



Strengthening the Rehabilitation Workforce
Technical briefing to WHO European Region Member States
26 September 2024
11:00 – 12:00 CET

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22 July 2024
Original: English

Scope and purpose

Background:

The need for rehabilitation in the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region has arguably never been greater and continues to grow. Rehabilitation professionals, such as audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, physiotherapists, prosthetists and orthotists, rehabilitation doctors, rehabilitation nurses, speech and language therapists, and others, are on the healthcare frontline to provide rehabilitation services, including the provision of assistive technology.

Developing the rehabilitation workforce is foundational for the provision of effective, timely and quality delivery of rehabilitation services. Many countries cannot meet the rehabilitation needs of their population due to underdeveloped services and a lack of rehabilitation professionals, resulting in avoidable life-changing consequences for those whose rehabilitation needs are delayed or unmet, creating barriers to inclusion in education, employment and society at large.

The WHO European Region is below the global average for rehabilitation professionals, and the shortage is particularly acute in the 21 middle-income countries¹. The landmark regional report; Health and care workforce in Europe: time to act, outlined some of the issues underpinning the health work crisis, such as burnout, poor remuneration, education, and lack of financing for workforce and services. Moreover, the rehabilitation workforce and the delivery of rehabilitation services have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rehabilitation 2030 initiative² and the Sustainable Development Goal 3C³ call for a substantial increase in health financing, recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce.

It is evident that the situation warrants attention, and the complexity of the challenges calls for in-depth analysis. **The Guide for Rehabilitation Workforce Evaluation (GROWE)**⁴ comprises a set of resources that can be applied in countries to provide information to support planning and advocacy at the national or subnational level. GROWE draws on labour market analysis and competency-based approaches to generate granular data on the need, supply, demand and absorption of the rehabilitation workforce, as well as the extent of care being provided. It brings together rehabilitation workforce stakeholders to uncover opportunities for expansion and growth by identifying feasible, acceptable, sustainable, and effective actions.

¹ Health and care workforce in Europe: time to act. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2022.

² Rehabilitation in health systems: guide for action. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019.

³ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/70/L.1)] 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁴ Guide for rehabilitation workforce evaluation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023.

Undertaking a rehabilitation workforce evaluation with GROWE provides information that helps stakeholders not only capture the situation of the rehabilitation workforce in the country but to understand the factors that shape it, enabling the creation of an action plan which targets underlying issues and is responsive to the country context.

Date and time:

One 60-minute technical briefing will be held virtually.

The meeting will take place on Thursday 26 September 2024 from 11:00 to 12:00 Central European Time.

Aim:

To showcase the WHO tools and support available to develop the rehabilitation workforce and invite Member State engagement.

Objectives:

- To convey the lack of evidence-based data on the rehabilitation workforce and the need to develop the workforce to enable effective service delivery.
- To present the highlights from the survey: COVID-19 impact on the rehabilitation workforce.
- To brief Member States on the GROWE tool and available technical support with implementation examples from Georgia and Poland.

Participants:

Participants will comprise representatives from relevant ministries of WHO European Region Member States. Each Member State is invited to nominate up to two participants for the meeting.

Languages of the meetings:

The working language will be English, with simultaneous Russian interpretation provided. Preparatory documents will also be available in English and Russian.