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Registration Number
NGO0476.356.013

Ministry of Health
Palackého náměstí 4, 128 01 Praha 2
Czech Republic

Brussels, 25 August 2014

Nurses education in Czech Republic

Dear Mr Svatopluk Němeček,
Dear Mr Josef Vymazal,
Dear Ms Alena Šmídová,

The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) is aware of discussions at political level in your country to explore the possibility of returning the nursing education to the secondary level in Czech Republic, which will put at stake the future of nursing!

As the nurses' voice at EU level, representing National Nursing Associations from 34 European countries, and working to ensure a highly qualified and competent nursing workforce in order to deliver high quality care health service in the EU, the EFN is extremely worried about the implications that your political intentions will have on the nursing profession and the health workforce as a whole.

During the negotiations of Directive 2005/36/EC, amended by Directive 2013/55/EU, the nurses' education was highly debated and it was acknowledged that although there are different education systems in Europe, the importance of starting studies with enough maturity is a precondition to acquire vital nursing competences in an increasingly complex health care system. The reality is that the large majority of Member States have already set mechanisms for ensuring a minimum of 12 years general education or equivalent for the admission to nursing education for nurses responsible for general care and mostly all of them teach nursing at university level. If your government goes back and lowers the education system for nurses, it will cause a tremendous downturn for women in society!

Furthermore, scientific evidence shows that increasing the entry requirement for nursing education leads to better recruitment rates, major attractiveness of the profession and last but certainly not least, better patient outcomes (EFN Evidence Report on Nurse Education, 2012). This evidence mainly comes from Linda Aiken's studies which explains that *"every 10% increase in bachelor's nurses is associated with a 7% reduction in the odds of patients dying concluding that*

higher education of nurses correlated with lower mortality” (results from RN4CAST, Linda Aiken et al, 2012).

It would be unacceptable that Czech Republic enters the discussion of lowering their nurses' education, even more now that Directive 2005/36/EC, amended by Directive 2013/55/EU and which has to be implemented by January 2016, imposes very high requirements and competences that lower qualified nurses would not be able to meet, and as such, would not be able to freely move in the EU and have their qualifications recognised. Should these political intentions go further, we will be obliged to ask the European Commission to evaluate in detail whether nurses in Czech Republic comply with the European Directive.

Keeping nurses educated at university level is in the interest of the entire healthcare sector as well as patients! Do not give up on what you have done well over the years!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. De Raeve', with a large, sweeping flourish on the left side.

Paul De Raeve
EFN General Secretary