FORUM
DECENTRALISED COOPERATION
BELGIUM-ROMANIA-MOLDOVA

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The future of healthcare:
creating value through workforce innovation

From Shared Challenges to Shared Solutions

Advancing Value-Based Healthcare Through Workforce Innovation, Task Shifting and Nurse Empowerment in Belgium, Romania and Moldova



WORKFORCE INNOVATION

TASK SHIFTING

NURSE EMPOWERMENT

VALUE-BASED HEALTHCARE

SHARED SOLUTIONS

The European Health Workforce Crisis Plan (INI Report) From Workforce Shortages to Workforce Transformation

🗓️ **2025** European Parliament commissions the report:

"The Health Workforce Crisis in the European Union: Policy Options for Improving the Sustainability of Healthcare Systems and Employment and Working Conditions in the Healthcare Sector".

🗓️ **17 September 2026** The European Parliament adopts its Health Workforce Crisis Plan and calls for coordinated European action.

Why was action needed?

📉 **1.2 million doctors, nurses and midwives missing across the EU**.

👨‍⚕️ **More than one-third of physicians are over 55 years old.**

🚨 **One-quarter of nurses are nearing retirement age.**

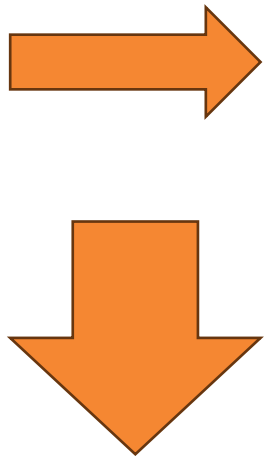
👴 **Growing demand driven by population ageing and chronic conditions.**

Sources: OECD/European Commission (2024); European Parliament (2025, 2026).

EU European Parliament Recommendations

Recommendations

- Better skill mix
- Task shifting
- Advanced nursing roles
- Workforce retention
- Community-based care
- Nurse empowerment



Expected Impact

- Better outcomes
- Better access
- Better patient experience
- Sustainable healthcare systems

Value-Based Healthcare

Sources: OECD & European Commission. Health at a Glance: Europe 2024 (2024); European Parliament. The Health Workforce Crisis in the European Union: Policy Options for Improving the Sustainability of Healthcare Systems and Employment and Working Conditions in the Healthcare Sector (September 2025); European Parliament. EU Health Workforce Crisis Plan, adopted 17 September 2026.

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Nursing empowerment and task shifting are key enablers to help health systems meet the growing challenges in healthcare.

Nursing Profiles in Belgium

Educational Pathways and Career Progression

Different roles – Different levels of autonomy – One common goal: quality care for every patient

From support to specialized care... ... a career in nursing



Healthcare Assistant (Zorgkundige)

Supportive care under delegation and supervision of nurses.

Education
- Secondary vocational education
- Additional certified training

Duration
± 1 year

EQF Level
4

Scope of practice
- Personal hygiene assistance
- Feeding & hydration support
- Mobility assistance
- Monitoring basic parameters
- Selected delegated nursing procedures

Always part of a structured care team under the supervision of a nurse.



Basic Nurse (Basisverpleegkundige)

Autonomous care in less complex situations, with focus on prevention and health promotion.

Education
- Graduate degree in basic nursing
- 3 years
- ≥ 3,800 hours theory and clinical practice

Duration
3 years

EQF Level
5

Scope of practice
- Provides nursing care according to care plans
- Collaborates with RN in complex situations
- Contributes to health promotion, prevention and patient care

Does not hold overall responsibility for nursing diagnosis, care coordination or comprehensive planning.



Registered Nurse Responsible for General Care (VVAZ)

Full professional responsibility for nursing care delivery.

Education
- Professional Bachelor of Nursing
- 4 years
- 240 ECTS

Duration
4 years

EQF Level
6

Scope of practice
- Assesses health status (physical, psychological, social)
- Establishes nursing diagnoses
- Develops & evaluates care plans
- Coordinates and supervises care
- Delegates nursing activities
- Performs and supervises technical procedures
- Health education & promotion
- Palliative and end-of-life care
- Emergency measures



Nurse Specialist

Expertise in a specific domain of nursing practice.

Education
- Postgraduate specialization
- (variable duration)

Duration
Variable

EQF Level
6–7

Scope of practice
- Specialized clinical care
- Advanced knowledge & skills
- Often leads to professional title or competency recognition



Advanced Practice Nurse (Nurse Specialist)

Highest level of clinical nursing practice.

Education
- Master's degree (2 years)
- + recognition
- Admission: RN + Bachelor

Duration
2 years (120 ECTS)

EQF Level
7

Scope of practice
- Advanced clinical assessment
- Management of complex cases
- Clinical leadership
- Research and innovation
- Quality improvement
- Coaching & mentoring

Post-Bachelor Specializations

After the Bachelor of Nursing, nurses can pursue postgraduate education and recognized specializations.

- **Acute and Critical Care** (Intensive Care, Emergency)
- **Surgical Care** (Operating Theatre)
- **Child Health** (Paediatrics, Neonatal)
- **Mental Health** (Psychiatric & Mental Health)
- **Oncology** (Cancer Nursing)
- **Geriatrics** (Geriatric Nursing)
- **Palliative Care** (End-of-Life Care)
- **Chronic Disease Management** (Diabetes, Nephrology & Dialysis)
- **Quality and Safety** (Infection Control, Wound Care)

Many lead to a Belgian Professional Title or Professional Competency Recognition.

