



European Oncology Nursing Society



EONS Guide to Establishing a National Cancer Nursing Society





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1. Introduction

Every year, 3.5 million people in the European Union (EU) are diagnosed with cancer, and 1.3 million die from it. Over 40% of cancer cases are preventable. Cancer is becoming the leading cause of death in the EU, but also one of the most noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) across Europe. The recently published Europe's Beating Cancer Plan aims to reduce the cancer burden for patients, their families and health systems. ⁽¹⁾ Cancer nurses in Europe can have a significant impact for achieving the goals of the European and national cancer plans. The European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) is a pan-European organisation dedicated to the support and development of cancer nursing. The improvement of patient safety and better clinical outcomes for people affected by cancer and their families is central to our work. EONS' mission is to ensure that all people affected by cancer benefit from the care of highly educated, well-informed and competent cancer nurses. Through our individual members and national societies, we engage in projects to help cancer nurses develop their skills, network with each other and raise the profile of cancer nursing across Europe. As an organisation, EONS strives for all cancer nurses to receive specialised training and qualifications, and continuous further education and training to keep up with developments in cancer care.

This guide has been prepared by EONS and has been developed in response to member feedback and suggestions. The document is intended to guide cancer nurse leaders to set up a National Cancer Nursing Society (or equivalent) in countries where these societies do not exist, to empower staff of existing national societies to manage their organisation more effectively and strengthen their bond with EONS. We recommend that the new societies consider using the term 'cancer nursing' instead of 'oncology nursing' to bring together cancer nurses working in different care settings and disciplines such as oncology and haematology.

It should be noted that there is no one-size-fits-all formula to successfully establishing a new cancer nursing society. Contexts and conditions may vary between countries. These conditions will largely determine what is necessary and possible on a national level. Therefore, we have focused on providing general guidelines. This guide also intends to raise the profile of national cancer nursing societies by outlining the unique role that they play in the development and empowerment of the European cancer nursing workforce.

This document aims to:

- a) provide basic information on how to establish a society
- b) help cancer nurses in the process of establishing the society, and
- c) provide guidelines on how to run a national cancer nursing society.

The possible services and (network) opportunities offered by EONS are also outlined.



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2. A National Cancer Nursing Society

2.1.1. What is a National Cancer Nursing Society?

A national cancer nursing society is a membership-based network whose goal is to represent the collective interests of their members and more generally the healthcare community. National societies play a critical role in bringing the cancer nurses' expertise together by providing a platform for members to collaborate, enabling an environment for cancer nursing as a speciality to convene and strengthen the cancer nurses voice in health care.

2.2. Setting up a National Cancer Nursing Society

There are a lot of incentives for establishing a national cancer nursing society including: transforming the fragmented structure of the nursing sector; influencing policy and/or professional development; overcoming restrictions on the cancer nursing community; serving the needs of the stakeholders and advocating on behalf of cancer nurses on specific issues.

Regardless of the specific motivations, the overall mission behind the establishment of a national society are likely to include advancing cancer care and nursing, creating opportunities for cancer nurses' engagement and strengthening the recognition of cancer nursing in their country. As a summary, principles and fundamentals for binding forces in the society together are described in the figure 1. Following these principles and fundamentals will support the successful establishment of a national cancer nursing society.



Figure 1. Principles and fundamentals in binding forces in the society.

As representatives of the national cancer nurses' community, national societies serve as a channel for a constructive voice and input into EONS and vice versa.



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2.3. Benefits of a National Cancer Nursing Society

National societies are more resource-efficient and capable of achieving greater impact for the benefit of the sector than the individual. National societies maximise resources and create a forum where diverse cancer nurse leaders can meet; exchanging knowledge and experiences, and jointly creating ideas and solutions to challenges in the sector. However, national societies need to ensure that their strategies are not competing with their (inter)national stakeholders' strategies.

There are a lot of possible benefits to setting up a national cancer nursing society. One of the most significant is that a national society provides a more cohesive, credible and powerful voice for all cancer nurses that are members of it. However, other benefits are also provided, depending on the focus, services, coalitions and networks of the national society.

