

# COMMONWEALTH NURSES AND MIDWIVES FEDERATION



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## OPEN LETTER

His Excellency  
Mr Nikos Anastasiades  
President of the Republic of Cyprus  
The Presidential Palace  
Nicosia, Cyprus

### **Recognition of the need for equality for Midwives and Nurses in Cyprus**

We are writing concerning your Government's intention to proceed with Health Care Reforms in the context of the nurses and midwives demand for equal recognition as professionals.

We are aware that the Republic of Cyprus provides salaries at a certain level to all university graduates, and that nurses and midwives in Cyprus are struggling to survive with working conditions which are unacceptable in 2016. This situation leads to stress and professional burnout, seriously compromising the quality of health care being delivered to EU citizens and jeopardizing their safety.

We are conscious of the financial crisis in your beautiful country, and the recommendations of the Troika towards improving the financial situation in Cyprus. Further to this, we are aware of the efforts made by the Cyprus government to make economies by reducing the salaries of nurses and midwives as well as other, similar measures.

The Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation expects nurses to have reasonable remuneration and acceptable working conditions. This should include a safe environment, a safe level of staffing and equal pay with other comparable professionals.

As employees, nurses have the right to organize, bargain collectively and take industrial action<sup>1</sup>. We consider that the strike action taken by the vast majority of nurses and midwives in the public sector was due to the fact that the Government of Cyprus does not recognize their right to be paid comparably to other public servants whose terms of service require them to possess academic knowledge and skills.

We stand in solidarity with the nurses and midwives of Cyprus in calling your government to honor its obligations with respect to the principles of equality and such provisions as are laid down in national legislation and the relevant EU directives<sup>2,3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ILO Convention 87 Freedom of Association; ILO Convention 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining; ILO Convention 154 Collective Bargaining; ILO Convention 149 on Nursing Personnel

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications; Official Journal L 255 , 30/09/2005 P. 0022 - 0142

On behalf of the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation and the national nursing and midwifery association members we represent, we urge you to reconsider your government's position as expressed by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health.

We ask that before your government takes any further action toward health care reforms, you recognize the right of nurses and midwives for pay that equates with their university graduate status, and initiate a comprehensive dialogue with the nursing unions regarding this issue.

Therefore, we call upon your government to take immediate action to correct:

1. The effects of an actual reduction in nurses' and midwives' wages brought about by pay cuts and salary freezes.
2. Diminished recruitment and retention rates that compromise quality of care and patient safety. This situation compels nurses to work harder than before to maintain quality standards, while being asked to provide "more for less".
3. We remind you that health and productivity go hand in hand, and we suggest that investing in the health of European citizens may well offer another resource to help boost Cyprus' economy out of recession.

Nurses and Midwives are a vital resource without whom any health care system will fail. We urge you not take actions that will only result in more burnout, less productivity and exacerbate an already difficult situation.

Also, we urge the EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament and European Council) to maintain the role and working conditions of nurses and midwives in the health care system by deploying the social cohesion funds to support the needs of the health care system; to make planning and forecasting a useful professional exercise instead of merely a theoretical one, and ensuring member states comply with the relevant European directives (qualifications and employment), even in times of austerity.

Yours in good faith



Executive Secretary  
Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation

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<sup>3</sup>DIRECTIVE 2013/55/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System ('the IMI Regulation')