

EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2022-2025©

National profile: Croatia

The EONS Cancer Nursing Index (ECNI) was developed by the EONS Advocacy Working Group to illustrate the development and status of this profession in Europe. The index (with scores from 0-100) covers the following dimensions: Education and Career Development, Patient and Occupational Safety, Recognition, Working Conditions and Impact and Workforce statistics.

The first ECNI survey, conducted in 2020, gathered responses from more than 650 cancer nurses across 42 European countries. ECNI 2020 offered a unique overview of the status of cancer nursing across Europe, highlighting both common challenges and country-specific variations. The data have since been presented at multiple international meetings and used to support advocacy for improved education, safety, and recognition of cancer nurses. In 2022, the ECNI 2022 update gathered responses from 630 nurses in 29 countries. This iteration placed greater focus on local workplace settings and included additional questions addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and staffing levels. The ECNI 2025 builds on the 2022 findings with a special focus on working conditions and safety in cancer nursing, both key concerns raised in previous editions.

The Index is based on:

1. EONS Survey on Patient and Occupational Safety (anonymous survey among cancer nurses, 2025 respectively)
2. Work force statistics (obtained from ec.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD in 2023).

A scoring system was developed to reflect the level of development for the different Index dimensions/items. For items with a variety of responses from the same country, the most frequently reported response was used. The purpose of the Index is primarily not to rank some countries as better than others, moreover, to illustrate cancer nursing profiles, differences and areas in need of development. The Index could be used to aid the development of cancer nursing in each country as well as for general European progress. The ECNI offers a snapshot of the status in cancer nursing across Europe, reported by the profession. The results largely depend on number of and profiles of responses from each country.

More information on ECNI including national profiles for each county can be found on

<https://www.cancernurse.eu/ecni>

Dimension/item	Maximum score	Score 2022	Score 2025	Comments
OVERALL SCORES	100	42	47	
EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVEOPMENT	23	4	4	

(5 items presented below)				
Specialist education at university level	5	0	0	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4	3	2	
Professors in cancer nursing	4	0	0	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	4	1	2	
EONS Cancer Nursing Framework recognized and supported	5	0	0	
PATIENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY (8 items presented below)	36	12	20	
Safety guidelines (hazardous drugs) available	5	2	5	All responding nurses reported that guidelines are in place at all workplaces.
Guidelines during pregnancy (hazardous drugs)	5	2	0	To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses should have reported that guidelines are in place at all workplaces.
Pregnant and /or breastfeeding women assigned other tasks that don't involve direct contact with cytotoxic/radioactive drugs	5	2	5	All responding nurses reported that pregnant/breast feeding women are forbidden to perform task with risks for exposure to cytotoxic/radioactive drugs at all workplaces.
Systematic testing for occupational exposure (surface swipes)	3	0	0	Systematic occupational exposure monitoring remains unavailable.
Access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE	5	1	5	All responding nurses reported that cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE are available at all workplaces.
Introductory training before administering hazardous drugs	5	2	0	To obtain the highest score (5) for this item, formal education should have been reported by all responding nurses to be obligatory before managing cytotoxic drugs at all workplaces.
Nurses preparing cytotoxic drugs	5	3	5	'It never happens'
Speak-up or whistle blower policy implemented for all members of staff	3	0	0	
RECOGNITION (4 items presented below)	18	10	7	
Does the country have a national cancer plan that includes nursing care?	3	3	3	
Does your workplace/center have Board positions dedicated for cancer nursing?	5	1	1	
To what extent is nurse-led cancer care implemented in your workplace/center?	5	1	0	Limited implementation reported in 2025 responses.

Does the country have a cancer nursing society?	5	5	3	
WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE IMPACT ON CANCER CARE (4 items presented below)	20	15	16	
Level of adherence to European Working Time Directive (EWTD)	5	4	4	
Risk of negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding	5	4	2	To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses should have reported that that pregnant/breast feeding women do not face negative consequences if asking for alternative duties
To what extent hospital beds are closed due to cancer nursing shortages	5	5	5	'It never happens'
To what extent cancer treatments were delayed due to cancer nursing	5	4	5	'It never happens'
WORK FORCE STATISTICS (1 item)	3	0	0	
Number of practicing nurses/1000 citizens (www.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)	3	0	0	

Strengths and recommendations for improvements

Overall, Croatia achieved a total score of 47 in 2025, demonstrating modest progress compared with 2022 (42). Other countries with similar scores included Poland (total score 46) and Germany (total score 51). The results suggest improvements in several dimensions of cancer nursing in Croatia, particularly in Patient and Occupational Safety and Working Conditions and the Impact on Cancer Care.

Scores for Education and Career Development remained largely unchanged in 2025. Progress was reported regarding the establishment of advanced cancer nursing roles, suggesting some development of advanced practice opportunities. However, specialist education in cancer nursing at university level, professors in cancer nursing, and recognition of the EONS Cancer Nursing Framework were not reported. Master's programmes in cancer nursing continued to be reported but at a lower level than in 2022. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen educational pathways, academic leadership, and professional development opportunities for cancer nurses.

Patient and Occupational Safety showed one of the strongest improvements in the Index. Positive developments included wider availability of hazardous drug safety guidelines, improved protection for pregnant or breastfeeding nurses through reassignment to alternative duties, increased access to cytotoxic spillage kits and personal protective equipment, and greater implementation of speak-up or whistleblower policies. Introductory training before administering hazardous drugs continued to be reported in some settings. However, systematic occupational exposure monitoring was not reported and remains an important area requiring further development.

Scores for Working Conditions and the Impact on Cancer Care also improved. Respondents reported strong adherence to the European Working Time Directive, very limited closure of hospital beds due to cancer nursing shortages, and fewer delays in cancer treatment related to nursing shortages. Improved workplace support for nurses requesting alternative duties during pregnancy or breastfeeding was also reported.

Recognition of cancer nursing presented a more mixed picture. Positive developments included the continued presence of a national cancer plan that includes nursing care and the continued reporting of dedicated cancer nursing leadership positions in some healthcare settings. However, nurse-led cancer care was not reported in 2025, and the score related to the national cancer nursing society was lower than in 2022. These findings suggest opportunities to strengthen the visibility and influence of cancer nurses within healthcare organisations and national cancer policy.

The Workforce Statistics dimension remained unchanged, reflecting the relatively low number of practising nurses per 1,000 inhabitants compared with many other European countries.

Overall, the ECNI 2025 findings present a cautiously positive picture of the continuing development of cancer nursing in Croatia, while also highlighting important priorities for future improvement in education, professional recognition, workforce development, and occupational safety.

EONS Advocacy Working Group, 2026

