

# EONS Cancer Nursing Index 2020-2022©

National profile: Malta

## Introduction

In the [RECaN project](#) EONS highlighted important differences in cancer nursing across Europe. 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 results from the ECNI 2020 have been used to highlight the importance and impact the recognition of European cancer nursing. More information on ECNI 2020 including national profiles for each country could be found [here](#)

The ECNI 2022 also include data on staffing levels and cancer nurses' experiences from the covid-19 pandemic. However, these data are not included in the national profiles since no comparison data from 2020 is available. These data will be presented separately.

The ECNI 2022 focuses more on the experiences from the responding cancer nurses' workplaces (rather than the national perspective), allowing for the great regional and local variety indicated in the ECNI 2020 data. The Index is based on data from the following sources:

1. EONS Survey on Patient and Occupational Safety (anonymous survey among cancer nurses, 2020 and 2022 respectively)
2. Work force statistics (obtained from [ec.europe.eu/Eurostat](#) and OECD in 2020). When the ECNI 2022 were completed, no updates had been published so both ECNI 2020 and 2022 include the same scores.

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 current status in cancer nursing across Europe, reported by the profession. The results largely depend on number of and profiles of responses from each country.

Dimension/item	Maximum score	Mean general score 2022 (min-max)	score 2020	score 2022	Comments
<b>OVERALL SCORES</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55 (19-84)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>78</b>	
<b>EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT (5 items presented below)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10 (0-23)</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	
Specialist education on university level	5		0	5	
EONS Cancer Nursing Framework recognized and supported	5		0	5	
Master programs in cancer nursing	4		4	4	
Advanced cancer nursing roles established	4		0	5	
Professors in cancer nursing	4		0	0	
<b>PATIENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY (8 items presented below)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>20 (0-33)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	
Safety guidelines (hazardous drugs) available	5		5	5	
Guidelines during pregnancy (hazardous drugs)	5		2	5	
Pregnant and /or breastfeeding women assigned other tasks that don't involve direct contact with cytotoxic/radioactive drugs	5		0	5	
Systematic testing for occupational exposure (surface swipes)	3		0	0	
Speak-up or whistle blower policy implemented for all members of staff	3		0	3	
Access to cytotoxic spillage kit and PPE	5		5	5	
Formal training before administering cytotoxic drugs	5		5	5	
Nurses not preparing cytotoxic drugs	5		5	5	

<b>WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE IMPACT ON CANCER CARE (4 items presented below)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14 (9-17)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	
Level of adherence to European Working Time Directive (EWTD)	5		4	5	
Risk of negative consequences if asking for alternative duties pregnancy/breast feeding	5		0	0	
To what extent hospital beds are closed due to cancer nursing shortages	5		5	4	
To what extent cancer treatments were delayed due to cancer nursing	5		5	4	
<b>RECOGNITION (4 items presented below)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10 (0-15)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	
Does the country have a cancer nursing society?	5		0	5	
Does the country have a national cancer plan that includes nursing care?	3		0	3	
Does your workplace/center have Board positions dedicated for cancer nursing?	5		0	0	
To what extent is nurse-led cancer care implemented in your workplace/center?	5		0	2	
<b>WORK FORCE STATISTICS (1 item)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1 (0-3)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	
Number of practicing nurses/1000 citizens (www.europe.eu/Eurostat and OECD)	3		3	3	

### Strengths and recommendations for improvements

Malta achieved the second highest total score (78) in Cancer Nursing Index 2022. Congratulations! Only Iceland scored higher (total score 84). Other countries with the similar >70 total score were Sweden (total score 77), United Kingdom (total score 74) and Ireland (total score 72).

Cancer nursing in Malta improved from 2020 to 2022 in several ECNI dimensions. In Education and Career Development from 4 to 19 scores, since EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework became well known and also that advanced cancer nursing roles were reported to be established. Specialist education were also reported to be available on university level. Total score for Recognition doubled in ECNI 2022 from 5 to 10 scores, with nursing care finally included in Malta's national cancer plan and cancer nurses gradually invited to decision-making bodies in cancer centers.

Impressive improvement was reported in Safety (from 22 to 33 scores) - systematic surface swipes, speak-up/whistle blower policy and guidelines during pregnancy were reported to be implemented at all responding nurses workplaces. Malta achieved the highest score in ECNI2022 for Patient and Occupational Safety dimension. Congratulations!

Pregnant and breastfeeding nurses are assigned to alternative duties that don't involve direct contact with hazardous drugs, however, based on responses assessing Working Conditions and the Impact on Cancer Care dimension, they are still facing negative consequences if asking for those duties. Total score for Working Conditions and the Impact on Cancer Care dimension was lower in ECNI2022 comparing with ECNI2020.

*EONS Advocacy Working Group, March 2024*

