allowing them to make use of their skills without repeating training they already went through and contribute to healthcare systems and patients across the EU more readily. Furthermore, a harmonised framework for recognition would ensure consistent standards across European Member States.

It would establish a baseline level of education and competency for healthcare professionals, regardless of the country in which they received their qualifications, which would contribute to maintaining high-quality healthcare services and patient safety across the EU.

In addition to developing a harmonised framework, addressing workforce mobility challenges is crucial to promote seamless transitions and enable healthcare professionals to pursue **professional mobility effectively**¹⁴. Linguistic barriers often pose a significant hurdle for healthcare professionals seeking to work in different countries. To address this challenge, language proficiency requirements and language training programmes can be implemented to ensure that healthcare professionals have the necessary skills to effectively communicate with patients and colleagues in their new work environment.

Financial considerations play a significant role in mobility challenges as well. Relocation costs and disparities in salaries and benefits between countries can deter healthcare professionals from pursuing opportunities in other EU Member States. To promote effective professional mobility, it is important to address these financial considerations by offering financial assistance, relocation support, and competitive compensation packages that reflect the cost of living and working conditions in different countries. By doing so, healthcare professionals would be more inclined to explore opportunities for mobility and offer their expertise across borders.

Furthermore, during ESNO's World Café event, another point of discussion

generated many comments as there is a lot of confusion around this topic: the **adaption to a more digital and green working environment**. As mentioned earlier, early education and training quickly became the main topic during the event, and it became very clear that the healthcare workforce needs training programmes focusing on **green and digital awareness** based on concrete practices to understand and apply sustainable and digital solutions in Europe. By integrating concrete examples and good practices into educational programmes, health workers can develop a comprehensive understanding of the importance of sustainability and digitalisation in various sectors, including healthcare.

¹⁴ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/223049>

More specifically, early education and training programmes can introduce concepts such as environmental conservation, renewable energy, waste reduction, and the responsible use of digital technologies. By incorporating real-life examples and showcasing successful sustainable and digital solutions, learners can better comprehend the impact of their actions and how they can contribute to a more sustainable future. Early exposure to these topics helps instil a sense of environmental and digital responsibility from a young age, fostering a **mindset of sustainability and innovation**.

*In the trendsetting domain, it also has to be taken in account that professionals and especially the younger generation took learnings from the COVID and reward their private time and quality life higher than working expectations and obligations: It's the **quiet quitting** trend that just won't quit. People are switching jobs and industries, moving from traditional to nontraditional roles, retiring early, or starting their own businesses. They are taking a time-out to tend to their personal lives or embarking on sabbaticals. The Great Attrition has become the Great Renegotiation.*¹⁵

Additionally, allowing direct feedback from stakeholders in training is essential

for the continuous improvement and relevance of educational programmes. Engaging stakeholders, such as healthcare professionals, industry experts, policymakers, and community members, enables a holistic approach to curriculum development. Their valuable input can shape the content, delivery methods, and practical applications of the training, ensuring that it aligns with current needs and challenges in the healthcare sector. Furthermore, incorporating stakeholder's feedback would allow training programmes to be tailored to address specific areas of concern, emerging technologies, and evolving best practices.

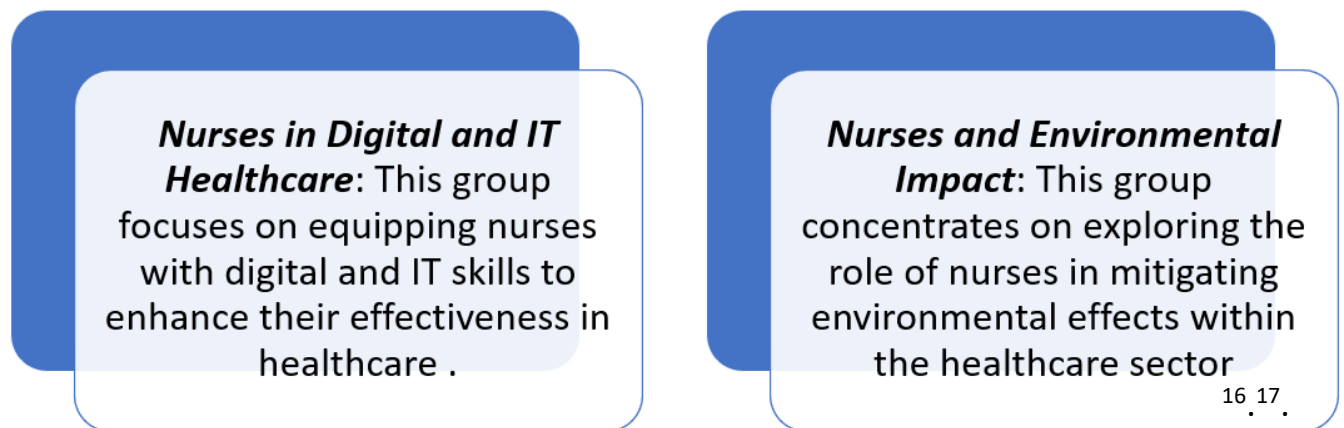
Finally, with the same objective to offer health workers the ability to adapt to the digital and green revolution, it is necessary to consider the simplification and translation of the European green agenda into specific competencies and skills so that

