Mr. Timofte graduated the Post-secondary Sanitary School in Cluj, becoming a nurse at Ambulance Service Constanta, where he worked for about 10 years. Later, he worked as a nurse at the Orthopedic Emergency Service at the Constanta County Hospital. He stepped up into the hierarchy, becoming head of the Constanta Public Health Department, followed by graduating the “Victor Papilian” Faculty of Medicine within “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, obtaining his medical license. In 2004 he was elected vice-president of the Order of Medical General Nurses, Midwives and Nurses of Romania, and for 10 years (since 2008) he has been the chairman of this institution. Mr. Timofte is a member of several international professional organizations and associations and, since 2015, he is also vice-president of the European Nursing Council.

Reporter: Mr. Timofte, this is the tenth year since you have been the president of OAMGMAMR. How have these years been? How much have you achieved from what you intended to achieve? What were the main obstacles you encountered in your work? Which was your dearest project?

Mircea Nicușor Timofte: I am honored that for 10 years I have been able to meet the demands of my colleagues who have supported me on this mission to promote and protect the profession of nurses in Romania. This period was a mix of exciting experiences, challenges, knowledge gained, new partnerships, effort, but especially professional, personal and team rewards. Looking at the route travelled together, the 2009-2018 period was focused on organizational development actions, strengthening the organization structure and streamlining organizational management, updating internal regulations, and improving the flows, but also stepping up business at international level, harmonizing Romanian legislation with the European one, expanding the external visibility of the organization and building new partnerships. Following the strategic plans of the organization to which over 900 of its members participated, we can see that most of the development areas defined in the strategic documents have become, over time, important results in terms of profession and its performance.

I will give some examples:
- internal and professional regulations regularly adapted to comply with the European regulations in force;
- internal and international partnerships to provide OAMGMAMR with a development platform for both human resources and the organization itself;
- improving internal and external communication;
- a better image and public positioning of the profession;
- improving the legal framework for performing of the profession in order to ensure autonomy and independent practice;
- restructuring the Countinuous Medical Education program in order to respond optimally to the professional development needs of nurses.

Since the adoption of Law no. 278/2015 for the amendment and completion of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 144/2008 (referring to exercise of the profession of general nurses, of the profession of midwife and of the profession of nurse, as well as the organization and functioning of the Order of General Medical Nurses, Midwives and Nurses from Romania) we have become the competent authority delegated for the issue of certificates of compliance for nurses, and we have succeeded to substantially reduce the waiting time for issuing documents under the deadline set by the Directive, while reducing the number of complaints registered in the SOLVIT system.

I also want to highlight the international results of our organization: becoming a member of the European Council of Professional Qualification Organizations (now European Nursing Council) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN). They are solid platforms for proving our capacity and value at European and international levels.

We have succeeded in obtaining these results by capitalizing the human resources within the organization, developing partnerships, accessing European funds, designing programs for human resources development, with focus on cultural changes, that ensure both behaviors and attitudes according to the organizational objectives, as well as increasing OAMGMAMR's capacity to manage changes induced by external factors.

What I consider to be the most important achievement is the assertion and enforcing of professional and organizational identity. We have been constantly pursuing a culture of excellence, and it is our responsibility to the 120,000 members to be the main stakeholder in improving legislation related to the nursing profession and the professionals we represent, to preserve the heritage of image unaltered and the position which we have attain in these years and to continue to capitalize the most of our results.

It is important to continuously evaluate our strategies and approaches, always adapt responses to the needs of patients, members of the organization, and the health system. It is important to identify opportunities for organizational development and funding within the national or international framework, so we can manage the challenges of the current context.
In my career, I have had a great deal of satisfaction, both as a nurse on ambulance, in intensive care, in the surgery room or in the emergency service, but also in my later work as a Chief Nurse at the Health Department, within the Ministry of Health or as President of OAMGMAMR. It is difficult for me to select one of these, because in all places I was led by the desire to do the best I can. But all these achievements came with hard work, sustained perseverance and motivation. I would advise young nurses or those who want to embrace this profession, to work with passion and be willing to become better professionally every day, and then the satisfactions will appear.

