

**74<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 29th-31st October 2024, Copenhagen, Denmark**

**Agenda Item 12 - Harnessing innovation for public health in the WHO European Region 2025-2030 – Preparing for a new strategy**

The European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA), the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and co-signatories, fully support the plan to develop a new strategy to harness innovation for public health in the region towards 2030. A more strategic approach to Innovation is needed to enable health systems to respond to changing demands and health emergencies in the region.

As frontline healthcare professionals, nurses and midwives must be at the forefront of developing and putting into practice innovative solutions. Their direct experience with patient care and health systems challenges provides invaluable insights that are essential for designing effective health interventions and ensuring data relevance to real-world needs. We strongly support the data collection for the upcoming State of the World's Nursing Report, set to launch in 2025.

Innovation needs to be consciously positioned as part of organisational culture. Engaging health professionals to innovate in their daily practice is rewarding and key to retention of the health and care workforce. Already during their education health science students should learn basic tools needed for innovation to increase overall capacity to innovate. Nurses and midwives have demonstrated innovation in practice for example through enhanced and expanded roles, and the development of specialist and advanced practice. These changes are driven by the development of integrated healthcare as part of strategies to expand primary healthcare and ensure equity and accessibility of healthcare for all. Moreover, nurses and midwives are already strategically positioned as decision-makers, in some countries, leading the development of new digital health systems through the introduction of telehealth, virtual wards, metrics for measuring quality, and the digitisation of health records.

Successful innovation requires transformative leaders and there is a need to develop the role of senior nurses and midwives at the policy level to champion and drive innovation. Governments need to recognise the potential of nurses and midwives in leading innovation and ensure legislation and regulation are in place to protect the role of nurses and midwives.

Finally, nurses and midwives are the largest group of healthcare professionals and their engagement would greatly contribute to achieving the goals of the strategy. Nurses and midwives must be engaged in development of this new regional strategy.

**The European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations (EFNNMA)** is the joint voice of nursing and midwifery in the WHO European Region and was established to promote the continuous development of the nursing and midwifery professions in all Member States in the region in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office

**The International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurse's associations (NNAs), representing the more than 28 million nurses worldwide. ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all, sound health policies globally, the advancement of nursing knowledge, and the presence worldwide of a respected nursing profession and a competent and satisfied nursing workforce.

**The European Nursing Students Association (ENSA)** is the voice of nursing students across the WHO/European Region, representing over 160,000 students committed to advancing the profession and advocating for high-quality nursing education. The ENSA currently unites 16 student member organizations from across Europe.

**The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN)** represents over 36 National Nurses' Associations and its work impacts 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.