NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

European NURSING Council



Word from Senior Policy Advisor Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas

Dear Friends,

This issue of our “News from Brussels” includes several WHO-Europe related news as well as an interesting report about the situation of Nursing in Slovenia, where, to my best knowledge, a Regulatory Body of Nursing does not yet exist.

Do try to have a look at the thought-provoking workshop of the European Parliament on Mental Health.

Your feedback will be very appreciated.

Kind Regards,
Theo

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

A new WHO research poses the question: Are European countries able to produce enough nursing graduates?

European Parliament hosted a workshop on Mental Health

Shaping the future of nursing in Slovenia

Discussions at the Health Security Committee on cross-border threats to health

Report of the WHO Regional Director for Europe at the 76th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

A new WHO research poses the question: Are countries able to produce enough nursing graduates?

6 octobre 2026

Several European countries are struggling to replace nurses who retire, migrate or leave the profession. This is according to **new WHO research based on data reported by 18 EU countries between 2015 and 2025.** As part of the EU-funded Nursing Action project, the analyses provide countries with guidance and evidence on how to ensure a well-resourced and well-supported nursing workforce.

The findings show that around half of the countries surveyed may not be producing enough nursing graduates to replace those who retire, migrate or otherwise leave the profession. Where major shortages persist, at least 8 new graduates are required to join the workforce each year for every 100 active nurses to ensure the national nursing workforce remains sustainable.

This is particularly important for **European countries, where on average 23% of current practising nurses are aged 55 years or older,** increasing the urgency of workforce renewal efforts. Migration also continues to shape workforce dynamics across the WHO European Region, with several countries relying heavily on foreign-trained nurses.

Access to real-time data critical to address bottlenecks

To better understand how countries are developing and retaining future nurses, WHO/Europe followed the nursing education pipeline in 18 countries, from application to graduation and entry into the profession. Despite most participating countries knowing the number of graduates per year, many countries found it challenging to find all the information needed to understand vital trends along the entire pipeline.

In a context of increased demand for services, ageing populations and health threats, countries need more trained nurses in the right place with the right skills. Therefore, health ministries need to be able to access data to address bottlenecks in real time.

The findings suggest that although several countries are on track to ensure long-term nursing workforce sustainability, many countries may face challenges in renewing their nursing workforce over the long term.

Findings

On average, **there are 4.1 new nursing graduates each year for every 100 active nurses, although an 11-fold variation exists between countries.** Other significant results from the WHO/Europe analyses are:

- **Countries have increased nursing education places over the last decade; however, large (up to 15-fold) variations exist between the countries analysed.**
- **Applicant numbers to nursing education courses vary widely among the Nursing Action countries, with one third of countries having more than 100 applicants per 100 000 population. However, it is important to highlight that interest in nursing studies among young people is generally declining.**
- **Non completion of nursing education within the expected time frame varies substantially, from 4% to 43%. This shows that significant losses or delays exist along the education pipeline, which reduces effective workforce supply.**

Strengthening data for better nurse workforce planning

The Nursing Action initiative has helped strengthen the evidence base for decision-making by supporting countries to improve data governance, harmonize indicators, improve data quality – including the WHO/Europe, Eurostat and OECD joint data collection – and strengthen analytical capacity within countries.

The analyses also identify important gaps in nursing education data. In many countries, education pipeline data are not systematically collected, information is fragmented across institutions, and definitions vary, making comparisons and workforce planning difficult.

The findings highlight that strategic investment in better data and monitoring can support more effective planning, helping countries build the nursing workforce needed to meet future health challenges.

Source : World Health Organization (WHO)

European Parliament hosted a workshop on Mental Health

On 15 October 2026, Adam JARUBAS, MEP, chaired a workshop on **mental health with a focus on youth**. Experts presented key insights on the scientific and clinical foundation, the public health and policy aspects, and the youth perspective, as well as recommendations for EU action.

Among the subjects discussed were mental health related disorders, whilst risks, prevention and the legislative framework of other countries were also evoqued in order to raise understanding on the issues at stake. The speakers were mainly based on post-pandemic data and the main accent was put on finding concrete ways to combat current problems EU-wide.

