

EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2022-2025©

National profile: Poland

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	54	46	
EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT (5 items presented below)	23	8	3	
Specialist education at university level	5	5	0	
EONS Cancer Nursing Framework recognized and supported	5	3	0	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4	0	0	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	5	0	0	

Professors in cancer nursing	4	0	4	
PATIENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY (8 items presented below)	36	19	16	
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	5	2	Implementation remains variable across 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	0	1	
Speak-up or whistle blower policy implemented for all members of staff	3	3	3	
Access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE	5	1	2	To obtain the highest scores (5) for this item all responding nurses should have reported that cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE are available at all workplaces.
Formal training before administering cytotoxic drugs	5	2	4	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	2	Inconsistent responses reported
WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE IMPACT ON CANCER CARE (4 items presented below)	20	16	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	5	2	'It happens every month'
To what extent cancer treatments were delayed due to cancer nursing	5	5	5	'It never happens'
RECOGNITION (4 items presented below)	18	11	10	
Does the country have a cancer nursing society?	5	5	0	
Does the country have a national cancer plan that includes nursing care?	3	3	2	
Does your workplace/center have Board positions dedicated for cancer nursing?	5	3	0	
To what extent is nurse-led cancer care implemented in your workplace/center?	5	0	5	

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, Poland total score was 46. Other countries with similar total score were Croatia (total score 49) and Germany (total score 51).

Poland received less points in ECNI2025 comparing with ECNI2022 and could improve their scores in all five dimensions for the next revision of the Index. Scores for Education and Career Development decreased as no responders reported to be familiar with the EONS Cancer Nursing Framework, master programs in cancer nursing or advanced cancer nursing roles. Majority of Polish cancer nurses confirmed professors appointed in this specialty.

Patient and occupational safety remains on similar levels and could improve if specific guidelines for reducing the risks of exposure during planned/pregnancy/breast feeding were reported to be fully implemented. All responding Polish nurses reported that speak-up/ whistle blower policy was implemented for all members of staff, and majority received training before administering hazardous drugs. Improvement has been noted in availability of cytotoxic spillage kits and PPE, and systematic surface swipes for occupational exposure. Sadly, in ECNI2025, more Polish nurses reported that, they are still involved in preparation of hazardous drugs, whereas in majority of European countries those tasks are performed by pharmacists in strictly controlled environment.

Working Conditions and Recognition requires further improvement, since less than half responders reported Poland having a national cancer plan and no national cancer nursing society. On the positive side, nurse-led cancer care was reported to be fully implemented and recognized on national level. Scores for Recognition would be higher if cancer nurses were invited to decision-making bodies in cancer centers.

The Workforce Statistics dimension remained unchanged, reflecting the relatively low number of practicing nurses per 1,000 inhabitants compared with many other European countries. Despite this, cancer nurses in Poland report that hospital beds never close and that cancer treatments never are delayed due to nursing shortage.

The ECNI2025 findings highlight important priorities for future improvement in all specialist education, patient and occupational safety, working conditions, professional recognition, and workforce development.

EONS Advocacy Working Group, 2026