One of the biggest challenges was to participate as the head of the working group for transposing EU legislation into national law in the context of Romania’s accession to the EU. This working group was the one that drafted the law on the performing of the profession, and the great challenge we felt was to implement the law and to build, together with my colleagues, a strong and competent organization recognized by national authorities, as well as internationally ones. We also undertook the program of equivalence of diplomas obtained before the accession to EU as a personal challenge, and we succeeded, through a complex process and excellent cooperation with the relevant ministries, to obtain automatic recognition of these diplomas nowadays.

R: We have had the new legislation of salaries for several months. How and to what extent do you think this law will prevent the migration of medical staff abroad? What do you think would motivate nurses to stay in the country or even return?

MNT: Having in mind the nurses’ responsibilities, it is normal that there should be motivational elements, such as appropriate conditions at the workplace, avoiding overloading with tasks by ensuring a sufficient number of staff, and also decent payment. As you know, this last aspect has been addressed by the new law of salaries and it is an important factor in individual analysis in the context of the migration decision.

The main source of internal motivation, in my opinion, comes from the professional satisfaction achieved by the nurse, who is at the service of the patient with passion, dedication and effort.

In the last years, the nurses’ role to participation in all levels of decision-making in the health care system has been increasingly recognized. Thus, management positions have been set for nurses at the level of hospitals, public health departments, at the level of the Ministry of Health. Also, the private practice that was regulated last year can be considered some form of career promotion and flexibility.

I would like to also emphasize the research initiatives that offer a platform of opportunities to any nurse who wants to participate in innovation in health care.

At the same time, the investments made by the Government in the medical infrastructure and in the high medical equipment may represent motivations for a decision to return to the country.

R: A lot is being discussed and done regarding the quality of the medical activity. How do you see the role of the nurse in the hospital accreditation process? What do you think is the most important progress in the quality of the medical activity offered by the nurse?

MNT: OAMGMAMR is represented within the Steering Committee of the National Authority of Quality Management in Health, where we actively participate in the development of a new set of standards for health care providers. In this context, we are working on developing a standard for nursing care plan that will record the activity of the nurse, with the aim to ensure the implementation of a unitary practice in the system.

I would also refer to a sensitive issue regarding the training of nurses since the care quality is intrinsically linked to the quality of the vocational training and the curriculum. In this context, I would like to mention the active involvement with the Ministry of Education for the adoption of the Order no. 3499/2018 on the approval of the vocational training standard, the curriculum and the vocational training for the generalist nurse level 5 of the national framework qualifications for which the pre-university education is ensured + Anexes 1-3 published Official Monitor no. 428 bis / 21 May 2018. This newly adopted normative act specifies that the clinical training activity in post-secondary education of nurses must accumulate more than half of the total hours of the program and must take place in the clinics corresponding to each module provided in the curriculum. Therefore, we try to improve the clinical practice of the nurse during training so as to facilitate there integration in working with the patients, after graduation.

The continuous medical education program is a major strategic objective of the organization, which we regularly adapt to European legislation and to the recommendations of international forum (eg the World Health Organization), to our colleagues’ training needs and to technological progress, and which we continue to constantly improve so that it meets the needs of the quality system and quality standards of care.

In my opinion, an important standard of quality of health care is patient satisfaction, which is given not only by the act of care but also by the patient's interaction with the professionals. the Romanian health system has lately been the subject of an extensive process of reform, a process aimed at ensuring the quality of the healthcare sector and the patient's trust in the health services he/she benefits from. There have been sustained actions to modernize the health infrastructure, to endowment with equipment in order to meet the patients’ expectations but also the technological demands.

Recently, measures have been taken to financially stimulate the retention of medical staff in the country and counteract the effects of the migration.

Patients’ opinions reflect the fact that an important component is still insufficiently addressed and remains deficient, namely the medical staff-patient interpersonal relationship.

The beneficial effect of the good relationship between medical staff and the patient is also seen in terms of the duration of healing. Studies show the importance of this relationship that must be based on a harmonious communication. Each person has a unique experience of their own disease, and the most effective way of healing is...
focus on the patient’s motivations, values and needs (on beliefs and emotions, as well as on experimentation). This aspect has been particularly highlighted for nurses and midwives who have a longer interaction with the patient, during her/his admission in hospital.

