

Joint Action on Chronic Diseases & Promoting Healthy Ageing across the Life Cycle

Work Package 5

Meeting on identifying, assessing quality and presenting good practice interventions and policies

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Lombardy Workplace Health Promotion*



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Day 1: The Lombardy Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) Network

Attendance

28 participants in total representing 7 countries participated in the study visit.

Italy	Norway
Belgium (European network)	Portugal
Estonia	UK
Ireland	

Italy's strategy on NCDs and prevention

#1 Presentation, Daniela Galeone (Ministry of Health Italy)

The national situation in terms of NCDs raises concerns: Cardiovascular diseases account for 38% of deaths, cancers for 30% of deaths, and the incidence is increasing.

The Italian strategy to strengthen the prevention of NCDs and to promote health relies on several plans:

- The National Health Plan, which defines all the health priorities;
- The National prevention plan and Programme: "Gaining health: making healthy choices easier";
- CCM National Center on Prevention and diseases control, whose activity is focused on projects dealing with main health themes.

A government initiative led by the Ministry of Health based on institutional alliance (Ministries, Regions and Municipalities) and partnership with the food industry, distribution networks, civil society etc. has led to an intersectoral strategy to prevent NCDs. The tools used include:

- National platform on food, physical activity and tobacco;
- Memoranda of understanding;
- Surveillance system;
- Centre for diseases control.

Examples of partnerships include:

- Partnership between health and education. They adopted an approach based on the model of "Health promoting schools";
- Voluntary agreement with the main national associations of bakers in order to reduce the intake of salt. The Salt reduction strategy saw a reduction of 5-15% of salt;
- The National prevention plan, which is a programmatic document shared between State and Regions that engages all the Italian regions to implement prevention programmes addressed

to the population. The first plan was launched in 2007; the new plan for 2014-2018 reinforces the role of health promotion and prevention as factors of society development. The plan foresees actions in different settings, such as schools, workplace and the community.

The strategy takes into account and shares ways with the EU and the WHO (e.g. global action plan).

Health promotion programmes in the community setting in Lombardy

#2 Danilo Cereda from the Lombardia Region

The Lombardy region has a population of about 10 million people. The healthcare system is governed by the DG welfare (regional governance), 8 ATS (Health Protection Agency) and 27 local social and health authorities.

Lombardy's Regional prevention plan for 2015-2018 includes 13 programmes that contribute to the national goals and objectives such as efficacy/effectiveness, sustainability, multidisciplinary approach, intersectoral approach, accountability and equity.

Six programmes aim to improve healthy lifestyles and the promotion of environments as well as preventing NCD risk factors. The Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) Networks is one of the programmes.

The Workplace health promotion (WHP) from a regional point of view:

- Has been established as one of the priority settings;
- The concept helps companies to keep a healthy, qualified and motivated workforce, and to compete in the marketplace. It is also an internal process of continuous improvement;
- However, the health of workers is also affected by non-work related factors.

Companies who participate in the programme receive an annual certificate "Health promoting workplace".

The Health Protection Agencies (ATS) provide methodological expertise and guidance.

Among the recommended key practices, the most implemented ones include:

- Inclusion of fruit and vegetables in the menu
- Intervention in the canteen
- Bread with reduced salt
- Wholewheat bread
- Vending machines with healthy choices (30%)
- Promotion of bicycle or pedestrian street to reach the workplace
- Policies and interventions for alcohol free and tobacco free workplaces
- Work-life balance practices.

Lessons learnt:

34% of companies who implemented the programme are in the healthcare sector (hospitals, health protection agencies, etc.). The majority of the companies are mid-size or big companies of over 50 employees. The complexity of the programme makes it difficult to evaluate and see the efficacy and in particular the cost-effectiveness of the interventions.

Health promotion and corporate social responsibility (CSR): The intersectoral process

#3 Elisa Rotta, Fondazione Sodalitas

The European Commission included the enhancement of CSR visibility and dissemination of good practices in its Agenda for action 2011-2014. Management systems and certification have been foreseen: ISO 26000 on CSR as well as environmental and social certifications (e.g. ISO 14001 and SA 8000).

Michael Porter on Corporate shared values: *"CSV may be defined as the system of policies and operational practices which reinforce corporate competitiveness, at the same time improving the economic and social conditions of the community where it is operating. Shared value creation focuses on the identification of connections between economic and social progress."*

The CSR Europe Network launched the Manifesto Enterprise 2020, which outlines business contribution to the smart, sustainable inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 strategy and identifies three priorities: employment and workplace innovation; the promotion of sustainable consumption lifestyles; and transparency and human rights. In particular businesses need workplace innovation to address crucial trends such as ageing population and late retirement age.

WHP is a multi-stakeholders programme within the company (it involves HR, communications department, procurement, etc.) as well as outside the company (local health authorities, trade unions, community reach, other companies, etc.). The programme also helps to build local partnerships.

