

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002346/25
to the Commission
Valentina Palmisano (The Left)
(11 June 2025)

Subject: Inclusion of hydrotherapy in healthcare plans in the EU

Physiotherapy in water (hydrotherapy) has been excluded from the essential levels of care in Italy since 2017, but the scientific community acknowledges its beneficial effects in neuro-rehabilitation, pain management and treatment of severe disabilities, such as spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) type 1 and other neurological disorders.

Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated better mobility, less pain, boosted circulation and improved mental and physical well-being among treated patients in all age groups, including older people and children and adolescents.

In the light of the above:

1. Does the Commission intend to promote the inclusion of hydrotherapy in the rehabilitation treatments supported at European level and in national healthcare plans?
2. Are there any plans for initiatives to make the public and healthcare professionals more aware of the effectiveness of this treatment?
3. Is there any EU funding available for the construction or upgrading of public hydrotherapy facilities?

Submitted: 11.6.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(20 August 2025)

According to Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ⁽¹⁾, Union action shall respect the responsibilities of the Member States for the organisation and delivery of their health services and medical care.

Definition of healthcare coverage, including specific services, such as hydrotherapy, is the responsibility of Member States. The Commission respects the responsibilities of the Member States in managing their healthcare systems.

This means that it does not directly intervene on specific healthcare treatments, such as hydrotherapy, for which Member States are competent.

Principle 16 of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan ⁽²⁾ underscores the right to healthcare of good quality that is affordable.

The Commission supports Member States in upholding this principle through funding projects, which provide support to address barriers in access to healthcare for persons with disabilities ⁽³⁾, improve affordability of healthcare ⁽⁴⁾, and ensure fairer distribution of health benefits ⁽⁵⁾.

While there is no specific funding support earmarked for hydrotherapy facilities under the EU4Health Programme, there are other complementary EU funds.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility ⁽⁶⁾, the Technical Support Instrument ⁽⁷⁾, and the Cohesion Policy ⁽⁸⁾ provide support to health systems, including for the upgrade of infrastructure and equipment, according to country-specific needs.

⁽¹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en>.

⁽²⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en.

⁽³⁾ HS-p-22-14.02 Guidelines on access to healthcare for people with disabilities; https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/331c4ac5-492d-4359-a708-c0a7e2cfa363_en?filename=c_2023_5052_1_annex_en.pdf.

⁽⁴⁾ HS-g-14.1.1 Supporting Member States in improving access to healthcare and effectiveness of health coverage, taking into account vulnerabilities of specific groups and targeted intervention; https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/024cb1cb-44ab-44be-a21e-56757550eb05_en?filename=com_2022-5436_annex1_en.pdf.

⁽⁵⁾ HS-p-23-46 The role of healthcare in reducing poverty; https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ff17bd26-4cdd-4351-a4e3-e2ca85aa3e84_en?filename=wp2023_annex_en.pdf.

⁽⁶⁾ Recovery and Resilience Facility: https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

⁽⁷⁾ Technical Support Instrument (TSI): https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en.

⁽⁸⁾ Cohesion Policy: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/2021-2027_en.