3rd International Conference of Nursing Regulators Empowering & Motivating Nurses for a Sustainable Public Health
9–10 October 2025 | Athens
Conference Proceedings

Nursing constitutes one of the most critical pillars of contemporary health systems, exerting a direct influence on both the quality and the safety of healthcare delivery. At the European level, the sustainability of health systems is increasingly linked to the capacity to retain, strengthen, and effectively utilize the nursing workforce. Demographic shifts, socioeconomic pressures, and the growing complexity of health needs create a high-intensity environment in which workforce adequacy and stability emerge as issues of strategic importance.

Staffing within healthcare services is widely recognized as the most decisive factor for the functionality and resilience of health systems. Across many European countries, significant shortages of nursing personnel are observed, closely associated with adverse working conditions, limited opportunities for professional development, inadequate remuneration, and elevated levels of occupational burnout. At the same time, the migration of nurses from countries with lower wages or weaker institutional frameworks toward states offering more robust health systems and improved employment conditions exacerbates inequalities and further weakens already strained national systems.

The concept of career pathways in nursing is intrinsically linked to the broader transformation of health systems and the strategic management of human resources. The existence of structured and transparent frameworks for professional advancement is internationally acknowledged as a critical determinant of the profession's sustainability, particularly in contexts characterized by workforce shortages, increasing care demands, and high levels of professional exhaustion.

Contemporary models of professional development move beyond linear and hierarchical notions of advancement and introduce multiple career pathways that respond to the diverse interests, competencies, and clinical or administrative orientations of nurses. Such pathways may include clinical specialization, academic careers, leadership and managerial roles, as well as positions related to education, quality assurance, and patient safety. This plurality enhances professional satisfaction and contributes to the retention of experienced personnel within health systems.

Of central importance is the alignment of professional advancement with objective, clearly defined, and merit-based criteria. The absence of transparency or clarity in promotion mechanisms undermines professional trust and limits the effectiveness of human resource policies. By contrast, the establishment of criteria grounded in documented competencies, continuing education, clinical experience, and demonstrable contributions to quality of care strengthens professional commitment and accountability.

Career pathways do not merely serve as instruments of individual development but constitute a core element of strategic governance. Their integration into national and organizational nursing policies contributes to the transformation of the profession, the improvement of working conditions, and, ultimately, the enhancement of the quality and safety of healthcare services.

Working conditions represent a critical determinant of nursing workforce retention. The absence of safe staffing ratios, increased work intensity, limited mental health support, and restricted access to continuing education create an environment that discourages long-term engagement with the profession. The international literature consistently demonstrates that poor working conditions are directly associated with higher error rates, reduced quality of care, and lower levels of patient satisfaction. Consequently, the improvement of working conditions should not be viewed solely as a matter of professional rights but as a fundamental prerequisite for the safety and effectiveness of healthcare services.

The role of leadership in nursing assumes particular significance. The presence of strong leadership structures enables systematic representation of the profession, participation in decision-making processes, and meaningful influence on

health policy development. When nursing leadership is supported by institutionally established roles, it can make a substantial contribution to the promotion of evidence-based practice, the development of innovative models of care, and the strengthening of health system governance. Conversely, the absence of an institutionalized voice limits nurses' ability to influence decisions that directly affect their professional practice and working conditions.

Within the European context, pronounced inequalities are evident both between countries and within individual states. The divide between northern and southern Europe, as well as between central and peripheral regions, is reflected in workforce availability, professional opportunities, and the quality of services provided. Furthermore, disparities between university-based and non-university institutions affect access to education, professional recognition, and opportunities for career progression. Such inequalities undermine the principle of equitable access to healthcare and call for coordinated interventions at the European level.

Professional councils and nursing chambers play a central role in addressing these challenges. The existence of institutionally established bodies contributes to the development and oversight of professional standards, the protection of the public, and the formulation of coherent professional policy. Through such structures, collective representation of the profession becomes possible, enabling the articulation of evidence-based positions and meaningful participation in public discourse. In countries where these councils operate with autonomy and clearly defined competencies, nursing demonstrates a stronger presence in health policy development.

Investment in education emerges as a fundamental strategy for the future of nursing in Europe. The establishment of common European educational standards, the development of professional specializations, and the strengthening of postgraduate pathways constitute key policy priorities. At the same time, the creation of clinical leadership roles enhances the link between theory and practice and contributes to improvements in the quality of care. Continuous professional development, encompassing both clinical and managerial competencies, is a prerequisite for adapting to evolving health system models and the growing needs of populations.

European cooperation constitutes a critical tool for addressing the structural challenges facing the profession. The development of common staffing guidelines, the implementation of cross-border educational programs, and the exchange of expertise can contribute to reducing inequalities and improving the overall performance of health systems. Particular importance should be placed on supporting countries experiencing high rates of workforce attrition, in order to prevent the further weakening of their national health systems.

In the Greek context, issues related to staffing and the institutional empowerment of nursing are particularly acute. The country records indicators below the European average, both in terms of the number of nurses per population and in relation to working conditions and opportunities for professional development. The lack of retention incentives, combined with limited institutional mechanisms of representation, intensifies professional outmigration and undermines the sustainability of the health system. The utilization of European collaborations and the adoption of best practices from other countries may serve as important tools for improving the current situation.

Nursing emerges as a critical determinant of the resilience and effectiveness of health systems. Fluctuations in human resources directly affect the quality and safety of care, rendering the adoption of comprehensive policies at both national and European levels imperative. Europe faces shared challenges, including population ageing, increasing health needs, workforce attrition, and the demand for specialization and qualitative upgrading of services.

The political participation of nurses constitutes an essential condition for the modernization of health systems. In the absence of institutional structures for representation and active engagement in decision-making processes, reforms remain fragmented and frequently ineffective. At the same time, the systematic generation and utilization of data represent a fundamental prerequisite for evidence-informed policymaking. The lack of reliable data constrains governments' capacity to design and implement targeted interventions.

Strengthening education, research, and evidence generation, in combination with the development of robust institutional structures and the expansion of European cooperation, constitutes a central axis for the future of nursing in Europe. Investment in the nursing workforce should not be regarded merely as a policy option but as an imperative for ensuring high-quality, safe, and sustainable health systems.

