



EUROPEAN REGION

World Confederation  
for Physical Therapy

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# **Report of the EU Matters Working Group of the ER-WCPT for the years 2006 – 2008 to the General Meeting 2008**

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## **REPORT OF THE EU MATTERS WORKING GROUP OF THE ER-WCPT FOR THE YEARS 2006-2008 TO THE GENERAL MEETING 2008**

### **European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) European Union Matters WG**

#### **Introduction**

The main objectives of the EU Working Group are to maintain a high profile of EU matters within the European Region of WCPT (ER-WCPT).

#### **Members**

##### **The members of the Working Group appointed in June 2006:**

- Sigrún Knútsdóttir, First Vice Chairman of the European Region of WCPT as Chairman of the Working Group
- Elisabeth Haase, Denmark
- Hans de Boer, the Netherlands
- Maria Suwalska, Poland
- Pedro Borrego, Spain
- Elizabeth (Liz) Carrington, UK

The General Secretary of the European Region of the WCPT works with the group and attends all its meetings.

#### **Terms of Reference and activities.**

The EU WG recommended the following actions for the period 2006 – 2008 that were approved by the General Meeting 2006.

##### **1. Migration issues**

1. Follow up of the implementation of the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (priority).
2. Continue to investigate the establishment of a Common Platform at European level based on the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (priority).
3. Follow up of the implementation of the Migration Policy at national level.

4. Provide Migration statistics for physiotherapists in the EU.
5. Continue to facilitate migration for physiotherapists.

## **2. Enlargement of the EU**

1. Continue providing general information about the enlargement of the EU and start mapping the prospective EU countries if they are not Member Organisations of the WCPT.
2. Follow up and assist Member Organisations with their specific needs in relation to the EU accession (priority).
3. Encourage networking among Member Organisations.

## **3. Health issues in the EU**

1. Be proactive in the field of health issues in the EU (priority).
2. Continue the follow up of the implementation of the Health Policy Statement of the European Region of WCPT.
3. Continue liaison with other health professionals and organisations at EU level.
4. Follow health issues that might involve Physiotherapists' skills.

## **4. Legislation and Directives in the EU**

1. Continue the follow up of EU Legislation development relevant to the Physiotherapy Profession and be proactive in that field.
2. Follow up any professional regulation that might include PT competencies or skills.
3. Continue close contact with European Institutions.

### **Meetings**

In the years 2006 - 2008, the Working Group had five regular meetings, one meeting with the Common Platform Task Force and with representatives from the EU Commission and two meetings with representatives of Member Organisations and national authorities, in Poland and Montenegro, respectively.

- **09 - 11 February 2006**, Copenhagen, Denmark
- **12 - 14 October 2006**, Brussels, Belgium
- **13 October 2006**, meeting with the Common Platform Task Force and with representatives from the EU Commission, Brussels, Belgium
- **01 - 03 February 2007**, Madrid, Spain
- **13 - 15 September 2007**, Warsaw, Poland

- **13 September, 2007**, meeting with representatives from the Polish Ministry of Health and the Polish Physiotherapy Association, Warsaw, Poland,
- **01 - 04 February 2008**, Kotor, Montenegro
- **04 February 2008**, meeting with representatives from the Montenegro Physiotherapy Association in Kotor.

### Activities

The Group decided to distribute the responsibility for each activity among the WG Members.

#### 1. Migration issues

##### 1.1. Follow up of the implementation of the Directive 2005/36/EC on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (priority).

*Responsible persons: Sigrún Knútsdóttir, Liz Carrington and Hans de Boer*

The Working Group had reviewed the Directive that was approved by the EU Commission on 07. September 2005.

In November 2006, a repeated letter was sent to the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) asking for cooperation in correction of errors that occurred in the final approved text of the Directive related to the terminology of medical doctors with speciality in physical and rehabilitative medicine.

Letters were also sent repeatedly to the Hungarian Physiotherapy Association to ask them to take action regarding the error that the title of the doctors in Hungary with speciality in Physical and Rehabilitative Medicine was wrongly called “fizioterapia”.

It is recognised by all parties involved that achieving changes to wording in EU legislation will be a long term objective.

The Working Group prepared an informative paper about the parts/actions of the Directive that shall be done (mandatory) or may be done (choice) by the National Authorities to implement the Directive at national level.

