

**Statement in response to provisional agenda item RC62 5(d) policy & technical topics:
European Mental Health Action Plan 2014–2020**

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 European Mental Health Action Plan.

WFOT commends the WHO's commitment to tackle mental health inequalities by aiming to improve the mental well-being of the population and reduce the burden of mental disorders, with a special focus on vulnerable groups. As reflected in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Position Statement on Human Rights (WFOT, 2006; available at <http://www.wfot.org/ResourceCentre>) the occupational therapy profession promotes and facilitates people's right to participate in a range of occupations that enable them to flourish to their full potential and experience satisfaction in a way that is consistent with their culture and beliefs. This statement speaks directly to services which deal with "exposure to determinants and risk behaviours associated with vulnerable groups in the Action Plan's scope 17(a).

The occupational therapy profession can participate in multi-sectorial initiatives contributing to a broad view of health care, social services and environmental priorities. The WFOT includes many specialists such as practitioners, researchers, and educators who can be resources for the work envisaged through the Action Plan and assist member states to meet its 7 objectives.

WFOT urges national policy makers to engage occupational therapists in implementing the Action Plan's four core objectives as occupational therapists can share the experience of their practice of empowering and enabling people to participate and engage in their everyday activities and thus can contribute significantly to the development of national mental health strategies and services. Occupational therapists are experts in promoting health and well-being through the use of purposeful and meaningful 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.

WFOT also requests that policy makers work with occupational therapists to meet the three cross cutting objectives. Regarding e) health systems providing good physical and mental health care for all and f) mental health systems that are coordinated with sectorial partnerships; the International Minimum Standards for Occupational Therapy Education (WFOT, 2002), WFOT advocates that occupational therapy education and practice is holistic. Occupational therapy is framed by a client-centred approach which crosses institution and community boundaries with our knowledge base, integrating medical, social, psychological and environmental domains. For g) mental health governance driven and delivery driven by good information and knowledge, occupational therapists

endorse and use critical appraisal and evidence-based practice approaches in planning services and interventions. The WFOT believes these elements are essential in achieving a vision of a holistic system, with policy and programme development which mirror the Mental Health Action Plan and better co-ordination and integration of a societal and governmental approach to change.

In closing, occupational therapists' active participation in European dialogue and implementation work will provide expert knowledge and practical solutions to the crucial European agenda of mental health practice and research. The World Federation of Occupational Therapists in 2010 made mental health a major area of revitalisation through its Mental Health Master Plan in preparation for addressing global service needs. The WFOT and its member organisations are deeply committed to working with governments at all levels, non-governmental organisations and clients to promote societal change and mental well-being. The European Mental Health Action Plan is powerful statement and directive in achieving access and equitable services across the European community.

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



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