

REPORT

to the

**Work Group of European Nurse Researchers
(WENR)**

**On the Feasibility of a 6th Framework Programme
Application**

By

The Pre-project Working Group

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1.0 Introduction and background

As a part of its new activities for the advancement of nursing research, the Work Group of European Nurse Researchers (WENR) published a Position Paper on Nursing Research in Europe in 2002 (Annex 1). To take the Position Paper's recommendations further, WENR discussed new avenues and opportunities. Based on the analysis of the member countries' state of the art, a need was identified for strengthening European nursing research capacity and for creating a European nursing research infrastructure, especially ¹networks of excellence. While the fostering of collaboration among European nurse researchers had been one of WENR's main goals for 25 years, this now required new and more systematic forms.

The European Union (EU) 6th Framework Programme (FWP) was brought to the attention of the 25th Annual Work Group meeting of WENR in August 2002, Geneva. The Framework was considered relevant to WENR's purposes and was seen as providing an opportunity for applying for funding to aid WENR's research capacity building objectives.

At the Geneva meeting, an observer from the Northern Nurses' Federation (NNF) offered an opportunity to apply for funding to undertake a review which could underpin an application to the 6th FWP. A small task force of five national representatives (Annex 2) was established. Its tasks were:

1. to apply for funding from the NNF 'to facilitate the writing of an application, and on the basis of all the information thus gained',
2. to consider the writing of a proposal for the 6th FWP.

In this Report, to be discussed at the 26th annual Work Group meeting in Utrecht, September 26-27, 2003, the work of the Pre-project Planning Group and the Research Assistant are described. Two opportunities for developing networks of excellence are presented: first, using the EU 6th FWP; and secondly, strengthening the infrastructure and working patterns of WENR. The latter is considered necessary for the future work of WENR whatever the results of the EU application discussions. The Report concludes with Recommendations for consideration by the WENR Work Group.

¹ In this Report a Network of Excellence is taken to mean a group of experienced researchers in a specific field; or in a Scientific Institution(s) of high standing; or the Work Group of European Nurse Researchers (WENR) itself.

2.0 The work process in the Pre-project Planning Group

The group worked together mainly through email correspondence and regular mail and by participating in two pre-project meetings, each of three days duration which were held in Farverg dsvej, Denmark.

2.1 Preparatory work

The Pre-project Planning Group held one short meeting during the WENR conference in Geneva 2002 where the work process and the content of the NNF application were decided.

- An application for financial support from the NNF was sent in September 2002 and a positive answer received by November 2002. The Pre-project Planning Group's funding was lodged at the University of Glasgow and covered travel expenses and consumables for two meetings in Copenhagen; and the 3 month employment of a Research Assistant (RA) at the University of Glasgow to work on the project.
- It was impossible to find dates to meet in 2002 given the Pre-project Planning Group's individual schedules. The earliest time that all could attend was June 2003. This was unfortunate for the following three reasons: a) the group would have to communicate by email for some months before being able to discuss together the task at hand; b) the RA had to start work before the first meeting in June 2003; and finally c) the two meetings had to be within a 3 month period which included the usual holiday period in order to complete a report to be submitted to WENR for the September 2003 Utrecht meeting.
- The job description and advertisement for the RA were agreed by email (Annex 3). In brief, the RA was to conduct and write a report of a review of the literature in relation to building research capacity with particular reference to nursing in Europe. Mark Anderson (MA) was employed on the project from May-July 2003.
- To introduce the RA to the field of nursing research, a portfolio of key documents was collected (Annex 4). Also, a list of search parameters including key words and documents was developed by e-mail between the Pre-project Planning Group (Annex 4).
- In the interim and during the Winter and Spring of 2003, the Pre-project Planning Group studied written materials from the EU in regard to the 6th FWP individually (Annex 5); and checked the official information about the 6th FWP in their own country, for example, through local universities or their research council(s).

2.2 The work of the Research Assistant

The Co-ordinator (LS) met with MA formally for about two hours weekly to plan the work for the week ahead and to review the work done the previous week. The following were completed by MA before the June meeting:

- Databases searched for relevant literature based on the parameters defined as well as other databases identified later
- The sources identified were entered into Reference Manager, a software data referencing system
- A matrix of the results (hits) of the search was created
- Wrote the first draft of an article 'Capacity Building in Nursing Research' for discussion at the meeting in June.

