



International Council of Nurses

Statement at the 63th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Agenda item 5(g)(i): Outcome document for the high-level meeting on Health systems in times of global economic crisis: an update of the situation in the WHO European Region)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN). We are pleased that adequate investment in health professional education and the reconfiguration of service delivery including the expanded role for nurses and midwives are recognised as urgent recommendations in order to meet the changing demands on health systems.

ICN strongly agrees that funding for cost-effective interventions should be protected and ideally increased. A number of researchers have clearly demonstrated that affordable nursing interventions can effectively contribute towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals as well as in reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including mental disorders. Considering that effective health promotion and disease prevention are essential in reversing the increasing burden of NCD 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. Promoting effective and efficient interventions is as much a governance issue as it is a matter for ministries of health.

Further, we support expansion of nurses' role especially in primary health care settings. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals closest to and in some case the only group available to the population. Necessary expansion of nurses' role will help optimise their functioning and support equitable access to health services including reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society.

Finally, health services of good quality cannot be delivered without adequate numbers of appropriately prepared nurses. Ensuring adequate pre- and post-registration education of nurses is essential. We must avoid a famine and feast approach and re-energise comprehensive efforts across sectors to deliver costed workforce plans that maximise returns on both educational and health investment.

In conclusion, ICN calls on governments to act on the policy lessons and recommendations: ensuring adequate and sustainable pre and post registration education, transforming practice by implementation of evidence based nursing interventions and through the speedy removal of regulatory barriers. This will support health systems redesign and significantly contribute to a reorientation towards primary health care based models. 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.

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