World Physiotherapy
Europe region

Report –
Quality Assurance of entry-level physiotherapy education in the Europe Region

Education and Research Working Group (E&RWG)

NOTED
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1. BACKGROUND AND REPORT FRAMEWORK

Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education serves as a fundamental pillar in ensuring the integrity, credibility, and effectiveness of academic programs. In the field of physiotherapy, where the education of future healthcare professionals directly impacts patient outcomes, QA mechanisms must be rigorously applied[1].

Accreditation is the benchmark for ensuring that physiotherapy programs adhere to national and international standards[2]. World Physiotherapy provides global guidelines for physiotherapy education. (https://world.physio/what-we-do/education/physiotherapist-education-framework) The European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE), representing 156 educational institutions focusses on aligning physiotherapy educational programmes and drive forward new developments across Europe. (https://www.enphe.org/en/about)

The European Higher Education Area offers standards and guidelines that promote quality assurance in the higher education institutions across Europe and are endorsed by the Bologna Follow-Up Group. (https://ehea.info/page-tools)

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of quality assurance practices in entry-level physiotherapy education across 31 European countries.

1.1 Aim: To provide an up-to-date overview of the Quality Assurance landscape in entry level physiotherapy education across Europe.

1.2 Objective: Identify the responsible stakeholders and processes of quality assurance in physiotherapy education from Higher Education Institutions in Europe.

1.3 Methodology: The dataset contains responses from 31 European countries. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on how Quality Assurance in physiotherapy education is organised across Europe, who is responsible for it, and how Member Organisations are involved.

1.4 Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Quality Assurance (QA) - the systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity and efficiency (European Education Area).

Statutory regulation - refers to health and care professions that must be registered with a professional regulatory body by law. The titles used by regulated professionals are also legally protected

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) - safeguards and enhances the quality of education (primarily higher education) by setting standards, reviewing providers, creating guidance and providing support to ensure students receive high-quality learning experiences and maintain the sector's global reputation

ENPHE - The European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education

HEIs - Higher Education Institutions

MOs – Member Organisations

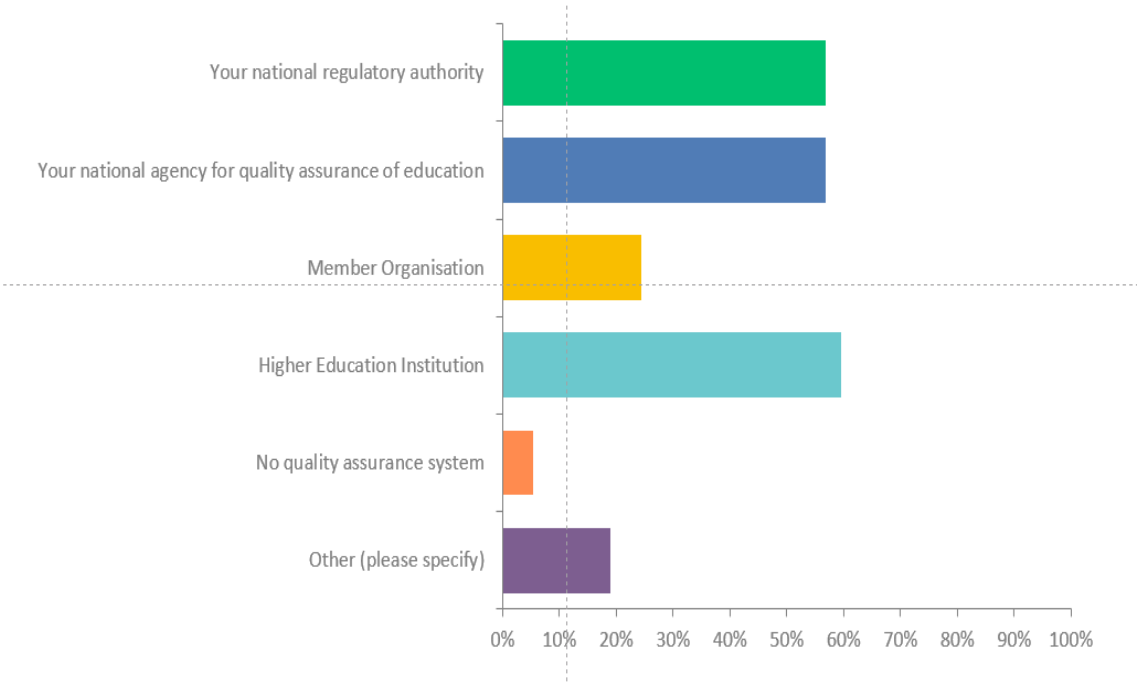
2. RESULTS

A total of 31 countries responded to the survey, response rate with follow-up: 80%. Surveys were completed between June 2025 and November 2025.

