

RE | Recognition and enhancement of the role of the occupational therapist in rehabilitation pathways - Italian Association of Occupational Therapy (AITO)

19th June 2025

To: Dr. Mainolfi

Directorate General of Health Professions and Human Resources of the NHS

Dear Dr. Mainolfi,

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) is the official international representative for the occupational therapy profession. Federated since 1952, today the Federation represents 111 member organisations and in excess of 680,000 occupational therapists worldwide. The Italian Association of Occupational Therapy (AITO) was accepted as an associate member of the WFOT in 1978 and as a full member of the WFOT in 2002.

AITO have informed WFOT of the proposed upcoming reorganisation of the health professions in Italy. We are therefore writing at this time to support the strategic role of occupational therapists described by AITO in a summary brief submitted to your Ministry. The brief outlines clinical evidence and national and international regulatory frameworks for occupational therapy, and describes implications for the quality, continuity and sustainability of health services in your country.

As outlined in the WFOT position statement on [Professional Autonomy](#)¹, occupational therapists are autonomous professionals that work with individuals, groups and communities in a variety of settings to promote participation in occupations that give value and meaning to life. As autonomous professionals, occupational therapists serve in the best interests of the public, guided by a defined set of competencies, standards of practice and ethics. Occupational therapists take responsibility for collectively defining required competencies and education to enter occupational therapy practice, as well as ensure the continuing competency of members of the profession. Individual occupational therapists assume a lifelong commitment to professional learning for use of best available evidence in the provision of occupational therapy.

The occupational therapy workforce unfortunately remains underdeveloped and inequitably distributed within Italy at a time of increasing population needs within the community. [Human resources data](#) collected by WFOT indicates your country has a low supply of occupational therapists to meet needs of the Italian people, with a low per capita distribution of occupational therapists in comparison with peer European countries².

¹ WFOT (2023). Professional Autonomy. Retrieved from <https://wfot.org/resources/occupational-therapy-professional-autonomy-1>

² WFOT (2025). WFOT Human Resources Project 2024. Retrieved from <https://hr-project.wfot.org/>

WFOT developed an evidence-based [Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce](#) to provide an overarching framework that articulates key strategic directions and domains at local, national, and cross-national levels³. The Global Strategy is designed to inform and guide the development of context-sensitive situation assessments, priorities, and plans within and across jurisdictions such as Italy for strengthening the occupational therapy workforce. We hope this resource may be of value to your Ministry during your health workforce redevelopment.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our support for the position of AITO regarding the specific and irreplaceable role of occupational therapy; the contribution of occupational therapists cannot be superimposed on or absorbed by other professions that differ in their orientation, purpose, methods and tools. Occupational therapists have a defined set of unique professional competencies, standards of practice and ethics to optimally support people to participate in the activities that they wish, need or are expected to do in their everyday lives.

Yours sincerely,



Samantha Shann

President

World Federation of Occupational Therapists

³ World Federation of Occupational Therapists, Jesus TS, von Zweck C, et al.(2024). Retrieved from <https://wfot.org/resources/wfot-global-strategy-for-the-occupational-therapy-workforce>