

GOOD PRACTICE BELGIUM

Disability management in Belgian Companies

Contact person (NCO)

Name and organisation

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General information about the MOGP

Name of organisation and short description

Prevent, Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Disability management in Belgian companies. Name of the project: DM@work

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Information on the good practice 'Disability management in Belgian Companies (DM@work)'

Aims

The project aimed to guide companies in different sectors (healthcare, building & chemical industry) to implement a disability management (DM) policy and from this experience, to develop guidelines for other companies.

Long-term health problems and/or functional limitations often lead to exclusion from the labour market. Research shows that less than 50% of the employees, absent for three up to six months, return to their own workplace (SILC, 2006). This is an important social issue, and furthermore, on the organizational level, absenteeism and loss of trained workforce leads to an important financial cost and may threaten the continuity in the workplace. On the individual level, besides financial benefits, work is considered as a meaningful daytime activity, a source of social contacts and a place for self-development.



The project DM@work based on company practices and that resulted in sector-specific practical guidelines, build upon a previous project on disability management (Intro_DM, Prevent 2008) that focused mainly on individual case management. One of the findings from this project was that companies are not prepared to cope with RTW questions. The DM@work answered this need by offering support and guidance for companies that are setting up a DM policy.

Target group

The target group are companies (especially in the above-mentioned sectors) and also their workers confronted with long-term illness or functional limitations.

Description

The step by step plan of the project is provided for companies in a manual.

This manual underlines the need for a change in culture. In the manual examples and tools are given to:

- (1) get the management on board;
- (2) establish a working group;
- (3) determine a starting point and priorities;
- (4) develop a manual at the company level;
- (5) conduct; and
- (6) to evaluate the policy.

Special attention is given to provide companies with information about and to get acquainted with professionals (who often are already in their network) who can support them in designing and developing a DM policy. Factors that significantly reduce the risk of long-term absence or getting permanently into disability schemes are:

- the contact between care provider and the workplace;
- an offer of changes in the work organization, tasks, workplace such as alternative jobs, reduced and/or flexible working hours, a gradual return, redesign of the workstation, or other efforts to temporarily reduce physical work demands

Why is it a good practice?

The manuals build on the DM approach that already has proven its effectiveness for retaining and RTW of chronically ill employees or employees confronted with a long-term absence (Intro_DM, Prevent 2008). Furthermore, the contents are based on sector specific company practices: how can companies integrate the DM approach into their daily practices taking into account specific situations, bottlenecks, opportunities, ... linked to their sector.

The manual offers organisations a roadmap for implementing a systematic and structured approach pointing out the possibilities to overcome bottlenecks, to get into touch with various stakeholders, etc.

Results

Evaluation

The project was conducted with financial support of the ESF. The results were positively evaluated by ESF and the project was also rewarded with the ambassadorship of 2011.



Incentives for success

During a year, the project team guided several companies in different sectors to help them implement a DM policy.

Furthermore, a study was conducted to clarify the legal framework in which a reintegration process takes place (on the individual level) but also to get an overview of the administrative, financial and practical support for companies that want to take action in this domain. Based on these company projects and on research 4 manuals were developed (1 for each sector and 1 general) to help other companies to set up a DM policy. The manuals provide general information but also offer guidance as well as examples, indicate pitfalls and success factors for each of the sectors.

Barriers for success

In this topic you may also go into the consequences of the economic crisis with respect to the employability of workers with a chronic illness.

