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## The Role of Healthy Workplace in Austria

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The topic of healthy workplace is part of the Austrian health targets. The 10 Austrian health targets were developed with the aim to prolong the healthy life years of all people living in Austria within 20 years (until 2032), irrespective of their level of education, income or personal living condition. The 10 health targets were officially approved by the Bundesgesundheitskommission and the Council of Ministers in summer 2012. They were mentioned in two government programs and are an important basis for the health reform process. The first health target focuses on provide health-promoting living and working conditions for all population groups through cooperation of all societal and political areas. Healthy working conditions are a relevant determinant for health and at the focus of health politics in Austria.

Developing a national strategy for healthy workplaces is thereby the most influential activity that is set by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and Social Security Institutions. The main aim of this strategy is to develop an integrated system, in order to achieve the needs of the people and companies.

In Austria exists the system of employee protection, which has two specific aspects which the other sectors do not have: 1. Employee protection (a legal duty for companies, which means that companies have to fulfill the legal requirements), health promotion and reintegration (voluntary for the enterprises). 2. The Fulfilment of the legal requirements is controlled by federal institutions — the Labour Inspection. The Duties of these two Institutions are defined by federal law and focus mainly on technical protection, working conditions and which is new since 2015 on mental workloads.

Health promotion is regulated by different kinds of legal sources at the federal level. Concerning workplace health promotion the two biggest and most important stakeholders are the Network of Workplace Health promotion which is mostly driven by health insurance and the Funds healthy Austria.

In Austria exists the national Program “Fit2work”, which is responsible for reintegration at workplaces. This National Program is financed by Accident Insurance, Health Insurance, Pension Insurance, Employment Service, unemployment insurance, Ministry of Social and Labour and offers services for individuals and companies.

Also, the key element of the network is the quality-assurance-system, which is well accepted and established in Austria. However modern companies need integrated services that would combine workplace health promotion with employee protection and occupational integration management. These three fields have different legal bases in Austria and are implemented by different institutions now, which is why there is a need for additional collaborations and networks.

**Key words:** *healthy workplace; health politics; employee protection; Labour Inspection; working conditions*

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## Роль гигиены рабочих мест в Австрии

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Обеспечение гигиены рабочего места является одним из важных направлений здравоохранения Австрии. Были разработаны десять задач в области здравоохранения, согласно которым в течение двадцати лет (до 2032 г.) должны приниматься меры по продлению долголетия всех людей, живущих в Австрии, не зависимо от их уровня образования, дохода и условий жизни. Эти задачи были официально одобрены Бундесгундхейтской комиссией и Советом Министров летом 2012 г. Они были также упомянуты в двух правительственных программах и являются основой для процесса реформирования здравоохранения.

Первая задача в области здравоохранения направлена на обеспечение благоприятных для здоровья условий жизни и труда для всех групп населения посредством сотрудничества во всех социальных и политических сферах. Гигиена труда является важной составляющей здоровья населения и находятся в центре внимания политики здравоохранения в Австрии. Таким образом, разработка национальной стратегии по созданию рабочих мест, удовлетворяющих требованиям гигиены труда, является наиболее важным направлением деятельности, которую осуществляют Министерства труда, социальных дел, здравоохранения и защиты прав потребителей, а также учреждения социального обеспечения. Основная цель этой стратегии — разработать интегрированную систему, способную удовлетворить потребности населения и предприятий. В Австрии существует система социальной защиты работников, которая имеет два специфических аспекта, отсутствующих в других секторах: 1. Защита прав трудящихся (юридически обязательная для предприятий: компании должны выполнять юридически законные требования), укрепление здоровья и реинтеграция (добровольно для предприятий). 2. Контроль выполнения требований законодательства федеральными учреждениями — Трудовой Инспекцией. Объ-

занности этих двух учреждений определены федеральным законом и ориентированы главным образом на техническую защиту, условия труда и умственный труд (с 2015 года).

Политика укрепления здоровья регулируется на федеральном уровне. Что касается укрепления здоровья на рабочем месте, то двумя крупнейшими и наиболее важными заинтересованными сторонами в этом вопросе являются «Сеть по укреплению здоровья на рабочем месте», которая в основном обеспечивается медицинским страхованием, и «Фонды здравоохранения Австрии».

