



# GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

2019

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

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Governance has always been at the heart of COTEC's activities, and the organisation's constitution and rule of procedures had outlined the way the organisation works.

However, the intention is to go one step further by disclosing, in the most transparent way possible, COTEC's various decision-making procedures in one comprehensive volume, the present Governance Handbook.

*It is important to underscore that striving for "good governance" in our day-to-day operations describes an ongoing process which is never quite completed. Similarly, this handbook is an ongoing document which will continue to be updated and improved. COTEC will strive to improve its provision of the most up-to-date and transparent information about its internal and external activities, communications and decision-making processes to its members. This process will never quite be concluded, nor will the results satisfy everybody. However, COTEC's commitment represents an attempt to manage the organisation as democratically as possible, in line with international governance standards and emerging good practice.*

The Executive Committee wants to thank EPHA for allowing them to use the structure of the EPHA Governance Handbook of which we made full use.

## 3. GOVERNANCE

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Governance is crucial to the operations of COTEC. The legitimacy of the organisation, as well as the confidence in its representation given to COTEC by its members, is dependent on good governance structures and clear, transparent accountability of the executing bodies.

### 3.1. CONCEPT

Governance is a long-standing, flexible concept that can mean many things to many people.

Depending on context, it can refer to organisational, social or economic environments and relate to corporate, international, national or local power structures involving formal and informal actors. At the organisational level it is employed to describe the process of decision-making, and the way that decisions are implemented by those mandated to do so.

At COTEC, good governance refers to the entirety of its internal and external decision-making and implementation processes which are carried out by its membership via the General Assembly, (GA) Executive Committee (Executive) representatives and secretariat in accordance with its Constitution under German law and detailed in its Rules of Procedures.

COTEC is accountable to its members through its governance processes, to its partners through its activities and to the public through its transparent communication.

### 3.2. GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

The present Handbook describes COTEC procedures, references key documents and is intended as an aid to organisational memory and transparent decision-making.

Since the present volume is conceived as a dynamic text, we encourage our members to point out any areas where further improvements can be made. Please send your comments to [info@coteceurope.eu](mailto:info@coteceurope.eu) with the subject 'Governance Handbook'. In addition, the Handbook, or elements of the content, will be reviewed every four years, with notes maintained throughout by Vice-President Administration so as to ensure smooth upgrade of the handbook. It will be reviewed earlier when needed to ensure that it remains consistent with legislation and good practice, reflects relevant organisational changes, and can serve as an essential tool for COTEC's General Assembly, executive committee, and secretariat.

### 3.3. COTEC CONSTITUTION

COTEC's functioning is defined and controlled by its Constitution.

Changes to the Constitution are always voted upon in the General Assembly.

## 4. WHAT IS COTEC?

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COTEC is a membership organisation - the National Association of each of the countries within the Council of Europe are eligible for membership (one per country) and COTEC is the only organisation providing such a benefit within Europe. There are a mission, vision and values clearly stated that shape COTEC's work as Europe's occupational therapy practitioners voice. There are also Strategic Aims and subsequent annual work plans which identify the drivers and actions which the COTEC Executive are tasked to undertake on behalf of and with its membership.

It is important that COTEC's membership is diverse, representative and balanced across the members of the Council of Europe. COTEC embraces an approach to diversity and varying priorities amongst its members. COTEC pays particular attention to geographical representation. This ensures a pan-European approach in COTEC's contribution to policy-making and representation.

### 4.1. ORIGINS

The European Council in Brussels agreed in 1983 that "mutual recognition for diplomas was an important step in creating satisfactory conditions for the exercise of a number of professions" including Occupational Therapists. COTEC was established in 1986 (Strasbourg) with the purpose of co-ordinating the views of the National Associations of Occupational Therapy in Europe. The aim of COTEC is to enable National Associations of Occupational Therapists to work together to develop, harmonise and improve standards of professional practice through a robust educational system, as well as advance the theory of Occupational Therapy throughout Europe to best address the social and health issues affecting the citizens of Europe.

COTEC is the European organisation 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 (June 2019) represents 31 European Occupational Therapy Associations and more than 185,000 Occupational

Therapists. COTEC has a legal status as an NGO, is accepted in the European Commissions' transparency register and is a Regional Group of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

COTEC delivery model has shifted from ad hoc actions, through programme areas to the development of a Strategic Plan (reviewed and refreshed every four years) which shapes yearly Action Plans.

