



European Federation of Nurses
Associations

EFN UPDATE

Biannual 2026 (II) – October 2026

President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

On 1st July 2026, the Republic of Ireland assumed the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, which is taking forward the recommendations of the European Parliament Own-Initiative Report on the EU Health Workforce, that has moved Safe Staffing Levels (SSL) and Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) to the highest political levels of EU policymaking. That is why the Irish EU Presidency is so important for EFN, and I would like to thank the Irish Nurses

and Midwives Organisation ([INMO](#)) for pushing these topics through the Irish Presidency.

At EU level, other important developments for nurses and nursing in 2026 include the European Semester Country Reports which address structural challenges relating the nursing workforce and health systems, and as such have been analysed and sent to all the EFN Members (EU 27), as they represent a crucial resource to lobby their national governments. Furthermore, for the first time, housing is also a central focus of the European Semester. That is why the EFN Report on Housing, based on the Data collected from the EFN Tour de Table (April 2026 EFN GA), becomes an important lobby tool.

When it comes to EFN lobbying and impact in the current European and international political landscape, it is important to translate values into pragmatism. Supported nurses are more productive, more resilient, and more cohesive. Investments in the nursing workforce strengthen national competitiveness, economic sustainability, crisis preparedness, and public defence, especially at times when our healthcare is facing new threats such as military and hybrid scenarios, cyberattacks, natural disasters and pandemics. Without a resilient nursing workforce, you cannot ensure resilient healthcare systems that can withstand internal and external pressures while providing the highest quality of care. Placing resilience in the spotlight requires coordinated cooperation among and with different healthcare professionals. Translating this into influence means demonstrating nurses' impact is not a peripheral concern but a central contributor to resilient societies. That is why EFN is lobbying on the European Parliament Own-Initiative Report (INI) on the Cross Border Health Directive and the Own-Legislative Initiative (INL) on Psychosocial risks, after a very successful lobby outcome on the INI Report on the EU Health Workforce.

Moreover, EFN continues to be a credible, and trusted actor working closely with the European Commission. All our lobby efforts towards the Directive 2013/55/EU are paying off as we are moving towards a Common Training Framework for Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) and APN, which are aligned with the [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#). In this regard, EFN's long-standing collaboration with the Commission DG EMPL is particularly important, especially in relation to the Skills Portability Initiative Actions 2 and 3.

Finally, we should be proud of the EFN Nursing Student Forum (NSF) with currently comprises 21 nursing student connections, representing over 150.000 student nurses in the EU and EU. We look forward to the face-to-face EFN NSF at the upcoming Brussels GA in April 2027, which will build on the three online meetings in 2026. It is key nursing students contribute to Commission developments, especially on Youth and preparedness but also on exploring ways to further develop the network from an NNA perspective: building students' networks within the NNAs will be essential to strengthen nursing students' capacity and influence at European level.

With my warmest regards,

Dr Aristides Chorattas,
EFN President

News from EFN

EFN Autumn General Assembly



The 123rd EFN General Assembly, took place in Vienna, Austria, on 15-16 October 2026. On this occasion, the EFN Members held important discussions on key EU political developments that have an impact on the nursing profession, such as the Skills Portability Initiative, with measures aimed at strengthening the Professional Qualifications Directive, the development of a Common Training Framework for Advanced Practice Nurses (APN), the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals, but also those linked to the European Parliament, with focus on the EMPL-SANT INI Report on the Health Workforce that was voted in September 2026, and tow Own-Legislative Initiatives on Psychosocial Risks and Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare.

Within this broader European political context, the EFN members discussed and approved some key EFN Policy Statements, namely on 'APN harmonisation in the EU and Europe'; Nurses' Health and Safety at Work" and on 'Nursing Students Financial Challenge'. Moreover, EFN Members had the opportunity to shared positive national developments in 'victory sessions' that were held in the three EFN Committees.

Furthermore, the EFN took this opportunity to collect data from its 38 Members NNAs on the current regulatory developments concerning the different components of the nursing workforce (PQD Nurses, Specialist Nurses, and APNs) and the occupation of healthcare assistants, in order to update the [EFN Workforce Matrix 3+1](#).

The next EFN General Assembly will take place in Brussels, on 15-16 April 2027.

