

Priority 3. *Digitalising Health and Care*

ICT for Active Ageing

Proposed Call: Workplace health strategies for sustainable and inclusive health

Specific Challenge:

Work constitutes a major part of most Europeans' life, thus there is a major unutilized potential in exploring the association between working life or occupation and personalised health. Health is strongly influenced by the environment the individual is working in and the adaptation of this environment to the health status of the individual. To create an opportunity for companies, and society as a whole, to increase employment opportunity for older workers, for individuals with chronic diseases and for persons with functional impairments is important for job retention, job quality and to exert a societal impact on levels of employment and productivity.

Demographic changes have created an ageing and more heterogenous workforce, and therefore an increased proportion of workers will work with functional impairments, chronic disease or have returned to work after treatment for severe diseases. Up to 23.5% of the working population in the EU-27 is reported to suffer from a chronic illness and 19% is stated to have long-standing health problems. The proportion of worker with a chronic diseases varies substantially between countries. These conditions therefore impact upon a large part of the European workforce.

Important knowledge gaps have been identified with regard to possible effects of working conditions on the prognosis of a chronic disease. The environment of the individual is often very complex and difficult to characterize. New technologies, modern job design and sustainable quality jobs (in combination with personalised health care) has the potential to increase job opportunities and promote job longevity for several groups who currently are forced to leave the labour market too early or never get the chance to enter the labour market at all.

New technologies have created opportunities for self-monitoring of this complexity using digital devices that measure heart rate, blood pressure, body posture and movements as well as personal levels of exposure noise and pollutants. The information gathered could and should be interpreted by the individual, and the development of user-friendly interfaces has created a number of new tools for workplace health promotion and health monitoring of special interest for older workers and workers with chronic diseases as well as workers with function impairments or temporarily reduced work ability. Thus, it is important for the employer and the employee to be able to identify which work factors impair the prognosis of the illness, and which factors enhance improved work participation – so that personalized interventions can adapt the environment to the health status of the individual. The possibility of these groups gaining access to the labour market or returning to work is important for the wellbeing and prosperity of the individual and society.

Scope:

Activities will focus on innovative strategies for sustainable work participation, productivity and risk mitigation for impairment of prognosis in chronic or severe diseases:

- Innovation actions to support the development of user-friendly devices and software interfaces for monitoring of the environment and the interaction between the environment and the individual.
- Supporting and coordinating scientific activities on associations between prognosis of chronic diseases and the work environment.
- Developing policy documents in dialogue with practitioners.
- Identifying barriers and incentives to work for various groups with reduced work ability as well as employers' attitudes and recruitment strategies.

Expected impact

- European business will become more competitive by creating sustainable work, which includes innovative workplace health promotion and prevention measures and, thus, attract high-skilled workers, and new talents.
- Improved employment possibilities for European workers with functional disabilities or chronic diseases.
- Faster and safer return to work for workers after severe disease, and safe work conditions for individuals with chronic diseases or functional impairments.
- Empowerment of the individual – including increased work participation and productivity, based on personalized interventions and the facilitation of new sustainable businesses.
- Increased possibilities for European *SMEs* in the IT-sector to develop a world-leading position in personalized medicine, focused on environmental monitoring and adjustment.
- More productive, healthy work-lives, more sustainable social security systems and inclusive economic growth, if people retire at a later age and in good health via sustainable work.

EU added value.

This proposal links to the work of DG Employment, DG Sanco as well as to the two European agencies, Eurofound and EU-OSHA.

Support

PEROSH Partnership for European Research on Occupational Safety and Health, ISEE??
EPICOH?

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