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Swiss nurses win Heroines of Health award for their campaign to address nursing shortage and win improved working conditions

Geneva, Switzerland, 18 October 2022 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is proud to have nominated Sophie Ley and Yvonne Ribi of the Swiss Professional Association of Nurses ([SBK-ASI](#)) for the Women in Global Health *Heroines of Health* award, which was presented yesterday at the prestigious Women in Global Health Gala on the sidelines of the World Health Summit in Berlin.

The award, which recognises women who are leading change for gender equity in health, honoured the Swiss nurses' campaign to address the nursing shortage in Switzerland and win impressive gains in their terms and conditions of service.

In 2021, SBK-ASI said that COVID-19 had put an extra burden on nurses who were already tired and overworked, increasing the potential for errors that could put patients at risk.

It used Switzerland's unique system of referendums to ask the Swiss population to support its calls to expand nurse prescribing, train an additional 11,000 nurses, and ensure there are enough nurses on every shift so that care is safe.

The 'People's Initiative' vote called on Swiss national and local government to do more in support of the nursing profession to ensure universal access to appropriate, high-quality nursing. It set out demands for investment that would create enough registered nurses, and for them to be working in roles that are appropriate to their professional training and skills.

The initiative also proposed that the government should regulate working conditions and ensure appropriate compensation for nursing services, and for nurses to be able to bill certain services directly to health insurance companies.

ICN President Pamela Cipriano congratulated SBK-ASI President Sophie Ley and its Managing Director Yvonne Ribi for being named Heroines of Health.

"This prestigious award from Women in Global Health recognises the courage and sustained action of the Swiss Professional Association of Nurses (SBK-ASI), which led to a historic victory to address the shortage of nurses and improve working conditions.

"The Swiss people spoke in the referendum and showed their wholehearted support for nurses. This victory was a clear sign of the public being ahead of the politicians in appreciating the value of nurses and nursing.

"We are seeing a growing wave of public support for nurses around the world, but as with Switzerland, what we now need is political action in the form of sustainable investment from all governments."

For more information about the awards go to <https://womeningh.org/initiatives/heroines-of-health/>

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Note to Editors

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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