

# Call for Founding Members of the European Organization for University Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (UniPRM)

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The World Health Assembly resolution on “Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems” [1], together with the WHO’s Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative [2], emphasizes the urgent need to build rehabilitation workforce capacity [3]. Achieving this goal requires robust academic structures within universities. In response, leading Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM) organizations - including the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM), the European Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine (EARM), and the Association of Academic Physiatrists (AAP) - have jointly called for efforts to strengthen academic capacity in PRM [4]. This is essential to reinforce the foundations of the specialty, attract a stronger workforce, and ensure future physicians, PRM specialists, and rehabilitation professionals are equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills. To advance this effort in Europe and building on the arguments presented in the paper “Why we need a representative organization of academic PRM in Europe, and why we need it now” [4], its authors have initiated to create the European Organization of University Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (UniPRM). Following an initial meeting held on January 7, 2025, in Milan, the foundational steps included the establishment of a Founding Council (comprising one invited university professor per European country) on February 10 and 12, 2025 (see Supplementary Table SI for current membership), and a Founding Executive Board on April 2, 2025 (see Supplementary Table SII for membership). To date, 37 countries have expressed interest in joining the organization through their designated Council members. The Founding Executive Board and Council now extend an open invitation to all current and prospective PRM professors across Europe to join UniPRM as Founding Members. By doing so, members will actively contribute to shaping the organization from its inception. This includes defining its vision, mission, and strategic plan for 2030, as well as its governance and financing models. Founding Members will also help establish the working structure across the four pillars of academic PRM: education, research, clinical care, and academic leadership and administration.



### What is UniPRM?

UniPRM is a representative, inclusive, and collaborative organization dedicated to strengthening academic capacity in PRM across European universities. Academic capacity is essential to ensure that future physicians, PRM specialists, and rehabilitation professionals are well trained to meet the growing rehabilitation needs within health systems. UniPRM serves as the academic voice of PRM in European universities, providing a platform to connect and empower academic PRM communities to meet this challenge together. Its mission is to unite and advance academic PRM by fostering excellence in education, research, clinical care, and academic leadership. UniPRM is grounded in three core values:

- Representativity:** Every existing and future national organization of PRM professors is represented in the UniPRM Council, ensuring broad geographic and institutional inclusion across Europe.
- Inclusiveness:** All current and prospective professors teaching PRM in European universities are welcome to join UniPRM through an open application process, fostering individual engagement, diversity, and academic collaboration.
- Collaboration:** UniPRM actively seeks partnerships with other relevant organizations in Europe and internationally. It aims to work closely with the AAP, the EARM, the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) PRM Section and Board, the European Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ESPRM), and the ISPRM.

### Our Name and Identity

The name UniPRM stands for University Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, emphasizing the organization’s foundation in university-based academic PRM. The name was carefully developed over a three-month consultation process involving: the Founding Executive Board and their academic networks, and the presidents and executive committees of the European Alliance of PRM, including EARM, ESPRM, and the UEMS PRM Section and Board. The final choice reflects three key elements:

- The academic discipline: the term University PRM highlights the organization’s focus on academic PRM as anchored in universities.
- The geographical scope: European defines the regional focus of the initiative.
- The organizational form: The term Organization was selected as the most appropriate to represent UniPRM’s goals because:
  - it encompasses the development of academic PRM across its four pillars - education, research, clinical care, and academic leadership
  - it provides a flexible and future-oriented structure, while remaining firmly rooted in its academic mission
  - it is distinct and not currently used by any other European or international PRM body.