Master of Science in Nursing and Midwifery

- 120 ECTS – 2 years (full-time)
- Advanced nursing practice
- Leadership and management
- Evidence-based healthcare
- Research methodology
- Healthcare policy
- Innovation and quality improvement

Offered by: UGent | KU Leuven | University of Antwerp

Advanced Practice Nurse (APN)

Clinical expert, leader and change agent.

Admission: RN + Master's + legal recognition

Main roles:
- Advanced assessment
- Complex case management
- Clinical leadership
- Research & innovation
- Quality improvement
- Coaching & mentoring

Career progression from support to advanced practice

Healthcare Assistant (EQF 4) → Basic Nurse (EQF 5) → Registered Nurse (EQF 6) → Specialist (EQF 6–7) → Advanced Practice Nurse (EQF 7)

Skilled nurses. Healthier communities. A stronger Belgium.

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The Evolution of the Nursing Profession in Belgium

More skills | More autonomy | Greater impact

Same care. A bigger role.

From

Executor of medical orders

Mainly performing tasks and following instructions from physicians.



To

Autonomous healthcare professional

Taking responsibility for own decisions within the scope of practice.

Clinical decision-maker

Assessing, planning and adjusting care based on evidence and patient needs.

Coordinator of care processes

Bridging patients, families and multidisciplinary teams.

In recent years, Belgium has strongly invested in:

Expanded nursing competencies

- Broader scope of practice
- More autonomy
- Greater responsibility



Nurse prescribing

- Safe and evidence-based
- Improved access to care
- Better continuity



Advanced Practice Nursing

- Higher level of expertise
- Complex patient care
- Leadership in clinical practice



Specialized nursing roles

- e.g. oncology, diabetes, wound care, mental health, critical care
- Expert & consultant roles



Stronger nurses. A healthier Belgium.

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Initiatives to address Workforce shortages through task shifting

GAINS

- ✅ Optimized Use of Skills
- ✅ Reduced Workload Bottlenecks
- ✅ Faster Response Times in Home Care
- ✅ Increased Capacity Without Increasing Cost
- ✅ Better Care Coordination

NEEDED

- ✅ Structural taskshifting with clear legally defined protocols
- ✅ Professionalisation & Education
- ✅ Optimisation of workflows
- ✅ Innovation & technologie
- ✅ Policy and financial incentive

Examples of task shifting

Expanded nursing role (Advanced Practice)

- ✔ Routine follow-up for chronic patients (diabetes, hypertension, COPD,…)
- ✔ Vaccinationprograms by nurses
- ✔ Diabetes care by diabetes educators
- ✔ Oncology -> Nurse Navigators
- ✔ Medication adjustments within predefined parameters
- ✔ Prescribing specific medical devices and medication
- ✔ Diagnostics such as ECG, Wound-care descisions and basic examinations
- ✔ Nurse led practices (travel clinics, home care, vaccination centers,….

Interprofessional Collaboration: Nurses and Physicians as Partners – NOT SUBSTITUTION - COMPLEMENTARY

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Task shifting only succeeds when :

1. **Competencies are clearly defined**
2. **Protocols and standard procedures exist**
3. **Training is available**
4. **Organisational culture supports delegation**

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Value-Based Care enabled by Nursing Empowerment & Task Shifting in home care and primary care

- Improves **patient outcomes** through earlier intervention and continuous monitoring in home & primary care.
- Increases efficiency by allowing staff to work at the **top of their competencies**, reducing delays and unnecessary referrals.
- Expands capacity by **delegating routine tasks**, freeing nurses for high-value clinical activities.
- Strengthens **care coordination** between home care, primary care, and community services.
- Supports **preventive and proactive care**, reducing avoidable hospitalizations in chronic-disease management.
- **Improves healthcare in underserved rural areas**, where task shifting and empowered nursing roles help counteract workforce shortages and maintain continuity of care.

BE RO MD

Common Challenges

1. **Workforce shortages**
2. **Ageing of the health workforce**
3. **Ageing populations and chronic disease**
4. **Growing demand versus limited resources**
5. **Need for stronger primary and community care**
6. **Workforce transformation**

BE RO MD
From Shared Challenges to Shared Solutions
Opportunities for Belgium – Romania – Moldova Cooperation

Building Capacity Through Partnership

🏥 Hospital Twinning Programs

- Partnerships between Belgian, Romanian and Moldovan hospitals
- Exchange of best practices in workforce planning, patient safety and quality improvement
- Joint implementation of innovative care models

🎓 Education & Exchange Programs

- Student mobility and international clinical placements
- Faculty exchange between universities and training institutions
- Short-term professional exchanges for nurses and healthcare managers

👩‍⚕️👨‍⚕️ Workforce Innovation Projects

- Task shifting and skill-mix optimisation
- Development of Advanced Practice Nursing roles
- Community and primary care workforce strengthening

🌟 Leadership & Nurse Empowerment

- Leadership development programmes for nurses and healthcare professionals
- Strengthening nurses' participation in decision-making processes
- Building clinical and organizational leadership capacity

🔬 Joint Research & Innovation

- Collaborative research on Value-Based Healthcare
- Workforce sustainability and retention strategies
- Patient outcomes and quality improvement initiatives

Case study
Arteveldehogeschool
IN ROMANIA – PROJECTS IN BUTEA AND ROMAN

Different places. Same goal: better care.

Collaboration Arteveldehogeschool – Romania
(sponsored by Humanitarian Aid Hasselt)

Project Butea
Focus on improving healthcare or quality of life in home for elderly people.

Internship Home care
Hospital Emergency Room – Home for elderly people.





Examples

Development and Implementation of **Wound care** protocols

Development and Implementation of **Dysphagia** protocol

Development and Implementation of **Medication administering** safety protocol

Care creates opportunities

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Panel Discussion

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