Session: Contemporary Developments and Perspectives in Nursing Regulation

Research evidence on the use of licensure compacts to facilitate mobility and modern health care delivery while assuring public protection

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Nursing in Europe is shaped by a complex interplay of demographic, social, and institutional factors that directly affect both the sustainability of health systems and the quality of care provided. A central issue concerns the attractiveness of the nursing profession and its selection by younger generations, particularly within a context of pronounced demographic ageing. The shrinking of the active population, combined with increasing demand for healthcare services, intensifies staffing pressures and positions nursing as a critical determinant of health system resilience. At the same time, European health systems are transitioning from a model primarily focused on acute care toward one centered on the management of chronic conditions and long-term care needs. This shift significantly elevates the importance of a strong nursing presence, particularly in primary and community care. Continuous patient monitoring, the management of multimorbidity, and support for self-care render the role of nurses pivotal to the effectiveness and sustainability of health services.

Issues of professional mobility and regulatory frameworks also emerge as decisive factors. In the international context, examples such as the United States illustrate how state-based licensure systems may act as barriers to professional mobility, particularly during crises or in the expansion of telehealth. The adoption of interstate or interregional agreements, such as professional compacts, has contributed to reducing administrative barriers, with nursing demonstrating faster and broader implementation of such mechanisms compared to other health professions. Within the European framework, mutual recognition of professional qualifications represents a significant step toward facilitating mobility. However, practical implementation remains uneven and requires further harmonization and maturation in order to ensure quality of care and public protection. The need for a "next generation" of regulatory arrangements becomes evident, with an emphasis on integrating technology, telehealth, and clear indicators for assessing impact on safety, continuity, and quality of care.

In this context, the importance of systematic data collection and analysis related to professional mobility, service delivery impacts, and patient outcomes is highlighted. Mapping regulatory gaps—particularly in areas related to digital health—and conducting comparative analyses of international models can contribute to the identification of best practices without undermining existing institutional frameworks. At the same time, enhancing the attractiveness of the profession through targeted recruitment and retention policies is recognized as a prerequisite for addressing the future challenges of European nursing.

Citation: Benton D. (2025). Research evidence on the use of licensure compacts to facilitate mobility and modern health care delivery while assuring public protection. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 56, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.202547

Tajdid Santé: Reforming Nursing Education as a Foundation for Strong Regulation in Tunisia

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Tunisia is currently undergoing a comprehensive reform of nursing education and regulation, driven by evolving healthcare needs and the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reform responds to growing workforce shortages and the increasing recognition of nurses as a critical component of resilient health systems. Strengthening nursing education is seen as essential for improving healthcare quality, patient safety, and system sustainability, both nationally and internationally.

One of the key challenges identified is the outdated nature of the existing nursing curriculum and the gap between training outcomes and the skills required in modern healthcare settings. These gaps are particularly evident in areas such as chronic disease management, care for aging populations, patient safety, ethics, and the use of digital health technologies. At the same time, Tunisia experiences a high level of nurse migration, with a large proportion of graduates seeking employment abroad. This trend highlights the need to align educational programs with international standards while still addressing national health priorities.

The reform initiative is structured as a national program involving both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education. Its central pillar is the transition to a competency-based curriculum aligned with global standards, including those promoted by international health and nursing organizations. The reform also emphasizes interprofessional collaboration, ethical

practice, continuous professional development, and the integration of emerging fields such as tele-nursing, which remains relatively underdeveloped compared to telemedicine.

Another major objective of the reform is the strengthening of regulatory frameworks. Tunisia currently lacks a formal Nursing Council, limiting nurses' involvement in health policy and professional governance. The reform seeks to link education, regulation, licensing, and lifelong learning into a coherent system that supports professional accountability and leadership. Establishing a Nursing Council is viewed as a medium-term goal that would enhance professional recognition and improve coordination between education and practice.

International cooperation plays an important role in the reform process. Partnerships with universities, regulatory bodies, healthcare professionals, and patient groups—both domestically and internationally—are intended to support curriculum modernization, quality assurance, and mutual recognition of qualifications. Improved international recognition would reduce the need for additional training when Tunisian nurses work abroad and strengthen the credibility of national qualifications.

Overall, the reform is presented as a long-term investment in healthcare outcomes rather than solely an educational initiative. By modernizing nursing education and regulation, Tunisia aims to develop a nursing workforce that is competent, ethical, adaptable, and prepared to meet the complex health challenges of the 21st century, while remaining aligned with global standards and best practices.

Citation: Darghouth Gh. (2025). Tajdid Santé: Reforming Nursing Education as a Foundation for Strong Regulation in Tunisia. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 56-57, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.202548

The importance of standardized nursing terminology for quality care and uniformity of professional language; Integration in clinical practice, organization, training, and nursing research

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The future trajectory of nursing in Europe is closely linked to two interrelated and decisive axes: the overall attractiveness of the profession and the extent to which it is actively chosen by younger generations. These factors shape not only the sustainability of the nursing workforce but also the capacity of health systems to respond effectively to evolving demographic and epidemiological challenges. In the European context, demographic ageing represents a defining structural condition, generating patterns of healthcare need that differ significantly from regions with younger populations and placing sustained pressure on service delivery.

This evolution underscores that nursing is not merely a professional or sectoral issue, but a core determinant of public health and system performance. European health systems are undergoing a profound transition from models primarily oriented toward the management of acute and episodic conditions to those focused on the long-term management of chronic illness, multimorbidity, and functional decline. Within this shift, nursing and community-based care assume a central role, as continuity, coordination, and proximity to patients become increasingly critical to quality and safety of care.

At the same time, health systems face a dual challenge: persistent workforce shortages and declining interest in nursing among younger cohorts. This dynamic unfolds within a broader social environment that increasingly emphasizes individual achievement and personal fulfillment, often at the expense of professions grounded in service to others. Such trends further complicate efforts to attract and retain new entrants to nursing, particularly under conditions of high workload, emotional demands, and limited professional recognition.