A national society can play an important role in helping to strengthen the healthcare of a country by:

- Coordinating the sector demands, and creating a joint platform for engagement and negotiations, thus facilitating and strengthening communications towards national health policy, for the interests of people affected by cancer.
- Providing a platform for sharing the experience and expertise of individual cancer nurses and the ideal platform for public debate on existing and emerging healthcare topics.
- Providing a single platform for communicating with the national healthcare sector enabling effective information dissemination and balancing of power to prevent abuse.



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3. Establishing a National Cancer Nursing Society



3.1. Common Cancer Nursing Vision

It is important for a new society to have a clear vision of what it aims to achieve. The following points might be useful when preparing a society's vision, mission and strategic plan:

1. Promote and develop cancer nursing as a specialty in its own right, as well as promoting the professional interests of the group.
2. Identify a body of specific knowledge of cancer nursing in all its dimensions and aspects of care.
3. Promote, encourage, support and disseminate activities which improve knowledge and practice among cancer nurses, including courses, conferences, training exchanges and other opportunities.
4. Establish contacts with the different national and international associations for similar purposes and maintain technical, scientific and cultural exchanges.
5. Develop the objectives that serve to maintain and improve the quality of cancer care.



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3.2. EONS vision & network

EONS' vision is that cancer nursing will be recognised by the cancer community and national- and European-level policy makers as a profession with specialised training and qualifications available across the continent. Working conditions for cancer nurses will be optimal, providing a commensurate financial income as well as protecting and promoting individual well-being. We anticipate that this will produce a relatable improvement in the health and clinical outcomes for people affected by cancer. Finally, we envisage that all our members will become confident and empowered cancer nurses operating as leaders in research, practice and education within multi-professional teams.

Membership of EONS offers cancer nurses outstanding opportunities to update and expand cancer care knowledge and to exchange information with colleagues across Europe. In 2020, EONS has 32 society members accounting for more than 21000 cancer nurses. EONS has in recent years launched significant initiatives and projects to increase the recognition of cancer nursing, advance cancer nursing as a specialty, develop occupational and patient safety and support the development of high quality education. EONS has also committed to supporting the development and inclusion of Young Cancer Nurses (YCN) and encourages new societies to plan for a protected YCN position on the board of the society.

National Cancer Nursing Societies/Inter-European specialist nursing groups involved in cancer care can join or renew their membership with EONS at any time in the year by completing the online application form.

From 2020 EONS will form a fund to support the development of cancer nursing, EONS Cancer Nursing Fund. The new Fund's purpose is to ensure that all people affected by cancer benefit from the care of highly educated, well-informed and competent cancer nurses. The Fund will support activities in the following areas: Cancer Nursing Education, Cancer Nursing Research, Cancer Nursing Capacity Building and Innovations in Cancer Nursing.

In particular the Fund will amongst others, and not limited to, support projects that expand on the EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework, develop research by cancer nurses for example in to patient reported outcomes, promote capacity building through the provision of a congress travel bursary for cancer nurses from low and middle-income countries and finally, seek funds to support cancer nurses trialling innovative methods of cancer care.

See the EONS membership benefits www.cancernurse.eu/membership

3.2.1. Recognising European Cancer Nursing (RECaN)



Recognising European Cancer Nursing (RECaN) is a major project led by EONS. The overall goal is to increase recognition of the value and contribution of cancer nursing across Europe – focusing on expert cancer nursing skills, research, education, clinical leadership, strategy and management roles, advocacy, and policy development.

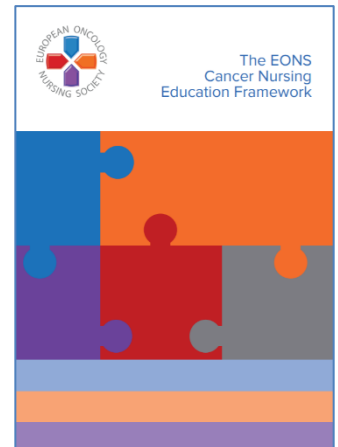
Read more: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/research/recan/>



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3.2.2. EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework

The extensive development within cancer care, the expanding roles of cancer nurses and changes in educational structures were the main driving forces behind the decision to revise, update and rename the former highly-regarded EONS Post-basic Curriculum in Cancer Nursing. The new EONS Cancer Nursing Education Framework was launched on 18 May 2018. In addition to being an essential educational tool, the Framework is an important part of the Recognising European Cancer Nursing (RECaN) project, one of whose aims is to promote cancer nursing as a specialty across Europe, based on a mutually agreed education framework. EONS members are advised to adapt the Framework to meet their specific professional needs within their country and suggestions on how to develop learning outcomes and how to link these to clinical competencies are provided.



