

79th World Health Assembly

Item 15.2: Wellbeing and health promotion. Outcome of the WHO Commission on Social Connection

National Statement - Italy

Honourable Chair,

Italy welcomes the WHO Commission on Social Connection's call for systemic action on social connection: we agree that the latter requires an integrated community-based approach, embedded within a wellbeing promotion strategy.

As an operational tool, Social Prescribing offers a promising way to turn recommendations into practice. In Italy, this is gaining traction through grassroots initiatives in primary care, mental health services and community welfare, while WHO's relevant tools are actively disseminated among professionals, to support uptake.

Social prescribing is also receiving initial institutional attention: the realization of a social prescription programme is now an objective of the newly approved National Plan for Mental Health; a national working group hosted by the National Institute of Health is fostering discussion among practitioners, researchers and policymakers; some regions are piloting structured models. In addition, an inter-ministerial agreement on *cultural welfare* is creating opportunities to promote social connection. Furthermore, the National Institute of Health, with WHO Europe, are showing how arts-based activities targeting new mothers can alleviate isolation and depression symptoms, in a measurable way.

However, in order to transition from isolated initiatives to a coherent national framework, many Member States such as Italy require an enabling environment, including clear policy guidance, sustainable funding, and increasing coordination across health, social, and community sectors.

WHO can support these efforts by facilitating peer learning, providing adaptable tools, sustaining policy coherence, and supporting monitoring frameworks.

Thank you.

[232/220 words]