



EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF NURSE EDUCATORS

FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES ENSEIGNANTS EN SOINS INFIRMIERS

Specialist nurse in Europe: education, regulation and role

A descriptive cross-sectional survey

C. Dury, RN, MSc, PhD Candidate,

C. Hall RN, PhD, FHEA,

J-L. Danan RN, MSc, PhD Candidate,

J. Mondoux RN, MSc,

M.C. Aguiar Barbieri-Figueiredo RN, MSc, PhD,

M.A.M. Costa RN, PhD

C. Debout RN, MSN, MPhil, PhD, CRNA


Background

In Europe:




Registred
Nurse

Directive 2013/55/UE



Specialist
Nurse



Advanced
practice
Nurse

**In Europe: lack of information about
SNs with regard to their title, scope of
practice, educational requirements and
regulation**

Daly & Carnwell 2003; Donald et al. 2010;

Doody 2014; Hudspeth 2009; Pulcini et al. 2010



Aim

- To describe and clarify the level of education, regulation, scope of practice and competency requirements for the SN in Europe
- To test our questionnaire and study design before undertaking a larger study

Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey

Methods

- An online questionnaire was developed
- Snowball sampling was selected to build a convenience sample of nurse educators, clinical nurses and specialist nurses, national nursing association members, and chief nursing officers from all European countries.



It was sent to 550 members of the European Federation of Nurse Educators (FINE) and 10 members of the European Specialist Nurses Organizations (ESNO).



Data analysis

- Excel® was used to analyse the responses to the seven closed-ended questions.
- The two open-ended survey responses were analysed qualitatively using a deductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs 2008).
 - The open-ended data were read several times and reviewed for content.
 - They were coded and classified into categories corresponding to a structured matrix based on the ICN Framework of Competencies for the Nurse Specialist (Affara 2009) using NVIVO10®.



Study results

The results are structured in four parts:

1. Countries and respondents' characteristics
2. SN's education: level, organization, duration, type of specialization
3. Regulation of practice for the SN: title and legal regulation
4. The results present finally a definition of the SNs and their competencies as proposed by respondents.



1. Countries and respondents' characteristics

- 85 questionnaires were completed
- 8 were rejected
- Participants included were from 29 countries.
 - All EU members were represented but six countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania and Slovakia).
 - Countries working towards accession to EU (Iceland, Serbia and Turkey); potential candidates (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Switzerland and Armenia were also represented.
- Respondents were expert in their domain; they came from various educational backgrounds and positions.



2. Nurse specialist education

1. Type of training or education level to obtain the title of specialist nurse ($n = 77$ respondents)

No specialist nurse	5
No specialist training or education, nurses gain their specialists from working in the area of interest	8
Specialist clinical training after first qualification as a nurse	33
Specialist education study at the first cycle bachelor	12
Specialist education study at the post-first cycle bachelor	33
Specialist education study at the second cycle master	32
Specialist education study at the third cycle doctoral study	13



2. Nurse specialist education

1. Organization of the programmes preparing SN

Diversity between academic and non-academic education

2. Type of specialization (top 5)

- Psychiatric and mental health
- Paediatric care
- Intensive care
- Community health care
- Operating room

3. Duration of the programmes

Diversity between countries and sometimes within the same country



3. Regulation: title and legal regulation

- 19 countries had protected titles
- 10 countries do not recognize titles
- Many specializations exist in some countries, with no legally recognized titles
- 2 countries had specific requirements to maintain the title (recertification)
- Some countries regulate general nurse and APN but not SN
- Regulators: diverse even in the same country (eg, Switzerland), regulation operated by professional organizations, national board, hospitals



4. Definition and competencies of the SN

List of the 50 most frequently occurring words of minimum four letters used in response to the open-ended questions

