



European Federation of Nurses Associations - EFN Mental Health Europe - MHE

10 October 2021

Joint Statement Supporting Frontline Nurses' Mental Health and Wellbeing Creating a resilient nursing workforce

The COVID-19 ongoing outbreak is getting under control in most EU Member States. However, the risk of another outbreak/pandemic is high, and our frontline nurses and healthcare systems need to be well prepared for this.

The COVID-19 has taken a huge toll on the EU citizens, healthcare systems and, above all, frontline nurses. The latter group is the biggest healthcare profession dealing with patients daily. Nurses have been doing their job in very poor working conditions, suffering from anxiety and psychological stress, under heavy working shifts and making life-or-death decisions. Thus, they have put their mental health and wellbeing at risk resulting in 30% leaving the profession (EFN Tour de Table, 2021).

For all the reasons outlined above, the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) and Mental Health Europe (MHE) are collectively calling for the EU institutions, all EU Member States, the health industry and other health stakeholders, to:

1. Put in place national and local programmes to support frontline nurses who are caring for patients to preserve their mental health and prevent psychological trauma.
2. Combat the stigmatisation of nurses taking care of COVID-19 patients during times of COVID, through official communications and the media.
3. Foster the co-creation and co-design with frontline nurses, concerning relevant political decision-making processes, including Infectious Disease of High Consequence preparedness, health protocols, training, and the selection of appropriate equipment.
4. Work closely with the nursing profession to develop policies that protect frontline staff from unnecessarily difficult or unsafe working conditions.

5. Allocate funds to support frontline nurses. The EU institutions could re-arrange already agreed on budgets to inject funds into the nursing frontline and into nursing research, with the view to be better prepared for future pandemics.
6. Urgently adopt European comprehensive long-term strategies on mental health, that address among others the needs and situation of frontline nurses in order to ensure coherence with existing policies, legislative and governance frameworks as well as human rights commitments, across the EU.

The EFN and MHE remind the European Union and all above-mentioned stakeholders that frontline nurses are going through a critical situation – and this is where the focus should be now. By applying these six measures, the frontline nurses would be further alleviated from unnecessary stress and mental suffering. They need to recover from the first COVID-19 waves mentally and physically, before they tackle the next one.

Finally, the EFN and MHE would like to offer their expertise and commitment to the EU institutions and all the above-mentioned stakeholders. We remain at your full disposal to ensure that EU decision reflects frontline nurses' views and needs. Together, we need to make EU Actions fit-for-purpose.

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