

# The Edinburgh Declaration on the Promotion of Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing



*This Declaration states the commitment of the members of the EUROPEAN Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) to continue to campaign for the promotion of workplace mental health and wellbeing, and to include it as an integral and central aspect of their workplace health promotion efforts.*

*This Declaration calls upon European Employers, Employees, Trades Unions, Intermediaries and Governments, to give greater emphasis to workplace mental health promotion, and to implement measures to protect and improve mental health and wellbeing at work.*

## **Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The World Health Organisation defines positive mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” This definition is consistent with the International Labour Organisation concept of “decent work” in relation to mental health in the workplace. There is no health without mental health, and work is a key determinant of both.

The costs of poor mental health and wellbeing are significant for employers and for society:

- 25 percent of European citizens will experience a mental health problem during their life time – it is an issue that will touch all of our lives directly or indirectly
- The WHO estimates that by 2020 depression will become the second most important cause of disability. It is already the second most important cause of disability between the ages of 15-44 years for both sexes combined.
- Absenteeism, unemployment and long term disability claims due to work related stress and mental health problems are increasing in Europe - around 10% of long-term health problems are due to mental and emotional disorders
- The costs of mental health disorders in Europe are estimated to be €240 billion per year. €136 billion is due to lost productivity through sickness absence.

The causes of poor mental health and wellbeing are complex and multifaceted. Work and the working environment are only part of the problem, but they are fundamental to the solution. Work makes a significant contribution to mental health and wellbeing by providing self esteem, fulfilment, opportunities for social interaction and a source of income.

Employers are a significant beneficiary of such measures including through improved productivity, a more motivated workforce, reduced absence and lower staff turnover. Improving mental health and wellbeing can therefore have a direct impact on the bottom line.

## **Workplace Mental Health Promotion**

The Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) defines it to be “the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work.” WHP “can be achieved through a combination of improving work organisation and the working environment,

promoting active participation, and encouraging personal development.” Workplace Mental Health Promotion is an integral part of these efforts.

Since its foundation in 1996, ENWHP has been at the leading edge of WHP efforts in Europe. There is an increasing evidence base for what works, and ENWHP actively promotes practical approaches to improving workplace mental health promotion. Such approaches, which need to be embedded in an overall WHP model, include:

1. Encouraging employers to provide meaningful and stimulating work opportunities and supportive work organisation for their employees.
2. Providing opportunities for employee skill development including self-confidence and social competence.
3. Promoting greater employee participation in decision making.
4. Recognising the key role of managers in supporting staff.
5. Creating a positive working environment and setting clear job roles and expectations.
6. Reducing sources of stress in the work environment, and developing resilience to stress by promoting coping strategies.
7. Encouraging a culture of enterprise, participation, equity and fairness, and challenging stigma and discrimination in the workplace.
8. Supporting, retaining and employing people with mental health problems.
9. Developing and implementing strong policies on mental health and wellbeing at work.
10. Monitoring the impact of these policies and interventions.

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Members of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion

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