### Who can join UniPRM?

- UniPRM welcomes a broad spectrum of academic professionals (both fully and partially employed by universities) who are committed to advancing PRM. Membership is open to individuals across different stages of their academic careers, including:
- Full Professors of PRM (grade A).** Individuals holding the highest academic rank in their country, typically affiliated with a medical faculty or medical school.
  - Associate Professors of PRM (Grade B).** Academics at the second-highest rank, also affiliated with medical faculties or medical schools.
  - Prospective Professors of PRM (Grade C).** PRM trainees and physicians pursuing an academic career with the goal of becoming associate or full professors. This category is particularly important, as one of UniPRM’s core missions is to strengthen the academic PRM workforce by supporting the next generation of university-based PRM educators and researchers.
  - University-affiliated Academics in PRM.** PRM physicians engaged in teaching and research within universities, including those working outside traditional medical faculties.

Become a Founding Member: How to Join

This is a unique opportunity to help shape the foundation of UniPRM as a Founding Member. Founding Members will play a key role in defining the organization’s strategic direction, structure, and activities from the outset.

If you are interested in joining UniPRM as a Founding Member, please send an email to universityPRM@gmail.com, copying the Founding Council member of your Country (see Supplementary Table SII), and the chair of your national organization of university PRM professors, if such an organization exists.

In your message, please include the following information: Name, Country, University, Academic role, as defined above in the membership categories (e.g., Full Professor, Associate Professor, Prospective Professor, University-affiliated academic).

For more information or guidance, you are encouraged to contact the Founding Council member representing your Country.

Join the First UniPRM Scientific Symposium

We are pleased to invite all founding Members to the first scientific symposium of UniPRM, which will take place on Friday, November 14, 2025, at the University Campus of the University of Lucerne in Nottwil, Switzerland.

This event marks a key milestone in the development of UniPRM and offers a unique opportunity to engage with colleagues from across Europe who are committed to advancing academic PRM.

How to Register: To register, please send an email to gerold.stucki@paraplegie.ch, with cc to universityPRM@gmail.com. In your message, kindly include the following information: Name, Country, University, Academic role (see membership categories)

Attendance mode: on-site in Nottwil (accommodation is available at Hotel Sempachersee and in the broader Lucerne region) or via live stream.

Join in Shaping the Future of Academic PRM

We warmly invite all current and future PRM professors in Europe to join UniPRM as Founding Members and become part of a growing community dedicated to advancing academic PRM. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the strategic direction, structure, and activities of UniPRM from the very beginning.

Our shared vision is to establish PRM as a fully recognized academic and clinical discipline, a cornerstone of modern medicine. PRM should lead innovation in human functioning, rehabilitation, and integrated care across health systems. Through strong academic structures in every European university, UniPRM aims to foster excellence in education, research, clinical care, and academic leadership. By joining UniPRM, you will help build the academic foundation that is essential to strengthening rehabilitation within health systems across Europe.

| Table SI. UniPRM Founding Executive Board                |                               |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Voting members   |                               |                                     |
| Founding President                                       | Stefano Negrini (ITA)         | stefano.negrini@unimi.it            |
| Founding President-elect                                 | Xavier de Boissezon (FRA)     | deboissezon.xavier@chu-toulouse.fr  |
| Founding Chair of the Council                            | Francesca Gimigliano (ITA)    | francesca.gimigliano@unicampania.it |
| Founding Full Professors (grade A) representative        | Jari Arokoski (FIN)           | jari.arokoski@hus.fi                |
| Founding Associate Professors (grade B) representative   | Katja Groleger Sršen (SVN)    | katja.groleger@mf.uni-lj.si         |
| Founding Prospective Professors (grade C) representative | Sofie Rummens (BEL)           | sofie.rummens@uzleuven.be           |
| Nonvoting members  |                               |                                     |
| Founding advisor (promoter)                              | Gerold Stucki (CHE)           | gerold.stucki@paraplegie.ch         |
| Founding advisor (promoter)                              | Henk Stam (NLD)               | hendrikjanstam@gmail.com            |
| Secretary  | Alessandro Picelli (ITA)      | alessandro.picelli@univr.it         |
| Treasurer  | François Constant Boyer (FRA) | fboyer@chu-reims.fr                 |