EFN at WHO Academy Lyon

SESAM and the WHO Academy co-hosted an [event](#) entitled 'Simulation for Global Health: From Innovation to Implementation' to which EFN was invited. Despite strong evidence of its value for patient safety and workforce development, simulation remains underrepresented in health policy and system-level decision-making. As such, EFN brought the nurses' perspective to the discussions, focusing on patient safety; quality of care; nursing workforce development; continuing professional education; competency-based learning; implementation of evidence-based practices. It is clear that there is growing international recognition that simulation can contribute not only to professional education but also to broader healthcare system improvement and patient safety objectives. As such, from an EFN perspective, there is a clear opportunity to advocate for stronger nursing involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of simulation-based initiatives.

EFN joined HCWH Europe's Campaign to protect healthcare professionals from the impact of rising temperatures

EFN joined forces with [HCWH Europe](#) to support and amplify the [#HandleTheHeat](#) campaign, a European campaign calling for urgent action to protect healthcare professionals (HCP) and strengthen the resilience of healthcare systems in the face of rising temperatures and increasing climate-related pressures. Within this campaign, EFN has co-signed an [open letter](#) towards the European Commission, urging the EU to strengthen protection for health professionals and support coordinated climate resilience across health systems. Through [#HandleTheHeat](#), HCWH and EFN are calling for: 1. Stronger protections for health workers facing occupational heat risks; 2. Improved preparedness, surveillance, and early warning systems; 3. Climate-ready healthcare facilities with heat-health action plans; 4. Safe staffing levels and resilient working conditions; and 5. Stronger coordination and resilience planning at EU level.



EFN co-signed the European Declaration on Heat and Health



After the large increase in mortality due to the strong heatwaves in June and July 2026 in Europe, the EFN joined the Planetary Health European Hub in addressing the European Union authorities in a [Declaration on Heat and Health](#) that calls for a radical change in ambition and resources. Importantly, the declaration calls on the EU to Move to operative emergency; Adopt a European Heat-Health Action Plan with an emergency adaptation fund; Close the gap in European occupational heat protection; Guarantee access to safe indoor temperatures for vulnerable people; Accelerate mitigation as health policy; and Put health, evidence and equity at the centre of all EU climate policy.

EFN alliance building with EUROFOUND (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions)

EFN provided input to a new Eurofound report on Care Services and quality of working conditions in the EU. Within the report, EFN identified key gaps, linked to working conditions and improving retention of nurses in the EU and Europe, the need to propose concrete policies such as EU Legislation on Safe Staffing Levels, and the implementation and harmonisation of Advanced Practice Nursing (APN). Therefore, this represented an important opportunity for EFN to feed its views and evidence into an important report that will influence EU and European policymaking within the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) sector.

EFN-EPSU and EFN-EPSU-EBN Joint letters on the CMRD

EFN continues to follow-up on the implementation and annual revisions of the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic substances Directive (CMRD). In this context, [EFN cosigned a letter with EPSU](#) towards the Commission Vice-President Roxan Minzatu, as the Commission is not fulfilling its legal obligations stemming from the Fourth Revision of the CMRD, which called on the Commission to integrate in the Directive a list of Hazardous Medicinal Products (HMPs). Therefore, to ensure legal certainty and effective enforcement by employers, the workforce, labour inspectors, and competent authorities, EFN and EPSU call on the Commission to ensure a dedicated entry on HMPs to be included directly in the Directive. Moreover, [EFN cosigned a letter on the same subject with EPSU and EBN](#), on behalf of the Stop Cancer at Work campaign, to call on the Commission to support the European Parliament position to integrate HMPs in the core operative provisions of the CMRD.



EFN support to the EFN Members

✓ The case of Luxembourg

The Association Nationale des Infirmières et Infirmiers du Luxembourg ([ANIL](#)) requested EFN's support in relation to the nursing reform in Luxembourg, focusing on the scope of nursing practice and updated nursing competencies. However, this reform process was conducted under significant pressure, and the proposed revision did not adequately reflect the today's realities of nursing practice. Despite active engagement from ANIL, nurses' concerns and recommendations raised were not sufficiently considered. As such, EFN sent a letter of support to National and EU Politicians, which stressed that the government misinterpreted ANIL's request for greater nursing autonomy as a request for APN, while ANIL's demands related to a level of autonomy which should be granted to all general care nurses in the EU in line with the 8 competences listed in Article 31 of the Directive 2013/55/EU. EFN received very positive feedback from ANIL, and building on the momentum generated, the EFN letter was used for a formal "Avis concernant le projet de loi 8714", explicitly addressed to the Minister of Health, strengthening its institutional weight in the legislative process and putting the EFN's position formally on record, debated and voted on in the Chambre des Députés.

