

DECADE OF THE SPECIALIST NURSE 2020-2030

INTERNATIONAL NURSING DAY IN BRUSSELS

PRESS CLUB, RUE FROISSART 95, BRUSSEL, Thursday 12 May, 15.30 – 18.00

- **Thank you for the introduction and for the opportunity to represent civil society at this event celebrating the launch of the Decade of the Specialist Nurse on International Nurses Day. I am delighted to join you today as Director General of EPHA, the European Public Health Alliance.**
- For those of you who have not worked with us before, EPHA is active in the area of policy and advocacy, covering a wide range of public health topics.
- We are a platform for public health with a uniquely broad and versatile membership, consisting of over 80 organisations working at the local, national, and European level, from health professionals and patient organisations to public health authorities, research organisations, organizations that represent vulnerable population groups and specific diseases.
- **It is indeed a great honour to be here today recognising the role of specialist nurses, as part of the wider evolution of nursing.**
- The position of the nurse as a profession is most interesting, **acting** as the storm-wall for society against constantly changing tides of health challenges, yet at the same time **shaped** by the society it protects.
- Today is symbolic of this dynamic, the birthday of Florence Nightingale. A woman who similarly rose to meet the health crisis of her time, the fallout of the Crimean war, and was in turn influenced by societal norms and value systems in forming the prototype of the modern nurse.
- It must be noted however that societal evolution occurs at a much slower pace than that of health challenges. The foundations of modern nursing are therefore essential for understanding how the nurse is perceived by society; why there is a difference between the recognition nurses receive, and what is actually deserved; and determining how to **bridge this gap**.
- **How can civil society organisations like EPHA assist nurses in this *bridging* during the Decade of the Specialist Nurse?**
- Thankfully, we don't have to look further than the nurse's own professional DNA. In helix with their evidence-based expertise is their art of caring. And with nurses orientated in caring for society, it is **incumbent** upon civil society to reciprocate, thereby complete the care process.
- However, like with the development of the modern nurse, we should also note the history of the concept of care - how it is perceived by society, the challenges this poses in engaging society to care, as well as how to **utilise** this knowledge to find areas of opportunity to enable this reciprocity.

- **So, how do we care for nurses?**
 - Again, nurses already provide the answer - in their holistic *person*-centred approach. As nurses recognise the personhood of the patient, we need to **recognise** the person behind the profession; not primarily as an employee in an industry, but first and foremost as human, vulnerable to and influenced by their environment, with both universally shared as well as particular needs.
- **At the *practical* level, nurses have already indicated what care they need.**
 - EPHA and other organisations involved in health advocacy, have as their own duty of care towards the nursing profession, to be aware of their campaigns, and to **amplify** their voice at the political level whenever possible – for both their personal health, wellbeing, and self-fulfilment, and in recognition that without them, public health would collapse.
 - Additionally, organisations involved in health policy should consider how their areas of engagement directly or indirectly affect nurses, and other health professionals, and **be mindful** of these when making policy recommendations. We, as civil organisations should also have at the forefront of our activity planning, opportunities for **collaboration**, identifying areas for specialist nurses to contribute to decision making processes. Creating a platform for specialist nurses outside their own sector will also help raise their social profile as experts. Finally, we should **keep the door open** for other areas of opportunity to support them, as persons, and their professional work.
 - EPHA has already been engaging in these activities, which have included
 - **promoting** ESNO’s Infection Prevention and Control Focus Group launch and recent publications¹ through our communication channels;
 - **advocating** for the welfare of health professionals to be included in policy recommendations of the European Parliament’s special committee, set up to reflect on the impact of COVID-19²;
 - and **co-signing** with ESNO, and other organisations, a position paper in response to the European Commission’s Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe.³
- **To conclude, on behalf of EPHA, I look forward to participating further in this conversation and continuing to strengthen the bond between nurses, the wider health sector, and civil society, throughout the Decade of the Specialist Nurse and beyond.**

Thank you again for this opportunity to mark this occasion with you today.

Milka Sokolovic, Director General

¹ [Launch of ESNO Focus Group: AMR, Vaccination & Infection Prevention - EPHA](#)

² [European Parliament’s special committee on COVID-19 is an opportunity to drive health equity forward - EPHA](#)

³ [Position-paper-on-pharma-strategy-20.pdf \(epha.org\)](#)