



**World
Physiotherapy**
Europe region

**Position Statement –
Autonomy in Physiotherapy Practice
in the Europe Region**

Professional Practice Working Group (PPWG)

APPROVED

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Riga, Latvia

POSITION STATEMENT - AUTONOMY IN PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN THE EUROPE REGION

Europe Region

Professional Practice Working Group

In reviewing the past professional practice documents as an approved action of the 2022 General Meeting, the Professional Practice Working Group (PPWG) of the Europe Region recommended that position statements would be developed from the previous documents. The previous document would be retained as the substantive reference document. While there was not a specific document on Autonomy, the PPWG developed one additional position statement on that topic.

Autonomy in physiotherapy is a fundamental and evolving concept that recognises the vital role of the physiotherapist in health systems. World Physiotherapy defines autonomy as “the ability of a reflective practitioner to make independent judgments to initiate, complete, or modify a physiotherapy intervention”¹. Therefore, the physiotherapist is responsible for managing their practice independently and acting in accordance with frameworks for regulation, ethical and professional conduct. Autonomy means that the physiotherapist recommends and implements interventions based on a comprehensive assessment and diagnosis¹. Consequently, the physiotherapist delivers the treatments that best meet the patient's needs².

As autonomous professionals, physiotherapists use their professional judgement and decision-making, wherever they practise, as long as it is within their knowledge, skills and competencies³. This autonomy empowers physiotherapists to independently assess, diagnose, and treat patients, facilitating equitable access to high-quality care, while adhering to globally accepted standards of practice and ethical guidelines.

Physiotherapy has been an autonomous profession in many countries for several decades. The Europe Region gathers information on the current situation on autonomy every two years. The autonomy of physiotherapists has evolved substantially⁴. In some countries, the evolution of autonomy has led to physiotherapy offering direct access services and advanced practice, such as first contact services and prescribing^{5,6}.

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