Some of the key strengths of WHP that businesses appreciate:

- Integrate in an organic framework
- Share good practices
- Participate in a well monitored programme, with benchmarking opportunities
- Investment in human capital

Business challenges:

- Implement evidence based practices
- Network out reach beyond enterprise boundaries, with other businesses and existing local resources

- Enhance project ownership, further integrating it in corporate policies

www.sodalitas.it

Local experience: The WHP programme and the WHP Network of Bergamo

#4 Roberto Moretti – WHP ATS Bergamo

Lots of models of WHP exist in theory, but Italy did not have any operational model.

As of June 2016, 453 companies in Lombardy were involved in WHP, including 212.673 workers; out of them 100 companies were involved in the province of Bergamo, representing 24.000 workers.

Why is WHP a success? Here are some key components:

1. Partnership opportunities:

Businesses partner with industrial unions, workers unions, institutions and scientific societies.

2. Motivation/communication

Showing life expectancy data and explaining that active ageing makes the difference and that introducing a combination of healthy lifestyle factors help. E.g. a study looked at the impact of the combination of healthy lifestyle factors such as being a non-smoker; a BMI under 30; over 3.5 hours of physical activity a week, and a diet index that is above average. When no healthy factors could be shown, 1 person in 5 developed a chronic disease, when one factor was present, the risk was halved, when four healthy factors were present, a person in 20 developed a chronic disease.

3. Voluntary adhesion

Despite some mandatory requirements complying with legal, safety and social security rules and a minimum number of good practices, the WHP encourages businesses to:

- Apply voluntary adhesion (not forcing companies nor employees to participate)
- Act on multiple risk factors (not just one)
- Medium or long term programmes
- Integrate with interventions for safety promotion
- Change the context- make healthy alternatives easy and pleasant
- Evidence based prevention
- Promote workers' participation

The WHP features that appeal to companies include:

- Progressive implementation of good practices ("start small")
- Recognition as health promoting workplace by the health system
- Networking opportunities
- Monitoring- impact of interventions and risk factors

4. Adaptability and freedom in choices

Businesses should cover a number of good practices, from 2 thematic areas of work the first year, to 4 the second year and 6 thematic areas at the end of the third year. Each company can propose a good practice in every area. Once validated by the Health system, the good practice is added to the WHP Manual.

5. Web and e-health tools are available
6. Workers' participation is crucial for the success of the WHP.
7. Feedback
8. Real networking: 2 or 3 local meetings take place between the companies participating in the project every year.
9. Follow-up and timely responses by the Health system is important.

Lessons learnt

The Health system tries to engage everyone in the programme. Companies that are interesting are companies that are not so perfect. There are no selection criterias for companies to participate in the programme.

Effective good practices from previous positive experiences are documented in a Manual which lists the good practices by thematic area. Every company can propose a good practice, once validated it is added to the manual, which can be found online (an older version is in English):

<http://Retewhpbergamo.org/manual/>

Recommendations to companies include:

- To make a working group in order to attract employees' involvement.
- To support proactive initiatives.
- To communicate with workers in an effective, "non-terroristic" way (a fun theory approach is more effective than trying to scare people with "if you smoke you'll have cancer"), not only on nutrition, tobacco cessation and physical activity, but also on road safety, breastfeeding etc.
- To have an evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the initiative in order to monitor progress and a company report, f.ex. with pictures of the actions taken.

The steps, from raising companies' awareness of the programme to the programme's implementation included the following:

At regional level, the programme was presented by the Lombardy Region (Unit for Health Promotion) to and through major labour organisations and associations eg. Sodalitas, Confindustria, trade unions.

At the local level, each Health Protection Agency (ATS) is responsible for its own organisation, the implementation of the programme in its own context and the publicity. The ATS Bergamo did not do any particular publicity of the programme, however the awards played a role. The news were

published in newspapers and on the website, which seemed enough. Word of mouth also played a role.

There is no minimal number of companies to involve and it is better to start small (ATS BG started with 2). It takes a lot of energy in the beginning to get the programme started, then it gets easier to add on more companies. It is not important to have different companies from different sectors, there is no preferred sector.

Three operational staff at ATS work and manage the WHP Network in Bergamo, including the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. However they involve the network of the health system. Companies register online to the programme.

Sustainability is another crucial point: if there are no sustainability elements it will not work, nor for the company, nor for the regional system.

Political support of the Ministry is crucial too. Despite a general lack of financial resources for preventive measures (Lombardy is no exception), it was important to show:

- That the programme can be done with little funding (e.g. companies want the logo on the documents, which looks great for companies and does not cost a lot);
- That the programme follows a rigorous methodology;
- Finally, that programmes work better than projects, which have a start and an end.

How do we get the engagement from the different groups? Especially the lower social economic groups?

The difficulty for top-down approaches is that at the top someone needs to sign some big money; in the WHP programme, the model starts with individual companies, it is more a bottom-up approach. However you need to work within a national framework. The WHP for example fitted very well with the national plans, like the national prevention plan. All the regions have to work on the different areas of the national plan.

Over 60% of the companies participating in the programme are not public companies. The companies which are described as from the health sector are hospitals.

