

EONS consultation on the United action for better health in Europe

Draft European Programme of Work, 2020–2025

The European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) welcomes the draft of [the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025 \(EPW\)](#) which aims to move towards universal health coverage, protect people better against health emergencies and ensure healthy lifestyles and well-being at all stages. The World Health Organization (WHO) designated 2020 as the [International Year of the Nurse and Midwife](#) to highlight their significant role in delivering universal health coverage.

- [Moving towards universal health coverage](#)

In order to move towards a **universal health coverage**, we need to invest in the health workforce empowerment (page 6). The programme should emphasise the importance of professional qualifications for all to **empower the workforce, increase mobility** and **reduce shortages** by requalifying the existing workforce towards people-centred care in the postCOVID-19 context.

The COVID-19 pandemic has showcased the importance of enhancing country preparedness and response capacity in protecting people better against health emergencies (page 10). This mandates paying attention to **building capacity** and assist in **designing processes and training staff** to enable effective communication on health emergencies and handling of rumours and false news. The programme needs to mandate towards keeping **screening programmes** open within the Region and create mechanisms to **avoid delaying treatments** in combination with other previous illnesses of the patient (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes etc). Designing process need to focus on strengthening the healthcare systems to address weaknesses highlighted by the pandemic and to ensure that patients non-COVID19 related treatments can continue during the pandemic.

- [Protecting people better against health emergencies](#)

The programme reflects a determination to **leave no one behind** by tackling health inequalities and to **strengthen the leadership of health authorities** in the Region by improving safety, reinforcing the leadership capabilities and trust. On May 18, EONS launched the [Cancer Nursing Index \(CNI\)](#), a tool designed by the EONS Advocacy Working Group to tackle inequalities in access to good quality cancer care and cancer nursing shortages.

- [Ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages](#)

Prevention is the key to ensure healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages (page 12). Promoting **healthy lifestyles can reduce cancer risk factors** (such as regarding nutrition, tobacco, alcohol, obesity, traffic accidents) and the **burden of NCDs**. We need to **strengthen the role of healthcare providers in prevention** and equip them with the fundamental knowledge and experience to work towards this aim.

Last but not least, the programme should provide concrete examples of improving patient safety and occupational safety in the workforce. [EONS Safety Manifesto](#) encourages **cancer nurses to speak up** and **avoid direct contact with cytotoxic and radiation drugs** when planning or during pregnancy. We need to encourage the creation of **surveillance mechanisms** within the European Region and Member States to supervise **safety guidelines** and the use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** in working environments.

Cancer patients have the right to receive **optimal cancer care** regardless of their of their location, gender, race, sexual orientation, or disability. We need to promote specialisation for healthcare professionals in order to **improve the status, financial rewards, and respect of healthcare providers** to attract more people to join the workforce and strengthen our healthcare systems to manage all kinds of threats. In light of the 2020 WHO designation of the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, it goes without saying that **investing in the cancer nursing workforce is essential** to achieve the goals of the European Programme of Work 2020–2025.