

EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION: SUMMARY OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to the Luxembourg Declaration, workplace health promotion (WHP) is defined as the combined efforts of employers, workers and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work. This can be achieved by: improving work organisation and the work environment; promoting active participation of all stakeholders in the process; and encouraging personal development. It is important to note that WHP aims to be a complementary support for, but not a replacement of, workplace risk management. Proper risk management is an essential basis for a successful WHP programme. Regarding participation in WHP activities, the literature suggests that the number of participants often tends to be rather low once the WHP project has actually been implemented. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate how organizations are able to motivate their employees to participate in WHP activities in both the short and long-term. At the same time it should be kept in mind that employee participation in health promotion activities is totally voluntary.

The aim of the report that this factsheet summarizes was to conduct a review of the available literature to identify the motivating factors for employees to participate in WHP. This knowledge can be used to improve WHP programmes and, consequently, participation rates. The findings section of the report is divided into two key areas. The first outlines and describes some of the key findings from the literature concerning workers' motivation to participate in WHP, and the second examines the role that diversity may play in workers' participation and recruitment.

What motivates workers to participate in WHP?

The main findings of the literature review were as follows:

- The visible commitment of employers and senior managers to the promotion and protection of employees' health and wellbeing has been found to be linked with enhanced commitment and participation of employees in WHP initiatives.
- Active worker involvement and participation is essential in the planning, implementation and evaluation of WHP programmes. Employees are more likely to participate in WHP programmes if they work for/ in organisations where employees' representatives or peers endorse and participate in such programmes.



- Tailoring WHP measures and actions to meet individual needs has been observed to be successful in motivating workers to participate in WHP programmes and measures. A preliminary step in developing a tailored programme for employees may be to use existing data to help identify priority areas or topics.
- Worker participation can be enhanced if the accessibility of WHP activities is considered during the design process. This includes considering: time (both the length of the activity and time of day) required for employees' participation, convenience of the location of such events and the associated costs for the individual employee.
- It is important to use a holistic approach to WHP, which should include organisational changes as well as measures targeted at the individual. Having health-promoting organisational structures in place has been found to encourage employees to take individual measures more seriously and have confidence that information is credible and meaningful.
- Health screenings are seen as a key element in health promotion programmes. Individual risk reports, based on such assessments, provide feedback to employees regarding their relative risk for various mental and physical health conditions, and this information, in turn, may encourage workers to participate in WHP measures and actions. In general, offering health risk assessments and individual consultation on the results helps employees to understand their individual profile and enhances their motivation to become active. Confidentiality and personal data protection should be respected throughout the process.
- Positive messages targeted at the individual have been found to be a successful strategy for recruiting workers to participate in WHP programmes. The use of both formal and informal communication channels can help to cultivate worker participation in WHP measures and actions. However, it is important that targeted health information and communication channels should not interfere with employees' autonomy and privacy.
- Incentives (either material or social) have been observed to help promote employee participation. However, incentives must be handled carefully for several reasons. Enhancing intrinsic motivation through social incentives, rather than exclusively material ones, is a more secure way to achieve long-term behaviour changes.

The role of diversity in participation in WHP

The review of the literature found that:

- The groups most likely to be recruited for WHP activities are not necessarily the groups that are most likely to show sustained participation in these WHP activities.
- Male employees, employees with high educational attainment, employees in managerial positions and married employees are more likely to be recruited for WHP whilst, by contrast, female employees, employees with low educational attainment, employees in non-managerial positions and unmarried employees are more likely to show sustained participation in WHP activities.
- Sustained participation increases significantly with age and female gender.
- It is important to take into account the role of diversity when designing WHP programmes, and how this may affect both recruitment and participation rates of workers.

Key recommendations

Based on the results of the literature review, a number of key recommendations to help facilitate increased recruitment and participation of workers in WHP actions and measures were outlined:

- Actively and continuously involve employees in the design and implementation of WHP activities.
- Tailor and target WHP measures to the individual needs of employees.
- Use formal and informal communication strategies to promote WHP measures and raise employees' awareness of health issues.
- Provide employees with adequate, personal and motivating information on the WHP activities.
- It is important that WHP activities satisfy individual and social needs at the workplace.
- WHP activities and measures should be easily accessible.
- Clear leadership and continuous support by employers and senior management is crucial for WHP programmes.
- Consider the role of diversity when planning WHP measures and actions.

The literature review also identified some areas in which additional research is necessary. In particular, more information is needed on how employees' motivation works in SMEs as most of the evaluated interventions are described for large enterprises; how to motivate difficult-to-reach staff such as part-time and shift workers; and what is the impact of cultural differences on workers' motivation, especially in the EU context.

More information on **workplace health promotion** is available at: <http://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/whp>

A literature review on the motivation for employees to participate in workplace health promotion is available at: http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/literature_reviews/motivation-employees-whp/view