

NEWS FROM BRUSSELS



Word from Senior Policy Advisor Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas

Dear Friends,

This Newsletter begins with some memories from our very successful General Assembly Meeting in Tiranë three weeks ago. We are sharing news from the EU and the UK as well as information of an amazing new film dedicated to Nursing – a rare gem!

I do hope most of you are already on holidays and I skip my usual feedback request to wish you all a great summer break.

**Warm regards from Brussels,
Theo**

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

ENC Holds a Very Successful General Assembly Meeting in Tiranë

Hit Film About Overworked Nurses Shocks Public Across Europe: 'Nurses should be at the very top of our social hierarchy'

Adoption of EU4Health Work Programme

News From the UK: Striking Junior Doctors Earn Up to £100,000 Per Annum

ENC Holds a Very Successful General Assembly Meeting in Tiranë



The latest General Assembly Meeting of the European Nursing Council has passed splendidly. ENC was graciously hosted on the 7th and 8th of July by our colleagues of the Regulatory Body of Nurses of Albania (UIH) in Tiranë. The two-day event was a great opportunity to catch up and network with leading nursing professionals of different member states, and to discuss the ongoing evolutions regarding healthcare, public health, and patient safety within the EU and the rest of the continent.



Enjoying Albanian hospitality in Tirana's Park

The night before the meeting, representatives of member organisations experienced the renowned Albanian hospitality and cuisine, generously offered by the Albanian colleagues, in a lovely restaurant located in Tirana's national park where local and national delicacies were on offer.



Assembly Discussing Plans

The following morning, the General Assembly met in the premises of the Marriott Hotel overlooking both the National Stadium and the Tirana Park. The agenda was focused on the actions of ENC in the months to come. The Assembly voted unanimously to accept a new member, the National Order of Nurses of France (Ordre National d'Infirmiers — ONI), whose representatives joined us virtually.

This most welcome addition to our family will undoubtedly strengthen our collective work and voice advocating for quality nursing regulation, public health, and patient safety.

After welcoming our new member, discussion was had on the possibility of ENC drafting a working paper in preparation for the Third International Conference of Nursing Regulators to be held in Athens on the 9-10th of October. The paper would be of immense importance in establishing ENC's voice in the international arena and would augment ENC's growing role in advocacy of nursing both within Europe and beyond. Furthermore, our presence would go a long way in establishing crucial links with our international partners and notably with the World Health Organization.

At the conclusion of this exceptionally successful Meeting, the Assembly was formally closed, and the participants were hosted to a mouth-watering lunch at Sofra e Ariut where, once again, we were treated to the finest Albanian dishes and delightful conversation.



Family photo with the colleagues who have virtually joined

Hit Film About Overworked Nurses Shocks Public Across Europe: ‘Nurses should be at the very top of our social hierarchy’

A Swiss film about a nurse pushed to her limits one night is being praised for the picture it paints of treacherously underfunded healthcare.

By the end of this decade, the world could very well face a shortage of thirteen million nurses; when Swiss director Petra Volpe imagined the consequences of a single missed shift on a busy night at a hospital, the idea quickly took the form of a disaster movie.

The film, ***Late Shift***, aims to shine a light on the frontlines of the looming healthcare catastrophe, from the eyes of a dedicated but exhausted on-the-ground nurse called Floria – played by the German actress Leonie Benesch – the young nurse is depicted initially as being a dynamic and fluid professional in her hectic day-to-day work. The character’s day soon unravels, as she hears of another nurse calling in sick. Already faced with a burdensome workload, her extra work covering for the absent colleague grows out of control, compounding on the already heavy stress, and drives up the likelihood that she will eventually make a fateful (or fatal) mistake.

This story is no doubt familiar to every nurse who faces an unceasing increase in work as labour shortages and lack of investment hit hospitals all over the world. The Sisyphean task of nurses requires incessant bravery and self-sacrifice from nursing professionals – which Ms Volpe says influenced the German title of the film ***Heldin (Heroine)***.

‘This work, which is extremely complex and emotionally charged, is completely devalued in our societies,’ Volpe says. ‘I find it very symptomatic because it’s women’s work – 80% of the people [in many countries] who do this work are female.’

‘You’re used to getting the physicians as the heroes and then in the backdrop a nurse might hang an infusion bag or drink a coffee or have an affair with the senior doctor,’ Ms Benesch says. ‘Before this it wasn’t clear to me how much of the actual medical responsibility rests on nurses’ shoulders.’

The director was inspired by a longtime roommate who worked as a nurse, and by the autobiographical novel ***Our Profession Is Not the Problem – It’s the Circumstances*** by German former care worker Madeline Calvelage (who also advised on the script).



Leonie Benesch in *Late Shift*

'My heart was pounding from the first chapter and I thought to myself – this reads like a thriller,' Volpe says. 'But within that stress you find the most tender, human moments.'

