



SCOPE AND PURPOSE

WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE/ NURSING ACTION GCNMO HUB

Background

The current challenges facing health and social care, and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the vital role of nurses in the WHO European Region. Nurses comprise upwards of 60% of the European countries' health and care workforce. It is imperative that nurses are protected in order to ensure they can continue to deliver the important and valuable care they provide in all countries. Member States have a responsibility to their nursing workforce, as they promote patient safety, population health outcomes and economic development.

As governments move beyond the pandemic and work to address the complex array of challenges facing health systems, and have endorsed both the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery and the WHO European Framework for Action on Health and Care workforce to deliver the European Programme of Work, it is clear that the availability and capacity of nurses is a fundamental element, vital for success. With heightened efforts to meet the goals of universal health coverage and protect against future health emergencies the time to retain and recruit nurses has never been more pressing.

An informed and supported ministry of health can help mobilize appropriate resources, actions and supports to inform and shape strategies that can effectively support the retention and recruitment of nurses.

The WHO – EU Nursing Action is a new project, led by the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, funded by the European Commission and other key partners from the European Region, including the European Federation of Nurses (EFN), the European Nursing Students Association (ENSA), the European Forum for National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) and the European Public Sector Union (EPSU).

The project will be announced during the Polish Presidency in January 2025 as an initiative to strengthen data, dialog and analysis in order to drive more evidence-driven recruitment and retention strategies.

The strategic objectives of the Nursing Action are:

1. to build up the pool of European nurses to counteract structural shortages of nurses in the Union and their negative impact on other regions of the world (traditional origin countries of migrant nurses).
2. drive more policy focus and mobilize efforts to address the critical situation of nurses in order to improve resilience of health systems and safety of care, which are the central objectives of the European Health Union.

The activities embarked upon with selected Member States will include:

- Supporting the Member State to understand nursing recruitment trends in their countries with a specific focus on diversifying recruitment and ensuring early career nurses remain in the profession beyond the first 5 years of practice
- Support Member States to understand nursing retention trends in their countries with a specific focus on wellbeing, working conditions and safe staffing to support in country dialog and planning.

Implementation of the Nursing Action

The project will take place in a group of selected 14 countries in the EU and will run from 2025-2027. Several of the countries selected have been identified based on current country collaboration strategies (CCS). Other countries have presented themselves with a need for WHO support through their Government Chief Nurses and their ministries of health.

In each participating country, a focal point will need to be selected to serve as a interface with the WHO Regional Office for Europe. This is ideally a Government Chief Nurse but where there is no such profile, the Ministry will be asked to appoint a health workforce focal point or equivalent to work with WHO and national partners in progressing the project.

The terms of reference for the nominated government nursing focal point in this WHO – EU Nursing Action will be as follows:

1. The focal point will communicate government priorities to the WHO team of experts and partners in a timely manner, in order to prioritize efforts in data analysis and learning opportunities needed by the country;
2. The focal point will secure relevant data and inputs for WHO experts to conduct accurate trend analyses;
3. The focal point will convene relevant national partners as needed for data analysis, dialog, discussions and learning cycles held throughout the course of the project;
4. The focal point will drive nationally relevant and appropriate efforts to strengthen nursing workforce data and lead policy dialog that results in evidenced-based decision-making on investment in the nursing workforce.

The WHO- EU Nursing Action will be organized by the Division of Country Health Policies and Systems under the leadership of the Nursing and Midwifery Policy Advisor of the Health Workforce and Service Delivery Unit.

Timing and duration

We will aim to hold regular (frequency to be determined by WHO/Europe) starting 1, February 2025. The duration of the WHO-EU Nursing Action will run until June 2027.

Language of operation

The discussions will be in English. Translation will be available, upon request.