Addressing these interconnected challenges requires strategic investment in nursing education, working conditions, and career development, alongside policies that enhance the visibility and societal value of nursing. Strengthening the appeal of the profession and supporting the next generation of nurses are therefore essential not only for the advancement of nursing itself, but for the long-term resilience and effectiveness of European health systems as a whole.

Citation: Zega M. (2025). The importance of standardized nursing terminology for quality care and uniformity of professional language; Integration in clinical practice, organization, training, and nursing research. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 57, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.202549

The campaign of the Nursing Council of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) on care shortages

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A shared field of reflection among European countries concerns the current state of the nursing profession and the challenges it faces within contemporary health systems. The importance of transnational exchange of experience and collective dialogue is strongly emphasized, as issues affecting nursing extend beyond national borders and display pronounced pan-European characteristics. Within this context, it is noted that Germany faces challenges similar to those encountered in other European countries. Shortages of nursing personnel, increasing pressure on health systems, and population ageing constitute structural challenges with direct implications for both the sustainability of healthcare services and the conditions under which nursing practice is delivered. Addressing these phenomena requires coordinated interventions and strategic planning at both national and European levels.

Particular emphasis is placed on political will as a fundamental prerequisite for the promotion of substantive change within the profession. In the absence of strong institutional commitment, necessary reforms remain limited or fragmented. In this regard, the operation of nursing chambers is highlighted as a critical mechanism for strengthening collective representation and amplifying the public voice of nurses, thereby contributing actively to policy development. A representative example is provided by the Nursing Chamber of North Rhine–Westphalia. This body comprises approximately 250,000 members and is governed by 60 elected representatives. Its organizational structure includes working groups active in key areas such as education, safety, and the quality of nursing care, alongside specialized councils. In parallel, support structures operate to provide professional guidance to nurses and to contribute to the formulation of evidence-based policy positions.

A central feature of the chamber's activities is the systematic collection, analysis, and utilization of data. Statistical data are produced regarding healthcare staffing and demographic trends within the nursing workforce, while regions with an increased likelihood of future workforce attrition due to retirement are identified. This evidence base is used to prepare reports and policy recommendations addressed to relevant ministries, thereby strengthening evidence-informed policymaking. In parallel, extensive public awareness campaigns are developed with the aim of highlighting the social value and substantive content of nursing work. These include initiatives with significant outreach, reaching millions of views, as well as actions focusing on reducing stigma associated with mental health issues.

In conclusion, the active civic and political participation of nurses is presented as a necessary condition for strengthening the public presence of the profession. Engagement in democratic processes, social councils, and public debates, combined with the development of skills related to political advocacy, contributes decisively to the sustainable development and institutional empowerment of nursing at the European level.

Citation: Foster S. (2025). The campaign of the Nursing Council of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) on care shortages. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 58, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025410

What have we missed to do for the benefit of the nursing profession in the past twenty years?

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The development of the nursing system in Croatia is linked to a long historical trajectory of institutional formation and professional organization. The first organized nursing structures emerged as early as 1929, marking the initial steps toward the systematic provision of nursing care. Following 1992, a period of professional reconstruction ensued, associated with broader sociopolitical transformations within the country. In 2003, the nursing council was established, institutionalizing a central body for the regulation and representation of the profession. In parallel, during the period 1999–2010, educational programs aligned with European Union standards were developed, and the existence of different levels of nursing qualifications was formally recognized, leading to greater differentiation of competencies and professional roles.

In the contemporary context, the nursing profession in Croatia faces significant challenges. One of the most serious relates to the large-scale migration of nurses to countries such as Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland, a trend that weakens the national health system and intensifies workforce shortages. At the same time, ambiguity is observed in the linkage between

educational qualifications and professional roles, creating difficulties both for professional identity and for the effective utilization of nurses' competencies. Additionally, challenges in coordination among the Ministries of Health, Education, and Labour are identified, affecting the coherence of health workforce policy.

Available statistical data illustrate the composition of the country's nursing workforce. Approximately 42,000 nurses are currently employed, of whom 25,000 hold basic qualifications, 13,000 possess undergraduate-level degrees, and 4,000 hold higher-level qualifications. Around 10% of the nursing workforce holds a Master's degree, a proportion considered relatively high compared to many other countries. However, it is noted that these qualifications are not adequately recognized in professional practice or career advancement. Particular reference is made to the participation of the nursing profession in policy development. A formally appointed nursing representative exists within Parliament, a factor that strengthens the institutional presence of the profession in public discourse. At the same time, the role of the President of the Nursing Council is associated with the need for continuous cooperation with state authorities and society, in order to ensure effective representation and the advancement of professional issues.

In conclusion, the nursing system in Croatia is characterized by significant institutional development and a highly educated workforce, while simultaneously confronting challenges related to migration, recognition of qualifications, and intersectoral coordination. Strengthening political participation and improving the utilization of nurses' scientific capital emerge as critical prerequisites for the sustainability and further development of the profession.

Citation: Gazic M. (2025). What have we missed to do for the benefit of the nursing profession in the past twenty years? Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 58-59, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025411

Strengthening the nursing profession in Greece: Policies and initiatives of the Hellenic Regulatory Body of Nurses

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The Hellenic reality in the field of nursing is characterized by structural weaknesses that affect both the staffing of healthcare services and the capacity for effective professional and political influence. At the level of institutional intervention, significant difficulties are identified in adapting and implementing lobbying models that have proven effective in other European or international contexts. Differences in political, social, and cultural conditions across countries make it clear that advocacy strategies cannot be transferred mechanically but require careful adaptation to the specific characteristics of each national environment. At the same time, changing social and demographic conditions exert a direct impact on the profession. The entry of Generation Z into the labor market is accompanied by different expectations regarding working conditions, work–life balance, and modes of communication and participation. These characteristics pose additional challenges for a health system that is already struggling with the limited attractiveness of the nursing profession.

Of particular concern is the steady and pronounced decline in the number of nursing students in Greece in recent years. The downward trend—from approximately 1,500 students to around 700—indicates reduced interest in the profession and foreshadows a further deterioration of workforce capacity in the future. This development is directly linked to the overall national picture, as Greece records the lowest ratio of nursing personnel per population in Europe. With indicators of approximately 3.4 nursing-related healthcare workers and only 2.4 nurses per 1,000 inhabitants, Greece remains significantly below the European average, which approaches eight nurses per 1,000 inhabitants.