The European innovation partnership on active and healthy ageing, EIP AHA

#5 Natalia Allegretti

The Lombardy Region was involved in the EIP-AHA 2013-2015 and renewed their commitment for 2016-2018 in the Action Groups A3 (Functional decline and frailty) and D4 (Age friendly environments). The main results achieved in 2015 include:

- The Walking Groups programme - open to all of the community but specifically designed for people with chronic diseases.
- Pedibus: "Walk to school" programme involving children and adults in promoting physical activity, wellness and respect of the environment.

Their commitment for 2016-2018 is grounded on the “Health Prevention Plan 2015-2018” and founded on two thematic fields of intervention: frailty prevention and healthy lifestyles promotion. In addition to the Walking Groups and Pedibus, the Region has included the “Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programme – The Lombardy WHP Network in its commitment to the EIP-AHA initiative.

The Region also applied to be a reference site.

Finally, the SPHERA project was mentioned as another European project in which the Region participated. SPHERA aimed at enhancing territorial governance focusing on inclusive growth in order to integrate healthcare in spatial planning at a transnational level by addressing issues such as demographic change and accessibility to services of general interest in order to improve social cohesion, wellbeing and quality of life.

EIP on AHA

#6 Roberto Zuffada

The PROEIPAHHA project is a Support Action to the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA). In this partnership stakeholders all over Europe collaborate on a voluntary basis in addressing the challenges of the ageing society and in creating support for policies in the field. The focus is on defining innovative strategies in health promotion, care and cure, active and independent living of the elderly.

Stakeholders share practices (e.g. organisations can submit individual commitments), join a collaborative work, contribute to Sprints (short-time prioritized task delivered within a Collaborative work), and participate in a Synergy (thematic working group)

Day 2: Visit to the Radici Group (June 24th 2016)

Short presentation:

- Multinational group; Family owned.
- Chemical industry: Produces polyamide and synthetic fibres and engineering plastics.
- Ca 3000 employees, 1600 in Italy
- Average age for the Italian employees in the group: ca 50 years
- Low levels of turn over.

“Sustainability is our great beauty”- What does sustainability mean to a chemical group?

- Being market leaders
- Increasing our value as a group
- Working for a greener chemistry
- Contributing to a better world

The Global Reporting Initiative

The Radici Group participates in the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), an international independent organisation that helps businesses, governments and other organisations understand and communicate the impact of business on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights, corruption and many others. As such, the Radici Group reports on its sustainability every year, including environmental, economic, labour, product and social sustainability and human rights. The WHP is part of their engagement in the initiative too.

WHP Implementation

The Radici Group started to implement the WHP with about 200 employees in three of their companies. This is not an HR-only initiative, it involves many other departments in the company, starting with the communications department and others.

How did the Radici Group implement the WHP?

One tip is to communicate, communicate, communicate.

The company established a Working Committee on WHP (employees who voluntarily joined the group and had meetings during lunch time for ex.)

Before the programme started, emails were sent out, f.ex. with a message about healthy eating.

At the start of the programme, they collected data on weight and waist measurement and decided on the first two priorities: promotion of healthy nutrition and physical activity.

Examples of activities the Radici Group organizes include:

- Every Monday morning fruits are made available for all the workers. They are bought from local producers and sellers.
- Promotion of healthy nutrition by providing healthier choices (a tip: push gently, do not exaggerate)
- Arranging seminars with nutritionists, arrange cooking lessons, arrange seminars about “how to read labels” on packaged foods.
- Promotion of physical activity: the company sponsors a ski team, football and volleyball tournaments as well as Sunday morning walks

They use social media to involve the workers’ families and the local communities.

Employees voted on next priorities: personal and social welfare and work-life balance. Activities include teaching how to keep a better posture, creating break/rest area, twisting working time, school orientation for employees’ children, “Open day” at the office and plant.

The ballot box was converted into a suggestion box.

Lesson learned: it’s like running a marathon, not a 100 meter dash.

Questions and answers:

The budget to implement the WHP in 2016 was 8000 euros.

The central management group (ATS BG) provides the facility for workers to register online and fill in the survey with their waist measurement, etc. They do it on a voluntary basis, but it is a nice check-up for participants.

Q: what were the points that convinced you in the first place?

A: It sounded right. You need to take care of your colleagues. For the company it sounded like a good investment. You get help from the protocol, the cost is low. The evaluation of the cost/benefit sounded right.

Q: What were their major difficulties?

A: Overcoming the resistance in the culture and changing habits. Physical activity is easier, but eating is harder. Smoking will be harder because it is an addiction. In the suggestion box we received 50 positive suggestions, but also a few negative ones.

Q: After a while do people still want to go for the walk, etc? How sustainable are the activities?

A: People talk about the programme, they stop one another from taking the elevator for ex. But of course the ones showing up for the walk are the ones who would most likely do it anyway.

In their approach to companies in general, ATS shows them that WHP is good for the health of the employees but also for the health of the company, as employees' good health reduces absenteeism, reduces the turnover, increases their productivity and increases the company's image.

Visit at the plant: Tessiture Pietro Radici, part of the Radici group