

EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2022-2025©

National profile: Italy

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 country can be found on

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

Dimension/item	Maximum score	Score 2022	Score 2025	Comments
OVERALL SCORES	100	43	64	
EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT (5 items presented below)	23	3	22	
Specialist education at university level	5	0	5	
EONS Cancer Nursing Framework recognized and supported	5	3	5	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4	0	4	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	5	0	4	
Professors in cancer nursing	4	0	4	

PATIENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY (8 items presented below)	36	18	22	
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	2	Various responses for 2025 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	2	'Sometimes' To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses should have 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	2	0	
Speak-up or whistle blower policy implemented for all members of staff	3	2	2	
Access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE	5	2	5	
Formal training before administering cytotoxic drugs	5	2	2	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 not preparing cytotoxic drugs	5	4	4	'Very rarely'
WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE IMPACT ON CANCER CARE (4 items presented below)	20	14	12	
Level of adherence to European Working Time Directive (EWTd)	5	4	5	All responding nurses reported EWTd to be followed in their working place
Risk of negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding	5	2	0	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	4	2	'It happens every week'
To what extent cancer treatments were delayed due to cancer nursing	5	4	5	'It never happens'
RECOGNITION (4 items presented below)	18	8	7	
Does the country have a cancer nursing society?	5	5	0	
Does the country have a national cancer plan that includes nursing care?	3	0	2	
Does your workplace/center have Board positions dedicated for cancer nursing?	5	1	2	
To what extent is nurse-led cancer care implemented in your workplace/center?	5	2	0	
WORK FORCE STATISTICS (1 item)	3	0	1	
Number of practicing nurses/1000 citizens (www.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)	3	0	1	

Strengths and recommendations for improvements

Overall, Italy achieved a total ECNI score of 64 in 2025, demonstrating substantial progress compared

with previous years. Other countries with similar total score were Spain (total score of 65), Sweden (total score of 65) and Finland (total score 64).

Major improvement was observed in Education and Career Development dimension, where Italy scored 22 points comparing with 3 points in 2022. Congratulations! All responding nurses confirmed specialist education, master's programmes, professors in cancer nursing, and familiarity with EONS Cancer Nursing Framework. Progress was also reported regarding the establishment of advanced cancer nursing roles, suggesting continued development of advanced practice and expanded clinical leadership opportunities. Italy could also improve their ECNI scores if nurse-lead care was fully implemented and if cancer centers were reported to have board positions dedicated for cancer nursing.

The results suggest some advances in Patient and Occupational Safety, particularly in availability of safety guidelines for hazardous drug and access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE. Continued efforts are needed to integrate specific guidelines for reducing the risks of exposure during planned/pregnancy/ breast feeding, as well as formal education and exposure testing. Total score for Italy could be higher if all responding Italian nurses reported that pregnant and breastfeeding nurses are assigned to alternative duties that don't involve direct contact with hazardous drugs, and that nurses don't face negative consequences if asking for those duties. These remain important areas for future improvement.

Finally, Italy is the only country in the ECNI25 where number of practicing nurses increased, nevertheless, the number is still lower compared with most countries in the Index. Despite this, cancer nurses in Italy report that cancer treatments are never delayed, due to nursing shortage.

EONS Advocacy Working Group, 2026

