



**EUROPEAN NURSING
RESEARCH FOUNDATION (ENRF)
STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RESEARCH PLAN
2017-2020**

**NURSING RESEARCH IN EUROPE:
PROMOTING PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS**



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EUROPEAN NURSING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The European Nursing Research Foundation (ENRF) was created in 2016 (*Moniteur Belge 29 April 2016*) within the European Federation of Nursing Associations (EFN), as an extension of its activity for the promotion of nursing research.

Mission, vision, and values

Mission

The mission of the ENRF is a) To promote and encourage nursing research as a factor for professional excellence to benefit citizens' health in the EU and in Europe; b) To use nursing research to influence EU policies; and c) To promote evidence-based decision-making.

To fulfil this mission, the ENRF supports and carries out clinical and social research while promoting the training of early-stage researchers in Europe.

Vision

The ENRF's vision is reflected in three main goals: a) Contributing to the improvement of patient safety, the quality of social and healthcare services, and the development of healthcare policies and their implementation in the European Union and in Europe through nursing research; b) Promoting nursing research, supporting and facilitating the creation of a necessary, effective, competent, and motivated nursing workforce; c) Contributing to the sustainability of the healthcare and social ecosystem, including e-health services, to achieve better health outcomes.

Values

Nursing research activities should be based on the following values that guide ENRF researchers and postgraduate students:

- Innovation: nursing research as an investment in knowledge to improve health outcomes.
- Quality: commitment and responsibility for quality nursing research that can generate social advances as improvements in the quality of life of the European population.
- Transparency: nursing research as a rigorous, transparent, as well as high-quality activity.
- Humanism: nursing research as a service to society, respecting the freedom and dignity of individuals and their environment.
- Transfer of knowledge: nursing research as a tool to apply knowledge and meet the population's health needs.

- Orientation towards users and professionals: nursing research focused on the individual/user and on professionals.

ENRF strategic goals

The ENRF's strategic goals are:

- a) Promoting the quality of nursing research.
- b) Promoting education and training programmes that can be developed in the member states as a result of research projects.
- c) Obtaining funds and financial aid for research projects, human resources, and infrastructures.
- d) Establishing partnerships with Universities, institutions, and public or private organisations.
- e) Disseminating science, transferring the results of research projects to society.
- f) Collaborating with national and international research centres providing training opportunities.
- g) Guaranteeing the principle of lawfulness, as well as the principles of an ethical, professional conduct in research and knowledge management.

To achieve these strategic goals, which combines SOLP from EFN and SORP from ENRF, the Foundation's research capacity must be developed by creating a network of research collaborating centres in alliance with the EFN member associations, in order to develop synergies and increase the ability to lobby for the design of health policies, policy making, and the allocation of EU funds to projects, as well as regarding the EU H2020 research agenda and beyond.

NURSING RESEARCH IN EUROPE

Background

The spirit of inquiry and the first experience in nursing research arose in Europe with Florence Nightingale in 1850, during the Crimea War. However, it was in the United States that nursing research was most developed through the inclusion of Nursing education in the University. This connection to the academic world promoted the creation of nursing grants for empirical research. Thus, the first Ph.D. programme in Nursing Science was created in 1924 at Columbia University in New York. In 1986, the American Nurses Association created the National Centre for Nursing Research, which pioneered research in the USA, and which, years later, was consolidated by the US Congress as the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) within the National Institute of Health



(NIH). Since then, research in the United States has constantly grown. There is currently a large community of highly qualified nursing scientists and a budgetary investment of billions in research for nursing sciences, as stated in the recent NINR reports^{1,2}

In Europe, nursing research has grown more slowly and differently by country and region. It was not until the late 1940s, after the Second World War (1939-45), that the first links between nursing and the academy were established, thus laying the foundations for research. The United Kingdom was the first European country to create a University nursing centre, thus promoting graduate and postgraduate education. In the 1970s and 1980s, the number of nursing departments increased in European countries, and thus nurses' university education.

However, research activity was very limited, particularly in Southern European countries. For this reason, a Nursing Research Experts' Committee was created in Europe which in 1996 published a report with recommendations for each European Union Member State to establish a Nursing Research strategy. The strategy included the following five recommendations: (1) Creation of structure and organisation; (2) integration of research and practice; (3) research into education and training; (4) funding, resources, and investment; (5) international collaboration.

There is no doubt that the publication of this report was a historical landmark for the advance of nursing research in Europe. However, the pace of progress varied significantly between countries. It was much faster in the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries (Norway, Finland, Denmark) and slower in Eastern European countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland) and in Southern European countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy). There were many factors involved in this growth, such as the slow inclusion of research in nursing syllabi and the lack of research funding and resources.

The Workgroup of European Nurse Researchers (WENR) played a key role by promoting and strengthening for 25 years the value of collaborative research in Europe. Regrettably, the WENR was dissolved years ago.

Given all the above, it can be stated that in Europe nursing research is currently a priority for research, development, and innovation centres, as well as for many European nursing associations, such as the EFN, within which the ENRF was created in 2016 in an attempt to promote nursing research in Europe.

¹ National Institute of Nursing Research, NINR. Strategic Plan: Advancing Science, Improving Lives. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, 2016.

² National Institute of Nursing Research, NINR. Strategic Plan: Bringing Science to Life. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, 2011.

Current research challenges

Nursing in Europe is undergoing a profound change, both academically and professionally, to adapt itself and meet the new health needs arising mainly from the ageing European population, the greater prevalence of people with long term conditions, professional mobility, large migratory movements, and technological innovation.

