

27 June 2023

To whom it may concern

Re: Physiotherapy education standards in Germany.

I am writing to advocate support for the proposal by Physio Deutschland / Deutscher Verband für Physiotherapie (ZVK) that physiotherapy education in Germany occur exclusively in the university setting.

World Physiotherapy believes that the situation in Germany, where physiotherapy education occurs at both a vocational and an academic level, needs to be resolved as a matter of priority. Germany is becoming increasingly more distant from international education benchmarks in physiotherapy by maintaining this low entry to practice.

Germany is now the only country in the Europe region where it is possible to train to be a physiotherapist with a simple vocational diploma.

World Physiotherapy is the sole international organisation for physiotherapy, representing more than 600,000 physiotherapists worldwide through its 129 member organisations. World Physiotherapy (previously known as the World Confederation for Physical Therapy) was founded in 1951 and since 1956 it has been a non-governmental organisation in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO).

World Physiotherapy is a founding member of the Global Rehabilitation Alliance, which was formed in May 2018 with the aim of being a powerful advocacy platform for the rehabilitation sector. Within this partnership we work with other members such as the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to further the development of rehabilitation services around the world.

Physiotherapy, as a health profession, plays a key role in maintaining the health and well-being of the population. World Physiotherapy is committed to moving physiotherapy forward and to promoting the significant role the profession plays globally in improving health and wellbeing. World Physiotherapy encourages high standards of physiotherapy research, education and practice.

Deutscher Verband für Physiotherapie was a founding member of World Physiotherapy in 1951, and World Physiotherapy recognises the association as the sole authorised voice of the physiotherapy profession in Germany.

As a member organisation of World Physiotherapy, ZVK has the responsibility of establishing standards for education and professional practice for physiotherapists in Germany. ZVK ensures that the necessary processes are in place to implement and monitor the standards of education and professional practice and to ensure that those who wish to practice physiotherapy in Germany comply with those standards.

All World Physiotherapy member organisations have the responsibility to support, promote and develop the role of physiotherapists ensuring that there are standards to provide quality service to the public.

Likewise, all member organisations accept World Physiotherapy's policies and work to achieve standards of professional practice and education that are consistent with international benchmarks.

In accordance with these internationally recognised policies, physiotherapists are qualified to undertake the following functions:

- comprehensive examination/assessment of the patient/client to formulate a physiotherapeutic diagnosis and prognosis/plan of care
- implement a therapeutic intervention/treatment programme if appropriate
- evaluate the outcome of any intervention/treatment
- determine discharge arrangements.

World Physiotherapy argues that physiotherapist entry level education should equip physiotherapists to be first contact autonomous practitioners, able to assess and treat patients/clients without referral from another medical practitioner or other third party (direct access).

All entry to practice programmes are expected to meet minimum threshold competences set out in our [Physiotherapist education framework](#). This document also supports the development of quality continuing professional development (CPD) in the profession.

Physiotherapist entry level education programmes must be grounded in the nature and scope of physiotherapy and, at a minimum, should:

1. reflect the scope of physiotherapy, described in World Physiotherapy's policy statement description of physiotherapy, and the domains of competence of physiotherapist practice
2. ensure the graduate is competent to practise by requiring them to evidence that they have achieved specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes according to the entry to practice threshold competence
3. enable the graduate to meet professional standards consistent with World Physiotherapy guidelines
4. be delivered, at a minimum, through a bachelor's level degree with physiotherapy in its title; the programmes should be aligned with the appropriate education qualification frameworks in the given jurisdiction

There are several World Physiotherapy policies that support the framework. These can be accessed via the following links:

[Policy statement: Education](#)

[Policy Statement: Description of physiotherapy](#)

[Policy statement: Autonomy](#)

[Policy statement: Direct access](#)

The situation in Germany, where physiotherapy education occurs at both a vocational and an academic level, needs to be resolved. It is clear that physiotherapy in Germany is continuing to fall behind international benchmarks.

For this situation to be occurring in a World Physiotherapy foundation organisation that seventy years ago was a global leader is particularly disappointing.

All other countries in the Europe region require a bachelor's degree or higher as the minimum entry level educational requirement. Internationally, only 19% of countries offer vocational diplomas in physiotherapy. Of

those with vocational diplomas, 46% are in the Africa region, 42% in the Asia Western Pacific region, 8% in the Americas, and only one in Europe (Germany).

I respectfully request you to address this situation as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathon Kruger', written in a cursive style.

Mr. Jonathon Kruger

Chief executive officer