



# FROM THE WORKPLACE TO THE HEALTH PLACE: EMPLOYER LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES IN THE WORKPLACE

*From workplace to health place – EIT Health will deliver improved healthcare to employees and consequent financial benefits to employers, by going beyond the traditional expectation of employer responsibility for health in the workplace.*

## Rationale

The health of employees is an emerging challenge in companies as well as the public sector and is not addressed optimally<sup>1</sup>. There are business decisions that affect the health of workers (e.g., low wages predict obesity anxiety and depression, low birth weights and hypertension<sup>1,2</sup> and certain working environments and positions have demonstrated fatal consequences such as higher incidence of suicide<sup>1</sup>, meaning an important burden in the Health System (disability benefits and paid sick leave represent 1,7% of GDP each year)<sup>3</sup>. In Europe, one in four employees experience work-related stress. Work-related stress can adversely influence health and cause a substantial amount of sick leave in organizations. Common mental disorders related to work-related stress, such as depression and anxiety, contribute the most to this sick leave<sup>13</sup>.

According to the European Network of the Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP), “the Work Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work”<sup>4</sup>. Embracing this culture in the professional environment drives greater economic value through contributing to the health of the workforce<sup>5</sup> bringing “greater job satisfaction, decreased staff related costs, improved employee engagement, less absenteeism, higher productivity and ultimately economic return”<sup>6</sup>. This impacts not only individuals inside and outside the workplace, but their communities and therefore Healthcare Systems and society<sup>4,6</sup>. Evidence shows how initiatives in this arena deliver tangible results in the short and long term.

EIT Health has the capacity to address this challenge by utilising technology and education. Moreover, EIT Health demonstrates by example, by starting the in the workplaces of our own partners (corporate and non-corporate). Furthermore this Focus Area provides a practical route to citizen engagement.

## InnoLife Business Plan Integration

In designing the activities to be executed in this Focus Area, we have drawn upon the relevant activities submitted in the original InnoLife Business Plan, these are summarised as follows in truncated form;

- Validate methods to non-obtrusively monitor WP stress etc. (BP2.1)
- Utilise the excellent InnoLife test beds/optimize health maintenance etc. (BP2.1)
- Create age-friendly work environments etc. (BP2.1)



## Activities in EIT Health within this Focus Area

Concrete actions need to be taken in to make the workplace a health place. Taking into consideration the existing evidence-based data, there are many activities that can have an impact on the worker and/or the company and consequently to the Healthcare System and the society. Activities will need top-management buy-in. Activities should impact every employee, regardless their position in the organization. Activities must use validated patient reported outcomes instruments.

1. Developing technology tools adapted to customer's health habits in the workplace and incentivizing the use of them through linkage to objectives
2. Implementing health education for employees, including new approaches like gamification
3. Improving the work organisation and the working environment<sup>4</sup>
4. Promoting active participation<sup>4</sup> and encouraging personal development<sup>4</sup>
5. Testing and measuring employee participation in Healthcare initiatives (health promotion, well-being, screening, early intervention) in the own work environment
6. Public-private partnership (primary care system, payer and employer) to improve the understand the impact in the short and long term of the measures taken, including options for reimbursement
7. Implementing policies and practices which enhance employee health by making the healthy choices the easy choices<sup>4</sup>

## Outcomes

### 1. Evidence-based corporate strategies that:

- a. Impact significantly on employees' health quality (objective and subjective measures)
- b. Demonstrate cause-effect on well-being and productivity
- c. Can be implemented and concluded successfully in 3-4 years in workplace environment
- d. Decrease or slow growth of healthcare system expenditure due to prevention and better management of disease in the workplace
- e. Can be replicable in other industries
- f. Are self-sustainable
- g. Demonstrate lower costs for Healthcare System and Employers, while delivering better health and well-being results for workers

### 2. Tools for easing / reinforcing the implementation of the strategies that:

- a. Influence actively employees' health
- b. Support cultural change in the working environment
- c. Monitor the quality of health and productivity
- d. Demonstrate and/or quantify the economic impact on the system

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## References

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