Before the meeting in September MA

- collected additional 6th FWP documents for discussion and distribution
- wrote a first draft of a Network of Excellence application
- reviewed highly rated UK Research Assessment submissions (2000) for evidence of capacity building

- continued to review the literature and compile the database.

2.3 First Pre-project Planning Group meeting, June 19-21 2003

One group member was not able to attend due to serious illness in the family.

- The Pre-project Planning Group shared with each other their understanding of the materials reviewed. The materials were rather difficult to read to comprehend in regard to the implications and consequences for WENR. Hence, the first two days were used to read carefully through the material to analyse and discuss its content and to decide whether it would be possible for WENR to engage in this programme (see 3.0). The members had different views on what if any participation was possible within the 6th FWP but were able to bring the discussion to the next step.
- This step was a discussion on relevant topics for WENR to put forward if a proposal should be made. Ideas were discussed in view of the requirements outlined in the EU papers and a model developed previously by Wagner (2003) contributed to the group's thinking. In addition a combination of brainstorming, the use of current research agendas and European health policy resulted in a matrix, which could act as a possible basis for a pre-project proposal (to be presented in Utrecht and not included in this report).
- The Pre-project Planning Group agreed on what areas a 6th FWP proposal could go forward on (see 3.0).
- The Pre-project Planning Group agreed to work on the first draft on MA's Capacity Building paper for the purpose of publication in an alpha-rated nursing journal.

2.4 Second Pre-project Planning Group meeting September 5-7, 2003

All group members attended the meeting.

- Work done since the group last met was reviewed and discussed.
- A final decision in regard to how WENR could be involved in the 6th programme was made (see 3.0).
- Alternative actions of WENR were discussed and agreed.
- The outline of the Report was discussed.
- The draft Capacity Building paper was discussed further in terms of the targeted audience, the purpose, the process of writing the paper etc.
- The draft final report was written, to be agreed via email.
- It was agreed, time allowing, that the Report without annexes be distributed to WENR representatives via email and prior to the Utrecht meeting with a covering letter. Representatives would be asked to read the Report and told that the Annexes were to follow in Utrecht.

3.0 Unravelling the Concept of a 'Network of Excellence'

3.1 What we thought initially

With the publication of the 6th FWP in 2002, three new instruments or programmes were announced, one of which was 'Networks of Excellence' (NoEs). The announcement by the EU of potential funding for NoEs was opportune for WENR. WENR had re-formulated its objectives and goals in 2000 and was now seeking through its evolving Action Plan, a way to develop and stabilise its core activities. WENR (2002) was a network of some 25 national nurses' associations but its financial instability, had, among other factors, precluded the development of multi-centre research projects.

Therefore this EU funding opportunity appeared to be ideal as it

- referred to 'networks of excellence';
- appeared to be aimed at capacity building and creating infrastructure across Europe;
- aimed to decrease fragmentation across Europe and looked to sustainable, long-term projects
- required a number of elements (e.g. partners, multidisciplinary) which were already contained within the WENR network;
- would provide funding to allow WENR to progress its Action Plan;
- Coincided with WENR's readiness to work towards multi-centre research.

3.2 What we learned

In order to construct a NoE research proposal it was necessary to identify, track and read a considerable volume of background material published by the EU (Annex 5). It was also necessary to have time to meet and work through this material. At the June meeting each of the Priorities within the 6th FWP were read but only Priority 7, that is 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society', was appropriate to the nature of nursing.

Then each of the two major areas within Priority 7 was read with a view to developing a 'Network of Excellence'. It was agreed that the theme 'Knowledge-based society and social cohesion' was most appropriate to nursing. Within that theme, there were two Research Areas but only one was relevant; that is 'Improving the generation, distribution and use of knowledge and its impact on economic and social development'. Of the various Topics to be addressed within that Research Area, it was the Topic 'understanding knowledge' that appeared to be most useful. Therefore:

Instrument:	Network of Excellence (NoE)
Priority 7:	Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society
Theme:	Knowledge-based society and social cohesion
Research Area:	Improving the generation, distribution and use of knowledge and its impact on economic and social development
Topic:	Understanding knowledge

The required elements of a 6th FWP NoE proposal were discussed in detail: These points are noted below with some additional comments.