You may find the different presentations of the experts via the link below :
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/workshop-on-mental-health/product-details/20261006WKS07313

Shaping the future of nursing in Slovenia

How can nursing retention and recruitment policies better respond to the needs of Slovenia's health system?

This question brought international partners and national stakeholders together from the 29th of September to the 1st of October with activites in Slovenia, including a discussion in parliament with the Commission for Social Care, Labour, Health and the Disabled about how to retain nurses in health promotion centres, a policy dialogue on increasing education requirements during recruitment to support health priorities, and a national conference organized by the Professional Group for Nurses in Management, a section of the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia.

The activities were organized by the Ministry of Health of Slovenia, WHO/Europe and the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia as part of the European Union(EU)-funded Nursing Action initiative.

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Securing the role of nurses in health promotion

On 29 September, the parliamentary Commission for Social Care, Labour, Health and the Disabled discussed securing the role of nurses in Slovenia's health promotion centres across the country. The Commission was addressed by the Ministry of Health, representatives of the National Institute of Public Health and the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, as well as representatives of health promotion centres and local communities.

During the meeting, it was noted that nurses make a vital contribution across the continuum of prevention – from health promotion, health education and counselling to early identification of risk factors, support for healthier lifestyles and continuity of care. Their expertise is also integral to strong multidisciplinary teams, in which health professionals work together to provide integrated services tailored to the needs of individuals and communities.

The meeting provided a valuable platform for national stakeholders to exchange perspectives on building a sustainable health and care workforce and further advancing accessible, integrated and people-centred preventive care in Slovenia.

The Commission issued a resolution that will now be forwarded t
Health and the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia, with copies shared with all invited stakeholders.

Following this, on 30 September, the Ministry of Health organized a policy dialogue with WHO/Europe with a range of education stakeholders to explore ways in which education can be adjusted to strengthen nursing capacity to deliver on increasingly complex health needs.

Welcoming participants on behalf of the WHO Country Office in Slovenia, Sanja Vuzem highlighted what made the dialogue significant. “What makes today particularly valuable is the opportunity to bring together policy-makers, nursing professionals, educational institutions and other key stakeholders to explore how nursing education can evolve to meet the changing demands of health systems and prepare the nursing workforce for the future.”

Contributions came from representatives of Slovenia’s Ministry of Health, the WHO Country Office in Slovenia and WHO/Europe, as well as Estonia’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Finland’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Slovenian academic and professional partners included the National Institute of Public Health, Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia and its student section, and Angela Boškin Faculty of Health Care.

Nursing education: Where does Slovenia stand?

WHO/Europe recently published an analysis on the Slovenian nursing education market. The new analysis provided a starting point for the policy dialogue, where Alba Llop-Gironés, Technical Officer for Nursing and Midwifery, WHO/Europe, presented findings on Slovenia's nursing education landscape.

The analysis shows that the profession faces significant strain, while career opportunities are expanding alongside changes in national legislation. Education and professional development are also being strengthened through increased training opportunities, mentorship, dedicated time for learning and benefits provided by employers and professional organizations.

The dialogue also marked the launch of Slovenia’s first 4 nursing-related clinical specialization areas:

- wounds, stomas and continence
- emergency conditions in health care
- mental health and psychiatric nursing
- integrated adult nursing in primary care.

“The dialogue reflects Slovenia’s commitment to a more strategic and forward-looking approach to nursing workforce planning and development,” said Dragana Savić Kuleto, State Secretary at the Ministry of Health.

Learning from Estonia and Finland

Speakers from Estonia and Finland presented their nursing education systems and current workforce situations. Their contributions gave participants an opportunity to compare approaches.

Their experience shows that meaningful cooperation between nurses, policy-makers, educators, employers and other stakeholders can create sustainable developments that strengthen the profession and help retain nurses in nursing.

Gerli Liivet, National Representative for the Department of Human Resources for Health, Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, stated, “Nursing development must be shaped with and by nurses. Nurses are the experts of their own profession. Their knowledge, experience and professional perspective must guide decisions about nursing education, roles, career pathways and the future development of the profession.”

