



# The impact of tradition and national requirements on radiotherapy education

**J GUILHERME COUTO**

ASSISTANT LECTURER @ UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

PHD RESEARCHER @ ULSTER UNIVERSITY

**PROF CIARA HUGHES**

**DR SONYIA MCFADDEN**

**DR PATRICIA MCCLURE**

**DR PAUL BEZZINA**

# Funding

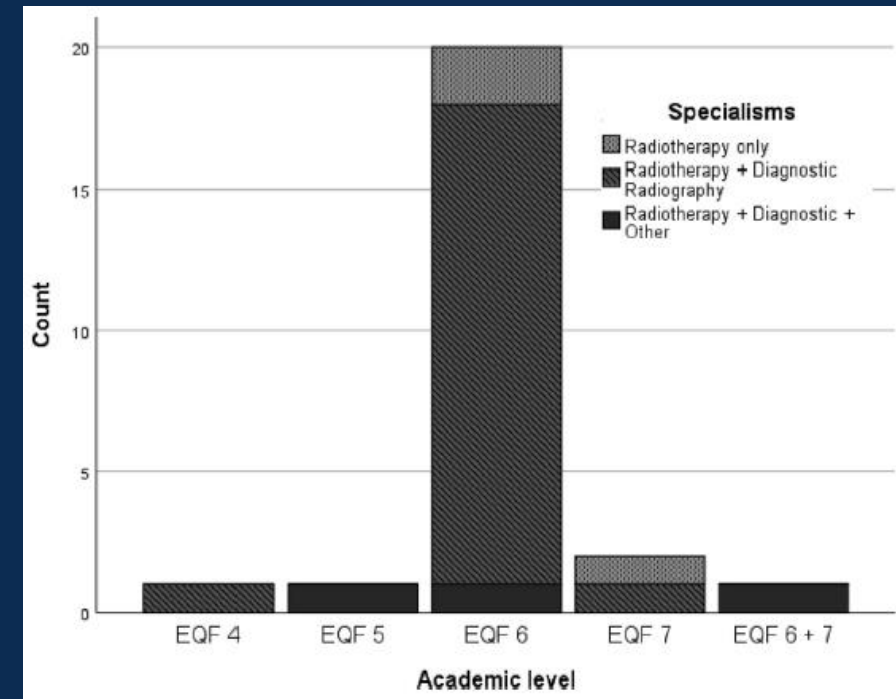
- ▶ SAFE EUROPE project
- ▶ University of Malta



*The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein*

# Rationale

- ▶ Therapeutic radiography: **Not regulated** at the European level
- ▶ European education **guidelines** (non-binding)
- ▶ **Different education programmes** across Europe
- ▶ **Literature** shows impact of
  - ▶ National tradition on other professions
  - ▶ European education regulations (e.g. Bologna)
  - ▶ Little literature on its impact on RT education at European level



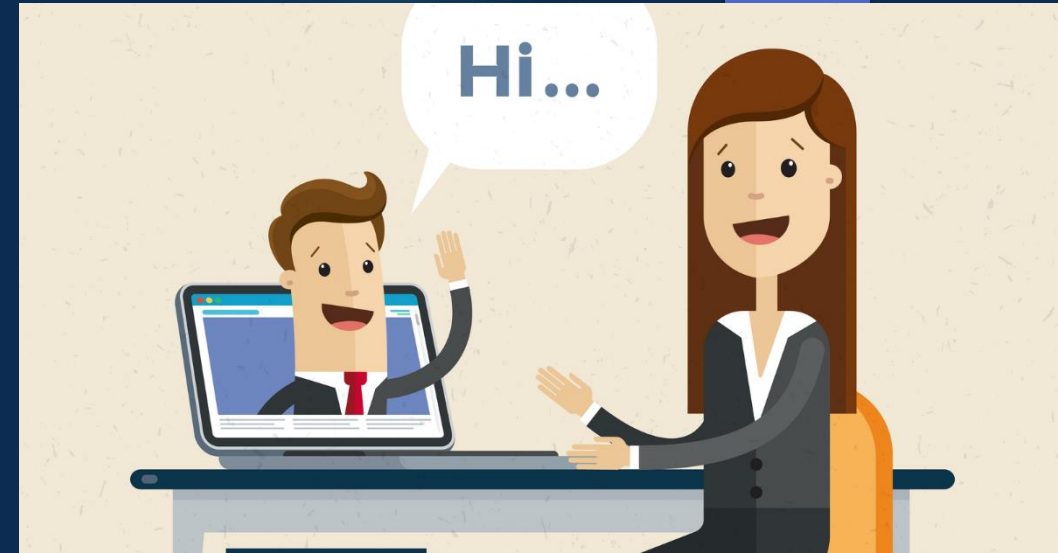
# Aim

Explore factors that affect **differences in radiotherapy (RT) competency** across EU



# Methodology

- ▶ Cross case study
- ▶ Interviews with stakeholders
  - ▶ Finland, Poland, Portugal and UK
  - ▶ Clinical managers, educators, professional association representatives, local and migrant TRs and students
  - ▶ Individual + group interviews
- ▶ Recruitment: SAFE EUROPE partners + social medial
- ▶ Transcribed + Thematic Analysis
  - ▶ Nvivo v.12



# Findings

- ▶ 30 participants
- ▶ Factors affecting education programmes
  - ▶ National standards
  - ▶ National needs and traditions
  - ▶ Professional identity
  - ▶ Perception of TR as a technical occupation
  - ▶ Economic factors

# National standards

Lack or  
inadequate  
regulation



Poorer +  
unharmonized  
education

“we don’t have a law regulation, still. That’s why the level of education is not equal” (PL1).

