

EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2020©

National profile: Italy

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 the time of this analysis, included over 650 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 (obtained from ec.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)

A scoring system was developed by the 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, moreover to illustrate cancer nursing profiles, differences and areas in need of development. The Index could be used to aid the development of cancer nursing in each country as well as for general European progress.

Dimension/item	Maximum score	Mean score (min-max)	Italy	Comment
Overall score	100	48 (16 -78)	42	
Education and career development (5 items presented below)	23	9 (0-18)	4	
Specialist education on university level	5		0	
EONS Framework recognized/supported by Ministry of Education/Health	5		0	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4		0	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	4		0	'Not established' To obtain the highest scores (4) for this item, advanced cancer nursing roles need to be fully implemented and recognized at a national level.
Professors in cancer nursing	4		4	
Patient and occupational safety (8 items presented below)	36	18 (3-36)	16	
Safety guidelines (cytotoxic drugs) available	5		5	
Guidelines during pregnancy (cytotoxic drugs)	5		0	To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses from the country should have reported that guidelines were in place.
Pregnant and /or breastfeeding women assigned other tasks that don't involve direct contact with cytotoxic/radioactive drugs	5		2	'Sometimes' To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item pregnant/breast feeding women should be forbidden to perform task with risks for exposure to cytotoxic/radioactive drugs at all workplaces.
Systematic testing for occupational exposure (surface swipes)	3		0	Surface swipes were not reported by the Italian

				nurses. 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		1	To obtain the highest score (5) for this item, the responding nurses should have responded that they always have access to appropriate PPE.
Formal training before administering cytotoxic drugs	5		0	To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses from the country should have reported that formal training was requested at their workplaces.
Nurses not preparing cytotoxic drugs	5		5	
Working conditions and the Impact on cancer care (4 items presented below)	20	15 (3-19)	14	
Level of adherence to European Working Time Directive (EWTB)	5		4	'Most of the time' To obtain the highest score (5) for this item the EWTB should be reported as always followed.
Risk of negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding	5		0	'Yes' 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)	8	
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		0	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		0	'Not established' 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)	1	
Number of practicing nurses/1000 citizens (www.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)	3		0	To obtain the highest score (3) Italy should have >8 practicing nurses/1000 habitants.

Strengths and recommendations for improvements

The total score for Italy (score 42) were slightly under the total mean score (score 48) in the ECNI. Other countries with the similar total score were North Macedonia (total score 41), Poland (total score 44) and Russia (total score 38).

Italy could improve their scores in all five dimensions of the Index for the next revision of the Index in 2022.

Education and career development could be improved if Italy had specialist education on university level and

master's program in cancer nursing. Patient and Occupational safety could improve if guidelines, formal education and exposure testing for the management of cytotoxic drugs were systematically implemented at all workplaces. A special concern noted were that responding Italian cancer nurses reported risks for negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding. Italy could also improve their ECNI scores if advanced cancer nursing roles and nurse-lead care were implemented and also if the number of practicing nurses increased.

Italy also has lower number of practicing nurses compared with most countries in the Index. Despite this, cancer nurses in Italy report that hospital beds never close and that cancer treatments never are delayed, due to nursing shortage.

Finally, if all cancer centers had a dedicated board nursing position and if Italy's Minister of Education/Health would support EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework, the scores would also be higher.

EONS Advocacy Working Group, October 2020