This inadequacy is not evenly distributed across the health system. A pronounced maldistribution of personnel is observed between peripheral regions and major urban centers. In provincial areas, approximately 2.8 nurses are recorded per occupied bed, whereas in large urban hospitals the ratio drops sharply to 1.6–1.7. This disparity intensifies workload pressures, increases the risk of professional burnout, and negatively affects the quality and safety of care delivery.

Within this already strained context, long-standing problems such as chronic understaffing, low remuneration, and limited social and institutional recognition of the nursing role persist. As a result, a significant number of nurses choose to migrate abroad, transition into administrative positions, or transfer to lower-pressure settings such as schools and other non-hospital services. These trends further weaken the core of clinical nursing and underscore the need for coordinated; multi-level interventions aimed at ensuring the sustainability of both the profession and the health system as a whole.

Citation: Bizas L. (2025). Strengthening the nursing profession in Greece: Policies and initiatives of the Hellenic Regulatory Body of Nurses. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 59, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025412

Session: International Challenges in Nursing and Cross-National Exchange of Experiences

Professional Regulation in Canada

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This section highlights the importance of sustained investment in nursing education and leadership as a fundamental factor for the sustainability of health systems. Nurses must have continuous access to education in both clinical and managerial competencies in order to respond effectively to the increasing demands of contemporary healthcare. Professional leadership is not viewed as a fragmented skill but as one that must be systematically cultivated from the early stages of professional development.

Particular emphasis is placed on the potential for mutual learning among European countries, especially with regard to institutional representation of nurses. The exchange of best practices and experiences is considered critical for strengthening the professional role and improving the quality of healthcare services. In this context, close collaboration among states, professional councils, and international organizations is emphasized as necessary for the development of common directions supporting nursing at the European level. At the same time, it is acknowledged that each national health system faces distinct challenges related to staffing and service organization. European strategies must therefore be unified in their core principles while remaining sufficiently flexible to adapt to the specific needs and conditions of individual countries.

In conclusion, investment in nursing education is presented as an essential prerequisite for professional empowerment and the assurance of high-quality healthcare services. The need for greater visibility of the nursing role, a stronger public voice, and meaningful participation in policy development is strongly emphasized.

Citation: Penney Chr. (2025). Professional Regulation in Canada. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 60, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025413

Actions' overview of the Chamber of Nurses, Midwives, and other Health Professionals of Kosovo

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The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Kosovo represents one of the newest institutional bodies for the regulation and representation of the nursing and midwifery professions in Europe, having been established in 2013. Since its inception, the Council has operated with full institutional autonomy, enabling it to develop independent policies and interventions guided by both the protection of the public and the assurance of high professional standards. Its role focuses on professional regulation, oversight of care quality, and the strengthening of professional accountability among its members.

A central axis of the Council's work is the support of healthcare professionals across multiple levels. Structured opportunities for education and continuing professional development are provided, alongside guidance on professional ethics, regulatory frameworks, and career progression. The Council's contribution to the empowerment of nurses and midwives is regarded as particularly significant, especially in an environment characterized by increasing professional demands and intense pressures on health systems.

Particular importance is attributed to the creation of a supportive framework that functions, for many professionals, as a stable point of reference. The Council offers not only professional guidance but also moral and ethical support, thereby reinforcing professional identity and self-confidence among its members. At the same time, emphasis is placed on creating opportunities for development at both individual and collective levels, through participation in actions, committees, and initiatives related to health and care. The role of the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Kosovo in health policy development is also significant. Members are encouraged to participate actively in consultation processes and initiatives related to policy design and implementation, thereby strengthening the professional voice in the public sphere. Through such participation, clinical experience is linked with decision-making, contributing to the development of more realistic and effective health policies.

In conclusion, the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Kosovo emerges as a dynamic and contemporary institution which, despite its relatively recent establishment, plays a substantive role in the regulation, support, and empowerment of the nursing and midwifery professions. Its emphasis on autonomy, public protection, professional development, and collaboration creates a framework conducive to the sustainable evolution of the profession and enhances prospects for cooperation at both national and broader European levels.

Citation: Nexhmije G. (2025). Actions' overview of the Chamber of Nurses, Midwives, and other Health Professionals of Kosovo. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 60, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025414

'Entry to the Register' standards pushing reform for nursing and midwifery across the health system

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A set of core positions underscores the need for more substantive participation of nurses in health policy development. It is emphasized that healthcare reforms must consistently ensure the delivery of high-quality services, with a strong focus on patient safety and system sustainability. In this context, the inclusion of nursing perspectives in decision-making processes is essential, as nurses possess first-hand knowledge of care delivery, patient needs, and system-level constraints. Their active involvement contributes to more realistic, evidence-informed, and implementable policy solutions.

The European region is identified as requiring common lines of action with regard to staffing and quality of care, in order to address shared structural challenges across Member States. These challenges include workforce shortages, uneven distribution of personnel, and variations in working conditions and professional recognition. Coordinated approaches at the European level can facilitate greater coherence, promote minimum standards, and support cross-border learning and collaboration.

In conclusion, the institutional empowerment of nurses and their systematic support through organized professional bodies are recognized as critical determinants of the overall quality and effectiveness of health systems. Strengthening representative structures enhances professional accountability, reinforces the public voice of nursing, and supports the development of resilient health systems capable of responding to current and future population health needs.

Citation: Donohoe C. (2025). 'Entry to the Register' standards pushing reform for nursing and midwifery across the health system. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 61, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025415

Recent evolutions regarding the competencies and the missions of Nurses in France

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Current healthcare systems face increasing pressure due to demographic change, population aging, workforce shortages, and the rising prevalence of chronic conditions. Within this context, nursing regulation, education, and workforce planning are critical factors in ensuring patient safety, quality of care, and system sustainability. Strengthening these areas is increasingly necessary to respond effectively to complex and evolving health needs.