✓ The Malta Case

The Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses ([MUMN](#)) requested the EFN support following a decision by the Maltese Government to take MUMN to Court after intervening to defend the rights of nurses working in the Cath Suite at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH), who, without any explanation, had been deprived of their entitlement to statutory vacation leave, in a clear breach of the established 20% rule which enables up to two nurses to take leave without the need for replacements, and in clear violation of the Maltese Public Service Management Code (PSMC). This was done despite an agreement between MUMN and the nursing Director at MDH was found, the Health Ministry overruled this decision, instead seeking a court decree prohibiting industrial action. As such, EFN sent an official letter of support to MUMN addressed to the Maltese Minister of Health and Active Ageing, as well as EU and European key policymakers, stressing that the decision by the Maltese Government was unlawful both under Maltese law, and under EU law enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The letter was also published by Maltese media, and finally, MUMN won the court case against the Maltese Government!

✓ The case of Slovakia

The Slovak Chamber of Nurses and Midwives ([SKSaPA](#)) requested the EFN support in relation to the government's decision to rename the profession of "healthcare assistant" into "practice nurse-assistant". This is an infringement of EU legislation as the designation of the professional title "practice nurse - assistant" creates a real risk of confusion with the regulated profession of "nurse", thereby violating EU law requirements established under the [EU Directive 2005/36/EC](#), amended by [Directive 2013/55/EU](#), and under the [Proportionality Directive \(2018/958\)](#), regarding transparency, clarity, and patient protection within the framework of regulated professions. Importantly, the Slovak Chamber of Nurses and Midwives submitted a complaint to the European Commission, in relation to this infringement, and the EFN letter called on the Commission to take this seriously and act urgently!

✓ The case of Italy

The Consociazione Nazionale Associazioni Infermiere/i ([CNAI](#)) requested EFN support in relation to the development of the "Nursing Assistant" role in Italy, which is a clear infringement on EU legislation as this new role would effectively do the same tasks as a nurse, while having only a fraction of the education and training. As such, EFN wrote a letter to the Commission to ask them to open an infringement procedure against the Italian Government. In this regard, CNAI, with the support of some of the major unions in Italy, opened an official EU-level complaint, which EFN is following up closely with the European Commission DG EMPL.

EFN involvement in EU Projects

- KEEPCARING** - The 3rd Project General Assembly took place in September, in Copenhagen (Denmark), hosted by the Project Partner Rigshospitalet. It was a good opportunity to take stock of project's developments that are now reaching a critical phase, with the Change Management Platform (CMP), the KEEPCARING Project key deliverable, taking shape and undergoing internal testing, including regarding the integration of the AI models for assessing stress and resilience. Furthermore, several clinical and intervention studies are being conducted or will soon be launched (see the [Press Release: KEEPCARING Clinical Studies](#)). These studies are informing the development of evidence-based interventions which will be offered to healthcare professionals via the CMP, supporting them in preventing stress and increasing resilience. Of particular interest to nurses, is an intervention study, that will start in early 2027, for with the [recruitment of potential participants](#) is ongoing. The study focuses specifically on exploring how small, everyday activities can support nurses' well-being at work.
 

- ICUData4EU** - The 3rd Project General Assembly took place in Crete (Greece), in September, hosted by the Project Partner FORTH. The GA was a great opportunity to visualise the ICUData4EU Data-Sharing Platform, with some very interesting demos of the main functionalities which are already available. Moreover, the piloting of primary use cases for the platform is starting soon, with the Advanced Kidney Injury (AKI) use case. These primary use cases will be key to demonstrate that the platform being developed by the project can be used effectively by ICUs from across the EU in improving the quality and safety of care. The EFN has contributed to the development of the use cases, contributing with the nurses' frontline perspective.
 