References

- World Health Organization. Resolution: Strengthening rehabilitation in health systems; 2023 [Internet]. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB152/B152\(10\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB152/B152(10)-en.pdf).
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| Table SII. UniPRM Founding Council Board |                                |  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| COUNTRY                                  | REPRESENTATIVE                 | ADDRESS                                |
| Andorra                                  | Merce Avellanet                | merceavellanet@gmail.com               |
| Austria                                  | Richard Crevenna               | richard.crevenna@meduniwien.ac.at      |
| Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina     | Mirsad Muftic                  | mhs@bih.net.ba                         |
| Bulgaria                                 | Elena Ilieva                   | elena_md@yahoo.com                     |
| Czech Republic                           | Alena Kobesova                 | alena.kobesova@lfmotol.cuni.cz         |
| Croatia                                  | Tonko Vlák                     | tonkovlak@gmail.com                    |
| Cyprus                                   | Nicolas Christodoulou          | nicolas.christodoulou.cyprus@gmail.com |
| Estonia                                  | Aet Lukmann                    | Aet.Lukmann@kliinikum.ee               |
| Finland                                  | Jaro Karppinen                 | jaro.karppinen@oulu.fi                 |
| France                                   | François Rannou                | francois.rannou@aphp.fr                |
| Germany                                  | Christoph Gutenbrunner         | gutenbrunner.christoph@mh-hannover.de  |
| Greece                                   | Markos Sgantzios               | sgantzios@med.uth.gr                   |
| Hungary                                  | Gabor Fazekas                  | fazekas123@t-online.hu                 |
| Ireland                                  | Raymond Carson                 | Raymond.Carson@NRH.IE                  |
| Italy                                    | Pietro Fiore                   | pietro.fiore@unifg.it                  |
| Kosovo                                   | Ardiana Murtezani              | ardiana.murtezani@uni-pr.edu           |
| Latvia                                   | Anita Vetra                    | anita.vetra@yahoo.com                  |
| Lithuania                                | Alvydas Juocevicius            | alvydas.juoce@gmail.com                |
| Malta                                    | Andrei Agius Anastasi          | aagi0017@um.edu.mt                     |
| Moldova                                  | Oleg Pascal                    | oleg.pascal@usmf.md                    |
| Montenegro                               | Vesna Bokan Mirković           | vesnabokanmir@gmail.com                |
| Netherlands                              | Alexander Geurts               | Sander.Geurts@radboudumc.nl            |
| North Macedonia                          | Koevska Valentina              | valeskoevska@yahoo.com                 |
| Norway                                   | Cecilie Roe                    | eller@medisin.uio.no                   |
| Poland                                   | Elżbieta Miller                | elzbieta.dorota.miller@umed.lodz.pl    |
| Portugal                                 | Joao Pinheiro                  | reabmedica@hotmail.com                 |
| Republic of Sprska                       | Tatjana Nozica Radulović       | tatjana.nozica@med.unibl.org           |
| Romania                                  | Mihai Berteanu                 | mberteanu@gmail.com                    |
| Serbia                                   | Milica Lazovic                 | lazovicmilica15@gmail.com              |
| Slovakia                                 | Karol Hornacek                 | hornacek59@gmail.com                   |
| Slovenia                                 | Helena Burger                  | helena.burger@ir-rs.si                 |
| Spain                                    | Soraya Hijazi Vega             | soraya.hijazi.vega@gmail.com           |
| Sweden                                   | Katharina Stibrant-Sunnerhagen | ks.sunnerhagen@neuro.gu.se             |
| Switzerland                              | Anke Scheel                    | anke.scheel-sailer@paraplegie.ch       |
| Turkey                                   | Ayse A. Küçükdeveci            | ayse.kucukdeveci@gmail.com             |
| United Kingdom                           | Manoj Sivan                    | M.Sivan@leeds.ac.uk                    |
| Ukraine                                  | Oleksandr Vladimirov           | avladimirov05@gmail.com                |