

Call - Better health and care, economic growth and sustainable health systems

SC1-BHC-22-2019: Mental health in the workplace

Specific challenge

In most European countries, absences from work and early retirement due to mental illness have increased in recent years⁸⁶. Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and stress represent substantial financial costs for employers and employees, as well as a significant loss for society at large. An EU-level estimate of the overall costs, direct health costs and lost productivity is more than 450 billion EUR per year. Mental illness is an important cause of absence from work but it is also linked to high levels of presenteeism, where an employee remains at work despite experiencing symptoms resulting in lower productivity. It is important to create mentally healthy workplaces, i.e., promoting and protecting employees' good mental health and supporting them when they experience mental health problems, and their return to work. A healthy workplace involves creating an environment that is supportive of the psychosocial aspects of work, recognising the potential of the workplace to promote workers' mental health and wellbeing, and reduce the negative impacts of work-related stress. Many of the factors that influence the positive mental health and wellbeing of workers relate to the social environment at work such as the working conditions, style of management, working culture and levels of supports, as well as job security. More knowledge is needed about effective interventions by employers to promote good mental health, and about the barriers to effective implementation of such interventions, in particular for smaller enterprises and public agencies with less resources and knowledge to manage these health issues.

Scope

Proposals should develop and implement intervention(s) that an employer/organization can take to promote good mental health and prevent mental illness in the workplace. These interventions can be newly developed or improvements on existing ones. They should address challenges in mental health in the workplace in the EU. The interventions should be assessed in terms of direct and indirect individual and collective health outcomes and cost-effectiveness, implementation facilitators and barriers.

Proposals should build on existing knowledge but may well go beyond. Co-morbidities in mental and/or physical health should be addressed. Research should be multidisciplinary, including social sciences and the humanities. The stigma attached to mental ill health is important to consider as well as other social and cultural factors which may be relevant to improving the working environment. Mixed-methods research is encouraged. Proposals should involve key partners such as employers and employees in the private and public sector, policy makers, insurers, social partners and civil society in developing initiatives. Proposals should address relevant gender issues (e.g. gender equality at the workplace). Ethics and data protection aspects should be addressed where they are relevant.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of between EUR 2 to 4 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Expected impact

- Improved mental health and reduced sickness absence in the EU working population.
- Positive impact on productivity and economic results of workplaces by improved policies and action to promote mental health.
- Improved policies on mental health in the workplace based on the broader evidence base of effective interventions.

Type of action	Research and Innovation action	
Deadline	1 st stage - 02 October 2018	2 nd stage - 16 April 2019
Call identifier	H2020-SC1-BHC-2018-2020	
Topic information	http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/sc1-bhc-22-2019.html	