A major challenge is the imbalance between healthcare demand and the availability of qualified nursing professionals. Nurse shortages are intensified by workforce mobility, uneven geographic distribution, and limited retention capacity. These trends highlight the need for long-term workforce strategies supported by reliable data, coordinated planning, and policies that enhance professional attractiveness and stability.

Robust regulatory frameworks play a central role in safeguarding public health. Clear standards for licensing, professional practice, and accountability help ensure consistent quality of care and protect patient safety. Effective regulation also supports professional autonomy and enables nurses to participate more actively in leadership roles and health policy decision-making. Strengthening regulatory institutions is therefore essential for both professional governance and public trust.

Education and continuous professional development are key mechanisms for addressing these challenges. Aligning nursing education with contemporary healthcare requirements, ethical principles, and technological advancements is essential. Competency-based education, lifelong learning, and the development of digital health skills are increasingly important as care delivery models evolve. Stronger links between education, regulation, and professional practice contribute to a coherent professional pathway and support adaptability across different healthcare settings.

International mobility of nurses further underscores the importance of harmonized standards and cross-border cooperation. Mutual recognition of qualifications and collaboration between regulatory bodies can facilitate workforce mobility while maintaining high professional and ethical standards. Such cooperation also promotes knowledge exchange and the dissemination of best practices across health systems.

Meaningful engagement with stakeholders—including educators, healthcare providers, policymakers, and

patients—is fundamental to effective reform. Inclusive dialogue supports better understanding of workforce needs, patient expectations, and system priorities, contributing to more responsive and resilient regulatory and educational frameworks.

Overall, strengthening nursing education, regulation, and professional development represents a strategic investment in health system performance. By improving governance structures, supporting workforce sustainability, and encouraging international collaboration, healthcare systems can develop a nursing workforce that is competent, ethical, adaptable, and capable of meeting both current and future healthcare challenges while maintaining high standards of patient safety and care quality.

Citation: Ahayan S. (2025). Recent evolutions regarding the competencies and the missions of Nurses in France. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 61-62, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025416

Session: Nursing Regulation in the WHO European Region

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Contemporary European realities in the field of health are characterized by a set of interrelated structural pressures that directly affect the functioning and long-term sustainability of national health systems. Demographic ageing constitutes a central axis of these challenges, accompanied by increased needs for care, long-term support, and continuity of services. At the same time, the growing prevalence and severity of chronic and multimorbid conditions place a substantial burden on health systems, requiring additional resources, specialized personnel, and continuous upgrading of professional skills.

Significant pressure is also evident in the area of human resources, as shortages of nursing personnel represent a widespread phenomenon across nearly all European countries. Persistent understaffing negatively affects the quality and safety of care, deteriorates working conditions, and undermines the professional sustainability of nurses and other health professionals. These challenges are further compounded by gaps in postgraduate education and continuing professional development, as many states fail to adequately meet the increasing demands for knowledge enhancement and skill adaptation in the face of evolving system requirements.

Within this complex environment, the role of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO Europe) emerges as particularly important. The organization provides technical support to Member States, develops and disseminates guidance, and promotes the alignment of health policies at the European level. Particular emphasis is placed on evidence-based recommendations for sustainable nursing workforce staffing, with the aim of strengthening health system resilience and ensuring high-quality care delivery.

At the same time, European health systems face a structural staffing crisis in nursing, directly affecting patient safety and service sustainability. This crisis is not transient but reflects long-standing policy choices, inadequate workforce planning, and insufficient investment in nursing. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these dynamics, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen nursing leadership and enhance institutional recognition of the nursing role.

Active political engagement by nurses is identified as a critical factor in addressing these challenges. Where nurses participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and public debate, greater awareness is achieved regarding patient safety, quality of care, and working conditions. Conversely, the absence of a nursing voice from policy-making centers is often associated with insufficient interventions and the perpetuation of professional burnout. At the European level, the need for stronger and more binding measures to protect nurses is emphasized, including common guidelines for safety, minimum staffing standards, and coordinated workforce policies.

In conclusion, nurses are positioned as a foundational pillar of safety, resilience, and sustainability within European health systems. Strengthening staffing levels, professional recognition, political protection, and support mechanisms—particularly for newly qualified nurses—constitutes a prerequisite for ensuring high-quality care and safeguarding the future effectiveness of healthcare services across Europe.

Citation: Kluge H., Langins M., Duignan M., Kearns Th. (2025). Nursing Regulation in the WHO European Region. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 62, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025417

Session: The impact of Nursing Leadership on nurses' job satisfaction and patient safety

Bridging Education and Practice: The Strategic Role of Regulatory Bodies in Nursing

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Bridging the gap between education and clinical practice in nursing constitutes a critical prerequisite for the quality and safety of healthcare services. The contemporary reality of health systems—characterized by increased complexity, technological advancement, and evolving population needs—highlights a structural discontinuity between theoretical training and practical application. This gap affects professional competence and, consequently, care outcomes and patient safety.

Regulatory bodies in nursing play a central role in reducing this discontinuity. Their mission focuses on protecting public health through the establishment, implementation, and oversight of professional standards. Their intervention extends across both education and professional practice, ensuring that educational structures are aligned with the real demands of clinical care. Through mechanisms of licensure, certification, and continuing professional development, these bodies contribute to the creation of a coherent framework of professional competence.

Particular importance is attributed to accreditation and evaluation processes for educational programs. Systematic evaluation ensures that curricula comply with evidence-based quality standards and incorporate contemporary pedagogical and clinical approaches. International literature demonstrates that accreditation is associated with improvements in indicators of care quality, patient safety, and graduate readiness for professional practice. At the same time, the adoption of educational methods such as simulation, interprofessional learning, and outcomes-based education strengthens the transition from theory to practice.

Continuing professional education constitutes a complementary pillar of regulatory intervention. Through mandatory continuing education hours and skills updating, nurses remain informed about scientific developments, technological innovations, and evolving clinical guidelines. The integration of technology into regulatory oversight—such as digital systems for monitoring and data analysis—enhances compliance with standards and enables the timely identification of deviations from safe practice.

