

Citation for Branka Rimac

In 1995, during the civil war that affected the countries of the former Yugoslavia, a Croatian community in Nova Bila in Bosnia, was surrounded and cut off from a range of services, including health care. Branka Rimac was the senior nurse member of a convoy that travelled to the site and helped to establish a hospital in the church of St Francis. This project was undertaken at enormous personal risk and arose from Branka's involvement in the Zagreb Regional Group of the Croatian Nurses' Association. People of all religious and political backgrounds and all ages were treated in this hospital, with the specific aim of ensuring that further scars would not settle on the national consciousness. Branka had not only put herself at personal risk, but provided leadership in undertaking this work.

Subsequently, Branka became active in developing the nurse associations in her own country as well as with nursing organizations in Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, meeting also with Slovenia and Serbia. In 2003, the Croatian Nurses Association elected Branka as its president, and she still serves in this role. Some of her achievements in this role are:

- Negotiating membership of the International Council of Nurses, giving the Association the status of National Nurses Association
- Membership of the European Nurses Association in 2005, which opened the door to significant support for the development of nursing and midwifery from the wider professional community in Europe
- Development of firm links with the Croatian Trade Union of Nurses and Medical Technicians to enable joint working on staff development and representation
- Collaboration with the American Organization of Nurse Executives, which has resulted in yearly conferences to help in the development of nurse and midwifery leadership in Croatia
- Establishment of Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (TAIEX) workshops in Croatia in order to address the development needs of nurses and midwives in preparation for Croatia to accede to the European Union

These and other achievements are significant in a society that has suffered from the withdrawal into ethnic and religious groupings and divisions. Branka has devised systems of working across boundaries, drawing people and organisations together and achieving ownership of goals that are for the benefit of society, not simply for individual professions. She has demonstrated the highest standards of ethical awareness in pursuit of social goals that are enabling a country to build on what is good in the past and develop ways that make it part of a stronger and more vibrant community.