

Ref: Agenda item RC62 5(c) Policy & technical topics: Strategy & action plan for Healthy Ageing in Europe, 2012-2020

The European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (ER-WCPT), representing over 160,000 physical therapists & physiotherapists in Europe welcomes the *Strategy & action plan for Healthy Ageing in Europe*.

Physiotherapists are experts in promoting physical activity and exercise prescription across the lifespan [**WCPT 2011, Policy statement: Physical therapists as exercise experts across the life span - <https://www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-exercise%20experts>**] and can be key contributors to strategic area 1 – healthy ageing over the life-course – particularly since many people present to physiotherapists in their 50's, the target group for 'early old age' and can be educated and empowered to be more active by their physiotherapists. Physiotherapists can encourage greater physical activity and empower people to exercise within any limitation they may have in order to improve health and fitness and minimize later complications.

In the majority of states in Europe, physiotherapists are educated to be first-contact, autonomous practitioners and work with patients/clients through their whole episode of care. Many work in extended roles and save health services significant financial resources through their independent professional practice. The ER-WCPT urges national policy makers to ensure that physiotherapists are key professionals involved in priority interventions 1 and 2 – falls prevention and the



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promotion of physical activity – where there is significant evidence of both the clinical and cost-effectiveness of physiotherapy.

Physiotherapy entry-level education equips physiotherapists to work with older people to promote health and activity and to prevent functional impairment however unemployment of physiotherapists or poor working conditions may result in emigration from home states and indeed beyond Europe. The ER-WCPT supports the strategic area 3 - people centered health and long-term care systems - and encourages health employers to engage physiotherapists as key health providers particularly in falls prevention and promotion of physical activity. It strongly endorses the priority intervention 5 – capacity building among the health and social care workforce - and encourages relevant national agencies to reflect on whether the employment and professional contribution of physiotherapists is being optimized. The ER-WCPT works with its national member organizations and welcomes the opportunity to being an engaged and active partner in the implementation of this Strategy over the coming years.

Statement delivered on behalf of the European Region of WCPT by Dr. Emma K. Stokes, Vice President WCPT and Mr. John Xerri de Caro, President, Malta Association of Physiotherapists.

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