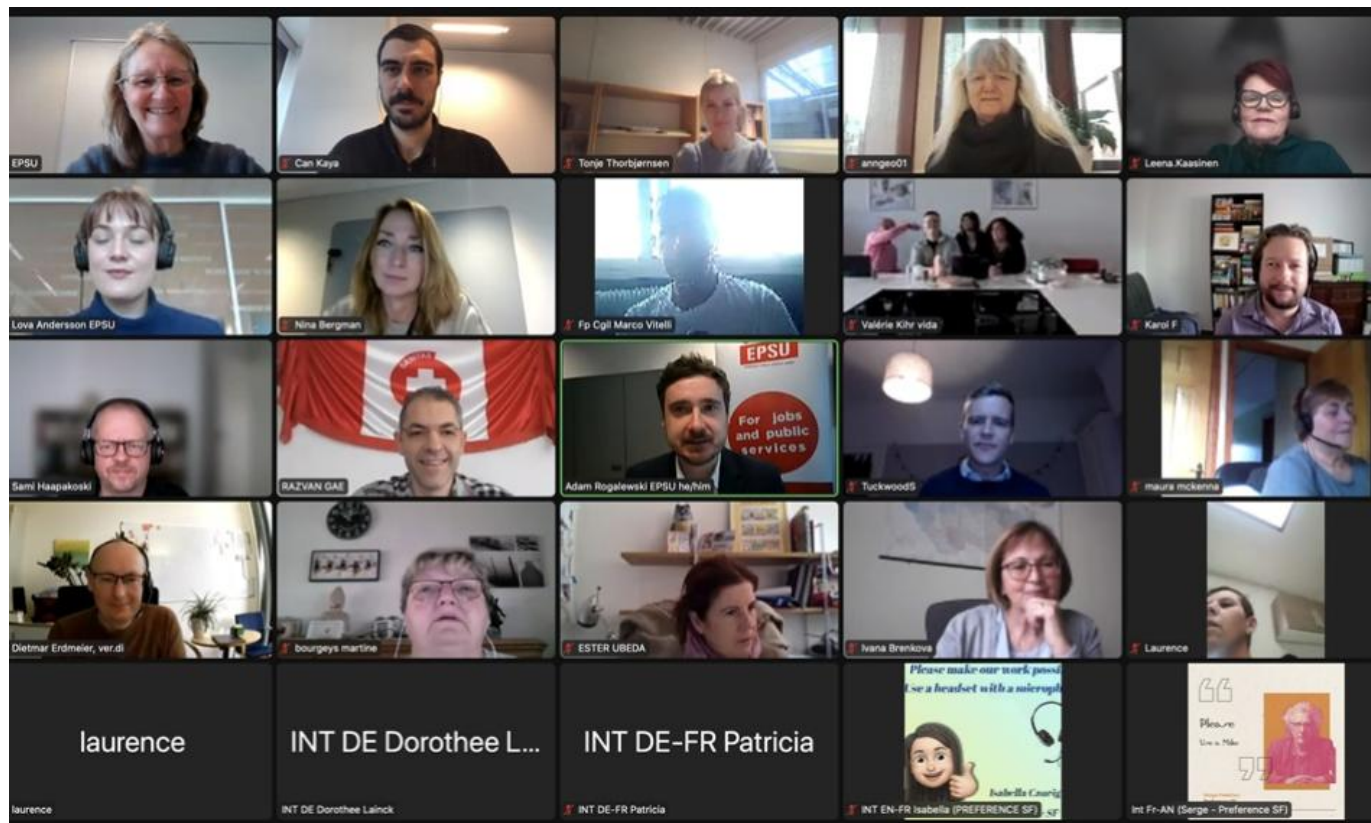


## Managing Safe Staffing levels, task shifting and wages on the agenda for discussion at the 4th Health Care Assistants Network Meeting



(14 November 2023) On 8 November the Healthcare Assistants network (HCA) met virtually to discuss ongoing issues regarding safe staffing levels, HCA wages, and the overall HCA situation in Europe at the moment. 25 members from 12 countries exchanged information and updates on activities since the last meeting in January, and participated in discussions which included a [presentation by Stuart Tuckwood from UNISON \(UK\)](#) regarding managing safe staffing levels and the current situation there.

The presentation showed a study which revealed an estimated 77% of workers said there was not enough staff to deliver safe patient care. More than 50 % of these respondents had asked employers for help, but only in 18 % of cases did the employer respond with sufficient actions, which resulted in HCAs frequently working in unsafe staffing level conditions which is harmful to both the workers and the care recipients.

Ann Georgsson from the Swedish union Kommunal spoke [about task shifting in Sweden](#), and the increasing complexity of work. The Health and Social Services act in Sweden regulates who is allowed to perform certain tasks. Some work tasks can be delegated to someone who does not normally do that task, but that is not the same as allocating a task. However, in July of 2023, assistant nurses became a protected occupational title in Sweden, which resulted in that the only work task that can be performed solely by a practical nurse now, are permanent care contact in home care. Kommunal is pushing for more tasks to be regulated in favour of practical nurses.

Karol Florek, an independent research expert, gave a [presentation on HCA wage comparison](#) between Finland, Sweden, England, Romania, Italy, Spain, and France. The initial findings conclude that the average HCA wage in both England and Romania is close to the minimum wage range. There is a big gap in wages between the public and private sector in both Italy and Spain. Finland has the largest pay slope and integration of HCA into the nursing profession, while Sweden that has a similar structure has lower pay with a flatter slope. The network agreed that it would be useful to add a benchmark such as male dominated professions as well as the spending power or cost of living, to give the data an extra dimension.

Finally, as the last time the network met in person was in 2020, the possibility of an all-day in person meeting in the Autumn of 2024 was discussed and agreed.

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