

EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2020©

National profile: Belgium

Introduction

In the [RECaN project](#) EONS highlighted important differences in cancer nursing across Europe. The EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2020 (ECNI) was developed by the [EONS Advocacy Working Group](#) to illustrate the development and status of this profession in Europe. The index (with scores from 0-100) includes 22 items covering the following dimensions: Education and Career Development, Patient and Occupational Safety, Recognition, Working Conditions and Impact and Workforce statistics.

The Index is based on data from the following sources:

1. EONS Survey on Patient and Occupational Safety (anonymous survey, available in 9 languages, which at time for this analysis had over 500 responses from cancer nurses in 38 countries)
2. Interviews with leading cancer nursing experts. Nurses from 38 of 42 invited countries participated
3. Work force statistics (from ec.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)

A scoring system was developed by EONS Advocacy Working Group to reflect the level of development for the different Index dimensions/items. For items with a variety of responses from the same country, the most frequently reported response was used. The purpose of the Index is primarily not to rank some countries as better than others but to illustrate cancer nursing profiles, differences and areas in need of development. The Index could be used in the development of cancer nursing in each country but also for general European progress.

Dimension/item	Maximum score	Mean score (min-max)	Belgium	Comments
Overall score	100	48 (16 -78)	75	
Education and career development (5 items presented below)	23	9 (0-18)	11	
Specialist education on university level	5		5	
EONS Framework recognized/supported by Ministry of Education/Health	5		0	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4		4	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	5		2	'Partly implemented' To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item, advanced cancer nursing roles need to be fully implemented and recognized at a national level.
Professors in cancer nursing	4		0	
Patient and occupational safety (8 items presented below)	36	18 (3-36)	34	
Safety guidelines (cytotoxic drugs) available	5		5	
Guidelines during pregnancy (cytotoxic drugs)	5		5	
Pregnant and /or breastfeeding women assigned other tasks that don't involve direct contact with cytotoxic/radioactive drugs	5		5	
Systematic testing for occupational exposure (surface swipes)	3		1	'Sometimes' To receive highest possible scores (3) for this item, testing should be systematically implemented at all workplaces.
Speak-up or whistle blower policy implemented for all members of staff	3		3	
Access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE	5		5	
Formal training before administering cytotoxic drugs	5		5	
Nurses not preparing cytotoxic drugs	5		5	
Working conditions and the impact on cancer care (4 items presented below)	20	15 (3-19)	17	
Level of adherence to European Working Time Directive (EWTD)	5		5	

Risk of negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding	5		2	'Sometimes' To obtain the highest score (5) for this item all responding nurses should have reported that there is no risk for negative consequences.
To what extent hospital beds are closed due to cancer nursing shortages	5		5	
To what extent cancer treatment delayed due to cancer nursing	5		5	
Recognition (4 items presented below)	18	8 (0-15)	10	
Does the country have a cancer nursing society?	5		5	
Does the country have a national cancer plan that includes nursing care?	3		3	
Does cancer centers in the country have Board positions dedicated for cancer nursing?	5		1	'Some centers have' To obtain the highest score (5) for this item, the respondent nurses should have reported that this is always the case.
To what extent is nurse-led cancer care implemented in the country?	5		1	'Planned' To obtain the highest score (5) for this item, nurse-led care should be fully implemented and recognized on a national level
Work force statistics (1 item)	3	1 (0-3)	3	
Number of practicing nurses/1000 citizens (www.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)	3		3	

Strengths and recommendation for improvements

Overall, Belgium (total score 75) was one of the countries with the highest total scores in the ECNI. Congratulations! Only Ireland (total score 78), the Netherlands (total score 77) and Sweden (total score 76) scored higher. For the dimension Patient and Occupational Safety, Belgium received the 2nd highest score among the 38 countries in the ECNI and received maximum scores in 7 of the 8 items. Only Germany scored higher in this dimension (score 36). Belgium would receive maximum score in next revision of ECNI 2022 for this dimension, if systematic testing for occupational exposure of cytotoxic agents should be systematically implemented. Belgium also had maximum score in Workforce statistics.

Belgium could improve the scores for Education and Career Development if Advanced cancer nursing roles and were fully implemented and if Belgium's Minister of Education/Health would support EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework. Belgium could also improve their scores if nurse-lead care were fully implemented and recognized at national level. Finally, if all cancer centers had a dedicated board nursing position, the scores would also be higher.

EONS Advocacy Working Group, August 2020