

**WHO Regional Committee for Europe: 66th session September 2016**

**Statement in response to EUR/RC66/11:  
Action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in the  
WHO European Region  
Provisional Agenda item 5(c)**

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, wish to declare strong support for the initiatives being undertaken and established by WHO Europe related to NCDs. These strategies will ensure the necessary attention and commitment by Member States to the complex problems that affect all aspects of society from economic integrity and societal capacity building to health.

The WHO Europe 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.

Whilst mental health is covered in the Action Plan with reference to the The European Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020, it is important that the link between mental health and preventing NCDs is not overlooked. The WFOT also requests that policy makers work with occupational therapists to ensure the needs of vulnerable groups including those with disabilities are fully addressed.

The WFOT requests Member States to engage occupational therapists in implementing the Action Plan. Occupational therapists promote health and well-being through the use of purposeful and meaningful occupations and already address many of the actions listed in the Action Plan including lifestyle modification. Occupational therapists are experts in adapting and grading activities and environments to help remove barriers and facilitate full participation and satisfaction in daily life; they can therefore assist with the planning and design of appropriate housing, health care institutions, schools, mobility plans and transport infrastructure.

In closing, the WFOT and its European member organisations are deeply committed to working with governments at all levels, non-governmental organisations and service users to promote societal change with regards to the prevention and control of NCDs. Enabling more people to lead active and healthy lives will allow them to remain active in society longer and will limit the strain on health and social care systems.

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

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