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Item 12 Progress reports: Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016–2025

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), representing more than 30 million nurses worldwide, welcomes the progress report on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the WHO Europe Region 2016–2025.

ICN underscores that a strong and well-supported nursing and health workforce is fundamental to achieving an effective and sustainable response to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Accelerated action is needed to implement evidence-based policy measures, with the meaningful engagement of nurses and midwives at every level. Across the world, nurses are at the forefront of NCD prevention and control—providing screening and early detection, managing chronic conditions, delivering health education, and empowering individuals and communities to make healthier choices. In both stable and crisis settings, nurses and midwives ensure continuity of care and equity in access to essential services. As the first and often most trusted point of contact for patients, nurses play a pivotal role in promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting the management of conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer, and mental health disorders.

According to WHO's State of the World's Nursing 2025 report, the projected global shortage of 4.1 nurses by 2030 is deeply concerning. ICN underscores that equity and access to primary health care, particularly nursing services, are essential to preventing and controlling NCDs; hence, ICN calls on Member States to:

1. Invest in nursing for NCD prevention and control: ICN calls for greater investment in educating and providing professional development for nurses to deliver integrated NCD services at the primary health care level. Evidence shows that nurse-led primary care improves quality of life, reduces complications, and enhances cost-effectiveness. Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), when fully supported, can lead in screening, diagnosis, chronic disease management, health education, and mental health care—especially in underserved and rural communities. ICN's report Nursing and Primary Health Care: Towards the Realization of Universal Health Coverage demonstrates the vital role

of nurses in improving prevention, continuity of care, and system responsiveness. ICN also calls for Member States to commit to the implementation of the Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery (GSDNM) 2025–2030. that was endorsed at WHA until 2030.

2. Leverage digital health: ICN highlights the need to expand digital health tools, including telemedicine, electronic health records, and mobile health technologies, to strengthen continuity of care and improve access to NCD services during emergencies. Nurse leaders play a crucial role in positively shaping the advancement of digital health and should be supported and resourced to lead the digital transformation for the nursing workforce. Nurses and midwives must participate in monitoring and evaluating new and emerging digital health technologies to ensure they are positively contributing to health system and health workforce processes and health needs at all levels.

As the largest health workforce globally, nurses and midwives must be fully engaged in leadership, strategic planning, and the design of patient-centred models for NCD prevention and management, particularly in emergencies. Their insights and innovations are indispensable to shaping effective responses. To conclude, investing in nursing is not only critical to tackling the NCD crisis—it is a decisive investment in resilient health systems, stronger economies, and healthier, more equitable communities worldwide.

****The statement is endorsed by the European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA), a non-state actor representing the nursing and midwifery professions in the WHO European Region.**

Links

- Nursing and Primary Health Care Towards the realization of Universal Health Coverage - https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2024-09/ICN_PHC-Report-2024_EN_FINAL.pdf