At the broader international level, variation is observed in regulatory models, with Europe emphasizing harmonization and professional mobility through common directives, while other regions prioritize national workforce expansion strategies. Despite these differences, a shared denominator remains the need for a clear and structured linkage between education and practice, with patient safety and quality of care at the core.

In conclusion, the strategic role of regulatory bodies in bridging education and clinical practice emerges as a decisive factor in strengthening nursing competence. The systematic alignment of curricula, professional standards, and evaluation mechanisms creates the conditions for safe, effective, and evidence-based care, reaffirming that the quality of education constitutes a foundational pillar of patient safety.

Citation: Kapritsou M. (2025). Bridging Education and Practice: The Strategic Role of Regulatory Bodies in Nursing. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 63, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025418

The Impact of Toxic Leadership on Nursing Staff Retention

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Toxic leadership in nursing is internationally recognized as a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, with serious consequences for both healthcare professionals and the functioning of care-providing organizations. At the center of scholarly debate lies the need to understand the mechanisms through which dysfunctional leadership patterns develop and are reproduced, as well as to assess their effects at individual, team, and systemic levels.

The theoretical approach to leadership in nursing encompasses a range of models that highlight both positive and negative expressions of power and authority. Within this framework, toxic leadership is described as a constellation of behaviors characterized by authoritarianism, lack of empathy, abusive control, and the undermining of professional autonomy. These behaviors do not occur in isolation but are often reinforced by organizational cultures that tolerate—or even reward—poor practice, particularly in high-pressure and understaffed environments.

The mechanisms underlying toxic leadership are closely linked to structural weaknesses within health systems. The absence of clear evaluation frameworks, lack of transparent accountability, and limited access to leadership education create fertile ground for the emergence of toxic patterns. At the same time, poor communication, power imbalances, and the inability to express concerns safely intensify feelings of fear and insecurity among nursing staff.

The consequences of toxic leadership are multidimensional. At the individual level, increased rates of professional burnout, psychological distress, and intention to leave the profession are observed. At the organizational level, collaboration deteriorates, productivity declines, and job satisfaction diminishes. Of particular importance is the fact that these negative effects extend beyond the workforce to patient safety, as team communication, decision-making, and adherence to clinical protocols are adversely affected.

Addressing toxic leadership requires systematic and multi-level interventions. The implementation of 360-degree evaluation mechanisms contributes to capturing leadership behavior from multiple perspectives and enhances transparency. In parallel, targeted education of managerial staff in leadership, communication, and conflict management skills constitutes a key preventive strategy. Particular emphasis is placed on the creation of safe and reliable reporting channels that allow problematic behaviors to be identified and managed without fear of retaliation.

In conclusion, toxic leadership in nursing should not be viewed merely as an issue of professional ethics or workplace climate, but as a critical threat to the quality and safety of care delivery. Its recognition, evidence-based analysis, and institutional response constitute essential prerequisites for the sustainability of health systems and the protection of both nurses and patients.

Citation: Tsapnidou E., Katharakis G., Moudatsou M., Koukouli S., Stavropoulou A. (2025). The Impact of Toxic Leadership on Nursing Staff Retention. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science. 18(4): 63-64, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025419

Session: Addressing Nursing Understaffing and Retention: Recruitment Strategies for the Next Generation of Nurses

Nursing understaffing at the center of the World Health Organization's "Nursing Action" project

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Nursing understaffing has emerged as one of the most critical challenges facing health systems globally and across the European Region. Nurses constitute the largest professional group within healthcare organizations and provide the vast majority of direct patient care. Adequate nurse staffing is essential not only for patient safety and quality of care, but also for the physical and mental well-being of nurses, the effective functioning of healthcare organizations, and the long-term sustainability of health systems. In recent years, and particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing shortages have intensified, revealing structural vulnerabilities that demand coordinated international action.

The causes of nursing understaffing are multifactorial and interconnected. Key drivers include workforce ageing and retirements, poor working conditions, high levels of occupational stress and burnout, low salaries, limited career development opportunities, and insufficient educational capacity. Migration of nurses to higher-income countries has further exacerbated shortages, while the pandemic has contributed to increased attrition through illness, mortality, and resignations. At the same time, demand for healthcare services continues to rise due to population ageing, the growing prevalence of chronic diseases, increased mental health needs, and heightened patient expectations. These converging pressures have resulted in unprecedented strain on nursing workforces across Europe and beyond.

The consequences of nursing understaffing are profound and far-reaching. For healthcare systems, insufficient staffing leads to overburdened personnel, higher absenteeism and turnover, reduced capacity to respond to public health crises, and escalating economic costs associated with overtime, temporary staffing, and recruitment. For patients, understaffing is associated with increased risks of adverse events, including infections, medication errors, falls, prolonged hospital stays, and higher mortality rates,

alongside longer waiting times and reduced continuity and quality of care. For nurses themselves, chronic understaffing contributes to burnout, psychological distress, reduced job satisfaction, and a growing intention to leave the profession, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of workforce depletion.

In response to these challenges, the World Health Organization, in collaboration with the European Union and key professional and social partners, launched the Nursing Action initiative in January 2025. This EU-funded programme aims to support Member States in developing evidence-informed strategies to improve nurse recruitment, retention, and working conditions. Nursing Action focuses on strengthening workforce data and policy dialogue, promoting mentorship and leadership development, improving safety and well-being, and supporting the implementation of safe staffing practices. Central to the initiative is the recognition of nurses not merely as care providers, but as essential leaders in health policy, system planning, and service delivery.

Overall, Nursing Action represents a coordinated and strategic response to one of the most pressing workforce crises in contemporary healthcare. By investing in nursing education, employment, protection, and leadership, the initiative seeks to enhance workforce resilience and ensure equitable, high-quality care for populations across Europe. Sustained political commitment and cross-sector collaboration are essential to translate this initiative into lasting systemic change.

