

# ENC

## NEWS FROM BRUSSELS



European  
NURSING  
Council

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## PRIORITIES OF THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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From the 1st of January to the 1st of July 2023, Sweden will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a time of historic challenges for Member States and the Union as a whole. Security, competitiveness, green transition, democratic values, and the rule of law, have been identified as priorities for the Swedish Presidency.

It is quite astonishing that none of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency are relevant to the ENC's areas of interest, given the complex health conditions experienced since the outbreak of COVID-19. It is worth remembering that the pandemic is not over yet and that the emerging sub-variants can cause great damage to health systems. While confinement has, on its part, increased vulnerability to other types of diseases and viruses, contagion measures have loosened and there has not been an adequate campaign to promote vaccination. It is therefore surprising that health has lost its strong relevance for the Council, since medical and nursing services may be subject to a high risk of collapse, and it is essential to work together towards prevention.

In these conditions, a strong and clear message should be passed. ENC is a key stakeholder in addressing the Swedish presidency to highlight the relevance of the matter and to recommend a vigilant approach to the conditions of the healthcare systems in order to avoid dramatic situations such as those experienced by some Member States since the beginning of 2020.

For further details, please visit the Swedish Presidency website [here](#).

The logo for Sweden's 2023 EU Presidency. It features the word "sweden" in a dark blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the year "2023" is written in a bright yellow, lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by ".eu" in the same dark blue font as "sweden".

sweden  
2023.eu

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## FROM MENTAL HEALTH TO MEDICAL DEVICES: A LOOKAHEAD INTO 2023

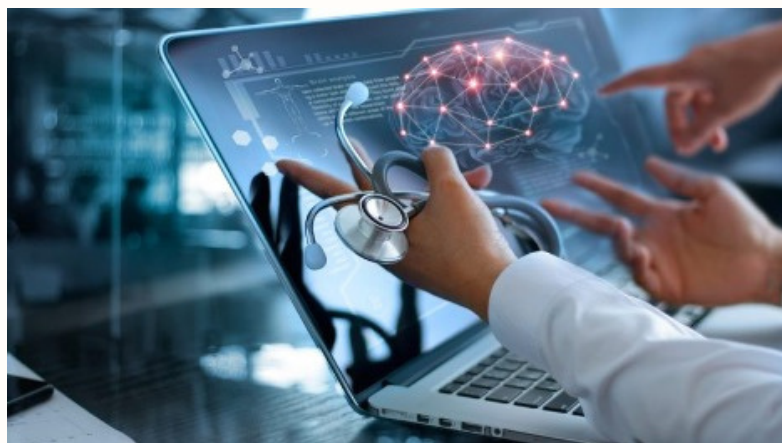
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The well-known paneuropean media network Euractiv published on January 5 an article profiling a EU's perspective in the area of health for this 2023.

Since the COVID pandemic, the European Commission has presented a steady stream of health files to answer the many health issues in the EU and globally, work that is expected to continue in 2023.

In the annual State of the European Union (SOTEU) speech last September, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also announced “a new health preparedness and resilience mission for the whole of the European Union”, which will be backed up by a ‘Team Europe’ investment of €50 billion by 2027. However, not all is perfect with healthcare systems, as it was pointed out in WHO’s report, which found that medical staff are ageing and exhausted and suggested that without immediate action, health and care workforce gaps in Europe could spell disaster.

Meanwhile, more voices advocate addressing health burdens together. Moreover, things are not getting any easier with the ongoing COVID pandemic, unexpected monkeypox outbreaks and increasing threat of anti-microbial resistance (AMR). With 2022 behind us, it is time to see what awaits in the 2023 pipeline.



### ***Mental health strategy***

Mental health issues have increased in prevalence across Europe for many years, but this accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission is expected to address this topic next year, as was announced in von der Leyen’s SOTEU speech in mid-September: “We should take better care of each other. And for many who feel anxious and lost, appropriate, accessible, and affordable support can make all the difference” von der Leyen said.

The new initiative was called “*a comprehensive approach to mental health*” in the president’s letter of intent, addressed to EU’s Parliament President Roberta Metsola and Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala. The EU’s health chief Stella Kyriakides stated that the commission is supporting member states to reform mental health systems and has allocated more than €28 million to mental health actions under the EU4health program over the last three years.

## *A year closer to health digitalization*

The Commissioner is hopeful that the European Health Data Space (EHDS), one of the central building blocks of the European Health Union, will be finalized by June 2024. The aim is to have the EHDS up and running in 2025. Making data fair, findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable across the EU is not easy when Europe's health information systems are diverse and countries are at different stages of digitalization, not forgetting loopholes in digital literacy. The EHDS, presented by the Commission in May 2022, aims to regulate the transmission and sharing of health data across the EU for private individuals, researchers, and policymakers.