#### IMI Project.

The ER-WCPT had been invited by the EU Commission to collaborate in the development of the Internal Market Information (IMI) Project related to the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, and specially the obligations of the Member States concerning administrative cooperation on this matter. The Internal

Market Information system (IMI) is being developed to improve communication between Member State administrations. It is an electronic tool that provides a system for the exchange of information so that Member States can engage in more effective day-to-day co-operation in the implementation of the Internal Market legislation.

The ER-WCPT was one of four professions that would participate in the project. The other professions were medical doctors, dentists and accountants. The Executive Committee had accepted this invitation.

Four meetings took place in 2006 and one in 2007 with representatives from the Commission.

1. The first meeting took place in July 2006 when representatives of the EU Commission met with the General Secretary of the ER-WCPT to explain the tool and discuss collaboration.
2. The second meeting took place in October 2006 where members of the EU WG, the Common Platform Task Force members, Antonio Lopes, Nina Holten and the treasurer of the Executive Committee, Eckhardt Boehle, met representatives from the EU Commission where the tool was again explained and comments from the ER-WCPT were presented. On the same day, the EU WG, the task force members and the treasurer prepared further comments to be presented to the EU Commission.
3. The third meeting which was bilateral with the other three professions was held in October 2006 and was attended by the General Secretary and the treasurer on behalf of the ER-WCPT. The EU Commission was pleased with the proposals and comments from the ER-WCPT and suggested they be used as a working document for the EU Commission and the other three professions participating in the pilot project.
4. The fourth meeting, also bilateral with the other three professions, took place in April 2007. The treasurer, Eckhardt Boehle, attended the meeting and presented further comments from the Region that were accepted by the EU Commission and would be discussed with the EU national authorities.

The EU Working Group was pleased with the development and specially thanked Liz Carrington for her good work in preparing the Region's comments to the EU Commission.

The first face test of the IMI tool would be ready for use in September 2007.

The Member Organisations have been informed about the development of the project through the Newsletter.

## **1.2 Continue to investigate the establishment of a Common Platform at European level based on the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (priority).**

*Responsible persons: Sigrún Knútsdóttir, Liz Carrington and Hans de Boer*

The Executive Committee had established a Common Platform Task Force in 2005, with the task of investigating the feasibility of establishing a Common Platform at European level based on the Directive for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

The task force was composed of the Chairmen of the Working Groups on Education and EU matters as well as two additional members from each of these groups. Hans de Boer and Liz Carrington represented the EU WG, and Graham Pope and Nina Holten the Education WG. In 2007, it was decided to add a member from the Professional Issues Working Group to the Task Force which was Natalie Beswetherick.

The task force held three meetings during the period.

In October 2006, the EU Working Group and the Common Task Force members, Antonio Lopes and Nina Holten as well as the Treasurer, met to make recommendations for the Executive Committee for further work that were accepted by the Executive Committee.

The activity assigned to the EU Working Group was to gather and analyse information from the Member Organisations about legislation and regulation.

A second meeting was held in April 2007 where further steps and an action plan were agreed and accepted by the Executive Committee.

A third meeting was held in December 2007 together with the Executive Committee where the status of the project and analysis of the information gathered was discussed. At that meeting, the Task Force and the Executive Committee agreed on the recommendations to be presented at the General Meeting 2008.

## **1.3 Follow up of the implementation of the Migration Policy at national level.**

*Responsible persons: Liz Carrington and Maria Suwalska*

At the General Meeting in 2006, a revised Migration Policy was adopted taking the following points into consideration:

- Reference to the Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- Reviewing of the chapter on enlargement of the EU
- Dividing some points for clarification
- Including a recommendation to monitor cooperation between authorities.

It was agreed that the implementation of the Migration Policy at national level would be explored.

The EU Working Group sent out a letter/questionnaire to all Member Organisations to get information about the following:

- The implementation of the Migration Policy at national level
- Migration problems
- To ask Member Organisations for amendments to the Policy
- To recommend to the Member Organisations to be aware of the actions that their authorities were undertaking to promote migration.

An analysis of the answers has been made as well as a proposal for updating the Migration Policy for adoption at the 2008 General Meeting taking into consideration the Directive 2005/36/EC, the IMI Pilot Project, the comments from the Member Organisations and other related developments.

