



News from Brussels

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European Mental Health Week – A Sound Mind in a Sound Body

Citizens, policymakers, and health professionals are increasingly aware of the crucial importance of mental health. One of the driving forces behind this growing awareness is the European Mental Health Week, organised by the NGO **Mental Health Europe**, which took place between May 13th and May 19th 2024, for its fifth edition. On this occasion, the ENC reaffirms the importance of mental health and the crucial role that nurses and midwives play in treating mentally ill individuals.



Supported by the European Union, this pan-European initiative aims to raise awareness of the importance of mental health, engage citizens and policymakers on the challenges people suffering from mental health distress can face, and create opportunities to promote better and fairer access to mental healthcare. Initially established in the US as Mental Health Month, this event stems from the recognition that mental health issues can have significant effects on individuals, families, friends and societies.

On this occasion, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides, affirmed her support for this event. Describing the importance of mental health, which she says is “equally important” to physical health, Commissioner Kyriakides also emphasised that mental health issues deprive the EU of 4% of its GDP.

Proving that the European Mental Health Week is a catalyser for new initiatives, Commissioner Kyriakides announced that, as part of the EU4Health program, the Commission had committed €11 million to a series of actions destined to identify and fill gaps in their supporting policies.

According to the Commissioner, collaboration between stakeholders is at the heart of mental healthcare. As such, health professionals are critical in helping vulnerable individuals and

communities in their struggles. In particular, nurses and midwives, who are in direct contact with patients, play a key role in implementing policies designed to treat mental health issues.

An Exhibition Collection on the History of Nursing Opened at the Croatian Nursing Council

"Croatian nursing through history" is the name of the exhibition collection in a permanent display that was officially opened on May 13 on the premises of the Croatian Nursing Council. The exhibition, which includes more than 1,500 collected exhibits, was opened by the **President of HKMS Mario Gazić**, **Josip Božić** and nurse **Barica Hršak**, one of the oldest active members of the Croatian Nursing Council.

The author and creator of the exhibition is Msc. Josip Božić, professor at the Vinogradska Nursing School in Zagreb, and the exhibition covers and shows the history of nursing in the last 120 years, that is, the entire 20th century, from the very beginnings of the development of nursing in Croatia until the Croatian War of Independence.



"We are proud of this exhibition and everything it shows. Nursing is a profession that requires professionalism, empathy and sacrifice from each of us who practice it. Among other things, these exhibits are a reminder of how nursing has developed throughout history

and that nurses, both in the past and today, are the backbone of any healthcare system," said Mario Gazić.

The collection is divided into 16 units, so among other things it shows as many as 30 uniforms of nurses as they changed throughout history, various medical accessories such as almost a hundred year old pressure gauges, sewing material throughout history and needles for suturing wounds, nursing professional and educational literature as well as the role of nurses in the Croatian War of Independence.

This permanent exhibition is unique in Croatia, but also much wider, and this kind of fascinating presentation of the development of nursing throughout history does not exist anywhere in this part of Europe.

"The motivation for this exhibition was not to forget the past of nursing. Nursing was an important factor in every political part of society then and now, in times of war, times of natural disasters, and of course, above all, in times of peace. That's when their role as an educator and teacher for the preservation and improvement of health came to its true expression. That's why with this exhibition we show the development of health care in our area from the establishment of the first school for nursing assistants in 1921 until today, that is, until the academization of the profession", said Josip Božić.



President of HKMS Mario Gazić

Finland Enhances Pathway for Non-EU Nurses to Practice Professionally

In an article, the newspaper The Helsinki Times said that Finland is rolling out a significant initiative aimed at integrating nurses trained outside the EU/EEA into its healthcare system. Spearheaded by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, the initiative seeks to streamline the process for these nurses to gain licensure and employment in Finland, in roles that match their qualifications.

This effort, backed by nearly three million euros in funding, involves 20 universities of applied sciences across the country.

The project is divided into two main parts: SAILA1, which focuses on developing national frameworks for the licensure of non-EU/EEA nurses, and SAILA2, aimed at piloting these frameworks. These projects, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Continuous Learning and Employment Service Center, respectively, are set to run through 2024-2025.



Previously, the licensure process for foreign-trained nurses was fragmented and inconsistent across various projects. The new initiative, however, introduces a unified, smooth, and nationwide approach. The Finnish Social and Health Licensing and Supervisory Authority (Valvira) continues to oversee the verification of credentials and the granting of professional rights, while the participating universities of applied sciences are responsible for assessing and supplementing the nurses' competencies as needed.

The licensure pathway is tailored to each applicant based on their previous experience and the requirements set by Valvira. Prospective candidates can currently apply for pilot programs through the Studyinfo service, which details the application processes specific to each university.

This project not only aims to alleviate the staffing shortages in the Finnish healthcare sector by facilitating smoother employment of qualified nurses but also emphasizes strong employer cooperation and support for Finnish language acquisition in the workplace. Additionally, special attention is given to the bilingual regions' needs, ensuring the licensure process is inclusive and comprehensive.

As we know the regulation of nursing, as that all liberal professions in Finland, is organised in a way that is quite different from that of most EU Member States. Any contact with those representing in this Nordic country will be greatly appreciated.

Nurses Day in Italy

On May 12, FNOPI celebrated the **International Nurses Day** , a profession in which **76% of women are women and 270,000 are mothers** who have to reconcile this demanding profession with their family responsibilities (over half have two or more children).

To celebrate May 12th this year, the Federation has chosen "Let's nourish health" as its slogan. A way, explains FNOPI president **Barbara Mangiacavalli** , “to return to the origin of the etymological root of the Anglo-Saxon term Nurse which derives from the Latin Nutrix and refers to the concept of nutrition, of taking care of those in need. This is what the nurses do in their daily activity. **We nurses** – he underlined – **are the backbone of the National Health Service** , but we are witnessing a particularly critical moment, made up of important shortcomings, of a decrease in interest on the part of young people in choosing this profession, of evaluation by those has already entered into 'migrating' to other structures in some European and North American countries”.



Hence, the need to turn attention to the profession.

“On this important day – stated the FNOPI President – we need to recall the institutions and politics on the issue of the nursing shortage, because it is no longer a problem of our profession, but of the whole country, it is a problem of all citizens because **without nurses there is no future, without nurses there is no health, there is no assistance for an increasingly elderly, fragile and lonely population** . It is therefore necessary to relaunch policies to enhance the profession both in training and career and contractual paths. Therefore, have the courage to innovate healthcare models so that our citizens can always benefit from this essential component which, together with all the other healthcare professions, has ensured that our National Health Service is among the first in the world and our country enjoys the of a high rate of longevity.”

As you know, ENC President Mr Timofte, Secretary-General Mario Gazic, and Treasurer Lampros Bizas are going to address the event our colleagues of the FNOPI are organising the 10th and 11th of October. We shall bring you a detailed report of this.