1. The scientific excellence of any proposal is the most important factor.
2. The financial management required for the 6th FWP is different than that for any previous EU research programmes. It is more complex; requires previous EU experience; must be lead by one formally constituted Institution e.g. a university but not a charity or a trades

- union; involves far larger sums of money than any previously funded EU research programmes.
3. Must be large scale with at least 6 core partners and may involve many researchers.
 4. Multidisciplinarity is essential so that the nominated researchers are not only nurses but could emerge from a wide range of discipline – e.g. lawyers, social scientists, geographers, health workers.
 5. Added value – it is important to argue in the proposal that by coming together one is producing more and of a substantive nature rather than simply more and the research must make a difference which can be viewed from an international perspective.
 6. Previous EU experience required.
 7. Sustainability must be a fundamental aim which is why all aspects of a proposal may not be funded in their entirety and which are indicated through the sharing of projects, movement of staff and/or students between partners in order to build for the future.
 8. Previous collaborative experience necessary so that it's clear there has been previous work undertaken by experienced researchers.
 9. Gender balance.

In summary it became apparent that although the term 'network of excellence' was used by the EU, that their understanding of that term could not be transferred directly to the WENR network.

Also it was clear that there had to be a lead institution according to the Rules. It was beyond the scope of the Pre-project Planning Group to identify which Institution might be able and willing to take on the lead role. In any case, this would be a decision reached after considerable discussion at only the highest Institutional level and in the context of financial probity and previous EU experience.

Further, given the above, the size and scope of an application were alarming and beyond the experience of most researchers in Europe. It was clear that WENR could not be the lead in a 6th FWP application. Furthermore because the 'Network of Excellence' was a new programme, there were a number of factors, which had yet to be detailed or worked out in full by the EU e.g. financial arrangements. The Pre-project Planning Group also noted that the timing of an application was critical as submissions could only be made in response to a specific call for that Priority area; for example the second round call for Priority 7 is due in 2004.

3.3 Other possibilities

Once the preceding was taken on board and incorporated into the Pre-project Planning Group's thinking, it became apparent that other possibilities needed to be considered.

3.3.1 WENR as a partner in a 6th FWP application

While WENR could not be the lead, it could be a partner in an application led by a recognised Institution. For example the NoE application asks for a list of activities. Amongst such activities could be Dissemination Activities such as those described as 'scientific activities' in the WENR Action Plan. Thus WENR might organise a scientific conference or methodology workshops through its Secretariat which would receive 6th FWP funding to undertake the administration of the activity but nevertheless be able to income generate through the payment of conference registration fees thus ensuring sustainability of future research dissemination activities.

Likewise if WENR members were not partners in the 6th FWP in their own right, nevertheless they could participate in for instance, the exchange of students or PhD training at another Institution through this programme, and WENR could then be a partner by proxy.

The above is no way a definitive description but meant simply to illustrate possibilities.

3.3.2 WENR to be a network of excellence

As noted previously, WENR is already a network for collaboration among its member national nursing associations (NNAs). Therefore in the interim, while WENR awaits an invitation to become a partner in a 6th FWP application, it is suggested that other work be undertaken by WENR to achieve its overall aim; for example

- working towards the development of nursing research
- strengthening collaboration networks between nurse researchers
- promoting growth and contributing to high standards of nursing care.

In so doing (and in line with the Rules and Regulations), priority would be given to:

- providing a forum for exchange of information about research in nursing in countries throughout Europe
- stimulating dissemination and discussion of research findings related to nursing
- encouraging collaboration between countries at different stages of nursing research development.

Some suggestions for future networking could be:

- *Stimulating dissemination and discussion of research findings related to Nursing*
 - Short presentations on the most recent, highly recommended evidence-based research from their home country including implications on changing clinical practice or working on new methods in nursing research or developing new nursing theories. WENR could offer support to new researchers in this. This information could be distributed to NNAs as written handouts and placed on the WENR website.
 - Invited guest speaker(s)
 - Focussed workshops on topic areas suggested by NNAs and their representatives.

- *Providing a forum for the exchange of information about nursing research throughout Europe*
 - To provide information on the WENR website on NNAs' research areas/topics/nursing research groups in order to facilitate collaborative research projects
 - To review state of the art research policy topics in order to enhance Capacity Building in NNAs and the infrastructure of nursing research in member countries
 - The development of a web-based WENR Newsletter to facilitate networking and disseminate nursing research

4.0 Recommendations

The Pre-project Planning Group recommends that WENR should:

- consider becoming a partner to a 6th FWP application
- signal its interest by sending this report to each NNA within its membership
- further signal its interest in becoming a partner by disseminating this report through its national representatives
- devise ways to solicit Expressions of Interest in providing a work package within a specific theme be considered
- consider the template (Annex 6) by its representatives and their NNAs as a potential way forward to express an interest in submitting a project for a work package within the topic area
- develop a 'research platform' on its website which could include
 - a bank of research instruments relevant to nursing research
 - translated versions of research instruments relevant to nursing research
 - additional information on NNA representatives' research profile (background, interests etc)
- continue to explore and work with other possibilities e.g. workgroups, presentations, invited guest speakers; website development
- encourage collaboration between countries at different stages of nursing research development in a continuously developing network of excellence to which all can contribute.

