

75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Europe, 28–30 October 2025

Item 12 Progress reports: WHO European Framework for Action on Mental Health 2021–2025

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), representing more than 30 million nurses worldwide, welcomes the progress report and calls for urgent action to address the escalating mental health crisis across the region.

ICN commends the recent report on the Mental Health of Nurses and Doctors (MeND) survey by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and is deeply concerned by its findings: doctors and nurses are five times more likely than the general population to experience symptoms of depression; one in three have faced bullying or violent threats at work in the past year; and 10% report exposure to physical violence or sexual harassment.

Drawing on ICN's 2025 International Nurses Day Report – Caring for Nurses Strengthens Economies, ICN also highlights the mounting evidence of the profound challenges facing the nursing workforce. Stress, burnout, unsafe staffing levels, poor working conditions, and rising workplace violence are widespread and require urgent, coordinated responses. Without meaningful investment in a well-prepared and well-supported nursing workforce and the involvement of strong nursing leadership, the vision of resilient and sustainable health systems, particularly on mental health, will remain unattainable.

The solutions are well established. ICN's Caring for Nurses Agenda presents a comprehensive and actionable framework to protect and promote nurse wellbeing, centred on seven key priorities:

1. Ensuring adequate staffing and skill mix to deliver safe, effective care
2. Investing in sufficient resources and equipment
3. Providing safe and decent working conditions
4. Supporting education, professional development, and full scope of practice
5. Fostering supportive, high-performing organizational cultures
6. Expanding access to health and wellbeing services for health workers
7. Valuing nurses through fair and competitive compensation

According to WHO's State of the World's Nursing 2025 report, the projected global shortage of 4.1 million nurses by 2030 is alarming. As the largest occupational group in health care, nurses are pivotal in promoting mental health, preventing illness, identifying those at risk, and providing treatment and rehabilitation. The quality of mental health care delivery depends heavily on the knowledge, skills, and motivation of this workforce. It is therefore essential to invest in creating, developing, and retaining a suitably qualified and adequately supported nursing workforce to meet current and future demands.

ICN's Guidelines on Mental Health Nursing emphasize that nurses' contributions to mental health care are multifaceted. Mental health nurses, representing 44% of the global mental health workforce, play a vital role in ensuring person-centered, holistic care that integrates physical and mental health needs. With around 300,000 mental health nurses worldwide, ensuring sufficient numbers, proper education, and adequate resourcing can profoundly improve outcomes for individuals, families, and communities affected by mental illness.

In conclusion, ensuring an adequate number of well-educated, experienced, and properly resourced nurses within enabling work environments can profoundly improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities affected by mental illness. ICN stands ready to work alongside Member States to safeguard the mental health of populations – including that of the health workforce – through collaboration, evidence-based action, and sustained investment in nursing.

****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.**

Link

- International Nurses Day 2025 is: "Caring for Nurses Strengthens Economies" – <https://www.icn.ch/resources/publications-and-reports/ind-2025-report>
- ICN Guidelines on Mental Health Nursing – <https://www.icn.ch/resources/publications-and-reports/guidelines-mental-health-nursing>