Given that the European health care market is an open and competitive one, and Romania annually loses significant amounts of money through the payments for the treatment of Romanian patients abroad, we consider that a concrete action for raising the patient's trust in the Romanian health system, in its staff and also the ability of the latter to empathize with the patient’s needs and expectations is an acute necessity. Providing high-quality care and ensuring patient’s safety are not only the results of the professional skills, but also of the way in which the professionals empathize with the needs of each patient, and how he ensures that the patient's dignity is maintained throughout the therapeutic protocol.

OAMGMAMR considers it vital to initiate a reflection process that sustains a policy regarding fundamental values that guides the practice of the nurses and midwives. OAMGMAMR will thus implement in the upcoming period, with European funding, a project that aims to develop a set of core professional values for nurses and midwives, for the benefit of the medical staff-patient relationship and with the ultimate goal of increasing the quality of the health care.

For Romania, the approach is innovative, because at this moment the ethical code in force for the profession of nurse and midwife acts more as a prescriptive norm of censorship on the professional and not as aspiring values guiding her/his practice.

\[R:\text{Which are the activities at European level?}\]

\[MNT:\text{At European level, the activity has to two priority directions:}\]

- performing of the commitments as a EU member, respectively the transposition and / or implementation of the European legislation in the field of competence and,
- extending the visibility of the organization at European level and building partnerships to better represent the interests of the profession on the European agenda.

In the first strategic direction, we actively participated in the negotiation process of the proposal for a Directive on a proportionality test, before adopting a new regulation on professions, a recent act adopted by the Parliament and the EU Council.

The final version of it, although not fully reflecting the concerns raised by OAMGMAMR during the negotiations, offers a balanced perspective between the need for safeguarding the health and economic objectives of the Directive compared to the initial proposal of the European Commission.

The final outcome emphasizes the specific nature of the health professions and provides to the Member States a sufficient margin of appreciation in order to guarantee the highest level of health protection when regulating professions in the field. This compromise reflected in the final version of the legislative act will thus allow Member States to continue to protect public health and to put patients’ safety first. It remains the responsibility of Member States to identify the specific approach in the national transposition plan, which takes into account the margin of appreciation granted by the Directive.

I would also like to mention the involvement of the organization in the transposition into national law of Directive 2005/36 as amended by Directive 2006/100 and Directive 2013/55 and, at the same time, the special efforts made to develop the equivalence program, the elaboration of a specific curriculum for the equivalence courses with the support of experts from the EU Member States, and our involvement during the entire negotiation process of the inclusion of the recognition for graduates of this program from Romania. We are preparing the first report on the implementation of the equivalence program, according to our commitments; the report is going to be sent to Romania in 2019.

Also, since the entry into force of Law 278/2015, OAMGMAMR is the competent authority to issue certificates of compliance for nurses, taking over this activity from the Ministry of Health.

As far as promoting the organization at European level, I would like to mention the position of President of the European Nurses’ Council, a position that I have been holding since March 2018. It is an honor and a privilege, but also a great responsibility, to represent the interests of the organization, and implicitly of the profession, at European and international level. The mandate of the ENC chairman is the proof that the aspirations for excellence of the organization are a fact and not just an aspiration. It also represents a solid platform for affirming the capacity and value of the Order not only in Europe but also internationally. It is worth mentioning that the ENC goes beyond the borders of the European Union, having as members associated organizations of the United States, Ontario and Quebec. This is a great achievement for our country.

The mandate as the President is also a recognition of Romania’s contribution to the ENC since its affiliation in 2006. The international recognition of this contribution value is certainly the most important benefit for our country, translated by image credits, prestige and external visibility. On the other hand, affiliation with the ENC brings OAMGMAMR significant benefits to the development of the nurse’s profession.

Within the new role, we have developed the ENC Strategic Plan for 2018-2022, a plan that will guide the mandate of the new executive leadership in implementing ENC’s vision and mission. The document is structured in four strategic directions: leadership and managerial reform, financial sustainability, communication and visibility, as well as international impact, with specific objectives and actions for each direction.