“there is no regulatory body that tells me that I need to prove my competencies” (PT5)

‘the HCPC will stipulate a number of standards of proficiency for a therapeutic radiographer, and we all have to maintain that’ (UK4)

# National needs and traditions

“I don’t know if [more research] can be included in studies. As I said, there’s not much research done by [TRs]” (FL4)

Traditional tasks influence curricula

“I am from the time when the planning CT was done by a colleague from radiology” (PT3)

“ratio of doctors to non-doctors” (UK1)

Task-shift between professions

Education must precede practice



# Professional identity

Perception of the  
profession  
boundaries  
influence  
curricula content

“[students] tell me ‘I don’t like RT because I want to pursue radiology’. [...] but then I say ‘No! you need to learn all three [...] Because [...] when you graduate, [...] you get all three warrants.’” (PT8).

RT separate  
profession/body-  
of-knowledge

“The roles are very different, and so the education [...] needs to [...] be very tailored towards the radiotherapy component” (UK1)

# TRs as technical occupation

“We need to move from being seen as a technician profession within countries to being a profession in our own right. [...] here in the UK, we’re always attached to the pieces of equipment but we know we’re much more than that.” (UK1)

Self- and others' perception

“the last decision goes to the doctor” (PL2)

“some of the radiotherapists are content to do what they are told to do instead of questioning” (FL4)