Citation: Evaggelidou E. (2025). Nursing understaffing at the center of the World Health Organization's "Nursing Action" project. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 64-65, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025420

Session: Exploring and Supporting Mental Resilience and Occupational Burnout among Nurses

Strengthening Nursing for Quality Care: Deliverables and Next Steps from the HEALTH-IQ Project

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The HEALTH-IQ Project represents a comprehensive, system-level initiative aimed at strengthening nursing for quality care in Greece through evidence-based tools, leadership development, and regulatory collaboration. Coordinated by the WHO Athens Office on Quality of Care and Patient Safety, in close partnership with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Hellenic Regulatory Body of Nurses, the nursing component of the project responds to long-standing challenges affecting nursing practice, including fragmented mentorship structures, unsafe staffing conditions, and growing concerns related to nurses' mental health and wellbeing.

Key project deliverables include three nationally tailored guidance documents. First, a two-part mentorship package, a strategic toolkit for nurse managers and a practical manual for clinical instructors, establishes a structured, standardized approach to mentoring student and newly graduated nurses. These resources aim to bridge the gap between academic education and clinical practice, enhance patient safety, support professional development, and improve workforce retention. Second, a safe staffing guide introduces an evidence-informed Professional Judgement Framework, enabling nurse leaders to assess staffing adequacy, advocate for corrective actions, and align staffing decisions with patient safety and workforce wellbeing. Third, a practical guide on mental health and wellbeing provides actionable recommendations to address burnout, foster supportive work environments, and strengthen resilience among nurses.

Beyond written deliverables, the project achieved a major milestone through the implementation of the first-ever WHO European Nurse Leadership Course, a five-day intensive program designed for directors of nursing services across Greece. The course focused on authentic leadership, values-based decision-making, and evidence- informed management, equipping participants with practical skills to lead quality improvement and workforce transformation.

All deliverables have been formally transmitted to national authorities and are entering the dissemination and implementation phase. Collectively, the HEALTH-IQ Project demonstrates how integrated policy, leadership, and practice-oriented interventions can empower nurses, enhance care quality, and contribute to a more resilient and sustainable health system.

Citation: Triantafyllou Chr. (2025). Strengthening Nursing for Quality Care: Deliverables and Next Steps from the HEALTH-IQ Project. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 65, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025421

Guide on "How-To" strengthen the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Nurses in Greece

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Modern professional and organizational environments are increasingly characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and rapid change. Established models based on predictability, stability, and linear planning are often insufficient for addressing contemporary demands. Effective action in such conditions requires adaptability, continuous learning, and the ability to evaluate situations as they evolve rather than relying solely on fixed procedures.

Decision-making frequently occurs under conditions of incomplete or ambiguous information. Individuals are required to balance competing priorities, limited data, and time constraints while still producing responsible outcomes. In this context, technical knowledge alone does not guarantee effective results. Ethical awareness, situational understanding, and informed judgment play a central role in guiding actions. Outcomes are influenced not only by individual choices but also by institutional structures, cultural expectations, and interpersonal relationships.

Communication is a critical factor in coordinating actions and managing complexity. Clear articulation of objectives, transparency regarding limitations, and openness to feedback contribute to cooperation and trust. At the same time, communication is shaped by hierarchical arrangements, power relations, and differing interpretations of roles and responsibilities. These factors can both facilitate and constrain collective efforts, affecting how information is shared and decisions are understood.

Responsibility is distributed across individuals and systems. While personal accountability remains important, actions and outcomes are often the result of multiple interacting elements rather than isolated decisions. This distribution complicates straightforward attribution of success or failure. A balanced approach to accountability recognizes the role of both individual agency and structural conditions in shaping results.

Professional activity in complex environments places significant cognitive and emotional demands on individuals. Uncertainty, pressure, and moral tension are common features rather than exceptional circumstances. Sustained exposure to these conditions can affect performance and well-being. Addressing such challenges requires acknowledgment of their presence and the development of supportive practices. Reflection, shared learning, and institutional support mechanisms contribute to more sustainable modes of working.

Adaptation is presented as an ongoing process rather than a one-time adjustment. Continuous evaluation of practices, openness to revision, and willingness to learn from experience are essential for maintaining effectiveness. Flexibility does not imply the absence of standards or principles, but rather the capacity to apply them thoughtfully across varying situations.

Overall, effective engagement with contemporary professional realities depends on the ability to navigate complexity responsibly. This involves integrating technical competence with ethical consideration, communication skills, and contextual awareness. Rather than eliminating uncertainty, the focus lies on managing it through informed judgment, cooperation, and continuous learning. Such an approach supports both individual effectiveness and the broader functioning of organizations operating within dynamic and interconnected systems.

Citation: Morgan L. and Lynch D. (2025). Guide on "How-To" strengthen the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Nurses in Greece. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 66, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025422

Session: Professional Development Pathways and the Evolution of Independent Nursing Practice

Socially Awar Health Professionals: The Role of Sociology in Nursing and Medical Education

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The increasing complexity of contemporary health challenges highlights the need for a holistic approach to health care that extends beyond the biomedical model. This paper examines the critical contribution of Health Sociology to Nursing education and practice, with particular emphasis on its role in strengthening Interprofessional Education (IPE). Drawing on the World Health Organization's Framework for Interprofessional Education (2010), which emphasizes collaborative learning across health professions to improve health outcomes, the study argues that sociology provides a shared conceptual language necessary for effective interprofessional collaboration.

Sociology of Health enables nurses and other health professionals to understand how social determinants influence health, illness, and recovery. It supports culturally sensitive and equitable care, enhances patient advocacy and fosters critical awareness of structural inequalities reproduced within health systems.

The study presents a comparative analysis of curricula in medical and nursing education

undergraduate programs. Findings indicate that while Sociology is strongly embedded in nursing education—appearing as a standalone course in 87.5% of nursing programs—whereas it is largely absent from medical curricula, since none of the examined medical schools of Greek public universities offer an autonomous sociology course. This imbalance contributes to communication gaps, limits shared understanding of patients' social realities and weakens the implementation of interprofessional education.

The paper concludes with policy-oriented recommendations, including the integration of Sociology as a core component across all health sciences curricula, the development of joint nursing–medical courses, and the inclusion of social and cultural competence in accreditation standards. Strengthening sociological foundations in health education is essential for advancing interprofessional collaboration and promoting more equitable and patient-centered care.