¹⁵ [https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-great-](https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-great-attrition-is-making-hiring-harder-are-you-searching-the-right-talent-pools)

[attrition-is-making-hiring-harder-are-you-searching-the-right-talent-pools](https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-great-attrition-is-making-hiring-harder-are-you-searching-the-right-talent-pools)

concrete education, training activities and curricula are developed around this theme. The European green and digital agendas include a wide range of goals, strategies, and policies related to the ecological and digital transition. However, for healthcare professionals to effectively contribute to these initiatives, it is important to translate these broader concepts into tangible competencies and skills that can be applied in their daily practice. If the healthcare workforce does not get the opportunity to have a proper understanding of the benefits these revolutions can offer, it is unlikely that they will effectively be used within healthcare systems. For example, artificial intelligence has triggered a lot of debates and remains a question mark in the mind of many people. It is then vital to provide healthcare workers as soon as possible with a clear picture of how AI could help them and not replace them.

Following the ESNO events, our organisation has embarked on two new initiatives by establishing two focus groups:



In conclusion

providing early education and training in green and digital awareness, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and simplifying the European green agenda into concrete competencies and skills are essential steps in promoting sustainability and digitalisation in the healthcare sector. These efforts help foster a workforce that is well-prepared to understand, apply, and lead sustainable and digital solutions, contributing to more environmentally conscious and innovative healthcare systems in Europe.

¹⁶ <https://www.esno.org/ehealthandnursing.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.esno.org/climate.html#image1-fm>

Chapter 3: Better recognition of nurses and their safety at work

From the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to understanding prescribing practices across the EU, this chapter will attempt to shed light on the paramount role the specialist nursing community plays within European healthcare systems. Prior to going into the context of this chapter, you can find hereafter a listing of the kind of working conditions that are not compatible with a sustainable and safe work environment¹⁸.

1. *Surgical smoke and air*: without proper evacuation of the smoke from tools during surgeries, nurses inhale daily an equivalent 1 package of cigarettes;
2. *Physical and verbal aggression*: the level of aggression has risen significantly since COVID;
3. *Aging of the health leadership*: the population of nurses is declining, and the average age is 45;
4. *Women in nursing profession and their special relation to family their life*
5. *Musculoskeletal impact*: nursing, especially but not only in elderly care, is physically demanding;
6. *Working with chemicals and medication*: medications and antiseptics are impacting personal health;
7. *Sharp needles*: high pressure and stressful situations lead to a loss of vigilance which can induce injuries;
8. *Mental health in the nursing profession*: too often mental health is neglected, it's not a "part of the job";
9. *Sleep/work balance*: due to long workhours and pressure, basic standards are not met;
10. *Sexual intimidation at work*: nursing is the highest ranked profession in terms of sexual intimidation and violence;
11. *Racism*: the level of racism in the nursing sector is very high;
12. *Medication Errors*: nurses are very often blamed in situation of errors, becoming thus "second victims" if such error occurs;
13. *Fair remuneration / salaries*: unsafe situations occur when budgets depend on longer workhours;
14. *Education as part of safety at work*: as nurses have often roles and responsibilities to meet safety regulation, guidelines and protocols
15. *Interdisciplinary discrimination*: in theory, everyone is equal in healthcare. This needs to be reflected in practice
16. *Man in nursing*: tackling discrimination and stigma.

¹⁸ <https://fonse.eu/blog/project-safety-at-work/>

Aggression in health

Recognition of leadership in healthcare involves **safety** as well. Developing comprehensive training programmes and European policies to address and prevent aggression in healthcare settings is crucial for creating a safe and respectful work environment for healthcare workers. This involves recognising the prevalence and impact of both physical and verbal aggression, understanding the underlying causes, and implementing strategies to mitigate and prevent such incidents.



