

# **Mobility of the Physiotherapist in the European Union. The Portuguese Case**

Carla Leão

Teresa Rodrigues

António M F Lopes

After the constitution of European Union (UE) and with the current process of globalization, the mobility of people and services became a most relevant subject for its Member States society and economy. However we consider that this process of mobility has been done without a perfect knowledge of the work market and without the necessary requirements for the exercise of the professions.

In this study we analyze the mobility of the physiotherapist in the UE, specifying the Portuguese case, due to the relevance that this phenomenon represents for the profession and the professionals. The subject has direct implications in health policies, as free circulation can be fundamental for the involved countries. The data analysis of physiotherapists' qualifications recognition shows the existence of a significant migratory volume inside the UE region, considering that to each order of recognition corresponds a migrant. The biggest percentage (80% to 100%) of recognition orders corresponds to countries of UE 15, like Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal, United Kingdom and Sweden. That conclusion explains why we limited our study to the UE 15 territory.

The principle of free circulation needs to be supported by a basic knowledge of the States specific norms which concern the exercise of this profession. That is important due to the existing disparities of the conception of physiotherapy and physiotherapists. Free circulation of qualified professionals implies the mutual recognition of the qualifications. Social and demographic characteristics of the professionals and the work market essentially the factor unemployment in UE, represents specificities of extreme relevance to classify receiving countries as more or less attractive.

The new Directive 2005/36/CE from the European Parliament and the Council of 7 September of 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications,

tried to facilitate and to hasten the process of recognition of professional qualifications. However it is opportune to identify the necessary procedures that a potential migrant has to follow to reach his intention, as to recognize the existing impediments that difficult mobility, which can differ among the migrant native country and the receiving country.

Using the database of the UE on the recognition of the professional qualifications apply, we will draw a picture from mobility inside of UE15 territory and the more relevant migratory flows.

Traditionally Portugal has been an emitting migrant's country, but in latest years this characteristic it started to be a receiving country. Analogous image happens in what concerns the sector of the physiotherapists. It is also attended that Portuguese physiotherapists have an increasing interest for emigration. Frequently this last one is not materialized, but youngest professionals and students, accompanied by interchange programs as Erasmus, demonstrate a major interest for the necessary procedures and show a clear migration intention. So, the problematic previously referred related to all UE15 States achieves an excellent role in the Portuguese context and constitutes our main goal.