Bringing it to nursing managers

On 1 October 2026, the conversation about how to retain nurses continued with Slovenia’s Professional Group for Nurses in Management. WHO shared findings of the EU-funded “Mental Health of Nurses and Doctors (MeND)” survey and explored strategies that can be implemented by managers. Dr Brigita Skela Savic of the Angela Boškin Faculty of Health Care shared findings from research on what the key drivers are for young nurses leaving the profession.

The study results clearly indicate that young nursing professionals are not leaving the field because of the profession itself, but rather because of their working conditions. Of particular concern is the finding that nearly a quarter of young employees are considering leaving the nursing profession, while more than a third are contemplating changing employer. The research confirms that manageable workloads, high-quality leadership, work-life balance and clear opportunities for professional and career development are key to retaining young staff.

Strong engagement and clear next steps

The 3 days emphasized the importance of strengthening nursing education and supporting Slovenia's future nursing workforce. Building on the contributions of the day, the Ministry of Health underlined its wish to strengthen collaboration among all key stakeholders and to keep this group continuously active – not only occasionally, but as a lasting platform for developing nursing education and other areas of nursing.

"We really wish to strengthen the collaboration of all the important stakeholders and have this group continuously active, not just from time to time, but continuously, to really collaborate for development in education and in other fields in nursing," said Lucija Rojko, Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health, Slovenia.

Slovenia is the third country this year, from the 21 countries participating in the Nursing Action initiative, to bring findings to national stakeholders to design and implement new retention and recruitment strategies for nurses.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

Climate change, public health preparedness and mosquito-borne diseases on the Health Security Committee Plenary agenda

At the Health Security Committee (HSC) senior level meeting on 27 and 28 October 2026, representatives met in Brussels to discuss the importance of coordination, preparedness, and response in the face of **serious cross-border threats to health**. The meeting brought together high-level participation from across EU and EEA countries, the European Commission, and specialised agencies, including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Medicines Agency, and the European Environment Agency.

Combatting cross-border health threats requires sustainable and solid approaches to preparedness and response, including coordination before, during and after any crisis hits. Exchanges therefore covered a wide range of health security risks such as the impact of climate change on health, focusing on heatwaves and extreme heat, increasing incidence of mosquito-borne diseases, civil-military cooperation, and vaccination as a crucial preventative measure.

The HSC adopted new opinions on **mosquito-borne diseases** and on the preparedness and resilience of critical healthcare infrastructure, as well as following up on the recent opinion on **extreme heat and heatwaves**. The meeting was also an opportunity to reflect on lessons learnt from the recent Andes Hantavirus outbreak and simulation exercises, which have tested the mechanisms to manage future health crises.

Overall, Sandra Gallina, Director-General of the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, underlined that today's threat landscape requires coordinated governance, and response mechanisms across human health, veterinary and environmental sectors, through a One Health approach and stressed that civil-military collaboration is also key to further health security preparedness.

The meeting took place alongside the presentation of a new **EU Framework for Climate Resilience**, which aims to strengthen Europe's ability to anticipate, prepare for, and manage climate risks. As the HSC meeting underlined, this is a strategic investment in Europe's competitiveness, security, health, and prosperity.

Source: European Commission

Report of the WHO Regional Director for Europe at the 76th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

The report was presented by the WHO Regional Directorate for Europe on the 29th October 2026 in Copenhagen. It reviews the main achievements and priorities of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe over the past year. It was delivered by Dr Corinne Capuano, Officer-in-Charge of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, on behalf of the Regional Director, Dr Hans Kluge.

The main message is that **health and well-being must remain at the centre of public policies**, as they are essential not only for people's quality of life but also for economic growth, social progress and sustainable development.

The report highlights four main areas of action: **transforming the way WHO works, strengthening trust, maintaining technical and scientific excellence, and developing partnerships.** It emphasizes the importance of cooperation between countries and the need for health policies based on reliable scientific evidence.

For further information, please click below:
www.who.int/europe/news/item/29-10-2026-report-of-the-who-regional-director-for-europe-at-the-76th-session-of-the-who-regional-committee-for-europe