

Ref: Agenda item RC64/2 5(c) i - Policy & technical topics: The European child and adolescent health strategy 2015 -2020

The European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (ER-WCPT), representing over 163,000 physical therapists & physiotherapists in Europe welcomes the European child and adolescent health strategy 2015-2020.

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 this strategic area.

The positive effect of physical activity in helping to maintain a healthy weight in adults is well understood. Physical activity also improves health in children notably helping to prevent overweight, obesity and Type 2 diabetes, as well as improving skeletal health and mental well being.

The key drivers for change towards a healthier lifestyle involve messages about diet and activity, and more often the nutritional component dominates over, the importance of more physical activity even though research continues to promote the need for more exercise by children and young people. Exercise effectively enables children to use different muscles, improving their bone health and to develop flexibility; this not only burns calories but confers other important health benefits that promotes healthier lifestyles and instils good habits from a young age, which can then be carried on into a healthy adulthood.

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 and the 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 children and young 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 encourages health and education employers to engage physiotherapists as key health providers particularly in promotion of activity and exercise in children and young people 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.



EUROPEAN REGION

**World Confederation
for Physical Therapy**

<http://www.physio-europe.org>

Statement delivered on behalf of the European Region of WCPT by Mrs Sarah Bazin, Chair of ER-WCPT and Mrs Karen Langard, Professional Advisor at the Danish Association of Physiotherapists.

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