Annexes

A Position Paper: Nursing Research in Europe (Summary)

The Work Group of European Nurse Researchers

The Work Group of European Nurse Researchers (WENR) was established in 1978 to: (1) build contact between nurse researchers from Europe and elsewhere and (2) to develop and promote systematic collaboration within the field of European nursing research. Approximately 25 European National Nurses Associations (NNAs) are involved in WENR. The working language of WENR is English with representatives appointed by the ICN-recognised NNA. WENR provides a unique opportunity for nurses in Europe to come together to discuss nursing research and clinical practice in order to build research capacity. WENR's biennial conference has provided a platform for many neophyte European nurse researchers who have gone on to be leaders in their own fields and countries.

In May 2001 WENR published 'A position paper on nursing research in Europe' in order:

- To influence European health policy;
- To embed nursing research in Europe;
- To promote the value of nursing research for the people of Europe; and
- To collaborate with PCN (The Standing Committee on Nursing) in establishing the value of nursing research.

In setting out its objectives, WENR acknowledged the importance of

- ICN's two priority areas in nursing research: 'health and illness'; & 'the delivery of care'; and
- WHO's European Health 21 (target 19) on Research and Knowledge for Health: 'By the year 2005, Member States should have health research, information and communication systems that better support the acquisition, effective utilisation, & dissemination of knowledge to support health for all'.

In its Position Paper on Nursing Research, WENR advised that the recommendations of The Council of Europe Report on Nursing Research (1996) be adopted formally by NNAs. However WENR believes that agreed statements, actions and policy must be translated into outcomes which are understandable, trans-national, capable of being put into action and take into account individual member States' interests. Therefore in considering outcomes WENR was mindful of the following:

- *the need to focus on health outcomes*
- *the need to consider how health delivery affects health outcomes*
- *the need to develop multi-centred nursing research*
- *the relationship between national and European priorities and WHO Health 21*
- *the financial impact of delivering high quality health activity*
- *that nursing does not occur in isolation.*

Therefore WENR recommends that nursing research in the next decade (2001-2011) focus on:

- **clinical outcomes which reflect the burden of disease**
- **multi-disciplinary working between all health and social professionals**
- **evidence-based nursing practice.**

Annex 2: Pre-project Planning Group

Pre-project Planning Group

- Lorraine Smith, BScN, MEd, PhD- (Co-ordinator)
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Research Assistant

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Nursing & Midwifery School
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Annex 3: Research Assistant Job Description

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

JOB DESCRIPTION

Nursing & Midwifery School

JOB TITLE: Research Assistant

LINE MANAGED BY / RESPONSIBLE TO: Professor Lorraine N Smith

ACCOUNTABLE TO: Professor Lorraine N Smith

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Nursing & Midwifery School provides leadership in Nursing & Midwifery research, education and practice at local, national and international levels. Our academic ethos is research led, facilitates the skills required for lifelong learning and has the patient/client as the focus of health care. We believe that our graduates will make significant contributions to health care in the 21st century.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES/ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE/CHART:

Currently being reviewed

1. JOB PURPOSE

To conduct and write a report of a review of the literature in relation to building research capacity with particular reference to nursing and Europe.

2. KEY TASK SUMMARY

2.1 to develop a search strategy

2.2 to liase with Professor Lorraine N Smith

2.3 to conduct an on-line and hand search effectively and efficiently.

2.4 to manage the references identified in a reference managing system such as reference manager

2.5 to write a report and make preliminary recommendations.

