



STATEMENT ON REFUGEE AND MIGRANT HEALTH

The organisations supporting this statement acknowledge the need to address the health needs and multidimensional implications of the ever-expanding populations of both migrants and displaced people. We note the new priorities in public health, the shifts in the epidemiology and the social determinants of health, and the challenges faced by health services and workforces.

In light of these challenges, we welcome the strategy and action plan for refugee and migrant health, and encourage its urgent implementation with the strong engagement of refugees and migrants. We are open to support and advise decision-makers in implementing the strategy and guaranteeing sustainable and uninterrupted provision of comprehensive and integrated health care, including primary care and basic palliative care to refugees and migrants.

To ensure this, we emphasize the importance of providing the health workforce with undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional education, as well as immediate training that reflects the changing health needs of Europe and its neighbouring countries. To this end we would like to play an active role in shaping training curricula and continuous professional development in collaboration with educational institutions and providers.

Furthermore we believe the implementation of this strategy should account for the health risks refugees and migrants face while in transit. Since the year 2000 over 46,000 migrants have died en route to Europe. Those in transit are exposed to numerous health hazards, including violence and abuse, whilst time spent in detention or poor reception conditions poses additional burdens on the mental and physical health threats of refugees and migrants.

Therefore we call on Member States to:

- a) establish safe and regular migration routes with ensured access to health services where possible;
- b) recommend, where practicable, the implementation of pre-departure medical examination, proper communication, coordination protocols and reporting for post-arrival follow-up to guarantee the safe travel and resettlement of the refugees without discrimination based on health status;
- c) acknowledge the risk of violence and its many presentations, screen and identify cases of violence and abuse, and intervene within their capacity alongside authorities and community resources;
- d) avoid the practice of detention whenever possible, while clearly limiting its duration;
- e) guarantee access to healthcare and adequate living conditions to all detainees;

- f) pay specific attention at all times to the particular needs of those vulnerable or marginalised populations, especially unaccompanied underage immigrants, the older persons and those with disabilities.

Finally, taking into account the social determinants of health, and to enable refugees and migrants to improve control over their health, combat stigma, move beyond the negative effects of displacement and strengthen inclusion, we urge:

- a) their better integration into the education system;
- b) their participation in valued occupations that help bridge a former life to the current situation.

These are crucial for creating the “strong societal will” needed to ensure successful implementation of this strategy.

Thank you for your attention.

NGOS SUPPORTING THIS STATEMENT

- **COTEC:** The European organization for all Occupational Therapists through their National Associations, with the purpose of ensuring an adequate number of high quality occupational therapy practitioners and services in Europe. COTEC is a regional group of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), representing more than 130.000 Occupational therapists.
- **EFPC:** European Forum for Primary Care represents around 100 institutional members in the WHO European region active at policy making, academic and practice level in the Primary Care domain.
- **EFMA:** The European Forum of Medical Associations is a forum of national associations of physicians across the WHO European Region.
- **EPHA:** The European Public Health Alliance is a Europe-wide alliance of 90 civil society organisations advocating for policies to protect and improve public health.
- **IAHPC:** The International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care is a global organization dedicated to the promotion and development of palliative care. Its mission is to collaborate and work to improve the quality of life of patients with advanced life-threatening conditions and their families.
- **IFMSA:** The International Federation of Medical Students Associations represents, connects and engages with a network of 1.3 million medical students from 130 national members organizations in 122 countries around the globe.
- **WFOT:** The World Federation of Occupational Therapists is the official representative of occupational therapy internationally, representing 480,000 occupational therapists worldwide. WFOT through its member associations and regional groups promotes and establishes high quality occupational therapy services and education programmes.
- **WHPCA:** The Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance is an international non-governmental organisation focusing exclusively on hospice and palliative care development worldwide. We are a network of national and regional hospice and palliative care organisations and affiliate organisations.
- **WONCA Europe:** The European regional network of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) represents more than 80,000 family doctors through their Member Organisations across Europe.