



## World Federation of Occupational Therapists Statement

14-15 September 2020 70th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

### **Statement on the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):**

As the global representative of occupational therapists, the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) expresses support for work undertaken toward the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs in the European Region. WFOT strongly endorses the strategies outlined in the Action Plan to generate commitment of Member States to address the complex problems associated with NCDs.

Action reported by Member States to promote physical activity as a leading factor in health and well-being is commended. Encouragement of physical activity early in the life course is recognised as a key approach to minimising the burden of NCDs and health issues in later life stages.

WFOT and its member organisations recognise that work on the Action Plan must be informed by overwhelming evidence regarding the important link between mental health and prevention of NCDs<sup>1</sup>. The strong associations and inter-related causal mechanisms between mental health disorders and other NCDs argue for a joint approach to intervention. Promotion of rehabilitation services is also required to address the increasing prevalence of NCDs. WFOT acknowledges that many people do not have access to rehabilitation services and advocates for equal opportunities to rehabilitation as a human right.

Consultation with occupational therapists is recommended to ensure the needs of vulnerable groups, such as individuals with disabilities are fully addressed as work progresses on the Action Plan. Occupational therapists promote health and well-being through the use of purposeful and meaningful occupations to address many of the Action Plan strategies. Occupational therapists are experts in adapting and grading activities and environments to remove barriers impeding full participation and satisfaction with daily life; they can therefore assist with planning, design and implementation of interventions, infrastructure and policy in relation to local contexts and population needs.

In closing, WFOT and its member organisations are deeply committed to working with governments at all levels, non-governmental organisations and service users to promote societal change for the prevention and control of NCDs. Enabling more people to lead active and healthy lives promotes lifelong community engagement and limits strain on health and social care systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Stein, D., Benjet, C., Gureje, O., Lund, C., Scott, K., Poznyak, V. & van Ommeren, M. (2019). *Integrating mental health with other non-communicable diseases*. *BMJ* 364:k1295 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l295>