

ENC22: Future Proof Nursing

Nurses as Key Drivers of Change

Closing statement

We, more than thousand nurses, nursing scientists and nurse educators have extensively discussed our contributions to affordable, accessible, sustainable and high quality, patient centered care.

Three hundred keynote speeches, oral presentations, webinars, roundtable discussions and E-posters were dedicated to future proofing nursing. By promoting integrated care and proactive inclusion of technology. By empowering our nursing workforce. And by encouraging new generations to become nurses. Showing them that in our view, nursing is still the most beautiful and impactful profession in the world.

Three key messages have stood out from the Covid19-pandemic:

First, our contributions have been lifesaving and system saving. Through our innovation, networks and resourcefulness, we have enabled our systems to respond flexibly.

Second, our physical and mental health have been disproportionately affected. And tragically, nurses have died due to Covid-19.

Third, nurses in Europe are leaving the workforce at an unprecedented pace. Often because they retire, since we have a rapidly aging population. But many leave the workforce prematurely, due to fatigue and burnout.

We recognize and endorse the findings and conclusions of *Sustain and Retain in 2022 and Beyond; The global nursing workforce and the Covid-19 pandemic* by the International Council of Nurses. The recent WHO report *Health and care workforce in Europe: time to act* identifies *ten actions to strengthen the nursing workforce*.

The impact of military conflicts and climate change, primarily on the people involved, but increasingly also on the financial position of people – including nurses- , disrupts communities, placing a further burden on the nursing workforce, already severely bruised by Covid-19.

In a concerted manner we want to ensure unwavering short- and long-term political commitment to our nursing workforce through sustainable investments in **five** priority areas:

1. **Strengthen nursing education, research, and training programmes.** Develop academic standards and promote appropriate regulatory measures to ensure excellence in nursing. Align education with population needs and health service

requirements, in order to decrease recruitment of nurses from abroad. Strengthen health information systems for better data collection and analysis.

2. **Optimize nursing practice** to enable nurses to practice in safe and supportive environments and promote nurses' enhanced roles within multidisciplinary interprofessional health teams. Empower nurses to – bottom up - embrace and adopt new knowledge and competencies, digital and other. Promote nursing with a smaller environmental footprint.
3. **Create and fund attractive jobs** to increase the availability, distribution, and retention of nurses. Protect the health and mental well-being of the workforce. Increase public investment in workforce education, development, and protection. Encourage people to start a career in nursing.
4. **Promote senior leadership positions for nurses across all levels of the health and care system.** Build nursing capacity at senior levels and offer clear career advancement pathways.
5. **Promote inclusivity and diversity across all levels of the health and care system.** Valuing and appreciating all nursing staff regardless of background is important for patient care, safety, and satisfaction globally. Nursing leadership in the policy, research and service delivery spheres must reflect the diversity of the nursing workforce itself to amplify and give voice to this diversity. Nursing care, research, policies and leadership are key for advancing health system responsiveness to the diversity of our patients, their families and their communities.

Our strength is our common purpose.

We make an unequivocal call to governments and policymakers to invest in nurses. There's an urgent need to attract more future nurses.

Social justice is a matter of life and death. Health inequities are a concern for all, as it affects the way people live, their consequent risk of illness, and their risk of premature death.

We're convinced that nurses, the trusted and close allies of people and communities everywhere, can be the Key Drivers of Change the world so desperately needs.

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