2.1 Stakeholders in quality assurance

Data from 31 countries (Figure 1) show that the assurance of high-quality physiotherapy education involves multiple stakeholders operating at both national and institutional levels. The three most prominent stakeholders are national QA agencies, HEIs, and national regulatory authorities. A smaller number mentioned professional bodies or MOs. Some entries noted the absence of a formal QA system or systems still in development. QA in European physiotherapy education is collaborative and multi-layered, combining external regulation with internal accountability. While universities lead internal processes, national QA bodies and authorities provide oversight and formal recognition.

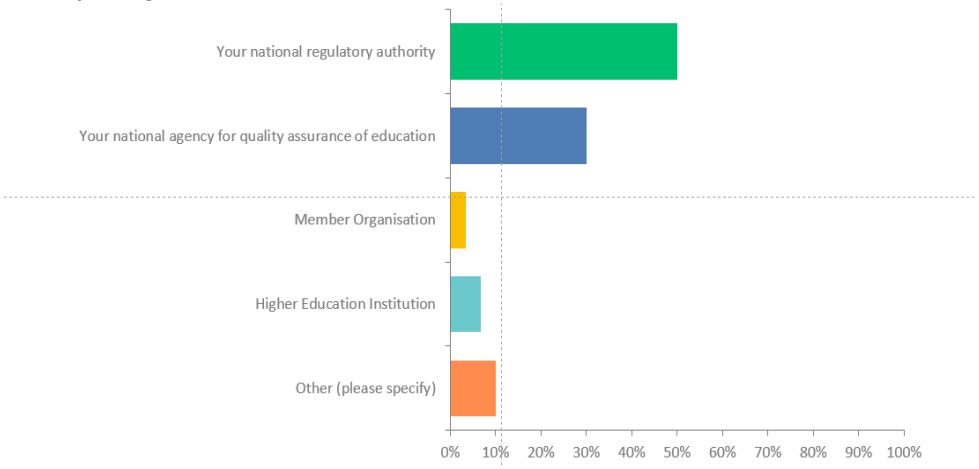
Figure 1: Stakeholders involved in ensuring high quality entry-level physiotherapy programmes in HEIs.



2.2 Primary responsibility for quality assurance

Most European physiotherapy programmes (Figure 2) are approved and monitored by state regulatory authorities, ensuring uniformity and compliance with national standards. Independent QA agencies are becoming more prominent, reflecting a shift toward professionalised, transparent accreditation systems.

Figure 2: Stakeholder ultimately responsible for ensuring high quality entry-level physiotherapy programmes in HEIs.



2.3 Role of member organisations in quality assurance cycle

The role of MO (Figure 3) such as physiotherapy associations or chambers varies significantly amongst countries. While some are actively involved in QA, many are only consulted or excluded altogether. Around half of respondents reported that the MO is not directly involved in QA. Where MOs are involved, they mainly act as stakeholders or advisors providing professional feedback. Only a few countries stated that MOs participate in QA committees or have accreditation roles. MOs play a limited but growing role in QA across Europe. Their involvement enhances alignment between education and clinical practice, but most remain advisory rather than regulatory.

Figure 4 outlines how MOs are involved in QA activities related to curriculum and programme review. Regular review of the programme as a whole was the most frequently reported activity (45.45%), followed by curriculum development and external site visits (both 27.27%). While there may be component overlap in responses, it is clear that the MO is a significant stakeholder in the process. The elevated percentage of “other” responses may need further investigation.

