International Nurses Day 2020



(12 May 2020) 12th May marks International Nurses Day, a day to celebrate the work of nurses around the world. But recognition of their role in our societies must not be reduced to symbolic gestures. Internationally celebrated days and clapping do not make up for precarious working conditions and low salaries. We call on governments to commit to large scale investment in public health systems.

This year, International Nurses Day has special significance. Not only has the United Nations World Health Assembly declared 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, but the COVID 19 pandemic has demonstrated more clearly than ever how vital nurses are to our survival. Yet despite this, nurses in many European countries continue to be employed on precarious contracts and receive low wages. And although nurses are on the frontline of the coronavirus outbreak, across the EU they lack adequate protective equipment.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has been made worse by a decade of austerity privatisation. As we emerge from this pandemic rebuild our societies, the focus

needs to be on investment in universal public health. Governments must learn the lessons from previous crises and stay away from failed models of neoliberlaism. We must organise our societies around the capacity to care.

This International Nurses Day, EPSU has signed a PSI Manifesto asking that when governments pay their respects to nurses, they recognise the following fundamental principles:

- The most important purpose of government is to organise society so that everyone can be cared for.
- We can no longer tolerate the perverse practice of extracting profits from ill-health.
- Healthcare must never be dependent on the capacity to pay.
- Trade must enhance the capacity of nations to provide quality public healthcare, not restrict it.

And we call on governments to:

- Work with nurses and their unions to develop public health reconstruction plans
- Remove all obstacles, including intellectual property rules, in existing trade agreements and rules that hinder timely and affordable access to medical supplies, such as lifesaving medicines, devices, diagnostics and vaccines, and the ability of governments to take whatever steps are necessary to address this crisis

Today, we demand that nurses should be celebrated and recognised not as “unsung heroes”, but as professionals who deserve the respect of all society and are worthy of decent wages and protection.

More information

WHO State of the World’s Nursing

Year of the Nurse and the Midwife 2020

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