В Австрии существует национальная программа «Fit2work», которая отвечает за реинтеграцию на рабочих местах. Эта национальная программа финансируется службами страхования от несчастных случаев, медицинского страхования, пенсионного страхования, службой занятости, страхования от безработицы, министерством социального обеспечения и труда, а также предлагает услуги частным лицам и предприятиям.

Кроме того, ключевым элементом Сети является система обеспечения качества, которая хорошо функционирует в Австрии. Однако современным предприятиям необходимы комплексные услуги, которые бы сочетали укрепление здоровья на рабочем месте с защитой сотрудников и управлением профессиональной интеграцией. Эти три области имеют различную правовую базу в Австрии и в настоящее время применяются различными учреждениями, поэтому возникает необходимость в их объединении.

**Ключевые слова:** гигиена труда; политика в области здравоохранения; защита прав работающих; Инспекция труда; условия труда

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**Конфликт интересов.** Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов

**The political context.** The topic of healthy workplace is part of the Austrian health targets. The 10 Austrian health targets were developed with the aim to prolong the healthy life years of all people living in Austria within 20 years (until 2032), irrespective of their level of education, income or personal living condition. Since population health is profoundly influenced and determined by many sectors outside the health care sector, the Austrian health targets were defined in a broad and participatory process that involves more than 40 stakeholders from relevant institutions and civil society. In 2011 the Bundesgesundheitskommission (Federal Health Commission) and the Austrian Council of Ministers requested the development of health targets at federal level. The targets were then formulated by all relevant stakeholders that are part of the process. The 10 health targets were officially approved by the Bundesgesundheitskommission and the Council of Ministers in summer 2012. They were mentioned in two government programs and are an important basis for the health reform process. The first health target focuses on provide health-promoting living and working conditions for all population groups through cooperation of all societal and political areas. Healthy working conditions are a relevant determinant for health and at the focus of health politics in Austria. Activities which are set to achieve these goals are e.g.:<sup>1</sup>

- Studies on workplace health promotion analyzing the field
- Programs of the Austrian network of workplace health promotion
- Broad communication activities
- Development of programs for older workers
- Development of programs for small companies

Developing a national strategy for healthy workplaces is thereby the most influential activity that is set by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and Social Security Institutions. The development of this strategy was brought on its way by the end of 2018 and will be published by 2019. The idea behind this strategy is to combine health promotion, prevention and re-integration at workplace.

### **Three approaches for improve health at the workplace.**

Concerning different models of intervening for better health at workplaces — which are Prevention of Diseases, Promoting better health and reintegration into workplaces for people with disabilities, chronic disease or psychosocial problems or illnesses there exist three different organisational systems and also three kind of supportive structures in Austria which co-operate in a certain way — but in the end work separately and not very integrated. These three different systems exist because of historical changes in science, epidemiology and knowledge. Different types of systems where established without taking into account of an integrated concept was develop. The main challenge and common goal of the relevant stakeholder at the organisational level today in Austria is to develop an integrated system, in order to achieve the needs of the people and companies, which is the aim of the mentioned national strategy.

**The Austrian Social Security System and structure of companies.** To understand the complexity of the system in Austria and the three areas of intervention in the field of Workplaces and Health, it is important to know something about the structure of social security in Austria. Austria has three different branches in the field of social security: Health, Accident Insurance and the Pension Insurance and 21 Institutions responsible either for one, two or all of the three branches. They have different background of financing, different organisational goals and legal duties. The Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions is the umbrella organisation has the task to keep social security and integration of these three branches on mind and develop and achieve common goals. Almost 100% of the people in Austria are covered by health insurance which is 8.5 Million people. The health insurance has the legal obligation for providing services on health promotion. The Accident Insurance covers the working people, children attending school or kindergarten and is responsible for prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases and rehabilitation in this area. And finally the Pension Insurances which covers 6 Million of the Austrian people.