To harmonise the profession across Europe it was felt a focus on education was needed. In 1995 the European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE) was founded, within the framework of the European Union on the initiative of COTEC with financial support from ERASMUS.

More recently a research "arm" to European Occupational Therapy - Research in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science (ROTOS) - has been under development.

COTEC collaborates closely with ENOTHE and ROTOS actively cooperating and building alliances with other organisations and networks to reach its goals. In order to maximise the impact of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Therapists across Europe an umbrella organisation - Occupational Therapy Europe (OT-Europe) has been formed and is in the process of becoming a legal entity. This will not replace any of the three member bodies but should ensure that resources are used effectively, and duplication of effort is avoided.

COTEC has membership of the European Forum of Primary Care (EFPC) and Health First Europe (HFE), partnership with European Public Health Associations (EUPHA) and links into the European Health Professionals Dialogue (EHPD). Partnerships are growing and dynamic so this list will change and grow to reflect COTEC member interests.

## 4.2. MISSION AND VISION

The aim of COTEC is to enable National Associations of Occupational Therapists in Europe to work together to develop, harmonise and improve standards of professional practice through a robust educational system, as well as advance the theory of Occupational Therapy throughout Europe to best address the social and health issues affecting the citizens of Europe.

COTEC focuses on two main areas:

1. to make OT visible to the outside world by making alliances with other organisations, networks and stakeholders at European level and to engage members and their individual members in participating in national and European projects making OT visible at a European level.
2. to internally connect and address the needs of the Member Associations and support its members.

### **Vision**

COTEC strives to make Occupational Therapy visible, valued, accessible and available for all European Citizens by supporting its members and by collaborating on a European level.

### **Mission Statement**

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

COTEC will contribute to the development of European Health and Social services in promoting inclusion, participation, health and well-being for people with occupational limitations and participation restrictions.

COTEC promotes and supports the development and practice of Occupational Therapy and the mobility of the labour market for occupational therapists in all European countries.

## **4.3. STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACTION PLAN**

COTEC's Strategic Plan translates COTEC's mission and vision into aims. The Strategic Plan covers a period of four years and directs COTEC's work and resource allocation.

The annual Action Plan further breaks down these activities into concrete actions for a given calendar year. Given the overarching directives of the Strategic Plan the Actions Plans do not differ profoundly year-on-year, however they leave flexibility to effectively address emerging challenges and opportunities as they arise. The Action Plan is prepared by the Executive Committee based on the suggestions made by the Member Associations and on European developments and is prepared annually. This is then discussed and voted upon in the General Assembly. A budget is also proposed annually in line with the presented Action Plan.

## 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

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This chapter provides information on COTEC's managing body, the Executive Committee, and the main governing body called the General Assembly.

COTEC's greatest strength and resources lies in its human capital.

As COTEC is an organisation relying on the work of volunteers the capacity for output is limited by human and financial resources. However, COTEC's success is not only due to the commitment and delivery of its non-paid Executive Committee members, but it's representative members, who through their participation in General Assemblies, Experts Groups, representation and commitment to COTEC's activities, achieve greater impact on European issues.

It is of the utmost importance that members of COTEC and the COTEC Executive Committee complement each other's work. While the Executive Committee uses the EU contacts and networks like ENOTHE, EUPHA and EFPC to raise the visibility of Occupational Therapy and initiate the participation of OTs in varied EU-led projects, consultations and meetings, it is up to the Member Associations to support the work actively by bringing forward items for discussion, participating in the General Assembly, following and disseminating COTEC's work and communications, identifying stakeholders and experts, sharing expertise and knowledge, representing COTEC and by disseminating the information to their members nationally.

The goals can only be reached when there is a good communication and cooperation throughout our network.

### 5.1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making authority of COTEC and meets yearly. The General Assembly is the business meeting of COTEC. It is composed of the entirety of COTEC's diverse membership. Each Member Association has one mandated Representative and one vote at the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is structured around an internal business meeting. The Member Associations are asked to put items on the agenda prior to the meeting. COTEC is exploring the possibility of electronic voting to involve members in important decisions needed throughout the year.



### 5.1.1. Purpose and Outcomes

The purpose of the General Assembly is;

- to hold the executive committee to account for its work e.g. the management of the organisation and for decisions affecting the operations of COTEC as a European organisation of occupational therapy;
- to forecast for the next period;
- to approve the annual accounts and annual report;
- to facilitate dialogue and exchange between members;
- to approve the budget, priorities and annual Action Plan of the coming year;
- to provide Member Associations with roles and tasks they can deliver to take the work of COTEC forward.