#### **1.4 Provide Migration statistics for physiotherapists in the EU.**

*Responsible persons: Elisabeth Haase and Liz Carrington*

It had been decided to use the Migration Statistics from the EU Commission that are published every two years as a reference for Migration Statistics for physiotherapists. The Member Organisations had been informed about the data base through the Newsletter and asked to look into the statistics to map the situation in their country and the reason for eventual rejections.

The WG had found that some of the information provided in the Data Base was misleading and that some competent authorities had not supplied the information asked for by the EU Commission. Letters were sent to the Member Organisations concerned, encouraging them to contact their National Authorities to ask them to fill in and clarify their statistical data and explore any errors found.

#### **1.5 Continue to facilitate migration for physiotherapists.**

*Responsible persons: All and General Secretary*

Information about migration procedures has been updated on the website to assist migrating physiotherapists. Questions on migration have been answered by the

Secretariat advising individual physiotherapists by referring to the website and to the Member Organisations.

## **2. Enlargement of the EU.**

### **2.1 Continue providing general information about the enlargement of the EU and start mapping the prospective EU countries if they are not Member Organisations of the WCPT.**

*Responsible persons: Maria Suwalska and Liz Carrington*

An article with information about the enlargement situation was published in the Region's Newsletter in April 2007 where links for further information was provided.

A mapping of the physiotherapy profession in the new and prospective EU countries was made, mapping the following areas: Number of inhabitants, physiotherapy associations and number of physiotherapists associated, membership of the WCPT, regulation of the profession, level of physiotherapy education, needs related to EU accession for potential candidates to the EU and actions taken by the EU WG related to that.

### **2.2 Follow up and assist Member Organisations with their specific needs in relation to the EU accession (priority).**

*Responsible persons: Pedro Borrego and Sigrún Knútsdóttir*

A letter was sent to the Member Organisations that had not answered a previous letter sent in 2005 to 13 Member Organisations in the new and prospective EU countries. This was done as a mapping exercise to further clarify their problems and needs, to enable the ER-WCPT to make an action plan and to inform them how the ER-WCPT could be of assistance.

A letter was sent to the Bulgaria and Romanian Member Organisations congratulating them on the accession to the EU and informing them about the implications of accession for the physiotherapy profession in their countries.

A meeting was held in Poland with representatives of the Ministry of Health to discuss the situation of Physiotherapy in Poland where education of physiotherapists in Poland was highlighted. The EU Working Group informed about the work of the ER-WCPT and its involvement in education matters, the IMI project and the work on



exploring the feasibility of developing a Common Platform for physiotherapists.

A meeting was also held with members of the Executive Committee of the Polish Physiotherapy Association where the situation of physiotherapy in Poland and in Europe was discussed.

A meeting was held in Montenegro with representatives of the Montenegro Physiotherapy Association to discuss the situation of Physiotherapy in Montenegro where education and the Recognition of Profession of qualifications as well as legislation and quality of services was highlighted.

The EU Working Group informed about the work of the ER-WCPT and its involvement in education matters, the IMI project and the work on exploring the feasibility of developing a Common Platform for physiotherapists.

It was discussed as well as the twinning within the ER-WCPT.

### **2.3 Encourage networking among Member Organisations.**

*Responsible person: Pedro Borrego*

In a discussion session at the General Meeting in 2006, it was agreed that the twinning framework could not fulfil the needs of a relationship between the ER-WCPT Member Organisations.

The EU Working Group looked at whether IT technologies could be used for the network, especially with new and accessing EU countries and a recommendation had been made to the Executive Committee of the ER-WCPT.

## **3. Health issues**

### **3.1 Be proactive in the field of health issues in the EU (priority)**

*Responsible person: Hans de Boer*

The Working Group has followed the development of the EU Health issues such as the EU Commission Public Health Programme 2003-2008 and the EU Health and Consumer Protection Programme 2008-2013. Information about these programmes has been published in the ER-WCPT Newsletter.

The EU Working Group submitted comments to the EU Commission consultation on the new Health Strategy, 2008 – 2013, in October 2007.

