

# EFN – EfCCNa – EuSEN Joint Statement on COVID-19 Preparedness and the Urgent Need to Protect Frontline Nurses

**Posted on March 26, 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic is currently taking a toll on the citizens and the healthcare systems of the European Union (EU). But, above all, it is having a huge negative impact on frontline nurses. They are doing their job in worse conditions than ever before, lacking enough and/or proper protective equipment, and often getting infected by the virus themselves, with deadly consequences in some cases.

For that, the EFN, EfCCNa, EuSEN call on the EU institutions, all EU national governments, the health industry and other health stakeholders to:

1. Minimise public procurements procedures to the bare minimum, ensuring that the right equipment (e.g., FFP2 masks, mechanical respirators) is accessible to the frontline nurses. It is key the distribution stays transparent and proportioned for all EU Member States.
2. Allocate the necessary funds to support frontline nurses. The EU institutions should re-arrange already agreed budgets to inject funds into the nursing frontline.
3. Act through media and social media against the stigmatisation of nurses taking care of COVID-19 patients.
4. Start monitoring the number of nurses that are infected with COVID-19 at the workplace and register the number of those who passed away because of the infection.
5. Foster the co-creation and co-design with frontline nurses of political decision-making processes concerning IDHC preparedness, protocols, training, and selection of appropriate materials.
6. Work closely with the nursing profession to develop policies that protect the nursing staff from unnecessarily difficult or unsafe working conditions, particularly when caring with COVID-19 patients.
7. Commit to preventing future outbreaks from becoming epidemics by engaging frontline nursing in the design of policies/procedures and coordination. The EU needs to improve its capacity to prevent, protect against, detect, report and respond to public health emergencies.
8. Ensure appropriate mechanisms for psychological care of nurses who are experiencing extreme anxiety and stress during the crisis as well as post factum to prevent and treat post-traumatic stress disorder.
9. Provide nurses with additional training in strategies for helping patients cope with isolation, lack of family visiting and fear of death.

EFN, EfCCNa, EuSEN recognise and value the efforts and funds put together by the European Commission and the health industry to research a COVID-19 vaccine and treatment. But we remind the Commission that the most critical situation is now frontline. Therefore, we remain at full disposal to the European Commission to make sure EU decision reflect frontline views making EU Actions fit-for-purpose.

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