News from the EU

The European Parliament Own-Legislative Initiative on Psychosocial risks, stress and mental health at work

The European Parliament EMPL Committee endorsed the [INL on Psychosocial Risks](#), drafted by Rapporteur Estelle Ceulemans (S&D, Belgium). The INL includes a series of recommendations for a new EU bill to ensure minimum requirements to prevent, eliminate or reduce work-related psychosocial risks which could lead to work-related stress, burnout, and mental and physical disorders. This proposal should be preceded by an impact assessment including an assessment of existing legislation. This is a key result for the EFN, which lobbied in favour of this INL report, calling for recommendations on Safe Staffing Levels, which were integrated in the text that was endorsed!

The European Commission's first monitoring report on minimum wage protection and the action plans to promote collective bargaining

[Directive \(EU\) 2022/2041 \(the "Minimum Wage" Directive\)](#) establishes a framework for the adequacy of statutory minimum wages, promoting collective bargaining on wage-setting and enhancing effective access to minimum wage protection. It constitutes one of the key deliverables of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular Principle 6 on wages. In this context, the Commission published the first [monitoring report](#) on minimum wage protection and the action plans to promote collective bargaining, providing key information on the implementation of minimum wages and state of collective bargaining in the Member States, which is crucial for the EFN Members within their negotiations with National Governments.

DG CNECT Health Cybersecurity Advisory Board

EFN is a member appointed by the European Commission to the Health Cybersecurity Advisory Board, established after the publication of the [EU Action Plan on the Cybersecurity of Hospitals and Healthcare providers](#) to which EFN provided input based on the EFN report on Cybersecurity. In this context, EFN continues to advise the European Commission on legislative initiatives in the field of Cybersecurity, calling to empower nurses to be more involved and supported in the development and implementation of EU and National Cybersecurity Contingency Plans, as nurses are the ones who will need to implement them to ensure continuity of care in case of a cyber-attack.

Publications

EFN Articles

- The European Parliament's Vote on the EU Health Workforce INI Report: An EFN Commentary** - The European Parliament EMPL-SANT INI Report on the EU Health Workforce was endorsed in the committees with an overwhelming majority. This is key, as the INI Report provides important political support for key nursing priorities, including safe staffing levels, advanced practice nursing, implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive, ethical recruitment, occupational health and safety, workforce investment, preparedness and co-created digitalisation. The report highlights the importance of strengthening workforce sustainability and improving patient safety across the European Union. However, translating these recommendations into effective legislative and operational measures will require sustained political commitment, investment and implementation across Member States.
- Nursing Lobbying and EU Health Workforce Policy: A Qualitative Policy Analysis** - The persistent shortage of nurses across the European Union represents a critical challenge for health system sustainability, patient safety, and workforce resilience. While nurses are frequently encouraged to engage in advocacy, considerably less attention has been paid to lobbying as a strategic mechanism for influencing health policy within complex multilevel governance systems such as the EU. As such, the article aims to examine lobbying as a form of nursing political leadership and to analyse how coordinated lobbying efforts shaped policy framing, compromise amendment negotiations, and policy outcomes during a high-impact EU parliamentary political, consultative, and agenda-setting process.
- Working conditions and mental health among doctors and nurses in the European Union, Iceland, and Norway: a cross-sectional survey** - Europe faces persistent challenges in retaining and recruiting healthcare professionals. Poor working conditions and deteriorating wellbeing may contribute to attrition and turnover intentions, yet large-scale studies examining associations between working conditions and mental health in Europe after the COVID-19 pandemic remain scarce. Therefore, EFN co-authored this important article, based on a cross-sectional online survey between October 2024 and April 2025 among a non-probabilistic sample of doctors and nurses in the 27 EU countries, Iceland, and Norway. Findings demonstrate that mental health problems are highly prevalent among European doctors and nurses and are systematically associated with working conditions.

Pathways to Settlement for Internationally Educated Nurses

The Royal College of Nursing, member of EFN, published a [Policy Brief](#) entitled "Pathways to Settlement for Internationally Educated Nurses: Findings from an International Comparison", that explores how different countries support internationally educated nurses to settle and build long-term careers. The Policy Brief explores specific findings, focusing on four key aspects of routes to settlement: what visa routes are available, what level of access to public funds these routes provide, how long the route is, and how much the application for permanent residence costs.