Figure 3: How MOs are involved in the QA cycle of entry-level physiotherapy programmes

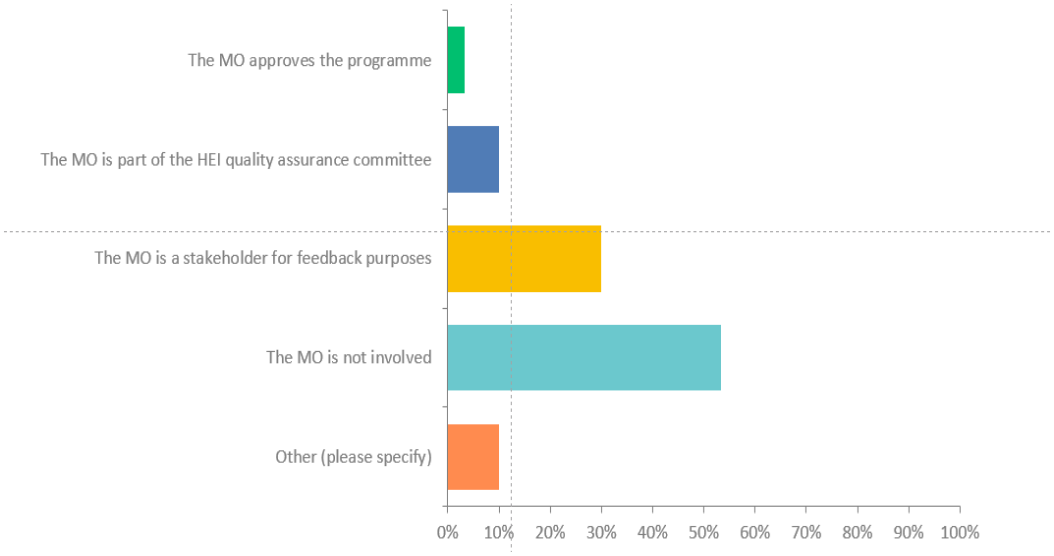
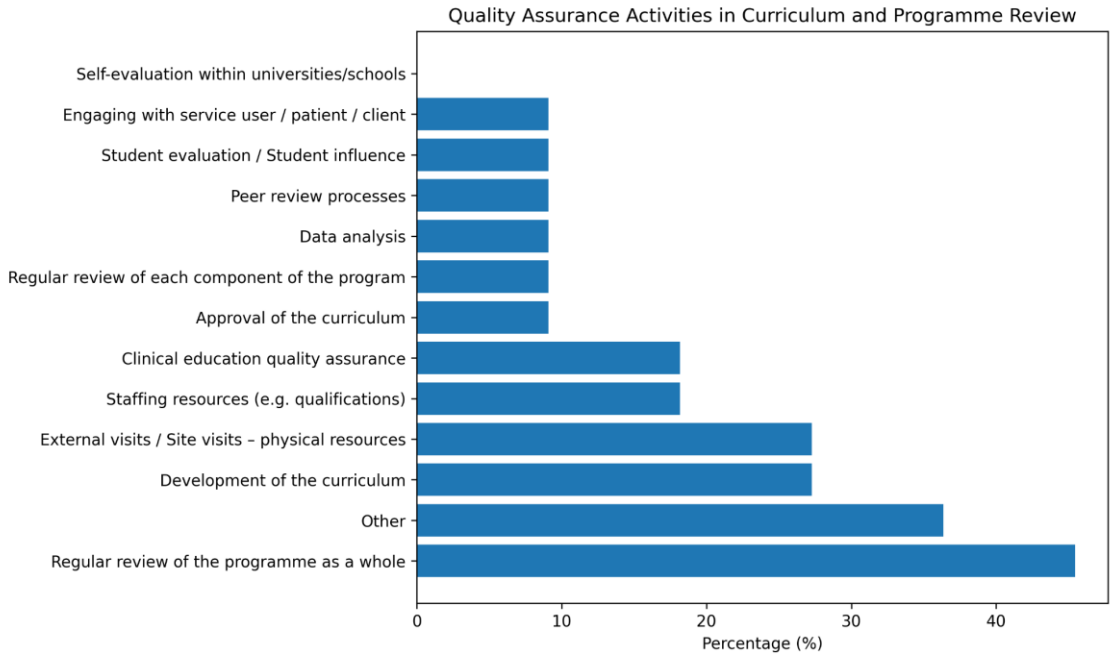


