

COTEC 4 Year Strategy 2017 – 2020

Introduction

COTEC is the European organisation for occupational therapists through membership of their national associations.

This four year strategy outlines the key areas of concern for the organisation, indicates the areas of political interest and identifies priorities for the next four years. The strategy forms a framework for the work of the organisation which will aid the development of annual action plans covering the period 2017-2020.

This strategy is based on the professional values and philosophy of occupational therapy set within the dynamic context in which occupational therapists are educated and work across Europe.

Background

In designing this strategy COTEC has been mindful of the challenges facing Europe such as the ongoing financial issues that impact on the delivery of health and social care, the need for an adaptable and mobile quality workforce able to deliver workable solutions to improve individual and community well being and the developing challenges of appropriately managing migrant and refugee populations.

In creating this strategy, the Executive Committee has discussed the policy issues that are likely to influence the years up to 2020. These are outlined below:

1. the World Health Organisation's Health 2020 Strategy is aimed at strengthening public health through the life course. There are specific strategies for mental health, children and adolescents, continuing work on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the ageing population. Non-communicable diseases are chronic diseases such as neurological, respiratory, cardiovascular, cancer, diabetes and dementia. Providing healthcare for NCDs is becoming increasingly expensive so ways of better managing chronic disease through public health, primary care and health improvement strategies are ever more pressing.
2. the European 2020 targets also form part of the political context in which occupational therapists learn and practise. The five targets are focused on employment for 16-25 year olds, poverty reduction aimed at children, tertiary education for 16-35 olds, increases in %GDP earmarked for research and development and improvements to emissions affecting climate change. Whilst these targets at face value may appear to have limited application to occupational therapy, they impact on every aspect of occupational therapy and there are potential opportunities in research (for example through Horizon 2020), work and education and other initiatives aimed at health and social care.

3. the overarching initiatives influencing all the above areas are concerned with primary care, public health, health improvement, the need for innovation and increasing use of welfare technology, as these are seen to be preventative in nature, require personal engagement and responsibility and therefore improve accessibility to health and social care to a greater number of people. Inequity of access, a continuing challenge, impacts many people in society who are severely disadvantaged through poverty and lack of opportunity for social participation which may impact negatively on population health. Welfare technology and e-Health is seen as a useful tool to support increased access to health and social care. Many of these issues are encompassed within the European Sustainable Development Goals, particularly 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11.

COTEC Values Statement

- Human rights and diversity – The Strategy builds upon the key tenets of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2008), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Bank report World Report on disability (2011), and the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society, thus improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe (2006-2015).
 Occupational therapists argue that diversity is a positive resource and that all people can contribute to society. All people have the right to have their basic needs met, to live in dignity throughout their life and be treated with respect. COTEC will work to support policies that emphasise empowerment and dignity for all people who experience limitations and restrictions in occupation.
- Inclusion and participation - All people have the right to be active, be included and to participate in society. Discriminatory practice will not be condoned. The development of the environment, both social and physical, shall be based on the principle of universal design. Occupational therapists work with individuals, groups and communities in their own environment to strengthen active engagement, inclusion and participation. Occupational therapists support the person and those involved with that person to establish a meaningful everyday life.
- Equality and equal access - All European citizens have the right to equal access to health and social services, independent of social status, income, sex, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, disabilities or age. Citizens with occupational limitations should be facilitated in managing their everyday life according to their personal wishes and needs. Occupational therapists work to enable people to participate in school, work and social life. Service users shall receive a good quality service in an equitable and timely fashion. In addition, Occupational Therapy services in health and social areas shall be based on best practice and evidence.
- Transparency – Transparency of the Organisation’s decisions and actions will be underpinned by good governance procedures to ensure that Member Associations and recipients of our services can have confidence in a responsible and credible organisation.

Strategic Vision

Occupational therapy is valued, visible, available and accessible in Europe by service users and policy makers and Occupational Therapists are proud to be a member of their national and European association.