Dominance →  
Lack of autonomy

# Economic factors

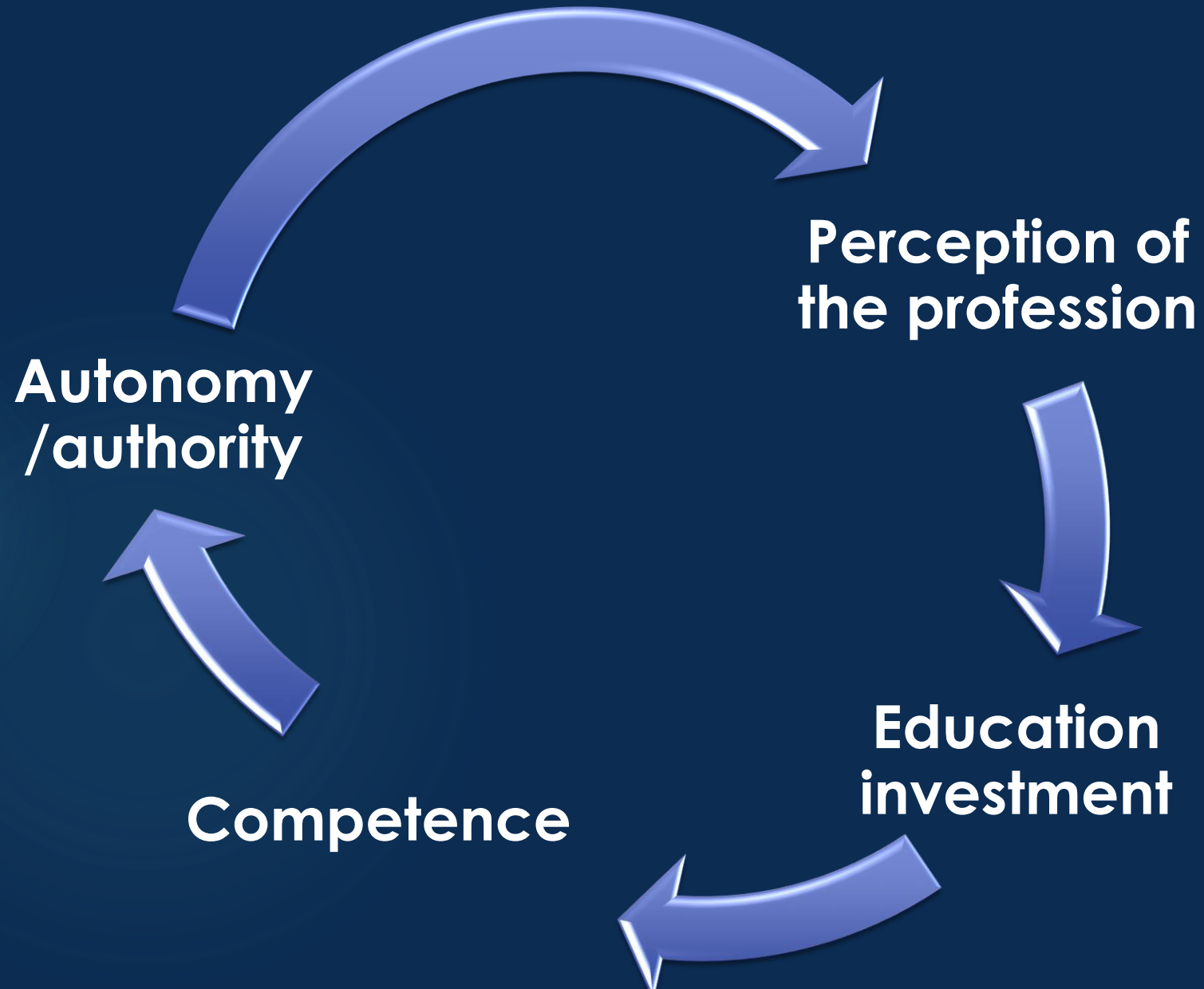
Funding issues

Limit teaching  
ability and  
programme  
structures

“the funding model in this country, it acts as a barrier” (UK1)

“The school always had difficulties in acquiring equipment” (PT8)

# Occupation perception/investment education cycle



Improvement in education can revert the cycle

# Conclusion

---

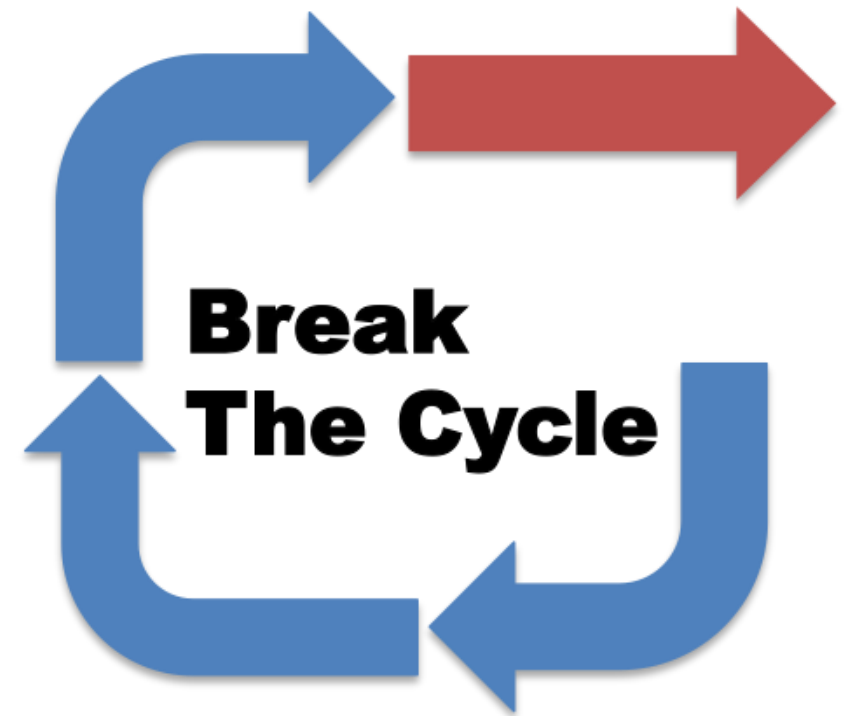
National regulations have the greatest effect on education design (it's the law!)

---

National tradition, needs, perception of profession, professional identity also influence course design

---

Changes in education can promote the profession!



Thank you!

# References

- ▶ Akimoto T, Caruana CJ, & Shimosegawa M. 2009. A qualitative comparative survey of First Cycle radiography programmes in Europe and Japan. *Radiography*, 154, 333–340 8p. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2009.04.002>
- ▶ Payne, K., & Nixon, S. 2001. External influences on curriculum design in radiography degrees. *Radiography*, 74, 249–254. <https://doi.org/10.1053/radi.2001.0340>
- ▶ Pratt, S., & Adams, C. 2003. How to create a degree course in radiography: a recipe. *Radiography*, 94, 317–322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2003.10.003>
- ▶ McNulty, J.P. Rainford, L. Bezzina, P. Henner, A. Kukkes, T. Pronk-Larive, D. & Vandulek, C. 2016. A picture of radiography education across Europe. *Radiography*, 22, 5–11.
- ▶ European Parliament, & European Council. Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications, Pub. L. No. Directive 2005/36/EC 2005
- ▶ Higher Education Network for Radiography in Europe HENRE. Tuning Template for Radiography in Europe. 2008.
- ▶ European Federation of Radiography Societies EFRS. European Qualifications Framework EQF Benchmarking Document: Radiographers. 2014.
- ▶ IAEA. A Handbook for the Education of Radiation Therapists RTTs. 2014.
- ▶ European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology ESTRO. European Higher Education Area Level 6. Benchmarking document for Radiation Therapists. 2014.
- ▶ Directorate-General for Energy. Radiation Protection 175 - Guidelines on radiation protection education and training of medical professionals in the European Union. 2014.
- ▶ Creswell, J. W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* 4th edition, international student edition. SAGE.
- ▶ Given, L. 2008. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- ▶ Mills, A., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. 2010. *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397>