Figure 4: QA activities in curriculum and programme review

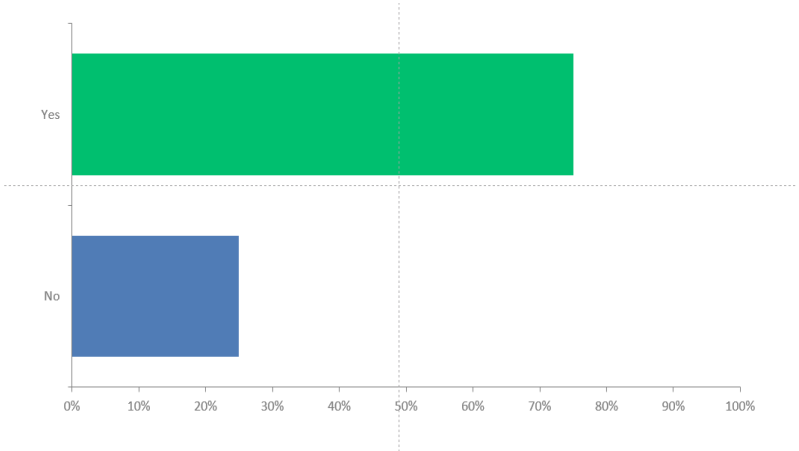


2.4 Frequency and nature of internal and external quality assurance

Most European physiotherapy programmes are subject to systematic and periodic evaluation, combining internal and external reviews. External QA is mandatory (Figure 5) in roughly two-thirds of countries (21 of 31), while 6 stated it is not. QA cycles vary, with an average duration of 4-5 years, with internal QA occurring more frequently (often annually or biennially). Some smaller or newer systems lack a formal external QA framework.

Quality assurance is institutionalised and cyclical across Europe. Regular review processes ensure transparency and continuous improvement in physiotherapy education standards.

Figure 5: The number of countries where external QA of entry-level physiotherapy education is a mandatory requirement

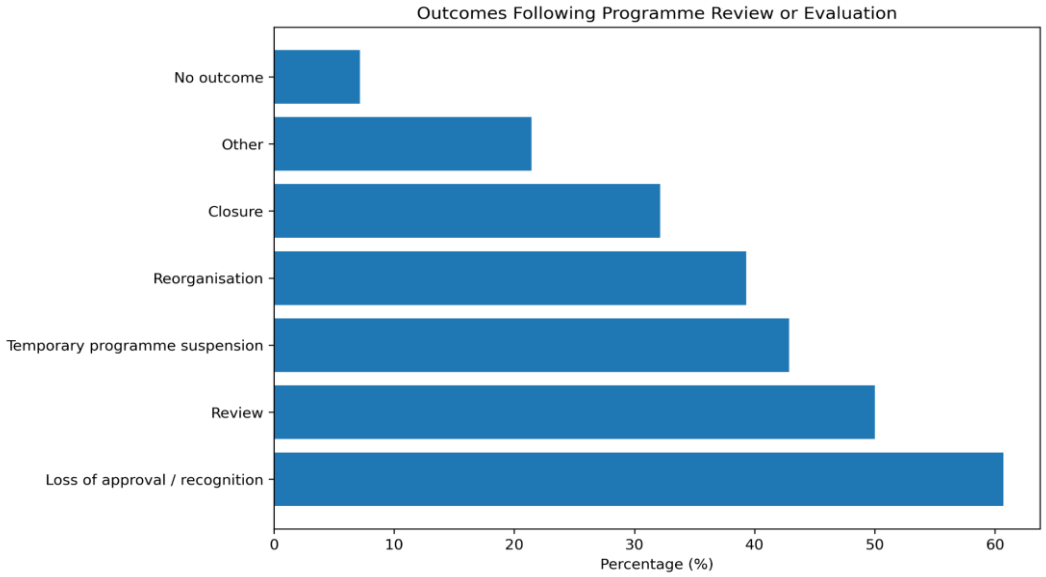


2.5 Consequences of quality assurance outcomes

When QA evaluations identify deficiencies, countries apply various corrective or disciplinary measures. The survey identified multiple possible consequences for failing to meet QA standards (Figure 6). The main consequences of unsatisfactory QA outcomes include: loss

of approval or accreditation, re-evaluation or temporary suspension, programme reorganisation or closure. Most countries operate structured and enforceable QA systems with clear follow-up mechanisms. The findings show that European QA systems are robust, accountable, and improvement-oriented. They balance sanctions with support mechanisms, ensuring institutions maintain educational quality while encouraging development.

