

## ICN endorses WHO Ten-Point Plan for expanding healthcare workforce in Europe and calls for urgent action

**Geneva, Switzerland, 14 September 2022** – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) welcomes the publication of the World Health Organization’s latest workforce report, which reveals shortages that WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge describes as a ‘ticking time-bomb.’

The [Health and Care Workforce in Europe: Time to Act](#) report highlights many of the issues ICN has raised since the start of the pandemic, including the findings in our [Sustain and Retain](#) report. Those issues include the ageing nursing workforce, the uneven distribution of nurses throughout the region, failure of governments to train enough of their own nurses rather than rely on international recruitment, and the ‘COVID-Effect,’ which has led to greater sickness absences, increased burnout and mental health problems among nurses, and higher levels of intention to leave the profession.

Speaking today at the launch of the report in Tel Aviv, Israel, Mr Catton said:

“This report provides baseline information about the health and care workforce across Europe and should be replicated across all of WHO’s regions. It highlights the many severe pressures and demands that nurses and others are under at this time. ICN fully endorses the report’s findings, including its Ten-Point Plan, which is an urgent call for governments to act immediately to grow their own nursing and healthcare workforces so that they can be self-sufficient in meeting their populations’ needs.

‘The report recognises the obligation nations have in increasing access to healthcare, but we will only be able to maintain and retain the nursing and healthcare workforce if we support their training and education, and enable them to advance their careers.

‘This cannot wait. We need action now, not some five or ten-year plan that never comes to fruition. It is a call to action that must be put in place now: to do otherwise would be to risk that ticking time-bomb blowing up in our faces.’”

Mr Catton said WHO must regularly monitor progress on the Ten-Point Plan, below, and report on its delivery.

WHO’s Ten-Point Plan:

1. **Align** education with population needs and health service requirements
2. **Strengthen** professional development to equip the workforce with new knowledge and competencies
3. **Expand** the use of digital tools that support the workforce
4. **Develop** strategies that recruit and retain health workers in rural and remote areas
5. **Create** working conditions that promote a healthy work-life balance
6. **Protect** the health and mental well-being of the workforce
7. **Build** leadership capacity for workforce governance and planning
8. **Improve** health information systems for better data collection and analysis
9. **Increase** public investment in workforce education, development and protection
10. **Optimise** the use of funds for innovative workforce policies.

## **Note to Editors**

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

For more information please contact Gyorgy Madarasz, Senior Press Officer at [madarasz@icn.ch](mailto:madarasz@icn.ch)  
Tel: +41 22 908 01 16

[www.icn.ch](http://www.icn.ch)