Aggression in healthcare settings can take various forms, ranging from verbal abuse and threats to physical assaults. Such incidents not only affect the targeted healthcare workers but also have broader implications for patient care, staff morale and the overall functioning of healthcare organisations. In the in the context of the ever-increasing importance of mental well-being, the European Mental Health strategy needs to consider and include

comprehensive training programmes that would play a key role in equipping healthcare workers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively manage and prevent aggression. These programmes should address the specific risks and challenges faced by healthcare professionals, providing them with practical tools to de-escalate potentially volatile situations, handle aggressive behaviours and ensure their own safety.

In addition to training programmes, the European Commission can play a significant role in developing and implementing policies that prioritise the prevention and management of aggression in healthcare settings. Besides verbal and physical aggression, such policies should also tackle fundamental issues in the healthcare workforce such as racism or sexual intimidation.

The interdisciplinary context

Indeed, one of the key aspects of a high-functioning healthcare system that would give a proper understanding of specialist nurses' contributions to the whole healthcare workforce is **interdisciplinary collaboration**. When considering the role the overall healthcare profession played during the pandemic, we know they took on many responsibilities that were out of their scope and ran from one crisis to another. By promoting shared decision-making, mutual understanding, and clear communication channels, healthcare professionals from different disciplines can work together effectively, recognising and leveraging the unique contributions and expertise of each discipline. Shared decision-making entails involving all relevant healthcare professionals in the process, while also including patients and their families. Multiple perspectives need to be considered to reach a more comprehensive and well-rounded approach so optimal patient care can be achieved. However, to achieve interdisciplinary collaboration, different measures need to be implemented; clear communication channels are crucial for effective interdisciplinary collaboration, for example. This includes both formal and informal methods of communication.

In addition, in line with the first chapter, creating opportunities for interdisciplinary education and training is another important aspect of fostering this type of collaboration. Exposing professionals to the knowledge and skills of different disciplines and enhancing their understanding and appreciation of each other's roles encourages teamwork, promotes interdisciplinary problem-solving and strengthens the ability to work collaboratively.

In this all, it also needs to be mentioned that the marketing dynamics in the earnest part of Europe are increasing, and some time also beneficial to salaries for nurses, but at the other side, the private health institute make a lower score in overall conditions: long hours, less education and overall insufficiency to carry out the work they are expected to do¹⁹.

¹⁹ <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/01/when-market-becomes-deadly>

One other key aspect to consider at the European level for better appreciation of specialist nurses is the recognition of diplomas and degrees. Specifically, there is a pressing need for the establishment of a European framework to ensure the automatic recognition of nurses specialising in various fields, as the current mechanisms in place are deemed inefficient. Addressing this issue will be crucial during the post-election phase of 2024. The European Commission needs to look very carefully at this issue and find rapid and suitable solutions with the support of the newly elected Members of the European Parliament.

Professional recognition as precondition for safety, retention and quality

EU officials need to deliver and provide a mechanism that would oversee the automatic recognition of specialties in the nursing community. Specialist nurses possess advanced knowledge and expertise in specialised areas of healthcare, such as critical care, mental health, oncology, or geriatrics. However, the recognition of specialist nursing qualifications can be particularly complex due to the diversity of educational programmes, specialisations, and job titles across European countries. Therefore, a **European framework for automatic recognition would establish common criteria and standards for evaluating specialist nursing qualifications**, streamlining the process, and ensuring consistent recognition across the European Member States. However, the establishment of such a mechanism requires coordination among European countries, professional nursing organisations, regulatory bodies, and educational institutions.

Following the need for European standards recognising diplomas and degrees of specialist nurses across the EU, prescribing practices would also need to be harmonised to reach optimal patient care. Indeed, pharmaceutical care regulations in health vary across countries in the European Union, which have different levels of authority and responsibility in prescribing medication.

Traditionally, prescribing has been predominantly within the competence of physicians. However, recognising the expanding role of leadership in healthcare delivery and the potential benefits of nurse prescribing, several countries within the European Union have changed that approach.

Chapter 4 : Nursing in pharmacare and prescribing

Nurses prescribing refers to the ability of qualified leaders to autonomously prescribe medications to patients within their scope of practice. This authority enables caregivers to initiate, modify, or discontinue medications, providing timely and accessible care to patients. Nurse prescribing, including the overarching domain of nurse's role in pharma care²⁰, has the potential to improve patient access to medications, enhance patient safety, and promote efficient and cost-effective healthcare delivery. The implementation of nurse prescribing requires careful consideration of regulatory frameworks and educational requirements. Countries need to develop and implement appropriate legislation, guidelines, and standards to govern these practices. This includes defining the scope of nurse prescribing, specifying the types of medications that can be prescribed, and establishing mechanisms for oversight, quality insurance and accountability.