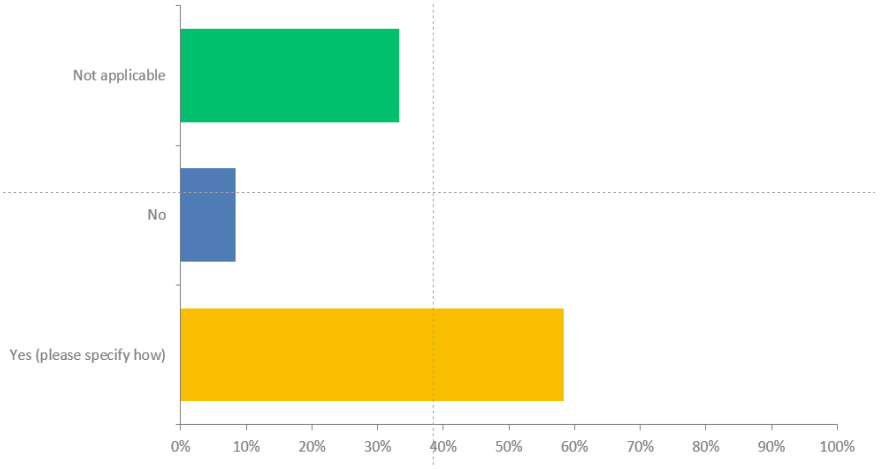
Figure 6: Potential consequences for the outcomes of the QA procedure



3. MEMBER ORGANISATION INVOLVEMENT IN BENCHMARK DEVELOPMENT

A minority of countries (n=12) reported MO participation in developing or updating national benchmarks or standards. Where MOs contribute, they typically collaborate with the national regulatory authority. Common reasons for non-involvement include QA being government or university-led with the MO lacking legal or formal recognition.

Figure 7: Level of involvement of MOs in the compiling or updating of the national benchmarks/standards related to the scope of physiotherapy practice that are drawn up by the national regulatory authority.



4. SUMMARY

QA in physiotherapy education across Europe is comprehensive, structured, and collaborative. It reflects a shared commitment among European countries to uphold and continuously enhance educational standards in the physiotherapy profession.

Across the continent, QA systems typically combine governmental oversight, institutional responsibility, and growing professional engagement. Most countries rely on external accreditation cycles, coordinated by national QA agencies or regulatory authorities, and these are complemented by continuous internal evaluations carried out within higher education institutions (HEIs). While QA agencies and regulatory bodies set the standards, it is the institutions themselves that are responsible for the practical implementation, monitoring, and ongoing improvement of educational quality.

Although MOs often lack formal regulatory authority, their participation plays an increasingly important role in bridging education and professional practice. Their involvement ensures that physiotherapy programmes remain relevant, practice-oriented, and aligned with the evolving needs of healthcare systems and patients.

The survey data, representing 31 European countries, demonstrate both strong engagement and diversity in QA approaches. National oversight remains the dominant model, but there is a clear trend toward greater institutional autonomy and enhanced professional consultation. MOs are present in most national systems, though their roles are primarily advisory rather than regulatory.

The findings highlight gaps and inconsistencies in how QA processes are organised and how MOs are involved. Some countries show highly centralised and formalised QA frameworks, while others are still developing structured processes or sharing responsibilities amongst multiple stakeholders.

Overall, the survey confirms a Pan-European commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of physiotherapy education. This commitment is achieved through a balanced combination of national regulation, institutional accountability, and professional collaboration, ensuring that future physiotherapists are educated to the highest standards of education and training.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

There remains substantial heterogeneity among the Europe Region of World Physiotherapy MOs in approaches to assuring the quality of physiotherapy education. As a result, any comparisons or overarching conclusions should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, not all Europe Region MOs responded to the survey, which may limit the representativeness of the findings.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this report provide a strong evidence base to update the QA in Physiotherapy Education document[3] and to inform the Europe Region of World Physiotherapy on the possibility of a position statement supporting robust QA models for entry-level physiotherapy educational programmes. A position statement would clarify and reinforce the distinct role of MOs in setting, maintaining, and advancing educational standards, particularly given they hold responsibility for professional scope.

To effectively exercise this influence and drive meaningful improvements in educational quality, MOs must be adequately resourced, with sufficient and appropriately skilled personnel to support QA activities.

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3. Europe Region of World Physiotherapy. (2016). Key documents - Education. https://www.erwcpt.eu/key-documents-education

Some further resources:

- World Physiotherapy (2021). Physiotherapist Education Framework Available from https://world.physio/what-we-do/education/physiotherapist-education-framework
- European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education. Available from https://www.enphe.org/en/about
- The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. Available from https://www.eqar.eu/
- European Higher Education Area. Available from: https://ehea.info/page-tools