The structure of Austrian Companies is dominated by very small, small and medium sized companies. The Employee size is important for the communication in direction to the companies, is relevant for the development of certain programs and

<sup>1</sup> Own graphic based on: [http://wko.at/statistik/kmu/GK\\_BeschStat\\_DetailGK.pdf](http://wko.at/statistik/kmu/GK_BeschStat_DetailGK.pdf)

Employment size of Companies	Number of Companies in total	Number of Companies in %	Number of Employees in total	Number of Employees in %
0-4	469.586	88,7	179.317	7,5
5-9	26.935	5,1	176.562	7,4
10-19	16.099	3,0	216.900	9,1
20-49	10.628	2,0	321.516	13,5
50-99	3.178	0,6	219.251	9,2
100-149	1.137	0,2	137.184	5,8
150-199	591	0,1	101.664	4,3
200-249	370	0,1	82.463	3,5
250-499	701	0,1	239.789	10,1
500-999	285	0,1	191.835	8,1
1.000+	183	0,0	515.520	21,6
Total	529.693	100,0	2.382.001	100,0

Figure. The structure of Austrian Companies

Рисунок. Структура австрийских компаний

intervention concerning the need of the enterprises and also for the strategic planning (Figure<sup>2</sup>).

Most of the Companies are very small and small enterprises. 97% of the Austrian enterprises have less than 20 employees, most of them less than 5. On the other hand, 40% of the employees work at medium or large sized enterprise. The needs, the readiness, the knowledge and the resource for health-related interventions of these Companies are quite different. While large enterprises develop a culture for health, it is still hard to reach smaller once with fitting programs.

**Three programs and responsibilities for improving health at the workplace. Prevention of health risks.** First of all, in Austria exists the system of employee protection, which has two specific aspects which the other sectors do not have. These aspects are:

1. Employee protection is a legal duty for companies, which means that companies have to full fill the legal requirements- The other sectors — health promotion and reintegration are voluntary for the enterprises.

2. The Fulfilment of the legal requirements is controlled by federal institutions — the Labour inspection.

The two most important institutions in this field are the Labour inspection and — as already mention — the Accident Insurance Institutions. The Duties of these two Institutions are defined by federal law and focus mainly on technical protection, working conditions and which is new since 2015 on mental workloads. Most of these topics are also regulated in a certain way by the European Union.

While labour inspection is focusing on the controlling and monitoring the implementation at company level, the field of action for Accident Insurance Institutions is to support companies in implementing certain programs and giving support to full fill the requirements.

**Workplace Health promotion.** Health promotion is regulated by different kinds of legal sources at the federal level. Within the field of Health promotion there are many players which are responsible — health insurance, the federal state, the regions and also the communities. Concerning workplace health promotion the two biggest and most important stakeholders are the Network of Workplace Health promotion which is mostly driven by health insurance and the Funds healthy Austria. Both work together and concentrate their workforce and resources on supporting companies in the field of workplace health promotion and make quality assurance.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.enwhp.org/>

The role of Austrian Network for Workplace Health Promotion will be described below in detail.

**Re-integration at workplace.** Last but not least in Austria exists the national Program “Fit2work”, which is responsible for reintegration at workplaces. This National Program is financed by Accident Insurance, Health Insurance, Pension Insurance, Employment Service, unemployment insurance, Ministry of Social and Labour and offers services for individuals and companies. The Program “fit2work offers case management for employees with sick leave over 40 days and occupational reintegration services for companies. Taking part in the case management program is by invitation or self-initiative. It offers support and orientation within health and social services and contains the development of individual plans. The program for companies focusses on structured clarification of the occupational situation, the creation of a company profile, building a re-integration team and the developing of an early warning system within the company.

According to the mentioned strategy for Healthy workplaces, the main challenge is to develop an integrated system which combines the benefits for the employees and the companies. The strategy will be published in May 2019 and will be a further milestone for better Health at the workplace in Austria.

**Austrian Workplace Health Promotion in detail. The Austrian Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ÖNBGF).** History of workplace health promotion (WHP) in Austria started in the early the nineties. At that time development in this area was at the very beginning. There was a low level of awareness of the area amongst the major players and hardly any activity within companies. Then an economic model of WHP that focused on productivity was predominant and there were no clear responsibilities for WHP among potentially interested agencies. Additionally we faced a lack of suitable tools to undertake WHP and we had to strengthen the professional knowledge and skills in the area.

