



**World  
Physiotherapy**  
Europe region

**Report -  
Physiotherapy Regulatory Legislation  
in the Europe Region**

**Advocacy & EU Matters Working Group (A&EUMWG)**

**NOTED**

**23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Riga, Latvia**

**REPORT - PHYSIOTHERAPY REGULATORY LEGISLATION IN THE EUROPE REGION**

Europe Region

Advocacy & EU Matters Working Group

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## BACKGROUND

One of the goals of the Europe Region is to strengthen Physiotherapy as an autonomous profession. Regulatory legislation has a broad impact on autonomy. The professional law is often combined in a joint law with other health professions. A change in law, for example within the scope of practice, mostly requires negotiating with stakeholders and authorities. If there is a regulation made in a joint law with other health professions changes are maybe harder to achieve. Following the outcome of the discussion session at the General Meeting of the Europe Region in Prague in May 2022 on the advantages and disadvantages of a specific law for regulating Physiotherapy (PT), the Advocacy and European Matters Working Group (A&EUMWG) included an additional question in its annual autonomy survey. The question addressed whether Physiotherapy is regulated in a specific law or in a law that combines other health professions. The data collected was cross referenced with the OECD Database and seemed to be consistent with the answers received from the Member Organisations (MOs).<sup>1</sup>

## 1. AIMS OF THE SURVEY

The general goal of the survey was to collect data on the regulatory legislation of physiotherapy in the Europe Region, and the specific aims were to:

- 1) Identify the countries where Physiotherapy is regulated in a specific law;
- 2) Identify the countries where physiotherapy is not regulated in a specific law; and
- 3) Collect information about the regulatory legislation if Physiotherapy is not regulated in a specific law.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was created with the platform SurveyMonkey to collect data on multiple topics, aiming to reduce the number of requests to MOs, including the question “Is Physiotherapy regulated in a specific law in your country”. A first invitation to fill out the survey was emailed to MOs on 13 June 2023. On 14 July 2023, the newest member organisation was included in the survey for this term. To broaden the knowledge on physiotherapy regulatory legislation, in November 2023, the survey was also sent to the seven countries not involved in the Europe Region, one of which responded. A total of 36 organisations (35 MOs) completed the survey, out of 45 invitations, which indicates a response rate of 80.0% (92.1% within the MOs).

### 3. RESULTS

The results of the survey will be provided in this section as an overview of the spectrum of the answers provided by the organisations.

#### 3.1 Physiotherapy is regulated in a specific law

16 of the respondents (n=36) reported that physiotherapy is regulated in a specific law in their country.

#### 3.2 Physiotherapy is not regulated in a specific law

20 of the respondents (n=36) reported that physiotherapy is not regulated in a specific law in their country.

#### 3.3 Additional Information about the regulatory legislation

19 respondents provided some sort of information about the other health professions who are represented legally in the common law. This is also listed in a separate annex.

**Figure 1:**  
Specific Regulatory Legislation of Physiotherapy in Europe



### 4. LIMITATION

The EU Regulated Professions database uses links that lead to the regulatory legislation in the country. This complex matter is provided in the language of the country concerned. The language barrier does not assist in identifying possible incongruencies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This survey provides data about the regulatory law of the profession in the countries of the MOs. It shows that physiotherapy is regulated in a specific law in 49 % of European countries. The fact that specific regulatory legislation has an impact on the autonomy of the profession is not substantiated yet. Therefore, more information is needed and the A&EUMWG recommends further research, focusing on the connection between the regulatory legislation in a specific law and level of autonomy in all aspects of the survey and the following assumptions:

- A professional law should contain a detailed definition of the scope of practice as determined by the profession, which reflects the state of the art of the actual practice of the profession and also takes into account the ongoing development of the profession. Only in this way would member organisations' or professional physiotherapy organisations' concerns be presented in a comprehensive occupational profile including job-specific competencies.
- A detailed professional law should create sufficient clarity for patients, clients and caregivers outlining the activities covered by the physiotherapy profession and what consequences would result for qualifications as well as cost coverage by payers of the health and social system.
- A separate professional law could offer advantages for optimal patient care and patient safety.
- A specific professional law may have advantages for legislators and legal practitioners (e.g., more legal clarity, more legal certainty, clearer structures).
- A specific professional law could provide legal clarity in liability issues.
- A specific professional law could promote the further development of the profession (e.g. through the possible faster anchoring current professional developments in law).
- A specific professional law could enable the establishment of a profession specific regulatory organ.

Therefore, the MOs should be asked to provide an English translation of the regulatory law of physiotherapy and the scope of practice in their countries.

### **ANNEX 22.1: DISCUSSION SESSION GENERAL MEETING 2022**

### **ANNEX 22.2: CHART**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **Members of the Advocacy & EU Matters Working Group of the Europe Region of World Physiotherapy - 2022-2024:**

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## REFERENCES

1. Healthcare Resources: Caring personnel (Personal care workers) [Internet]. Available from: <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=30176>