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To Minister of Health, Prof. Orazio Schillaci
Minister of Economy and Finance
Presidency of the Council of Ministers
Department of Regional Affairs and Autonomies
Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces, President Massimiliano Fedriga

CC President of the Council of Ministers Giorgia Meloni
Federazione Ordini delle Professioni Infermieristiche
Consociazione Nazionale Associazioni Infermiere/i

Brussels, 16 September 2024

Concern: Request to suspend the approval process for Agreements regarding the revision of the Healthcare Assistant profile and the establishment of the Assistant Nurse professional profile (Protocol DAR 0013420 P-4.37.2.10 of 08/08/2024 of the Department for Regional Affairs and Autonomies).

Dear Ministers and Presidents,

In all categories of health care, human resources policy in the field of health care has been underestimated and neglected in the long term. Nurses in Italy are no exception to that. Ensuring appropriate education and qualifications of general care nurses and allowing opportunities to advance the nursing profession are key to guaranteeing the sustainability of any healthcare ecosystems in the European Union.

It is therefore crucial that national governments of the European Union make sure that their healthcare systems have the necessary nursing workforce, with the necessary competences in line with the EU [Directive 2005/36/EC](#) amended by [Directive 2013/55/EU](#), to provide high-quality and safe healthcare services to citizens and patients.

The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) has been informed by our member, the Italian Nurses Association (CNAI), that there are ongoing discussions at the Italian Government level to introduce 'Assistant Nurse' (Assistente infermiere) role through a new proposed law, supported by the nurse regulator FNOPI. While understanding the urgency to address the shortage of healthcare professionals, the EFN believes this proposal is unacceptable as it risks providing a solution that is worse than the problem, leading to serious consequences for care quality and patient safety. The EFN, representing 3 million nurses within the EU, through 36 National Nurses Associations, and being the independent voice of the nursing profession at EU level, is therefore very much concerned with this proposal going forward.

If we want resilient healthcare systems in the EU and be better prepared for the next health crisis, in whatever format it will come to us again, we cannot lower down the qualifications of the nurses as patient safety and quality of care are inextricably linked with the current Directive 2005/36/EC, revised by Directive 2013/55/EU, and the Delegated Act updating the Annex V. It is key to acknowledge when designing national and European policies that scientific evidence over the last 3 decades shows that the reduction of education of nurses with 10% is increasing the mortality of patients by 7% (Aiken, 2023). The development of an Assistant Nurse professional profile goes against this scientific evidence!

It is therefore paramount that the Italian government ensures the Italian healthcare system possess a competent nursing workforce to deliver high-quality and safe healthcare services to the Italian population. The nursing shortage crisis in Italy cannot be mitigated by lowering nurse qualifications and creating an Assistant Nurse professional profile, not in compliance with the EU [Proportionality Directive 958](#).

Please bear in mind that the proposal currently discussed is not in line with the requirements of Directive 2013/55/EU regarding minimum standards for nursing, and the Proportionality Directive 958, which could lead to an EU infringement proceeding. This new "Assistant Nurse" role does little to change the previous "Healthcare Assistant" role, it creates confusing terminology, presents potentially ambiguous and insufficient training, and risks increasing healthcare litigation and compromising public trust in the system due to continued references to responsibility, collaboration and supervision.

Therefore, the EFN urges the Italian government and stakeholders, such as FNOPI, to drop this proposal and work closely with the professional association (CNAI), to find constructive legal solutions that comply with the EU legislation and strengthens nursing as a profession.

There is no need to downgrade the nurses and the nursing profession in Italy and the EU.

Yours sincerely,



Aristides Chorattas
EFN President



Paul De Raeve
EFN Secretary General