Educational programmes to prescribe should be designed to equip nurses with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to prescribe safely and effectively. These programmes may include specialised courses or postgraduate training that focus on pharmacology, therapeutics, prescribing principles, and legal and ethical aspects of prescribing. Collaboration between nursing education institutions, regulatory bodies and healthcare organisations is essential to ensure the development and delivery of high-quality education and training programmes for nurse prescribers.



PROBLEM 1: MEDICATION ERRORS
DUE TO COLLABORATION ISSUES



PROBLEM 2: COLLABORATION
PROBLEMS DUE TO UNCLARITY OF
NURSES' ROLE



PROBLEM 3: MISSED CARE DUE TO
UNCLARITY OF NURSES' ROLE

²⁰ <https://www.nuphac.eu/single-post/development-of-a-framework-for-nurses-role-in-interprofessional-pharmaceutical-care-in-europe>

Therefore, to ensure **proper collaboration** between nurses, physicians and pharmacists in PC and consequently to improve the quality of PC and patient outcomes a clear description of nurses' role in PC is urgently needed. A framework describing this role in a variety of healthcare situations can enable professionals to **openly discuss allocation of specific (shared) responsibilities and tasks**. This awareness begs the **ubiquitous question**: if such a framework ambitions to improve **patient safety**, then what should it look like?

Systematic and contextual practice in the nursing profession

It has to be emphasised that the activities of nursing are not an ad-hoc cumulation of activities, but a carefully developed "care-plan" **according to internationally recognised standards or even protocols and composed based on evidence**. Care plans are a way to strategically approach and streamline the nursing process. They also enable effective communication in a nursing team. This guide will help you understand the fundamentals of nursing care plans and how to create them, step by step²¹. In parallel, nurses are also expected to act according 'Care Bundles'²²: A care bundle is a set of interventions that, when used together, significantly improve patient outcomes. Multidisciplinary teams work to deliver the best possible care supported by evidence-based research and practice. It's of relevance to mention this in the contextual approach of specialist nurses' activities during patient recovery pathways.

*In this context, it is essential to emphasize that nursing professionals are expected to adhere to the NANDA²³ guidelines within the **nursing classification system**²⁴. They are tasked with conducting accurate assessments, formulating nursing diagnoses, proposing effective interventions, and diligently monitoring outcomes. This process operates as a continuous cycle, underscoring the*

significance of recognizing their competencies, autonomy, and contributions. There is high need that European nurses, especially those in specialist and advanced levels, become active in using these systems in their clinical work and that colleague professionals (medical) recognise this as crucial related to evidence based practices.

²¹ <https://www.usa.edu/blog/how-to-write-a-care-plan/>

²² <https://www.usa.edu/blog/how-to-write-a-care-plan/>

²³ <https://nanda.org/>

²⁴ International N. NANDA nursing diagnosis: definitions and classification 2015-2017. Vol. 11, Journal of Nursing UFPE on line. 2017. 2816 – 2817 p.

Conclusion

ESNO, its members and partner organisations, such as Health First Europe, stress the importance of enhancing specialist nurses' professional education and promoting lifelong learning in the nursing profession. As mentioned previously, education is a core element of this report which highlights that ongoing education and learning opportunities for specialist nurses are crucial for upscaling their knowledge, skills, and competencies, benefiting patients, healthcare systems and staff retention. Lifelong learning is not only about acquiring new knowledge but also developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Integrating these skills into educational programmes and promoting a mindset of curiosity, adaptability and continuous improvement can enable the nursing community to respond to challenges in healthcare with confidence and resilience and it should not depend on financial considerations.

Furthermore, the importance of early education and training programmes in promoting green and digital awareness among healthcare professionals should also be a priority. With different EU initiatives such as the European Health Data Space, the Artificial Intelligence Act, or the Green Deal, integrating concrete examples and good practices into educational programmes can foster a comprehensive understanding of sustainability and digitalisation in healthcare, leading to a more environmentally conscious and innovative healthcare system. In this all, a special note needs to be made on the field of Microbes, including vaccination, Antimicrobial resistance and Infection prevention. During the COVID a big gap showed up in relation to consistency in knowledge experience and competences related to microbe, as it's at the end, one of the fundamentals of the nursing profession. Yet, in addition to education, the importance of improving financial and working conditions, including competitive salaries, benefits, and reasonable workloads, to attract and retain specialist nurses in the healthcare workforce should not be overlooked.