The ENRF seeks, through research and the training of researchers, to help to promote the sustainability of European healthcare systems by contributing new knowledge for EU health policies, such as the prevention of disease and the promotion of health, including through the encouragement of healthier lifestyles; equal opportunities for all European citizens as regards good health and quality healthcare; and evaluation of dynamic healthcare systems and new technologies.

To achieve these goals, the ENRF wants to focus its activity on the following priority research areas.

ENRF PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

The ENRF Strategic and Operational Research Plan (SORP) presented here is linked to the EFN Strategic and Operational Lobby Plan 2014-2020 (SOLP). Thus, on the basis of the SOLP and the current health research priorities in the European Union, four areas of scientific interest are defined: a) Positive environments for professional nursing practice; b) Self-care: improvement of healthcare outcomes in chronic processes; c) Education and training of nurses in Europe; d) Innovation to improve nursing clinical practice.

In order to achieve these actions, it is key to prioritise them in accordance with potential priorities as established by the EFN General Assembly.

a) Positive practice environments for professional nursing

The establishment of positive environments for professional practice in healthcare is very important to guarantee patient safety and the wellbeing of workers, and thus achieve workplaces that promote quality healthcare.

According to the Position Statement on "Positive practice environments for healthcare professionals" of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), of which the International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a member, positive practice environments are characterised by: "Occupational health, safety and wellness policies that address workplace hazards, discrimination, physical and psychological violence and issues pertaining to personal security; Fair and manageable workloads and job demands/stress; An organisational climate reflective of effective management and leadership practices, good peer support, worker participation in decision-making, shared values; Work schedules and workloads that permit healthy work-life balance; Equal opportunities and treatment; Opportunities for professional development and career advancement; Professional identity, autonomy and control over practice; Job security; Decent pay and benefits; Safe staffing levels; Support, supervision and mentorship; Open communication and transparency; Recognition programmes; and Access to adequate equipment, supplies and support staff".³

Nurses, as healthcare workers, are often exposed to unhealthy work environments. For this reason, it is crucial to have work environments that promote the provision of quality nursing care, supporting positive outcomes for patients and the wellbeing of each nurse, as well as contributing to the strengthening of the workforce.

In order to contribute to positive practice environments for nursing professionals in Europe, the ENRF will, as a priority, support and seek funding to develop and implement projects through the following actions:

³ Available at: http://www.whpa.org/PPE_General_information_Sp.pdf

- Establishing the relationship between nursing staffing and healthcare quality and efficiency levels;
- Developing innovative and sustainable nursing strategies to promote nurses' safety in the workplace and biosafety;
- Implementing and assessing the impact of advanced and new nursing roles on the European social and healthcare environment.

b) Self-care: improvement of health outcomes in chronic processes

Clinical and pharmacological developments, greater access to healthcare services, and lifestyle changes have led to a significant increase in life expectancy over the last decades in Europe and globally. As a result, the number of individuals with chronic diseases increases, with most people with long term conditions having multiple morbidities. Thus, the response to chronic diseases (mainly heart problems, cancer, and dementia, as these are the most prevalent) is currently one of the main healthcare challenges for the European Union. Chronic diseases have a multiple impact: they constitute a significant limitation on the quality of life, productivity, and functionality of the individuals who have them; a heavy burden in terms of morbidity and mortality; and a driver that increases healthcare and social costs, compromising the sustainability of European healthcare systems.

Given the complexity of the health processes and their inherent challenges, it is crucial to develop nursing care and intervention plans that contribute to promote the quality of life of chronic patients, as well as to strengthen their knowledge for effective self-care of their condition

In order to contribute to the challenge of chronic diseases in Europe, the ENRF will, as a priority, support and seek funding to develop and implement projects in the following areas:

- Preventing and monitoring disease symptoms in various populations and environments, on a lifelong basis;
- Developing, implementing, and assessing innovative interventions (including technologies and devices) to contribute to the understanding, monitoring, health promotion, and self-care of people with long term conditions and their families;
- Examining the effects of nursing-led interventions to promote health and wellbeing;
- Supporting nursing care coordination to improve care;
- Designing strategies to optimise and improve the transition of people with long term conditions to integrated care, coordinated between care levels.

The ENRF will cooperate closely with EFN to understand the research evidence the EFN needs to underpin EFN political lobby objectives, and as such prioritise ENRF research activities, and generate knowledge and evidence to support the work of EFN.

c) Education and training of nurses in Europe

Given the complexity of the healthcare processes and their inherent challenges, the strengthening of Nursing education is crucial. In addition to the need to provide equivalent nursing training across all EU countries, the workforce must have nursing scientists and research competences that guarantee the future of nursing research to ensure the highest quality healthcare possible.

To this end, the ENRF seeks to improve educational and research capabilities through the following actions:

- Assessing the transposition of European Directive 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications across the EU Member States;
- Identifying and learning about the various experiences with credit systems for professional nursing practice;
- Learning about the regulations and various nursing categories across EU countries;
- Learning about the Ph.D. programmes in Nursing Sciences implemented across EU countries.

d) Innovation for the improvement of nursing clinical practice

In Europe, technological health innovation, with advances in data science, devices, and software, plays a key role in the advance of healthcare, as well as in nursing science. The establishment of new nursing interventions incorporating technological advances to benefit the healthy and ill population can promote personalised care and real-time information to patients, families, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

For this reason, the ENRF supports research programmes that, by means of technology and innovation, promote the health of the population, prevent disease, and improve clinical nursing practice. To this end, the ENRF will prioritise the following research actions:

- Designing and assessing technological nursing interventions in collaboration with other professionals (such as engineers and designers) to promote the health and wellbeing of the European population;
- Identifying the key factors in innovative interventions for clinical nursing decision-making;



- Identifying and supporting Big Data as a tool to obtain data that help to improve care by nursing professionals.