

ESNO Position Statement in Solidarity with the U.S. Colleague Professional Nursing Community: “NURSING IS A PROFESSION”



Brussels, 28 November 2025

To Our Colleagues in the U.S. Nursing Community

On behalf of the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), representing specialist and advanced nurses across all health domains and disciplines in Europe, we express our full solidarity and unequivocal support regarding the recent concerns surrounding the exclusion of nursing education from the category of “*professional degree*” by the U.S. Department of Education.

Nursing is a *profession* deeply rooted in society. It is grounded by public trust and in the close relationship between healthcare systems and civil society. Nurses operate at the unique intersection of public health, high-level clinical expertise, science, and health policy. They translate science into practice, policy into care, and societal needs into concrete action. Any policy that weakens the formal recognition of nursing education not only undermines the *profession* itself, but also weakens this essential bridge between citizens, public health, and governance.

At a time when all health systems are facing severe and accelerating nurse shortages, lowering the *professional* recognition of nursing education sends a deeply concerning signal. It directly threatens career perspectives, *professional* motivation, workforce retention, and the long-term sustainability of the nursing workforce. Across Europe and globally, specialist and advanced nurses are prepared through rigorous academic programs, advanced clinical training, and continuous *professional* development. Their contribution spans prevention, acute and chronic care, crisis preparedness, education, research, and leadership. Any downgrading of educational status risks further accelerating workforce attrition.

Equally concerning is the growing reliance on under-licensed or under-certified nurses from abroad as a response to shortages. Without proper recognition, certification, and integration into ‘*professional frameworks and standards*’, this practice undermines patient safety, *professional* standards, ethical recruitment, and the sustainable development of the global nursing workforce.

From a European perspective, we strongly affirm that nursing education is, by definition, professional education. It equips nurses with complex clinical judgement, scientific reasoning, ethical accountability, and leadership responsibility for patient and population outcomes. Recognition of nursing qualifications is fundamental for safeguarding patient safety, ensuring workforce mobility, supporting fair career pathways, and maintaining public trust.

We stand with our U.S. colleagues and the global nursing community in underlining that nursing is not a technical occupation, but a fully-fledged *profession* with its own body of science, governance, ethics, and advanced competencies. Policies affecting the educational and *professional* foundations of nursing must be shaped with the meaningful involvement of the *profession* and its representative organisations.

ESNO remains firmly committed to defending the integrity of nursing education, the autonomy of specialist and advanced nurses, and the international recognition of nursing qualifications. We call for continued and structured dialogue between policymakers, regulatory authorities, academic institutions, civil society, and *professional* nursing bodies to safeguard the future of the *profession* and the sustainability of healthcare systems.

Please know that you do not stand alone. The European specialist and advanced nursing community stands with you in this critical moment to uphold the value, societal role, and professional status of nursing worldwide.

On behalf of the full ESNO Board: President Dr. Adriano Friganović, Vice-President Alessandro Stievano, Treasurer Julie Dugmore, Board Members Patrícia Bursa and Andrea Šánič, and Executive Director Ber Oomen, and fully endorsed by our member organisations, organisational associates, and partner organisations:

ACOVENE - Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, EANN - European Association Neuroscience Nurses, EDTNA/ERCA - European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association / European Renal Care Association, EfCCNa - European federation of Critical Care Nursing associations, ENDA - European Nurse Directors Association, EORNA - European Operating Room Nurses Association, ESGENA - European Society of Gastroenterology and Endoscopy Nurses and Associate, EULAR - European League Against Rheumatism / Nurses section, EuSEN - European Society for Emergency Nursing, EWMA - European Wound Management Association, FEND - Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes, FINE - European federation of Educators in Nursing Science, ICANA - International Council of Anthroposophic Nursing Associations, ICRN - International Coalition Respiratory Nurses, IFNA - International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists. ESNO ORGANISATIONAL ASSOCIATES: AICO - Italian Association Operation Room Nurses, AIIO - Italian Association of Oncology Nurses, AISLeC - Italian Nursing Association for the Study of Skin Lesions, AEEEMC - Specialist Nurses in Medical Surgical Nursing Portugal, ANIPIO - National Society Infection Control Nurses – Italy, ANIMO - Italian Association of Medical Nurses, APER - Portuguese Association of Nurses Specialized in Rehabilitation, Association ART - Association of Anesthetists, Intensive Care and Transfusion Technicians, Montenegro, BFHBOV - The Belgium Federation of Advance Nurses, CNSARICT - Croatian Nursing Society of Anesthesia, Reanimation, Intensive Care and Transfusion, CNNF - Croatian National Nursing Federation, Eng4Nurse - English for Nurses, ESHRE - European Society of Human Reproduction. ESKULAP - Association of health workers and associates of the republic of Serbia, GONS - Georgian Oncology Nursing society, GORNA - Greek Operating Room Nurses Association, IMI24 NETWORK ETS - Italian Association of Infectious Diseases Nurses, NVAM - Nederlandse Vereniging van Anesthesiemedewerkers, PTPAIO - Polish Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Nurses, SIAN-ETS - Society of Nephrology Area Nurses, SK SaPA - Slovak Chamber of Nurses and Midwives, SIET - Società Italiana Infermieri dell'Emergenza, SOWADO - Social Welfare and Agricultural Development Organization Somalia, TPNA - Turkish Psychiatric Nurses Association, Turkey, UISH - Albanian Order of Nurses, UINARS - Association of Nurses in Intensive Care, Anaesthesia, and Resuscitation, Serbia, V&VN - National Nursing Association Netherlands, VMSB - Higher Medical School Macedonia and ZA NAS - Association of nurses, technicians, midwives and dental nurses and the European nursing Council and Sigma European Region.

The European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO), the officially recognised non-profit organisation, and the goal is to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and co-operation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisations and its constituent members. ESNO represents the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations to the wider European community in the interest of the public health. Members of ESNO consist of individual European specialist nurses organizations and associates.