Therefore, this report emphasises that a positive and supportive work environment, financial stability, work-life balance, and open communication are essential to combat burnout and job dissatisfaction and therefore have a positive impact on recruitment and retention.

This also implies the recognition of their leadership roles, at clinical, regional, national, and international level. This requires a culture change at both ends. On one hand, healthcare workers need to be aware that leadership and advocacy is an integrated part of the role and responsibility of the nursing profession, as it also is included in the definition of the nurse.

Next to this, it's very important to make the nurse that enters the policy and political level to be comfortable and accept, like all professionals, that competency development is an ongoing process. In this context, it must be underlined that at the end, patient safety, quality of care and efficiency also has a positive impact on health budgets.

"In addressing the specific requirements for nurses' education, skills, and competence at all levels, set forth by employers, a harmonious solution lies in establishing a well-structured connection with healthcare professionals in all nursing and care domains. By bridging the gap between the unique needs of professionals in the nursing domain and the expectations of employers, we can ensure a seamless alignment, fostering a sustainable workforce prepared to meet the challenges of the European healthcare effectively." Ber Oomen, ESNO Executive Director

Finally, this document aims to raise awareness on the need for a harmonised framework for the recognition of diplomas and degrees in the European Union to facilitate the seamless mobility of healthcare professionals across Member States. It also suggests that such a mechanism would streamline the process of recognising qualifications, establish common criteria and standards, and contribute to maintaining high-quality healthcare services and patient safety.

ESNO - DECLARATION

ESNO 10 Recommendations to Enhance the Role of Specialist Nurses and Advanced Level in European Healthcare Towards 2030

1. Enhance specialist nurses' **professional education** and promote continuing Professional Development to improve staff retention and ensure the delivery of qualitative care.
2. Develop a harmonised **framework for the recognition** of certificates, level of autonomy diplomas and degrees in the European Union for the healthcare workforce to facilitate seamless mobility and ensure consistent standards across Member States.
3. More specifically, establish a European framework for the **automatic recognition of specialist nursing** qualifications to streamline the recognition process and ensure consistent standards across Member States.
4. Improve financial conditions for nurses by **offering competitive salaries** and benefits that reflect their competencies, knowledge, skills, and contributions to patient care.
5. Create positive and **supportive work environments** by ensuring reasonable workloads, manageable shift schedules and safety at work requirements to prevent burnout and job dissatisfaction.
6. Provide clear **career pathways** and opportunities for professional growth to attract and retain specialist nurses in the healthcare workforce.
7. Offer financial assistance, relocation support, and competitive compensation packages to address financial considerations and promote effective **professional engagement in (European) health programs**.
8. Integrate critical education and training programmes on **green, digital and microbiology awareness** into healthcare curricula to promote sustainability and professional literacy in the sector.
9. Harmonise **prescribing practices, formal and informal** and educational standards for nurses across the EU to optimise patient care and recognise the expanding role of nurses in pharmaceutical healthcare delivery.
10. Foster **interdisciplinary collaboration** among healthcare professionals through shared decision-making, clear communication channels, and opportunities for interdisciplinary education and training.

Endorsing organisations

ESNO MEMBERS²⁵

EDTNA/ERCA	European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association / Renal Care Association
EfCCNa	European federation of Critical Care Nursing associations
ENDA	European Nurse Directors Association
EORNA	European Operating Room Nurses Association
FEND	Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes
IFNA	International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists
EAUN	European Association of Urology Nurses
ESGENA	European Society of Gastroenterology and Endoscopy Nurses and Associate
EULAR	European League Against Rheumatism / Nurses section
EuSEN	European Society for Emergency Nursing
EANN	European Association Neuroscience Nurses
ACOVENE	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
EWMA	European Wound Management Association
ICRN	International Coalition Respiratory Nurses
FINE	European Federation of Educators in Nursing Science

ESNO ORGANISATIONAL ASSOCIATES

GORNA	Greek Operating Room Nurses Association
AEEEMC	Specialist Nurses in Medical Surgical Nursing Portugal
ANIPIO	National Society Infection Control Nurses - Italy
PTPAIO	Polish Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Nurses
AEEEMC	Specialist Nurses in Medical Surgical Nursing Portugal
NVAM	Dutch Association of Nurse Anesthetists
AICO	Italian Association Operation Room Nurses
UISH	Albanian Order of Nurses
CNSARICT	Croatian Nurse Society of Anesthesia, Reanimation, Intensive Care & Transfusion
CNNF	Croatian National Nursing Federation
AIIAO	Italian Association of Oncology Nurses

²⁵ <https://www.esno.org/members.html>



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