At the same time, at the General Assembly of the ENC, which took place in Bucharest on 12th of March 2018, we adopted the definition of nurse practice activity. This definition represents the vision of the organization’s members about the entire range of nurse’s activities and responsibilities, of all professional activities associated with the provision of self-care or interdisciplinary teams based on lifelong partnership and cooperation, centered on individual, families, groups and communities.
The health care service involves the use of clinical judgement in holistic assessment, health promotion, health education and disease prevention, care for the sick, injured, disabled and end-stage patients. In essence, we try to capture the complexity of the role that nurses have in the health system as a whole. This is an approach found in other organizations such as the International Council of Nursing (ICN) or the World Health Organization (WHO), in the context of an increasing debate about the fact that nurses are not only the largest human resource of the health, but also a vital resource that should be placed in the center of health care.

The updating of the ENC Code of Ethics and Behaviour is an action supported by our strategic partner, namely the prestigious Faculty of Nursing within the RCSI, Ireland. The mandate of the ENC, as regulator, is set out in the Code of Ethics and Behaviour adopted in 2007. Taking into account these aspects, more than 10 years after its adoption, ENC members considered it necessary to revise the Code. There are many aspects to mention about the changes proposed in the new Code, some relate to international human rights jurisprudence, a repositioning of the values that guide the practice, which are subject of the ongoing discussions. I would like to point out an international necessity, with reference to all these codes, the so-called "umbrella codes". There is a growing need to empower these codes with a mechanism to monitor the implementation of their provisions by the members themselves and to reward them for good practice, even if only declaratively, but also a warning for those who fail to do so. Thus, we have discussed about introducing into the new code the establishment of a Committee for Code Implementation to report to the management of the organization.

Last but not least, I would like to mention the cooperation with Irish partners from the Faculty of Nursing for the establishment of a European center of excellence for continuing professional development dedicated to nurses. This is an initiative of our partners in Ireland launched in 2017, in Dublin, to cooperate on the establishment of a European Center for Excellence for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) dedicated to nurses. The proposal is based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Report on Continuing Vocational Development and Continuing Education for Health Professionals in the EU (Contract No 2013 62 02 of 2013). The Center will support the development and consolidation of national CPD systems, information sharing and research to support evidence-based approaches to CPD, and will be a reference and excellence system to facilitate international recognition of CPD.

**R:** What changes would the Romanian medical system need from your perspective? What projects are you preparing for the next period?

**MNT:** The Romanian health system is affected, like all other health systems, by the challenges of the current context to which it needs to adapt. The health system needs to be adjusted in order to be more patient-oriented, health care needs to be provided through team action, multidisciplinary case management, and benefiting from technological innovation. Also, the system management must be a participatory decision-maker. OAMGMAMR supports the competent authorities in assuming the new governance model of the system. All the results so far have been achieved by discussing with all parties concerned and affected by these changes, with the widest consensus on them. The consensus is supported by the work and the perseverance in achieving the set goals.

The plans for the near future are related to the successful organization of the Head Nurses Meeting within the Romanian Presidency of the European Council in the first semester of 2019, an activity that the Ministry of Health has delegated to OAMGMAMR. In parallel, we will carry out all other activities within the organization, such as participation in the working group for the development of the law of medical professions, the updating of the practice procedures, the development of a Single Register of Nurses linked to the Ministry of Health Register, which is going to allow the extraction of real-time reporting and statistics, focusing on the data needs that underpin public policies in the field, and allow for an efficient management of human resources in the health system.

We are also looking to develop partnerships with national institutions and authorities within the upcoming period to support our profession and our members. I would like to point out here the continuation of the excellent cooperation we have with the National School of Public Health, Management and Professional Development in Health Care, Bucharest in order to implement the training programs defined by Order no. 942/2017 (reconversion, development of professional skills for general practitioners, midwives and nurses). These specialization programs aim at improving quality health care services and patient safety, by increasing the nurses’ professional performances. Also in this context, I refer to the recently concluded Protocol between OAMGMAMR and the National School of Public Health, Management and Professional Development in Health Care, Bucharest (reference no. 427/28.06.2018 and 153/11.07.2018), regarding the continuous medical education programs, specialization programs as well as training of trainers programs for nurses. The protocol also mentions collaboration in conducting long-distance education courses, so that the nursing training should be carried out in optimal conditions, allowing the professionals to carry out the current activity without any syncope.

Interview translated by Cristina Jitariu