

Barcelona Challenge

Background

The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) is a European Non-Governmental Organisation with a history of developing innovative approaches to workplace health problems for more than 20 years. ENWHP has developed a European definition of Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) in the Luxembourg Declaration (developed in 1997 and renewed in 2018) and has been active in highlighting good practices in WHP in a range of workplace types and settings, including large organisations, SMEs and Public Sector organisations. The definition and approach to WHP outlined in these documents and activities still hold¹, but recent years have seen a number of changes and trends in the European workplace and labour force, which demand new approaches to the delivery of health promotion into the modern workplace. This Barcelona Challenge describes these major changes in work and society and outlines the need for new approaches to delivering effective WHP in this changed environment.

Changes and trends in the world of work in Europe

Compared to when the Luxembourg Declaration was originally drafted, the world of work has changed in terms of labour market composition, place of work, types of work organisation and the nature of workplace health and safety hazards. Some of these changes in the workplace, and in society at large, include:

- An increased number of SMEs
- Less trade union representation
- More Health Promotion services showing an interest in the workplace
- Higher rates of stress and mental health in the workplace
- More national plans to promote the implementing of WHP
- Increased numbers of people in marginal and precarious employment
- Massively increased numbers of people hybrid working from home
- The move towards green production and working methods
- Increased digitalisation of work and the workplace
- More people change work more often, while there is also a significant ageing of the workforce.

Other possible threats and opportunities include an increased need for, and focus on, quality of life in health care services – good quality work is a significant part of that.

¹ see ENWHP website – www.enwhp.org

Action needed

Current WHP delivery models need to be adapted given the decline of traditional workplaces and workforces because:

- They depend on stable workplace structures for labour and employers.
- They depend on WHP services maintaining strong connections with workplaces and their internal structures for Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) and Human Resources (HR).
- There is a need for more mental health and wellbeing literacy amongst all stakeholders.
- Current models lack sufficient focus on the need for mental health promotion as recognised by the European Parliament and the general population.

This is the challenge. Therefore we need and commit to:

1. *Develop new models of delivery* – these must include new partnerships between Health Promotion services, worksite actors and other organisations with an interest in promoting health as well as embracing new methods of delivering health promotion messages and programmes.
2. *Integrate the delivery of WHP and OSH* – even in relatively traditional workplaces, there is often little synergy between OSH and WHP actors. There is a need to build up and improve these working relationships.
3. *Identify and collaborating with new partners*, e.g. chambers of commerce, community-based organisations, other organisations (e.g. voluntary organisations, sporting organisations, patients' groups) to deliver WHP.
4. *Re-emphasise the importance of mental health promotion: **promoting** positive mental health in the workplace, **preventing** the problems that cause mental health problems, **supporting** employees who develop mental health problems and developing effective policies to **reintegrate** and employ people who have experienced mental health problems.*
5. *Support employers to redirect efforts on WHP* - Covid related challenges (both organisational and financial) have reduced focus on WHP.
6. *Focus on the salutogenic aspects of work and working relationships*, not just on disease, emphasising the benefits to the individual, the workplace and to society at large. Participatory processes and multilevel interventions at individual, group and organisational levels are a necessary part on this.
7. *Focus on conditions for health* such as positive personal relationships, sustainability, clean and healthy air, prevention of hazardous substances in the workplace and in society at large.
8. *Generate better synergy* between workplace actors and societal HP agencies.
9. Take advantage of **opportunities of new technologies and digitalization**, such as the use of artificial intelligence for health data analysis.

The Board of ENWHP

