

# NURSING ON THE MOVE

## Concluding Statement

*Communication is the essence of what we are as humans (Gerhard Polak)*  
*Culture is what remains when all else is lost (Petra Haderer)*



Nursing on the Move (NoM) is, on the one hand, a multiple and complex undertaking that has been built through the close cooperation of project members from eight European countries; but, on the other hand, it is very simple: a highly effective, intuitive and immediately practical online ‘product’ that develops and reinforces cultural competence for nursing professionals in situations of mobility.

The purpose of this concluding statement, however, is not to detail the specific characteristics on the NoM platform itself, nor even to delineate the results obtained in its extensive piloting (since such information is accessible in separate, dedicated reports). Rather, this statement will contextualise the ideas and rationale that underpin the entire development of this project, and will reaffirm the necessity and professional effectiveness of NoM’s principal objectives.

Why did we set about developing this platform?

An obvious answer is that the conventional training of nursing professionals—who act directly on the frontline of all health-care interventions with patients—does not adequately or sufficiently attend to interpersonal issues of a primarily cultural nature that affect the communication between nurse and patient. That is, too little attention is given in nursing training to the need for culturally sensitive care professionals capable of calibrating the production and reception of important health information to patterns of behaviour (ways of speaking, acting, interacting, responding, etc.), all of which may be very diverse between distinct cultures.

But the platform has also been developed to compensate for certain baseline perceptions of how to approach cultural competence and what learning actually consists of.

For instance, there is a generalised idea, not simply in health but in all areas of education, that sensitivity towards a different culture is basically a question of improving foreign-language skills. Time and money are therefore directed towards the formal aspects of language learning in the belief that this will *organically* support cultural awareness. Naturally, a certain instrumental level of language is basic to any interaction; this is a given. But NoM recognises that non-verbal communication can be far more important than speech, and consequently focusses less on formal correctness and more on what is actually being communicated in a given interaction. By understanding the cultural patterns at play, when speech is eventually brought into action it can be made far more directed, far more effective and far more accurate as regards the message that it creates (or confirms, or questions). That is, NoM proceeds from the fundamental belief that nursing professionals—like everyone else—need their attention to be *specifically* drawn to cultural issues.

Furthermore, according to certain estimates, 80% of what individuals learn is acquired outside formal education or training, generally in the workplace through practical experience.

Bearing these two considerations in mind, NoM places at the disposal of trainee nurses a language tool that highlights effective cultural interaction, and relates the content of this interaction directly to the daily work routines that nurses are familiar with. Essentially, it aims to develop the avoidance of misunderstanding. It encourages the facility of the health professional to enquire whether patients and carers are talking about the same thing; it empowers the ability to ask good questions, but at the same time, to talk less. It encourages carers to listen more, and better.

NoM is a tool that can be approached exclusively through online learning or else within the context of blended teaching. Our results suggest that both contexts are constructive, if in different ways. Above all, however, they emphatically suggest that online learning (whether direct or blended) amply supports the acquisition of cultural, language and communicative skills.

Through 25 function-based topics, each with an intercultural and communicative focus, with direct practice provided through real-life cases, NoM provides an online-learning context that is culturally dynamic, flexible and open; its content is practical and meaningful; its usefulness is direct; its focus is inclusive. Its essential understanding of culture rejects a fixed, nation-based view that is exclusive and overly concerned with surface behaviour.

In the final instance, NoM is a tool that allows nursing professionals to put themselves into a culturally communicative position from which they can successfully assess whether their interventions and decisions are in the best interests of their patients. This, we believe, is a powerful addition to the professional training and development of healthcare professionals and is one that places genuine patient welfare at its centre and not as a mere afterthought. When patients are hospitalised, fragile and uncertain, consumed with often unspoken worries, establishing secure cultural communication between them and their carers is not simply an admirable theoretical aim; it is a practical human necessity.



*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*