Further information about the General Assembly can be found in COTEC's Rules of Procedures.

## 5.2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

COTEC's day-to-day management responsibility is entrusted to the Executive Committee. COTEC is governed by an Executive Committee whose members are home-based. The Executive Committee consists of 4 occupational therapists who are elected to the following positions - President, Vice President, Vice President Finance, Vice President Administration, and up to two members without portfolio. The Executive Committee is made up of individuals who are not paid through COTEC, and therefore their time and commitment is additional to any duties arising from their employing organisations. Every member of the Executive Committee has to sign the Code of Conduct.

The members of the Executive Committee do not represent their National Association. It is desirable that the Executive Committee represents different regions in Europe. All Executive Committee members work under the chairmanship of the President or Vice-President and meets both in person and virtually and engage in tele-conferences. A minimum of four members need to be present at all meetings for decisions to be quorate and valid. There are at least three physical Executive Committee meetings a year. The meetings are held in those places which offer the opportunity of having other meetings as support to National Associations and ease the implementation of COTEC's action plan.

The Executive Committee has the mandate to set up subcommittees and to authorise the establishment of Groups to work on specific tasks and ask individuals to represent COTEC in other events and external groups. At present, the President is mainly the external face of COTEC and carries most of the representation, however this may change as the profile of the organisation increases and the Register of Experts will be used to its full potential.

Further information about the Executive Committee can be found in the Rules of Procedures.

#### 5.2.1. Purpose, Reporting and Accountability

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to oversee the delivery of COTEC's Action Plan, as approved on an annual basis by the General Assembly. The Action Plan provides strategic support and guidance to the Executive Committee as needed and holds the Executive Committee members accountable for the delivery of objectives and actions within the pre-agreed Plan. The Executive Committee reports to the General Assembly.

#### **Election procedures**

Executive Committee members are always elected at the General Assembly following the election procedure outlined in the Rules of Procedures. In the event of an Executive Committee member stepping down during their term of office, the Executive Committee may decide to operate with one less member or select and co-opt a suitable replacement until the next election, where he or she may also stand for election. Any co-option needs to be communicated to the membership.

### 5.3. SECRETARIAT

COTEC's is registered in Germany, the official address is the same as the German National Occupational Therapy Association.

Secretarial tasks are done by the Vice President Administration. Contact is maintained between the postal address and the Vice President Administration and other Executive Committee members according to the need. COTEC currently commissions part time administrative support.

### 5.4. WORKING GROUPS

The Executive Committee may establish groups as defined in the Rules of Procedures.

The Groups purpose is to fulfil the assignments given by the Executive Committee according to the Action Plan and / or to give advice about professional matters to the General Assembly and the Executive Committee. The Group members are appointed by the Executive Committee and consist of experts in the defined field, nominated by the Member Associations at the request of the Executive Committee.

COTEC established a Register of Experts which has now migrated to sit within Occupational Therapy Europe. These experts can be called on to input to and report back on a number of initiatives, meetings, conferences. The register is accessed via the COTEC administrative office and maintained by the COTEC administrative Officer.

## 5.5. REPRESENTATIVES

The external representation of COTEC is very important for the delivery of objectives and inclusion of the OT voice in decision-making. COTEC representation is undertaken by the Executive Committee members, representatives agreed and appointed by the Executive Committee and expert representatives.

COTEC's external representation activities include both active (whether as presenter, moderator, chair or participant, and passive (e.g., as observer at closed meetings involving ministers, EU stakeholder events, international organisations or governmental, privately organised meetings) participation in meetings and events.

COTEC confirms representation with a written and signed agreement with the representative. The representative of COTEC must ensure that he or she reflects the views of COTEC, as outlined by the agreement in the consultation response, policy briefing, position paper, or produced material and must indicate when they are talking in their own capacity if the required response goes beyond the pre-agreed position. Their behaviour during representation needs to highlight accountability and transparency and follow the COTEC Code of Conduct

According to the given task, presentation, written material or position paper will be developed closely with the Executive Committee and follows the articles in the agreement. The participating individual is responsible for submitting a written report from the event to be published on the COTEC website.

## 6. MEMBERSHIP

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COTEC strives to be as representative of its membership as possible. It is the successful delivery of its objectives that allows COTEC to maintain its credibility and legitimacy through the commitment and resources given by its members (full and associate).