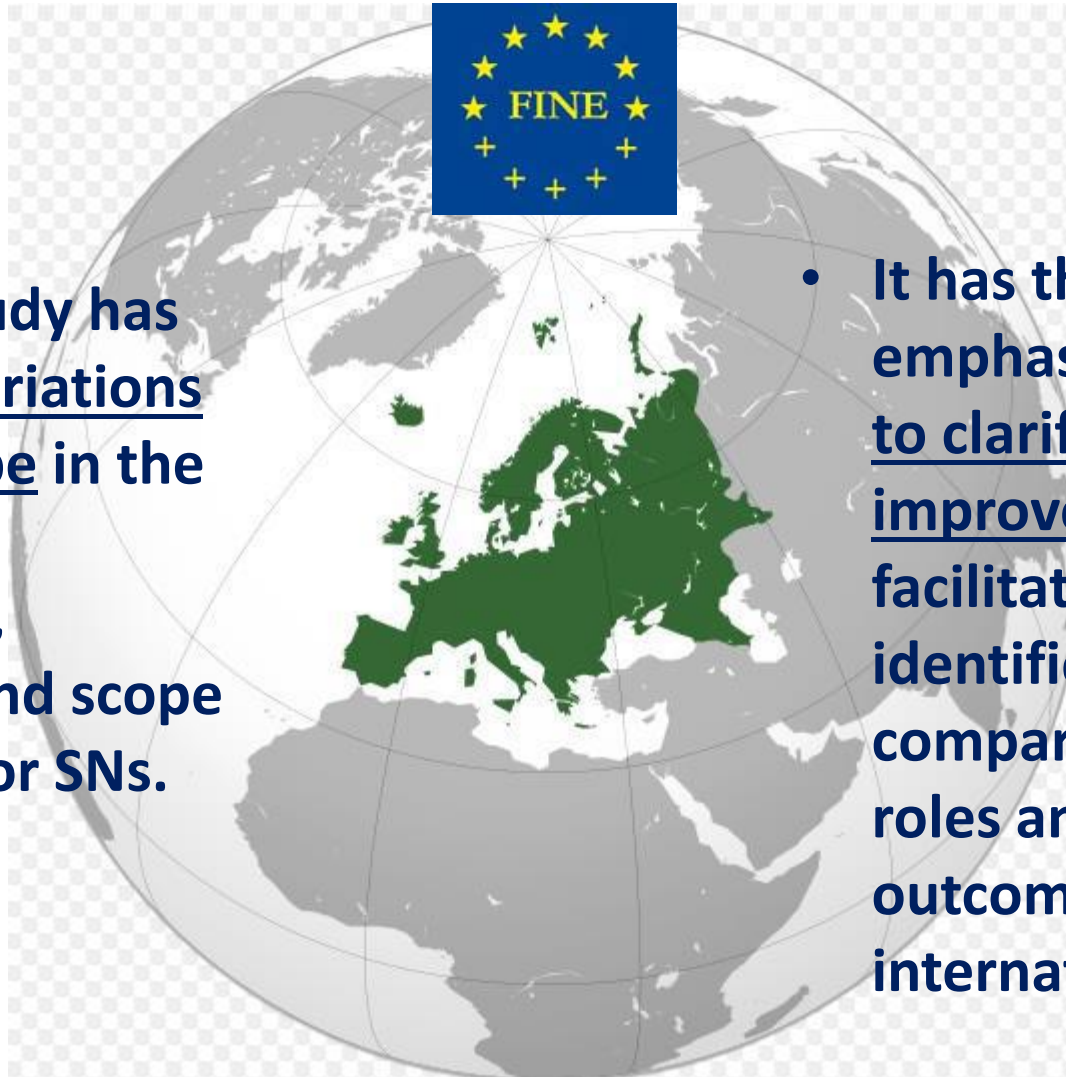




4. Definition and competencies of the SN

- The competencies of the SN were mostly described in terms of specific knowledge and skills.
- In comparison with the ICN framework for the NS, some competencies were poorly covered:
 - health promotion and interprofessional health care
 - delegation and supervision roles
- Appeared missing
 - Promotion of specialist nursing practice
 - Engagement in advocacy activities through professional organizations

Conclusion



- This pilot study has identified variations across Europe in the education, certification, regulation and scope of practice for SNs.

- It has thus emphasized the need to clarify the role and improve standards to facilitate the identification and comparison of SN roles and role outcomes internationally.

WHAT'S NEXT?



IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING AND HEALTH POLICY FINE'S POSITION STATEMENT



Implications for nursing and health policy

- The lack of clarity and the diversity of interpretations of the SN between countries do not support the development of a strong professional identity and an harmonized policy engagement to develop the profession.
- Educational requirements for the SN need to be regulated at European level in order to harmonize curricula /study programmes and promote lifelong learning:
 - The education framework and competencies could be matched with the relevant level of the European Qualifications Framework.



Implications for nursing and health policy

- Considering the absence of mutual recognition of SNs, common education frameworks based on a common set of knowledge, skills and competencies are needed to provide better care to patients and to guaranty their safety.
- To achieve an effective development of SNs, the nursing profession must work at European level to obtain equity of titles and regulation of professional development across the EU.



