

EFNNMA Position Statement on agenda item 5 “Advancing public health for sustainable development in the WHO European Region”

68th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe

17 – 20 September 2018, Rome, Italy

The European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA), a longstanding collaborative organization of WHO Euro office, welcome and support the document *Advancing public health for sustainable development in the WHO European Region* to be debated and decided at the 68th session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for Europe. Nurses and midwives strongly support public health as a central component of sustainable development.

EFNNMA welcomes the focus of the report on strengthening public health as essential to the achievement of Universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations. Transformation of public health policies and systems is urgently needed to grapple with the major societal challenges of aging population, non-communicable diseases, re-emergence of communicable diseases, increased migration, and risks of health emergencies related to climate change and must be addressed by all Member States. EFNNMA appreciates this strategic document that aims to align public health systems with SDG targets and indicators.

Nurses and midwives are the largest professions in the health workforce in Europe and are critical to achievement of UHC through strengthened public health systems. Without the active involvement of nurses and midwives UHC will not happen. Nursing and midwifery input to public health is essential in the development and implementation of all of the strategic priorities put forward in this important document. Moreover, nurse-led models are crucial to achieve UHC and it has been found that when nurses practice to their full scope in team-based primary care settings, it is cost-effective, improves quality of care and increases patient satisfaction, access and equity. However, given the current and projected shortage of nurses and midwives in Europe increased investment in nursing and midwifery education and training and improved practice environments and working conditions must receive greater attention.

Numerous challenges towards public health include non-communicable diseases, mental disorders, emerging epidemics of communicable diseases and health emergencies with each and every posing a large complex of financial, organizational, clinical, professional and legislative issues to be resolved. In this context EFNNMA calls on WHO and MS to focus on long-term workforce planning and introducing the legislation to empower nurses and midwives through extended scopes of practice. Overcoming existing barriers in nursing and midwifery practice regulation will have an extraordinary impact on Health systems efforts on achieving UHC and Sustainable development.

EFNNMA strongly supports the 10 point action plan presented in this document with focus as pointed out in our comments above.

The European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) is the voice of nursing and midwifery in the WHO European Region.

Co-founded with WHO in 1996, it is an independent group of 30 associations from 25 Member States. It represents a large proportion of the European Regional nursing and midwifery workforce of 8 million.

<http://efnma.org>

E-mail: gri@ordemenfermeiros.pt