

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Unethical overseas recruitment is not the answer to Europe's nursing shortages, says PCN**

Mass overseas nurse recruitment is unethical and poses potentially damaging consequences, according to Paul De Raeve, Secretary General of the Standing Committee of Nurses of the EU (PCN).

Writing in the **Journal of Advanced Nursing** he points out that many countries are competing for the same, finite resources.

"Overseas recruitment cannot be seen as the solution to the nursing shortage" he says. "It is, to say the least, unethical, and in many cases any existing surplus of nurses may be the result of an under-resourced and under-developed health service.

"The potentially damaging consequences of overseas recruitment need to be taken into account in any worldwide strategy that may be developed to tackle the global problem of nursing shortages."

The Standing Committee has drawn the issue of competitive recruitment to the attention of the European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Europe and highlighted the need for an ethical stance in the EU in relation to nurse recruitment.

It has also called for a Workforce Monitoring Forum to be set up at EU level to reliably predict future trends and needs.

"We are concerned that, if no benchmark exists to measure the nursing resource requirements to meet health service demands, it may prove difficult to assess whether particular countries do have a shortage, or surplus, of nurses" explains Paul De Raeve.

The PCN has also expressed concern about unethical practices by some recruitment agencies, including the possible exploitation of migrant workers.

"The solution to the nursing shortage in Europe, and the world, lies in a well-motivated, well-educated and adequately resourced workforce. Retaining existing staff is a very important part of that" he points out.

A number of strategies to improve recruitment have been discussed by PCN member associations. They include:

- Encouraging a level of pay that promotes equality and reflects workloads
- Creating and funding more career opportunities and ongoing education for all nurses, particularly older nurses
- Attracting returners to the profession
- Promoting family-friendly initiatives, such as crèches, childcare and more flexible working hours
- Recruiting more mature entrants and more men
- Encouraging nurses to stay in the profession through a more creative approach to continuing professional development.

“An ethical framework for nurse recruitment and retention is a key requirement” concludes Paul De Raeve. “The basic assumption must be that all recruits to nursing have the qualifications and experience required to meet the criteria imposed by European legislation.

“Addressing the problem of nursing shortages in Europe has to be tackled collectively or else some of its members will only succeed at the expense of other partners.”

The current issue of *Journal of Advanced Nursing* includes a paper on nursing shortages in the US by Heather Janiszewski Goodin, together with this commentary by Paul De Raeve and additional commentaries by Diane Wickett (Australia) and Chris Mullen (England).

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#### Notes to Editors

- A pdf of the main article and the three commentaries is available on request.
- Full reference: *The nursing shortage: a European perspective*. Paul De Raeve RN MScN MQA. Secretary General of the Standing Committee of Nurses of the EU (PCN), Brussels. **Journal of Advanced Nursing**. 43.4.
- Founded in 1976, **Journal of Advanced Nursing** is read by senior nurses, midwives, health visitors and advanced nursing students in over 80 countries. It informs, educates, explores, debates and challenges the foundations of nursing health care knowledge and practice worldwide. Edited by Professor Alison Tierney, it is published 24 times a year by Blackwell Publishing Ltd, part of the international Blackwell Publishing group.