Strategic Goals for the next 4 years

1. Develop political and strategic partnerships locally, nationally, and European wide to increase our presence and visibility in addressing societal issues and to promote an occupational perspective of life.
2. Ensure that COTEC engages with and inspires its member associations and their members to continue to deliver high quality occupational therapy and occupationally based, evidence informed services in existing and emerging areas of practice.
3. Continue to work towards the development of a sustainable network organisation by improving member engagement and ensuring that every occupational therapist understands the importance of being a member of their national association and pride in belonging to the community of occupational therapy.
4. To collaborate with ENOTHE and establish a new European umbrella organisation to coordinate and strengthen the impact of Occupational Therapy in Europe

Key Objectives

The Executive Committee in discussion and agreement with General Assembly Members annually, translated into Annual Operating Plans over the next four years, will:

1. **Develop political and strategic partnerships locally, nationally, and European wide to increase our presence and visibility in addressing societal issues and to promote an occupational perspective of life by**
 - Developing branding and communication strategies.
 - Increasing occupational therapists' awareness about the importance of mutual collaboration and partnerships to develop OT and COTEC, contributing from their respective roles in society such as practitioner, teacher, researcher, students and citizen.
 - Encouraging and facilitating members of COTEC to be visible partners in different interdisciplinary projects and actions.
 - Increasing collaboration with the third sector, service users and other social actors (social partners such as NGO, associations, cooperatives, community groups and others).
 - Raising awareness of the importance and contribution of Occupational Therapy in health and social systems among the public, community, opinion makers, politicians and decision makers.
 - Improving the occupational perspective and voice in current dialogues, influencing the development of decisions at the local/national/international political agenda on issues such as: human rights, poverty, citizenship, education, health, disability, employment, sustainable development, migration and refugees, by responding to consultations and commenting on European roadmaps.
 - Involving occupational therapists at a European level by e.g. sending representative/experts to attend meetings relevant to occupational therapy, providing information about occupational therapy as resource (e.g. in position papers, on website, newsletter and mails), engaging occupational therapy experts in European events, sharing information on European policies and initiatives.

2. **Ensure that COTEC engages with and inspires its member associations and their members to continue to deliver high quality OT and occupationally based, evidence informed services in existing and emerging areas of practice by**
 - Creating effective communication strategies by establishing communication channels for members - website, newsletters, social media and emails.
 - Supporting the creation and distribution of information concerning European health, social and educational policy.
 - Promoting our affiliations with other partners such as ENOTHE and WFOT, developing a unique brand and style for use in public relations and marketing
 - Supporting the development of member organisations by:
 - Visits to Member Associations for face-to-face meetings when necessary, about issues of concern for the Association, such as lack of support from ministers and governments.

- Providing keynote speeches at national congresses by invitation.
- Writing letters of concern and / or support to governments/politicians and policy makers.
- Sharing documents for development and "translation" to the national contexts.
- Supporting the establishment of new occupational therapy associations through a "mentor/buddy system".

3. Continue to work towards the development of a sustainable network organisation by improving member engagement and ensuring that every occupational therapist understands the importance of being a member of their national association and pride in belonging to the community of occupational therapy by

- Continuing the review and development of robust governance procedures by ensuring that COTEC's governance documents guide the operations of the organisation to provide openness and transparency of all activities on behalf of members by:
 - Reviewing current documents and investigating areas that require specific procedures and documentation
 - Providing a reference table of all procedures and documents produced on behalf of the organisation with review dates.
 - Securing financial sustainability and develop a fit for purpose administration system by:
 - Increasing membership to meet current costs and sustain future developments.
 - Identifying target regions and potential markets within Europe.
 - Marketing and promoting the value and contribution that being a member brings through engaging with previous and potential new members.
 - Offering transparency to members of the financial administration activities that are undertaken by the office and elected Executive Committee.
 - Continuing to organise a financially sustainable General Assembly.
 - Regularly reviewing current costs of all activities including pricing structures for membership and General Assembly meetings.
- Building and maintaining a professional network by updating contact details of all members and sharing these with members on a protected website and maintaining expert groups and identifying further experts through Member Associations
- Engaging members in COTEC's work to support professional development by informing expert groups about opportunities for collaboration and holding a joint congress every 4 years

4. To collaborate with ENOTHE and occupational therapy researchers to establish a new European umbrella organisation to coordinate and strengthen the impact of Occupational Therapy in Europe by

- Developing an organisational structure to facilitate communication, joint decision making and effective administration – while preserving the autonomy of the respective organisations, including research.
- Engaging in joint projects e.g. mental health, older citizens, refugees to promote occupational therapy practice, education and research in addressing European issues.
- Organising joint congresses every four years based on the results of feedback and consultation about what best meets the needs of the profession in Europe
- Developing technically and visually compatible integrated websites and collaborating in developing marketing/branding formats and strategies
- Supporting the development of a European Community of Occupational Therapists