## *Getting closer to orphan products legislation*

After many postponements, the Commission promised European lawmakers to finally adopt the proposal for revising the orphan medicinal products legislation in the coming months. These orphan medicinal products are for diagnosing, preventing, or treating rare conditions, meaning those affecting five in 10,000 people or less.

The current legislation was introduced in 2000 to create better incentives for developing orphan medicinal products. The revision of the legislation is often considered alongside the EU regulation for pediatric medicines, as diseases found in children are mostly considered rare diseases too. The Commission jointly evaluated the two in 2020.



You may find further information in the original article [here](#).

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## THE MENTAL HEALTH NURSE, A KEY ACTOR AGAINST THE ABUSE OF ANTIDEPRESSANTS

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On 13th January 2023, and on the occasion of the World Day against Depression, Spanish General Council of Nursing (CGN) has expressed its concern about the increasing rates of antidepressant consumption and urges to have nurses specialized in Mental Health to prevent possible cases of depression among the population and to help patients after diagnosis.

The CGN notes that the abuse of antidepressants is a public health problem that has been accentuated since the beginning of the pandemic, with their use increasing by up to 10 percent, according to data from the Medicines Observatory of the Spanish Pharmacists' Business Federation. In this sense, the CGE calls upon national and regional administrations to support the profession and create preventive strategies to provide better care for these patients, promoting other types of interventions, even if they require more time and resources from the health services.

"Nurses accompany these patients during a disease that may be present throughout their lives and they build a relationship with them, so it is important for them to be involved in the decision-making process. Having specialist nurses in Mental Health is essential to help, support and care for them."

Florentino Pérez Raya, president of the CGE.

Jesús Linares, an emergency psychologist and professor at the European University of Madrid, agrees by stating that the outbreak of the pandemic and its consequent overloading of an already overburdened sector meant a halt in the direction of the humanization of healthcare: "During 2022, numerous surveys have shown a very high percentage of the nursing professionals who have suffered anxiogenic and depressive symptoms, sleep disturbances, eating disorders... Health crises highlight the structural deficits that health systems suffer from, and health personnel have sustained this system to the point of exhaustion, breaking down physically and psychologically. Let's remember that they are not only healthcare professionals but also general population and are subject to the same stressors as any other person", he stresses.



## *Caring for those who care for us*

Beyond the prevention and care of these patients, the General Council of Nursing also considers it essential to work on strategies that help professionals themselves to take care of their mental health. As a macro-survey carried out by the CGE revealed, one out of three nurses acknowledge having suffered from depression due to the pandemic and the high level of work they have experienced in recent years.

The lack of professionals, the stress caused by the workload that nurses have been carrying even before Covid-19 and, on many occasions, the lack of attention from the administrations means that the mental health of professionals suffers. "We cannot allow our colleagues to end up exhausted after a day's work and, much less, to go home with the desire to leave the profession. There is no healthcare without nurses, and without healthcare there is no health. It is time to support the profession, to value the work done and to make a commitment towards nursing services" points out Pérez Raya.

You may find further information in the article of *Redacción Médica* [here](#).

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## EU4HEALTH CALL FOR TENDERS TO MAP EU/EEA/EFTA COUNTRIES' JOB RETENTION POLICIES FOR CANCER PATIENTS AND PERSONS WITH A HISTORY OF CANCER

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HaDEA has launched the call for tenders 'Study on job retention and return to work for cancer patients and survivors'.

The overall aim of this call for tenders is to map EU/EEA/EFTA countries' policies for cancer patients and persons with a history of cancer to remain in work and to return to work.

The service contract will:

- Map implemented or planned policies and related legislation in all above-mentioned countries.
- Identify obstacles and remaining challenges in job retention and return to work via desk research, interviews and workshops with relevant stakeholders and competent authorities from above-mentioned countries.
- Organize, collect, and share around 10 good practices of policy approaches in supporting job retention and return to work.

Estimated budget: € 550 000. **All interested parties are invited to send their applications by 17 February 2023, 16:00 (CET)**



The banner features a woman in a pink shirt and headscarf standing on a balcony with her arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The background is a blue gradient with white text. The text reads: 'CALL FOR TENDERS Study on job retention and return of cancer patients'. At the bottom left are the hashtags '#HaDEA #EU4Health #HealthUnion'. At the bottom right are the logos for the European Union and the European Commission. A small vertical copyright notice on the right edge reads '© European Union, 2022. Images source: Jose carlos Cerdano on iStock.com'.

For further details about the project, please visit HaDEA website [here](#).