

EN

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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi  
on behalf of the European Commission  
(26.5.2026)

Nurse shortages and more broadly health workforce shortages are an important challenge, requiring action in line with the division of competences in the EU. According to Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU<sup>1</sup>, Member States are responsible for the management of health services, which includes ensuring adequate staffing levels.

The Commission supports Member States in addressing health workforce challenges, including those related to nurses, notably through knowledge sharing and technical assistance. For example, the EU4Health Programme funds initiatives addressing workforce challenges<sup>2</sup>, including the Nursing Action<sup>3</sup> implemented in partnership with World Health Organization/Europe, which supports countries in developing effective recruitment and retention strategies. The technical brief<sup>4</sup> referred to by the Honourable Members is a deliverable of this EU action, highlighting participating countries' experiences.

This work also adds to that of the Commission's Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSPA)<sup>5</sup>. The group has mapped approaches to safe staffing levels across all health professions, including but not only nurses, and is foreseen to publish a report to further support the exchange of experiences.

To facilitate mobility across the EU, the Professional Qualifications Directive<sup>6</sup> sets out the rules on recognition of professional qualifications obtained in the EU and harmonises minimum training requirements for nurses responsible for general care. The upcoming Skills Portability Initiative<sup>7</sup> aims at modernising and speeding up the processes for EU citizens and introducing common rules on recognition to attract talent from third countries<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.agenas.gov.it/ricerca-e-sviluppo/ricerca-internazionale/personale-sanitario-ri/heroes-health-workforce-to-meet-health-challenges>; [https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/2022-eu4health-work-programme\\_en](https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/2022-eu4health-work-programme_en); <https://www.amreducecare.eu/>; <https://eh4future.eu/>; <https://gesea.eu/>; <https://digicantrain.turkuamk.fi/contact-us/>; <https://ddsmmap.webbaysolutions.com/>; <https://ehma.org/projects/transition>; <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2025-12709-52483-81031>; <https://bewell-project.eu/>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.who.int/europe/activities/partnering-with-the-eu-to-support-nurses-in-the-european-union-\(nursing-action\)](https://www.who.int/europe/activities/partnering-with-the-eu-to-support-nurses-in-the-european-union-(nursing-action)).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2026-13146-52920-82459>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-systems-performance-assessment\\_en](https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-systems-performance-assessment_en).

<sup>6</sup> Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications (latest consolidated version from 29/10/2025 available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02005L0036-20251029>).

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/15892-Skills-portability-action-1-facilitating-worker-mobility-across-the-EU-through-skills-transparency-and-digitalisation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/15892-Skills-portability-action-1-facilitating-worker-mobility-across-the-EU-through-skills-transparency-and-digitalisation_en).

<sup>8</sup> [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-seeks-views-skills-portability-initiative-2025-12-05\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-seeks-views-skills-portability-initiative-2025-12-05_en).