

WHO Regional Committee for Europe: 65th session September 2015

Statement in response to EUR/RC65/9 Physical activity strategy for the WHO European Region
2016–2025
Provisional agenda item 5(d)

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and its' regional group the Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (COTEC) representing occupational therapists internationally and within Europe welcome the Physical Activity Strategy for the WHO European Region 2016–2025.

The values, concepts and language employed throughout the document are congruent with those embraced by the occupational therapy profession. The WFOT strongly agrees that the Strategy and 5 priority areas should be an integrated approach to promoting physical activity across the life course. The WHO European Region's commitment to focus on physical activity as a leading factor in health and well-being is to be commended and the WFOT affirms that developing strategies to encourage physical activity early in the life course is a key approach to minimising the ever-increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD's) and health issues in later life stages.

The WFOT requests Member States to engage occupational therapists in implementing the Strategy's 5 priority areas as occupational therapists can share their experience and practice of empowering and enabling people to participate and engage in their everyday occupations. In occupational therapy, occupations refer to everyday activities that people need to, want to and are expected to do in order to bring purpose and meaning to life including physical activity that is age, gender and culturally appropriate. Occupational therapists promote health and well-being through the use of purposeful and meaningful occupations and already address many of the objectives within the Strategy especially Objective 3.3 – integrate physical activity into prevention, treatment and rehabilitation by addressing physical activity in assessments and intervention programmes.

The WFOT also requests that policy maker's work with occupational therapists to ensure the needs of vulnerable groups including those with disabilities are fully addressed. Occupational therapists are experts in adapting and grading activities and environments to help remove barriers and facilitate full participation and satisfaction in physical activities.

In closing, the WFOT and its European member organisations are deeply committed to working with governments at all levels, non-governmental organisations and clients to promote societal change and increased physical activity across the life course. The Physical Activity Strategy is a powerful document and directive for empowering the European community to engage in health enhancing activities.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists by Samantha Shann, Vice President Finance WFOT.