



International Council of Nurses (ICN)

Statement at the 65th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

Agenda item 5 (c): Priorities for health systems strengthening in the WHO European Region 2015–2020: walking the talk on people centredness

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN). We are pleased to see that the need for high-quality health-system inputs is recognised, including in the health workforce.

ICN fully agrees that the health workforce is central to the shift towards people centred services and to improve health outcomes. Reliable workforce data must be included in health information systems as it is fundamental to plan workforce according to the future needs of the population.

Besides adequate health professional education and safe and attractive working environments, the reconfiguration of service delivery including the expanded role of nurses is one of the essential investments. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals closest to and in some case the only group available to the population. Nurses coordinate and link services across different professions, sectors and time. Necessary expansion of nurses' role especially in primary health care settings will help optimise their functioning and support equitable access to health services including reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society.

Further, ICN welcomes the proactive approach. Preventing illness and disabilities is more people centred rather than reacting when people have problems. We encourage governments to support the role of nurses to proactively assess, detect and intervene early along the life course in primary health care settings. To optimise the nursing contributions, there is an urgent need to sweep away regulatory barriers that restrict the scope of the nurse in delivering validated, effective and efficient best practices.

As prime healthcare service providers, nurses can capture quantitative and qualitative data to inform evidence based policy development. The holistic and person centred nature of nursing care is an additional value of nurses. Fully involving nurses in policy setting to optimise nursing potential is essential if new creative and practical solutions are to become a reality.

Thank you.