2.6

3. KEY TASKS

The literature review, references catalogues and written report

4 OBJECTIVES

To identify strategies for building research capacity with particular reference to nursing and to Europe

Annex 4: Capacity Building Search Parameters

Databases: reference manager

Keywords

- Infrastructure
- Capacity building
- Processes
- Developmental processes
- Research infrastructure
- Research Network building
- sustainability
- interdisciplinary
- collective research
- multicentre research
- integrated projects -

- Health Services Research
- Nursing
- Europe

Start-up Documents

- NNF application Sept 2002
- ENNO Mtg Report Oct 2002
- Building a 6th FWP Bid Brussels Nov 11-13, 2002 meeting
- UKRO Teach Yourself Framework Oct 29, 2002
- WHO 21 Health for All targets
- Priorities and Strategies for Nursing Research in Europe (LNS 2003)

- **Nursing research strategy documents**
 - Nursing Beyond the Year 2000 (1994)
 - Council of Europe: Nursing Research (1996)
 - National Part-strategy for Nursing Research 1999-2002: Denmark (2000)
 - A Position Paper: Nursing Research in Europe: WENR 2001
 - Choices and Challenges: Scotland (2002)
 - ICN Research Statement (2002)
 - The Value of Nursing in a Changing World (1996)

WEB Sites

- <http://www.icn.ch/> (ICN)
- <http://www.wenr.org/> (Work Group of European Nurse Researchers)

Other

- LS's Reference Manager List

Organising framework for Searching (MA)

Why do nursing research?

- size of the nursing workforce
- role of nurses
- evidence-based practice

Who does nursing research?

Who determines priorities for nursing research?

Bottom-up organizational approach

- training
 - who?
 - how?
 - funding?
 - Mentoring?

Top-down organizational approach

- Organisational infrastructure
- Co-ordination and planning
- Quality assurance systems
- Policies and practices

Partnerships

Community organizing approach

Historical development of nursing research

- Individuals
- Critical mass
- Research culture
- Funding issues
 - Redistribution
 - New streams
 - Structure
 - Management

Dissemination

- English language
- Own language

Annex 5: Pre-project Planning Group Documents Read

1. Bosch X. Europe streamlines approach to public-health research. *The Lancet* 2003; 361:1191.
2. Detmer DE., Singleton PD., MacLeod A., Wait S., Taylor M., and Ridgwell J. The informed patient study: Report summary. 2003; Cambridge University Health Judge Institute of Management.
3. European Commission; 2002. FP6 – Implementing the priority thematic areas of the Sixth Framework Programme. ; www.cordis.lu/fp6/sp1
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[Http://www.ukro.ac.uk/public/proposal_writing/proposal_writing_researchers.htm](http://www.ukro.ac.uk/public/proposal_writing/proposal_writing_researchers.htm)
13. Provisions for implementing networks of excellence – background document. 2003. FP6 Instruments task force European Commission. http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/instruments_en.html
14. FP6 - Integrating Programme; Priority 7: Citizens and Governance in a knowledge based society. Work Programme 2002-2003. http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/instruments_en.html
15. The 6th Framework Programme – The Basics; 2002. [Http://www.ukro.ac.uk/subs/era_fp6/basics.htm](http://www.ukro.ac.uk/subs/era_fp6/basics.htm)
16. Sigma Theta Tau International Guidelines for International Collaborative Research ; 2003.
17. UK Research Office: Teach Yourself FP6 <http://www.ukro.ac.uk/>
18. Wagner L Dialog Based Resources Allocation (DiBRA) – A Model in Clinical Care-Team Practice Unpublished Paper 2003
19. Watson R. EU could help make patients better informed. *BMJ* 2003; 326:1286.

Annex 6: Expression of Interest Template

Expression of Interest Template

Guiding Principles

- Equity of opportunity for all members
- Total 6th FWP application should involve at least 6 partners
- To be involved one must complete a written Expression of Interest (EoI)

Format

- Title of the project
- Nominated topic area
- Justification of the project vis a vis Priority 7 and the designated research topic
- Role of the partner vis a vis the overall 6th FWP application
 - Names of nominated researchers, each with a brief CV including highest educational level; recent, relevant research papers; university affiliation;
- Name and role of the designated project leader
- Nature and specification of multidisciplinary involved in the project
- Brief abstract
 - Purpose
 - Rationale of the project
 - Incidence of the problem underpinning the project
 - Methods including tools/instruments
 - Timetable for work completion
 - Ethical issues
 - Deliverables (outcomes)
 - Indicators of sustainability and future work
 - Financial requirements as related to the project and justification of the costs

Suggested Criteria for Project Evaluation

e.g.

- Quality of the science
- Ratio of novice to expert researchers across the total 6th FWP application
- Range of countries across the total 6th FWP application
- Range of partner institutions across the total 6th FWP application
- Range of projects within designated topic areas