### **3.2 Continue the follow up of the implementation of the Health Policy Statement of the European Region of WCPT.**

*Responsible person: Hans de Boer*

At the General Meeting in 2006, a revised Health Policy Statement was adopted taking comments from the EU Working Group and from the Member Organisations into consideration as well as making a reference to the EU Health and Consumer Protection Programme 2007 – 2013.

It was agreed that the implementation of the Health Policy Statement at national level would be explored as well as asking for amendments to the policy if needed.

The EU Working Group sent out a letter/questionnaire to all Member Organisations to get information about the implementation of the Policy at national level as well as asking from amendments to the policy if needed.

An analysis of the answers has been made, with recommendations for adoption at the 2008 General Meeting.

### **3.3 Continue liaison with other health professionals and organisations at EU level**

*Responsible person: David Gorria,*

The ER-WCPT has continued the liaison with other health professionals and organisations at EU level such as the Health Professionals Group, the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and the European Health Forum (EHF).

#### **Membership in European Health Forum (EHF).**

In 2006, the permanent membership of the ER-WCPT in the EHF was approved. Meetings of the EHF are held twice a year. The General Secretary or a member of the EU WG had attended, on behalf of the ER-WCPT, the meetings during this period.

#### **Council of Europe**

The EU WG, regarding membership and attendance at the Council of Europe meetings, had explored its agenda and compared it with the EPHA and European Health Forum agendas in order to see if there was a need for ER-WCPT to become a member or not. The EU WG had reflected on this and agreed as follows:

- The agenda of the Council is covered by the EHF and EPHA agendas
- The influence of the Council is minimal in comparison with other groups such as EHF.
- The ER-WCPT resources should be for EU groups since we need to prioritise them.

For all these reasons, ER-WCPT should not apply for Membership to the Council of Europe.

#### **4. Legislation and Directives in the EU.**

##### **4.1 Continue the follow up of EU Legislation development relevant to the Physiotherapy Profession and be proactive in that field.**

*Responsible person: Sigrún Knútsdóttir*

The EU WG has followed EU legislation development that might be relevant to the physiotherapy profession.

##### **Health Service Directive**

On 31 January 2007, the EU WG answered, on behalf of the Region, the EU consultation regarding Community Action on Health Services. This consultation was launched as the first step to set up a specific EU health services framework to guarantee cross-border access to healthcare, after the exclusion from the Services Directive of public and private healthcare.

In Spring 2007, the Region reacted to the proposal of a member of the European Parliament to re-include the health professionals in the Service Directive. The Region reacted by sending a letter with EPHA and other health associations to all the European Parliament Members. The initiative was been withdraw by the European Parliament Plenary and a proposal for a health professionals service directive would be prepared by the European Commission as was planned.

The EU Working Group has followed the development of the Health Service Directive and the consultation process of the proposal and is in agreement with the the main outcomes of the consultation.

**Follow any professional regulation that might include PT competencies or skills.**

The EU Working Group has followed the development of regulations and directives of the EU to explore if they might include Physiotherapy competencies and skills and sees this as an ongoing process.

**Closing remarks**

The main tasks for the EU Working Group in the years 2006 – 2008 have been to follow up the enlargement process of the EU and the implementation of the Directive on Recognition of professional qualifications. Members of the EU WG have been involved in the IMI pilot project related to the Recognition of Professional qualifications and in the Common Platform Task Force which explored the feasibility of establishing a Common Platform of physiotherapists at European level. Other important tasks have been to follow up and participate in the consultation process of a new EU health strategy, 2008 – 2013, which was adopted in October 2007, to support and assist Member Organisations in matters related to the EU and to explore the implementation of the Migration Policy and the Health Policy Statement within the ER-WCPT.

Many of the activities of the Working Group are ongoing and are recommended to be continued for the next two years period.

It has been a privilege but yet a challenge to act as the Chairman of the EU Working Group since its establishment in 2000 but I have been fortunate in the continuity of members in the group and the experience and expertise of my fellow members. As Chairman of the group, I express my sincere thanks to my fellow Working Group members and the General Secretary for their contribution and good work.

Especially I would like to express my gratitude for their friendship and warmth that I value very much.

As I am now retiring after 8 years of service as the Chairman of the EU Working Group I wish the group all the best in the future and I am convinced of the value of the work of the group.

Sigrún Knútsdóttir,

Chairman of the EU Matters Working Group of the European Region of the WCPT