### 6.1. MEMBERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Although Occupational Therapy in a country is a national responsibility, COTEC supports the Member Associations to help each other, to collaborate and support each other and express solidarity between them. COTEC also encourages Member Associations to make the most of the networking possibilities within the organisation. Members will withhold any actions that can harm other associations and avoid conflicts of interest.

COTEC's membership is fundamental to its existence, credibility and legitimacy. One of COTEC's greatest resources is the diversity and breadth of its membership. The membership ranges from large, well organised associations to start up associations with fewer than 10 members. Also, the phase of development of the profession in the different countries varies.

As Occupational Therapy is context based the fields of practice develop according to the national and local context. Only through good governance, transparency and coordination, does the weight of such diversity give credibility and strength to its position, activities and advocacy. It is the members who combine their collective knowledge, expertise and resources to build the intelligence at the heart of COTEC's work.

Whether through participation in meetings and groups set up by COTEC or through other methods, the commitment of the membership to sharing knowledge, building capacity and providing a voice for occupational therapy advocacy is the fundamental core of COTEC. Without the membership, there is no platform and no network. Therefore, the maintenance, development and utilisation of this breadth of human capital is the foremost task and priority of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly.

#### **Members' Responsibilities**

Members are encouraged to be proactive in bringing issues and developments to the motive of COTEC as well as responding actively to calls for action, information and support for the Annual Action Plan.

As members are COTEC's most important asset, further information about the members' responsibilities can be found in the Rules of Procedures

## 6.2. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Membership of COTEC is organisational, and National Associations of Occupational Therapist of the member states of the Council of Europe may apply.

The application procedure to join COTEC requires that the National Association:

- has to be the one and only official representative of OT in the country
- has to be an association solely for occupational therapists
- must have statutes and bylaws, and budget
- must be a democratic organisation
- submit information about members, education, statutes and bylaws
- The Executive Committee May ask for supplementary information when considering the application.

Following the above procedures and when the Executive Committee agrees with the information provided, representative(s) of the National Association that is applying are invited to join COTEC General Assembly to present their National Association and application.

The General Assembly then votes to approve or otherwise the acceptance of this National Association within COTEC.

## 6.3. MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

The benefits of being a member of COTEC are to be a part of an OT community which is striving to develop the contribution that occupational therapy can make to the wider European community. To do this COTEC's strength is in its ability to network, share best practice, and to support the development of occupational therapy across Europe. Specific benefits and services are listed below: See appendix no. 7

Communication with Member Associations is done by means of emails, website and newsletters according to the Communication Strategy. See appendix no. 5

### 6.3.1. Fees and Reimbursement

- All membership fees are due annually. Failure to pay in two following years may result in membership lapsing.

- Fees shall be paid in Euros. All bank charges must be carried by the National Association. The fees may also be paid in cash at the General Assembly if agreed with the Vice President Finance.
- The annual fee is calculated on the basis of the number of practising members of the National Association. The number as given in the most recent Summary of the Profession shall be used for this calculation. Where a current figure is not available an increase of 10% is assumed and this may result in a change of banding (affecting the fee level).
- There is an annual increase in fees payable of 1.5% to manage the cost of inflation.
- National Associations are responsible for the expenses of their Representative to attend the General Assembly meetings.
- In exceptional circumstances, Member Associations, which have limited financial resources, may apply for financial assistance to send a representative to the General Assembly.
- Membership can be terminated at the end of the year; notice must be given 3 months in advance.

## 7. WAYS OF WORKING

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COTEC's work is guided by its vision, mission and aims. The Strategic Plan, updated every four years, is translated into an annual action plan and related budget. The action plan is updated regularly with the work carried out. Reports about work carried out and other issues are presented and discussed in the GA and updates are given in the e-newsletters. Position statements may also be written. Much of COTEC's work revolves around communication, and so COTEC's work follows closely its communication strategy.

### 7.1. RULES OF PROCEDURES

The Rules of Procedures are the guidelines of the Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (COTEC) and express the method by which COTEC may achieve its objectives. The Rules of Procedures are based on the COTEC Constitution and are revised in line with the Constitution or when needed.

## 7.2. STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan for COTEC outlines the main standpoints of the organisation and indicates the areas of political concern and priorities for the next four years. The programme is a framework for the work in the organisation and for developing an Action Plan. Every fourth year, at the General Assembly, the new Strategic Plan for the coming period is presented with an invitation to discuss.