***Late Shift* has fired off heated debates of policy reform and proved to be a critical and box office success in German-speaking Europe, even unseating the latest Bridget Jones in Swiss cinemas. It is hoped that its wider release will galvanise the public in other countries to start demanding further action to protect nursing professionals from the assault on their livelihoods and working conditions.**

At the world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival in February, several nurses were invited to appear in their uniforms on the red carpet and take the stage after the screening where they received an animated ovation. Several days before Germany's recent general election, some citizens held #wirsindfloria (We Are Floria) signs, highlighting the significant impact this film is having.

Commenting on the effect her film has had, Volpe says she was gratified to see nurses going in groups to see the film, and hopes it will make the rest of the audience into better patients. 'Nurses should be at the very top of our social hierarchy but we live in a world where it's just the opposite,' she says. 'This film is a love letter to the profession.'

This film demonstrates the impact that quality art can have on public policy. If the effect can be replicated in other countries, it could build exceptional momentum in instituting necessary reforms and unlocking crucial investment to enhance the status of nurses, improve their dire labour situation, and most crucially ensure protection of the patient that is the paramount focus of nursing care.

Adoption of EU4Health Work Programme



The European Commission on the 23rd of July adopted the **EU4Health Work Programme**, which sets out the Union's strategic policy orientations for 2025. The Work Programme supports the EU's priorities in health policy, with the goal to protect citizens and boost innovation in Europe. Among the areas of focus are **cardiovascular health, digital health, cancer, health technology assessment, crisis preparedness, medicines and medical devices and substances of human origin**. The EU4Health programme provides funding through grants and public procurement to contribute to a healthier Europe.

The new Work Programme also reflects the reduction of 1 billion euros in the EU4Health Programme budget which was agreed from 2025 onwards. The European Commission will draw on synergies with other EU funding programmes, such as Horizon Europe, Digital Europe Programme or European Social Fund Plus, to optimise the EU's health investments.

The overall budget for 2025 amounts to EUR 571 347 3153, of which EUR 195 464 733 will be grants, EUR 281 702 582 will be procurement, EUR 2 730 000 will be other expenditures (all under direct management), and EUR 91 450 000 will be under indirect management. The EU4Health programme represents an unprecedented level of financial commitment for the EU in the area of health in comparison with the previous health programmes.

Significantly, 39 686 810€ has been allocated to the Digital Strand and areas of action, which, whilst it is an improvement and a recognition of the importance of digitalisation of healthcare systems in the European Union, pales in comparison to the 380 995 165€ allocated in this budget to Crisis Preparedness.

News From the UK:

Striking Junior Doctors Earn Up to £100,000 Per Annum



According to the British broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*, junior doctors in Great Britain – now renamed as resident doctors – can earn just over £100,000 a year as part of the new Labour government's pay-rise package in an attempt to stave off further strikes which have rocked the healthcare sector in the United Kingdom since 2021. Despite the 28.9 per cent pay rise, however, the British Medical Association (BMA) has announced that physicians have voted in favour of a five-day mass walkout whilst calling for a further 29 per cent increase in their salaries.

The BMA has been criticised for aggravating division between junior doctors and consultants who previously had to sometimes work up to a hundred hours a week before a 48-hour cap was introduced. **There is growing frustration among the British population over the continuing strikes also as junior doctors are demanding further pay rises whilst most of the citizenry is enduring a painful cost-of-living crisis. In addition to that, the healthcare sector is facing a severe shortage of funding and investment which has led to decreasing quality of care, multiple delays in life-saving surgeries and extreme difficulty in obtaining an appointment, exacerbating negative sentiments among Britons over physicians who are increasingly seen as out of touch with the national mood as they have gone on strike consistently every few months since 2022.**

A junior doctor working full time on a 40-hour week, including a full “on-call” rota, currently earns more than £100,000 a year, prior to the end of his/her training. Taking into account the pay increases introduced by the current Labour government means that the starting salaries of the physicians are £38,831. However, there are significant bonuses for on-call work which can boost average earnings to £53,000 – a significantly higher figure than the median salary in Great Britain. By the time junior doctors reach their last stage of training (called ST8) basic starting salaries reach £73,992 which when combined with the aforementioned on-call work – including working one in six weekends and one in eight nights – means that they can expect to earn £101,369.

This is contrasted with the situation of British nurses, who have not gone on strike since 2023 despite facing graver pressures on their wages and a severe shortage of personnel in the British healthcare system. Considering the vital role nurses play in hospitals and patient care, there is a real risk that nurses will bear the brunt of the hours needed to maintain the quality of patient care, as physicians continue to gain further concessions as well as potential cuts to fund the salaries of resident doctors.

As a consequence, for the first time in two years the Royal College of Nurses has voted to reject a proposed 3.6 per cent pay, which faced little chance of being accepted when compared to the almost thirty per cent salary increase given to resident doctors.