



EFN Brussels Office
Clos du Parnasse 11a
B-1050 Brussels

Tel. +32 2 512 74 19
Fax +32 2 512 35 50

E-mail efn@efn.be
Web www.efnweb.org

Registration Number
NGO0476.356.013

To whom it may concern

Brussels, 12 May 2018

Concerns: EFN support to the Bulgarian Nurses

Dear President of Bulgaria, Mr. Rumen Georgiev Radev,
Dear Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Boyko Borissov,

Since Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, and the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2008, the EFN and its 36 EU Member Associations have observed negative effects on nurses and nursing, as reduction in nurses' posts, nurses' pay cuts and salary freezes, diminished recruitment and retention rates, and compromises in quality of care and patient safety. Nurses are the largest occupational group in the health sector, providing frontline care, 24 hours/7 days in a roll, 365 days a year. Therefore, when redesigning health and social care ecosystems at local, national & EU levels and their financial mechanisms to guarantee quality and safety, it is critical to foster nurses' solutions to strengthen integrated care and workforce development.

The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) has been informed by the Bulgarian Association of Health Professionals in Nursing, a member of the EFN, and a Member of the EFN Executive Committee, on the difficult situation for nurses in Bulgaria, and they will move a step forward through a National Industrial Action on 12 May (International Nurses' Day), together with patients' organisations, against the low salaries, the overload of shifts, the derogatory attitude of the public towards the nursing profession, and the enormous shortage of nurses, which leads to bad compromises on the professional quality of health care outcomes.

It is crucial to understand that the Bulgarian nurses are struggling to survive with working conditions which are unacceptable in 2018! Conditions that are seriously compromising patient safety and the quality of care they are delivering to the EU citizens. In public hospitals' nurses cannot tolerate anymore this increasing shortage in staff, bringing more and more workload for the ones in post. The excuse of economic savings in the health sector are unacceptable, threatening the quality of healthcare services and putting patients at risk!

Therefore, nurses are asking for a new way of financing the healthcare system with adequate nurses' salaries, the state participation in the life-long learning process: CPD courses are currently paid by nurses themselves, and the employers don't even allow nurses a paid leave from work. The urgent and crucial political decisions for saving the nursing profession so that young nurses stay in the profession and stay in Bulgaria, is key for the Bulgarian EU Presidency to make progress on.

Therefore, the EFN CALLS on the Bulgarian Ministry of Health and Government to take immediate action to:

- Make sure that the health facilities have the necessary nursing workforce to provide safe and quality healthcare services;
- Value nurses' salaries taking into account the extra hours worked; and,
- Design career pathways for nurses, with the promotion of advanced roles and more opportunities in community care.

Finally, the Bulgarian EU Presidency and upcoming EU Presidencies, need to tackle the nursing workforce composition and increasing frontline workload as a political priority. The EFN URGES the EU institutions, the European Commission, European Parliament and Council, to:

- Support the nurses' competencies, roles and working conditions in the health and social care ecosystem by deploying the EU social cohesion funds to the local needs of the frontline professionals operating to make the system work;
- Make planning and forecasting a useful professional exercise, instead of a theoretical one;
- Make recruitment and retention existing best practices in Member States ready for upscaling and translated into the European Pillar of Social Rights; and,
- Make sure Member States comply with the European Directives, especially Directive 2013/55/EU, even in times of ongoing austerity (10 years now!).

Most policy-makers and politicians say "nurses are very important!" but there is an urgent need to put these nice words into practice! And so, the EFN urges all the key players at national and EU levels to find better solutions for nurses as they are the cornerstone of any health and social care ecosystem design, close to patients/citizens 24 hours/day, 7 days/week!

Yours sincerely,



Paul De Raeve
EFN Secretary General

The European Federation of Nurses' Associations (EFN) represents over 36 National Nurses' Associations and its work has an effect on the daily work of 6 million nurses throughout the European Union and Europe. The EFN is the independent voice of the nursing profession and its mission is to strengthen the status and practice of the profession of nursing for the benefit of the health of the citizens and the interests of nurses in the EU & Europe.