Citation: Soultatou P. (2025). Socially Awar Health Professionals: The Role of Sociology in Nursing and Medical Education. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 66-67, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025423

Session: Adoption of The Athens Declaration proposed by the European Nursing Council

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Healthcare systems across Europe and globally are facing sustained and interconnected pressures arising from demographic change, population aging, workforce shortages, and the growing burden of chronic and complex health conditions. Within this evolving landscape, the nursing profession plays a critical role in ensuring continuity of care, patient safety, and the overall resilience of health systems. Strengthening nursing education, regulation, and workforce governance has therefore emerged as a strategic priority at national, regional, and international levels.

These challenges have prompted renewed policy dialogue and cooperation, leading to the development of shared frameworks and future-oriented commitments. Within this context, the Declaration of Athens is being shaped as a forward-looking policy document intended for endorsement and signature, reflecting a collective commitment to strengthening nursing regulation, education, and professional governance. The declaration provides a unifying reference point for aligning national reforms with common principles and shared objectives across health systems.

A central concern addressed within this broader framework is the growing mismatch between healthcare needs and the availability of qualified nursing professionals. Demand for nursing services continues to increase, while supply is constrained by workforce mobility, uneven geographical distribution, limited retention, and changing professional expectations. These dynamics highlight the need for long-term workforce planning supported by reliable data, coordinated policy approaches, and strategies that enhance the attractiveness, sustainability, and recognition of the nursing profession. Addressing workforce challenges is essential to maintaining equitable access to care and safeguarding system capacity.

Regulation is identified as a cornerstone of patient safety and public trust. Clear and consistent regulatory frameworks help define professional standards, scopes of practice, licensing requirements, and ethical obligations. Strong regulatory systems support accountability and transparency, while also enabling professional autonomy and leadership. The development of future-oriented policy instruments, such as the Declaration of Athens, underscores the role of regulation not only as a control mechanism but as an enabling structure that supports professional development, quality improvement, and shared responsibility across jurisdictions.

Education is closely interlinked with regulation and workforce governance. Aligning nursing education with contemporary healthcare needs is essential for preparing professionals capable of responding to clinical complexity, technological change, and evolving societal expectations. Competency-based education models emphasize critical thinking, ethical practice, patient-centered care, and adaptability. Continuous professional development and lifelong learning are increasingly necessary to ensure that nurses remain responsive to innovation and changing care models. Coherence between education, regulation, and practice strengthens professional pathways and supports consistent standards of care.

Digital transformation has further reshaped expectations of nursing practice. The expansion of digital health technologies, data-driven care, and remote service delivery requires new competencies and regulatory considerations. Nurses must be equipped to work effectively in technology-enabled environments while ensuring patient safety, data protection, and ethical integrity. Integrating digital health competencies into education and regulatory frameworks supports innovation while maintaining high-quality and safe care delivery.

International mobility of nurses adds another layer of complexity to workforce governance. Cross-border movement of healthcare professionals has become more common, driven by workforce shortages, career opportunities, and global interconnectedness. This mobility reinforces the need for harmonized standards and closer cooperation between regulatory authorities. Mutual recognition of qualifications and shared regulatory principles can facilitate mobility while ensuring that professional and ethical standards are upheld consistently. The Declaration of Athens is positioned as a future reference framework to support such alignment, cooperation, and mutual trust.

Stakeholder engagement is a central element of effective reform. Meaningful involvement of educators, healthcare providers, regulators, policymakers, and patients contributes to more inclusive and responsive systems. Understanding patient experiences and workforce realities helps ensure that reforms are grounded in real-world needs and aligned with public expectations. The process of developing a declaration intended for signature reinforces the importance of dialogue, consensus-building, and shared ownership.

Overall, the development of the Declaration of Athens reflects a forward-looking commitment to strengthening nursing education, regulation, and workforce governance as a long-term investment in health system performance. By articulating shared principles and preparing a framework for formal endorsement, the initiative supports coherence, collaboration, and accountability across healthcare systems. Aligning national actions with common objectives helps ensure that nurses are equipped to meet current and future healthcare challenges while maintaining high standards of patient safety, quality of care, and professional integrity.

Citation: Koutroumpas Th. and Bizas L. (2025). Socially Awar Health Professionals: The Role of Sociology in Nursing and Medical Education. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 67-68, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025424

Session: Building the Future of Nursing in Greece: Career Pathways and International Perspectives

Nursing Workforce as a Strategic Pillar of Sustainable Health Systems

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Nurses constitute a cornerstone of every modern health system, as they stand at the frontline of care delivery and directly influence the safety, continuity, and quality of healthcare services. Nevertheless, they are often required to work under highly demanding and frequently exhausting conditions, characterized by heavy workloads, limited resources, and minimal opportunities for professional development. These conditions place a significant strain on nurses' physical and mental resilience and directly affect the quality, continuity, and safety of care, increasing the risk of errors, delays, and unequal coverage of patients' needs. At the same time, they foster an environment of professional burnout, within which an increasing number of nurses express intentions to leave the profession, with four in ten reporting such considerations.

International experience demonstrates, however, that this trajectory can be mitigated to a certain extent. Countries that have chosen to invest strategically in the nursing workforce—by ensuring decent and safe working conditions and by establishing clear pathways for professional advancement through a structured career ladder—have succeeded in upgrading the role of nurses, enhancing the status of the profession, retaining their human resources, and, most importantly, achieving measurable improvements in care outcomes and patient safety.

Within these systems, advanced and specialized professional roles are established, such as the Advanced Nurse Practitioner and the Nursing Consultant. Following accredited education and within a clearly defined regulatory framework, these roles are granted increased clinical autonomy in patient assessment, diagnosis, and management. In parallel, they actively participate in decision-making processes related to care organization, lead educational and research initiatives, and act as critical links between clinical practice, healthcare management, and health policy development. The development of similar roles, appropriately adapted to the Greek context, could serve as a powerful lever both for improving the quality and safety of care and for creating meaningful incentives for career progression, retention, and the attraction of new nurses to the public health system.

Citation: Kaitelidou D. (2025). Nursing Workforce as a Strategic Pillar of Sustainable Health Systems. Hellenic Journal of Nursing Science 18(4): 68, https://doi.org./10.24283/hjns.2025425