## 7.3. ACTION PLAN

The Action plan is based on the Strategic Plan and it is made every year, discussed in the Governance Day and approved in the General Assembly whereby it is also connected to the budget. It is also updated periodically throughout the year by the Executive Committee. Updates of work from the Action Plan are provided in the newsletters issued by COTEC. It is also converted into a working document for the Executive Committee and updated periodically throughout the year by the Executive.

## 7.4. PROFESSION SPECIFIC COLLABORATION

The need for one strong voice in Europe has been identified, by both COTEC and ENOTHE, so that messages about occupational therapy are congruent and avoid potential confusion in the public and political contexts. COTEC and ENOTHE have agreed on a close collaboration to deliver this. When ROTOS and Occupational Therapy Europe are in legal existence it will be possible to;

- Agree about how to cooperate around issues of mutual interest - one voice for Occupational Therapy.
- Use each other's knowledge, experience and networks to best effect e.g. in the creation of expert practice groups, addressing educational issues and using best practice and evidence effectively.
- Create a common outward face to facilitate better and consistent communication with our stakeholders; public, political and other organisations
- Deliver a congress every four years to showcase and share developments in occupational therapy across Europe

## 7.5. POSITION STATEMENTS

To make COTEC's views visible, COTEC can create position statements on its own or in collaboration with others.

Position statements will generally be in response to European issues where an occupational therapy perspective is needed or could be valuable, both for the profession itself and / or to offer an opinion about a specific issue.

COTEC may also advise how WFOT position statements can be translated/applied to European context.

## 7.6. ELECTORAL COMMITTEE

The Election Committee consists of 3 members who oversee the process of election to the Executive Committee positions. They are elected at the General Assembly for a term of a year and cannot stand for election themselves during that time. They chair the election agenda item at the General Assembly when elections are taking place.

## 7.7. MANAGEMENT OF THE FINANCES AND AUDIT

COTEC has one main source of income, which is the membership fees. The Auditing Committee inspects the books and gives an Auditing report to the General Assembly. The Auditing Committee is elected during the General Assembly for two years. It consists of two members.

## 7.8. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Dispute resolution structures are indispensable for the smooth running of an organisation. Members ought to be guaranteed that there are structures and procedures in place that ensure that should any conflicts arise, they can be resolved quickly and fairly.

- Should a dispute arise among two or several member organisations, and they are unable to resolve the conflict between themselves, the members may submit a complaint to the attention of the VP Administration, who includes the item on the agenda of the next Executive Committee meeting.
- The agenda point is accompanied by a document stating the views of all the members concerned by the dispute. The Executive Committee shall then set up a



reconciliation procedure, including hearings of all members concerned. Should the conflict persist, the members may request a membership review.

- Following Article 7 of the Statutes, the Executive Committee is the sole body in the organisation, together with the General Assembly, which can impose sanctions on members. For any decision taken regarding membership issues (e.g., expulsion, legal suits) the Executive Committee is accountable to the General Assembly.
- It may recommend to the General Assembly to suspend membership or expel a member if it deems that it is to the advantage of the organisation. Any sanction imposed should be explained and justified in detail. The Executive Committee must ensure that all other means of conflict resolution have failed before it imposes sanctions or takes legal action.
- The General Assembly deals with conflictual matters only after they have been dealt with by the Executive Committee, which will present its recommendation to the membership. No such issue can be raised at a meeting of the General Assembly unless it has already been unsatisfactorily dealt with by the other bodies of the organisation. The General Assembly may uphold the recommendation of the Executive Committee waive it or alter it. The General Assembly's decision will be final.

## 7.9. SUMMARY OF THE PROFESSION

The Summary of the Profession is collated based on data and information about membership, practising OTs, regulation and education provided by the Member Associations.

The Summary is updated at the beginning of each year and circulated to all Member Associations by the Vice President Administration.

The National Associations are advised to circulate copies of the Summary to their government and relevant stakeholders. Past copies are archived at the Welcome Trust.

COTEC is the publisher of the Summary.

## 8. LIST OF OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

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1. [COTEC Constitution](#)
2. [Rules of Procedures](#)
3. [Strategic Plan](#)
4. [Current Action Plan](#)
5. [Communication Strategy](#)
6. [Code of Conduct](#)
7. [Membership benefits](#)
8. [Agreement with COTEC Representatives](#)
9. [Report form COTEC Representatives](#)
10. [Register of Experts papers](#)