Implications for nursing and health policy

- MSs and governments are accountable for common policy priorities including sufficient provision of healthcare practitioners with appropriate skills and competencies “*to improve the health and wellbeing of populations, reduce health inequities, and ensure a sustainable people-centered health system*” (WHO, 2012).
- Some issues are critical to consider:
 - adjustment of specialization areas to the healthcare needs of the population in each region and country,
 - as well as harmonization of academic degrees



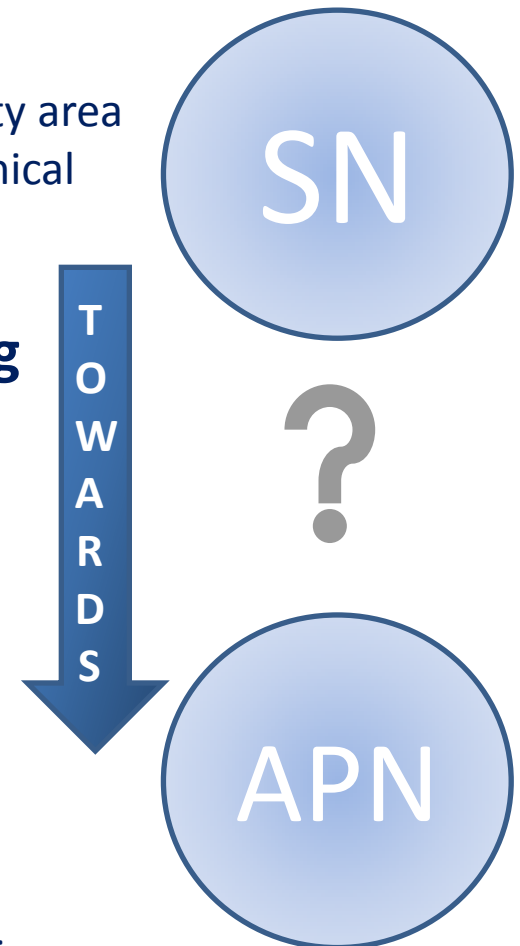
Implications for nursing and health policy

SN = A nurse

- who had completed a postgraduate course in a clinical specialty area
- who had extensive experience and expertise in a particular clinical practice area

Integrative model of Advanced Practice Nursing

- Primary criteria (education, certification, practice)
- Central competency (direct clinical practice)
- Core competencies
 - Guidance and coaching
 - Consultation
 - Evidence-based practice
 - Leadership
 - Collaboration
 - Ethical decision-making skills
 - Research
- Critical environmental elements affecting advanced practice nursing (regulation, health policy, outcome evaluation, ...)



Hamric & al. 2014



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C. Dury^{1,2} RN, MSc, PhD Candidate, C. Hall³ RN, PhD, FHEA, J.-L. Danan⁴ RN, MSc, PhD Candidate, J. Mondoux⁵ RN, MSc, M.C. Agular Barbieri-Figueiredo⁶ RN, MSc, PhD, M.A.M. Costa⁷ RN, PhD & C. Debout⁸ RN, MSc, MPhil, PhD, CRNA

1 RN-E Executive Council, Pedagogical Coordinator, Nursing Department, Haute Ecole de Namur-Liège-Luxembourg Namur; 2 PhD Candidate, Université de Liège, Liège, Belgium; 3 RN-E Executive Council Scientific Coordinator, Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK; 4 RN-E President, Nursing Director, Associate Professor, Faculté de Médecine Université de Lorraine, Institut de Formation en Soins Infirmiers, Nancy-Laxou; 5 RN-E Executive Council, Directeur du Département des Sciences Infirmières et Paramédicales, Sorbonne Paris Cité, Ecole des Hautes Études en Santé Publique, Paris, France; 6 Dean of Education, Haute Ecole Spécialisée de Santé Occidentale, Haute Ecole de Santé Fribourg, Fribourg Switzerland; 7 Coordinator Professor, Escola Superior de Enfermagem do Porto; 8 RN-E Honorary President, Coordinator Professor, Instituto de Ciências Biomédicas Abel Salazar, Porto University, Porto, Portugal

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Background: The concept of a 'specialist nurse' has existed for many years and related education programmes are proliferating. However, while literature clearly outlines the roles and practice of registered nurses and advanced practice nurses, those of specialist nurses remain unclear and varying specialisations across Europe need clarifying.

Aim: This pilot study aimed to explore the competencies, education requirements and regulation of specialist nurses in Europe.

Design: A descriptive cross-sectional survey.

Methods: An online questionnaire named 'Specialist nurses and specialisation in Europe' was sent to 550 members of the European Federation of Nurse Educators and ten members of the European Specialist Nurses Organisations. Snowball sampling was then used to build a convenience sample of nurse educators, clinical nurses and specialist nurses, national nursing association members, and chief nursing officers from all European countries. Besides quantitative aspects, responses to open-ended questions were analysed using a qualitative content analysis process.

Results: A total of 77 experts from 29 European countries responded to the questionnaire. Findings highlighted variations in titles, levels and length of education, certification, regulation and scope of practice for specialised nurses in Europe. Analysis of the promoted competencies revealed dominant clinical and technical aspects of the role with a high level of knowledge.

Correspondence address: Mrs Chloé Dury, Département Pédiatrie/ICL, Haute Ecole de Namur-Liège-Luxembourg, 37 Rue Louis Godebs, 5000 Namur, Belgium. Tel: +32 (0)4883375; fax: +32 (0)7333373; E-mail: c.dury@hainel.be

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Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.





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