Read more: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/education/cancer-nursing-education-framework/>

3.2.3. Cancer Nursing Occupational and Patient Safety

Cancer nurses play a pivotal role within the multi-professional team in the safe delivery and management of cancer therapies. Nurses who come into contact with cytotoxic agents during preparation, administration, nursing care and cleaning are at risk of exposure. Current practice and guidelines for occupational safety and access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) vary between countries and organisations. Cancer nurses can contribute strongly to achieving a safety culture which will reduce the risks for patients, for themselves and for other colleagues in the multi-professional team.

However, although safety is the responsibility of us all, those who have the power to effect change in cancer treatment systems and protocols must step up too: organisations need to support their cancer nurses and focus more on both patient and occupational safety, allowing the time and investment required.

EONS focuses on raising awareness on safety in cancer care across Europe. The EONS Safety Manifesto was launched on European Cancer Nursing Day 2019 in Prague. Our focus is on both occupational and patient safety.

Read more: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/advocacy/eons-work-on-safety/>



EONS Safety Manifesto – Objectives and key recommendations

Provide information to patients & their significant others and encourage them to take an active part in their care

When providing evidence-based information to patients, their significant others and our colleagues, cancer nurses can take the lead in patient safety. According to the WHO (2018) – out of hospitalised patients, approximately 1 in 10 experience harm and around half of those incidents could have been prevented. Furthermore, cancer patients are particularly vulnerable to harmful events, with 3 in 10 patients in oncology settings experiencing harm. Unsafe handling of medication is both costly and causes harm to our patients; around 15% of health care spending is wasted on adverse events.

As a cancer nurse you can involve patients and their significant others by encouraging them to tell you directly if something is or seems to be wrong regarding any aspect of their treatment and care. This is likely to reduce the risk of harm. Encourage patients and their significant others to ask questions regarding their treatment and care.

Avoid direct contact with cytotoxic and radiation drugs when planning pregnancy or during pregnancy

If you are a cancer nurse and planning to become pregnant or are pregnant and/or breastfeeding, tell your manager directly. Ask for alternative duties if you work with cytotoxic drugs, radioactive agents or with open radiation sources. You may assess cancer patients and manage side-effects, but should avoid direct contact with cytotoxic drugs, such as connecting, disconnecting cytotoxic drugs from a patient, handling of bodily fluids or dealing with a cytotoxic spillage. Even though protective clothing and following safety precautions will lower the risk, it will not eliminate it.



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3.2.4. European Cancer Nursing Day (ECND)

European Cancer Nursing Day (ECND) is celebrated annually on 18 May. ECND focuses on a different theme each year, based on EONS' strategic priorities – it is all about recognising and celebrating the positive impact that cancer nurses have on the quality of cancer care across Europe.

Read more: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/event/ecnd2020/>

3.2.5 Conferences and educational events

Every year EONS hosts educational events such as masterclasses and research workshops and, since 2018, the EONS Congress is held in partnership with ESMO. A three-day cancer nursing track covering different aspects of cancer nursing is offered. EONS General Assembly takes place in the beginning of the conference.

More information on coming events are: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/events/>

3.3.Organisational structure

The General Assembly is the supreme governing body of the society and will be composed of all partners. The society shall be managed and represented by a Board consisting of the President, the Secretary General, Treasurer, Vice President, YCN representative and the members to be determined in the statute. We recommend the society to consider in front agreement of advance the term length of Board membership. We also recommend considering a model for collaboration and use of the expertise of senior advisors following their term on the Board, or an alumni model. Each national society will be governed according to its own statutes and regulated according to national and international laws.

