

Response to the WHO Europe - European Programme of Work

15 July 2020

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) representing occupational therapists worldwide strongly supports the priorities of the European Programme of Work. As occupational therapists we recognise that a lack of access to health services serves as a significant barrier to participation in everyday life and full inclusion in society. WFOT endorses an intersectoral, person-centred approach for the provision of universal health coverage to tackle health inequalities and ensure that all people have equal access to improve and maintain health.

WFOT calls for a re-envisioned health system that addresses the high prevalence of mental health problems to promote health and wellbeing and recovery from mental illness. Improved mental health services are required within a broader definition of health systems that also includes enhanced rehabilitation services to optimize functioning, reduce disability and promote active citizenry. As a foundation for effective health system performance, proactive and inclusive planning is needed to improve preparedness, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience, particularly for disadvantaged populations. Recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic highlights disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals are disproportionately at risk in emergency situations.

Occupational therapy is a key component of an integrated health system to provide evidence-based interventions that teach skills, develop supports and promote engagement in occupations needed and wanted to contribute meaningfully to personal and community wellbeing. Occupational therapists are experts in promoting health and wellbeing in roles which cross institution and community boundaries, with a knowledge base that integrates medical, social, psychological and environmental domains. Occupational therapists are essential in mental health and rehabilitation services.

WFOT advocates for clear communication and collaboration with professional organisations to mobilise people and resources needed to meet priorities of the European Programme of Work. The network of members and partners of WFOT include trusted specialists such as practitioners, researchers, and educators who can inform change and build needed capacity. World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

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