In 1993, the Upper Austrian regional health insurer implemented the first holistic WHP project in a company in Austria. Despite its successful implementation, it was clear to those responsible at the time that the dissemination of WHP in Austria needed structural and institutional cooperation and coordination. Efforts to build these structures have existed at both national and international level. Thus, in 1996, the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.move-europe.it/file%20pdf/2018%20Version%20Luxembourg\\_Declaration\\_V2.pdf](http://www.move-europe.it/file%20pdf/2018%20Version%20Luxembourg_Declaration_V2.pdf)

was found with the participation of Austria. The ENWHP has significantly supported the development of WHP in Austria. In particular, the Luxembourg Declaration<sup>4</sup> has made an important contribution to the creation of a unified and holistic understanding of WHP. On the other hand, knowledge has been generated through numerous exploratory projects

At the national level, network building began in the year 2000. While the initiative came from the statutory health insurance funds, the Austrian Chamber of Labour and the Economic Chamber were important supporting institutions. Almost all statutory health insurer and the statutory accident insurance have quickly joined the network. The network has been dedicated to the following tasks since then:

- Promotion and further development of a uniform and quality-based understanding of workplace health promotion
- Establishment of service- and consulting centres for companies and stakeholders
- Execution of quality-based WHP-projects in Austrian companies through cooperation within the network

In the pioneering phase of project implementation the members of the Austrian network made differentiations according to company size. In addition, adjustments to industry-specific challenges were required.

In recent years, the constant acceleration of our working environment had to be taken into account, so the process had to be realised in a more compact and more flexible way especially through technical tools. Furthermore, improvements in our surveys and sick leave analyses were focused.

**Quality-assurance-system of the Austrian Network for Workplace Health Promotion.** From the beginning, we faced the challenge of winning companies for voluntary health promotion — even though the offer is extremely cheap. Furthermore, the problem arose that WHP was gradually diluted in content. Many different and also questionable measures were subsumed by providers on the free market under the umbrella of the WHP. Creating a quality assurance system that allows us to define and reward quality seemed to be an adequate instrument to meet these challenges.

Therefore, the quality-assurance-system of the Austrian Network for Workplace Health Promotion was implemented

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.move-europe.it/file%20pdf/2018%20Version%20Luxembourg\\_Declaration\\_V2.pdf](http://www.move-europe.it/file%20pdf/2018%20Version%20Luxembourg_Declaration_V2.pdf)

and conceptualized as a three-stage system in cooperation with the Fund Healthy Austria (FGÖ) in the year 2004. The system includes the following steps:

The WHP-Charter is a symbolic statement of intent, according to which the company's management confirmed the implementation of WHP within two years. This supports in particular the internal project marketing and loses its validity, should it come to no implementation. The WHP-Seal as second step of the system can be applied for once the WHP project has been finalized. The quality is checked by an independent institute along 15 specified criteria. After receipt of the seal, it remains valid for three years. Thereafter, the company may re-apply. The seal is widely spread in Austria and the heart of the quality assurance system. The WHP-Prize as the third stage is the highest award for WHP in Austria. Every three years, it is awarded to exceptionally innovative projects or companies. The quality-assurance-system is a key element of the network, well accepted and established in Austria. In 2018 485.572 employees worked in 1.091 companies that have received the WHP-Seal. These are 17 percent of the working population in Austria in relation to one percent of the companies with at least three employees, which proves an overrepresentation of large companies. 2.135 companies have signed the WHP-Charta and 50 companies have won the prize so far.

Against the background that WHP is a voluntary and not a legal obligation, the network and WHP in Austria can look back on a good development. The success factors of this development were a broad political support, persistence and an attractive offer to the companies. Today we are faced with the challenge that especially large companies want to take the next step. Workplace health promotion as a sole or isolated offer is no longer enough. Companies want integrated services that combine workplace health promotion with employee protection and occupational integration management. These three fields have different legal bases in Austria and are implemented by different institutions now, which is why there is a need for additional collaborations and networks.

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