3.4. Action plan

An action plan is a kind of checklist for the steps or tasks the society needs to complete in order to achieve the strategic goals. The plan is an essential part of the strategic planning process and a necessary tool for planning the teamwork in the society. In the action plan, the steps required to follow the mission of the society and to achieve the vision will be described. An action plan is also a tool for regular assessment of the progress of the society. It also outlines milestones and identifies potential problems and solutions. Allocation of responsibilities is also part of the plan. A well-made action plan ensures the openness and sustainability of the society. Implementation of the plan includes prioritizing the activities of the society, a financial plan and a risk analysis. In the process of creating the action plan, use reference to other similar societies, EONS and relevant stakeholders.



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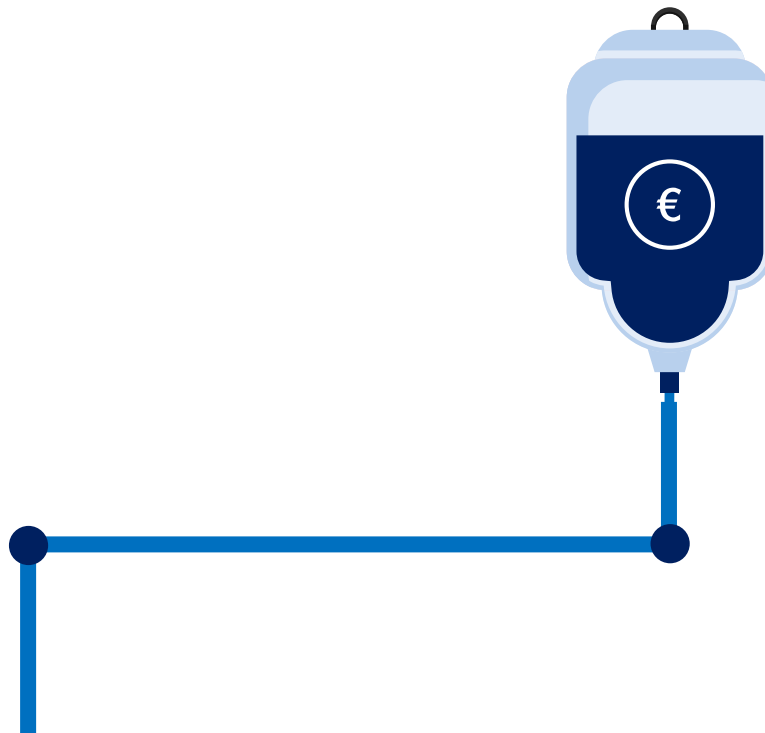
3.5. Financial resources

The economic resources provided for the development of the aims and activities of the society can be the following:

- a) The membership fees, periodic or extraordinary, set by the General Assembly.
- b) The official or private grants, donations, legacies or inheritances that could be received legally by the associates or third parties. Careful planning is recommended when private grants are received from industry.
- c) Any other lawful remedy.

All the members of the society have the obligation to sustain it economically, through quotas, in the manner and in the proportion determined by the General Assembly at the proposal of the Board.

The General Assembly shall establish the admission fees, monthly, semi-annual or annual periodic fees, as well as the extraordinary fees.





4. Operations of a National Cancer Nursing Society

4.1. Tips for starting a society

- Identify potential members and how to reach them
- Identify key stakeholders and supporters from different institutions and societies.
- Start with small networks and small-scale activities; the work is based on voluntary activity, therefore consider the workload and try to engage those who are able to commit their time to the new society.
- Document all actions.
- Communicate with interested parties: start with a newsletter and social media channels.
- Target the information about the new society at employers, nurse leaders and other stakeholders in order to reach cancer nurses.

4.2. Strategic planning

Strategic planning provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals for a society. Strategic planning is a tool that is useful for guiding day-to-day decision making, resource planning, evaluating progress and changing approaches when moving forward. It will also strengthen the transparency of the society and its operations for the members and stakeholders.

Strategic planning is a process of defining a society's strategy, operations and decision making regarding allocating its resources to pursue the strategy. It may also extend to control mechanisms for guiding the implementation of the strategy. A strategic planning process identifies strategies that will best enable a non-profit association to advance its mission and achieve its goals. The process itself is dynamic, reflecting on the changes in the operative, national and international environment. The process starts by identifying the society's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strategic planning is conducted in active collaboration with the members and approved by the General Assembly. The action plan, based on the strategic plan of the society, provides a basis for the activity of the organisation or its task groups.



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4.3. Profiling the society

Profiling the society is an important part of strategic planning to achieve the goals of the society. The society needs to be recognised, visible in the country and distinguished from other similar associations. Part of this is creating a clear vision for the society and then active promotion and engagement with national and international societies such as EONS. Profiling also requires active collaboration with stakeholders and policy makers. Branding is part of profile, see more 4.4.2.

4.4. Accountability & legitimacy

All active members of the governance of the society need to acknowledge their responsibility and accountability. It is important for a new society to be very clear how decisions are made regarding the operations and finances of the society (self-regulation of the society). These are described in the society statutes and based on national and international regulations. Concrete examples are, deciding who has access to society finances, who has signature rights, who is the voice of the society and how media relations are handled in general. Accountability is also an important part of fundamental trust. We recommend using professional support when it is possible, for example on finance management and control.



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4.5. Communication

4.5.1. Communication management

We recommend that new societies create a communication plan covering public relations, a communication strategy and visual look for the society. A well-designed website as a portal to the society is a powerful tool. It is good to have a person who takes responsibility for guiding the communication of the society and supports all the members of the society's governance and general members. It is well worth investing in the visual brand and how the society's website and media channel accounts are made. We recommend using professional support when possible. We also advise finding ways to engage members of the society in national and international campaigns.

4.5.2. Branding guidelines

EONS has created branding guidelines which can be used by the new societies.

Read here: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Branding-Guidelines-Final-Draft.pdf>

4.5.3. Social media guidelines

EONS has created social media guidelines which can be used by the new societies.

Read here: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EONS-Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf>

4.6. Membership

The members of the society are those persons with capacity to act with an interest in cancer nursing in the country and who can participate in the development of the aims of the society. Usually members in a cancer nursing society have a university degree in nursing. However, the membership does not have to be limited to cancer nurses in practice, it might also be in the interests of the society to engage researchers and educators in the field. In the statutes of the society it is determined who are the core members and other members, such as those wanting to support the cause (e.g. industry) or occasional members (for projects). Well described and planned benefits of the membership will support the recruitment of members.

The rights, duties and obligations of members will be determined in the statutes of the society.



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4.7. Campaigns

When planning the action and communication plans of the society, it is good to think also of potential campaigns the society will launch or participate in, such as EONS' annual ECND campaign. Campaigns can also be used to raise funding for the society or disseminate the work and achievements of the society.

More information: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/events/>

4.8. Advocacy

The strategic plan of the society guides the advocacy work of the society. It is important to determine how the advocacy work is done and what kind of activities the society will conduct or be engaged with.

See more on advocacy work of EONS

More information: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/advocacy/>

4.9. Evaluation

The action plan is also a tool for regular assessment on the progress of the society (see 3.2). Regular evaluation on progress towards the aims of the society and action plan will strengthen the society's work and the transparency of its operations. The outcomes of campaigns can also be assessed by the activity of the members and other society collaborations and stakeholders. It is also important to take feedback from the events organised by the society and to provide members with channels to give their feedback to society.



5. Coalitions and network

Networking is an important activity that every professional association should engage in. Nursing is team-based work, so no major and important goal can be achieved by just one association alone. For this reason, each cancer nursing society should build strong partnerships with associations, for example voluntary associations of patients, associations of oncologists and other specialties, and / or worldwide organizations such as the WHO or the CDC. These professional associations are valuable connections to an oncology nursing society and can help each society make changes and enhance cancer nursing and policy. In creation of coalitions and networks, a good plan will help the society to achieve its aims. Identify the most important national and international stakeholders and collaborators in the field. Then make contact with clear aims for the collaboration and how the stakeholders will benefit in working with the society.

As a cancer nursing society, you are stronger in coalition with EONS. We recommend all the national societies on the European continent to become members. More on EONS partnerships can be found at

More information: <https://www.cancernurse.eu/membership/our-partnerships/>



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6. Conclusions

Creating and maintaining a national cancer nursing society is not an easy task. It requires strategic planning, organization and dedication. EONS hopes that this guide will be a useful tool in the hands of cancer nurses with a vision for a better cancer nursing future in their country. Finally, EONS is always there to help and advocate for national unions (eons.secretariat@cancernurse.eu).

References

- 1) European Commission 2020. Europe's Beating Cancer Plan
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12154-Europe-s-Beating-Cancer-Plan>