

FIT FOR WORK DECLARATION

Joining hands for job retention
with a chronic condition



The Hague, May 25th, 2016

DUTCH EU PRESIDENCY ASSOCIATED EVENT 'FOSTERING LONGER ACTIVE LIVES THROUGH INNOVATION IN CARE AND POLICY: JOINING HANDS FOR JOB RETENTION WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION' BY FIT FOR WORK NETHERLANDS IN COOPERATION WITH THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF THE NETHERLANDS (SER)

**Working with a chronic condition is possible
With the effort of employees, employers, healthcare professionals and the government**

Participants of the Fit for Work conference underline the importance of job retention for people with chronic conditions. Stakeholders emphasize that working with a chronic condition is possible and desirable. Employers, employees, healthcare providers and the government each have a social responsibility here. Attendees thereby come to the following conclusions and recommendations:

- **Good work is important for everyone, good work is crucial for people with chronic conditions.**

Good work is work that suits one's abilities, skills and knowledge, and which has sufficient flexibility to enable employees to sustain work for the agreed period. It is also work that contributes to a valuable product or service and that stimulates the health and employability of workers and rewards them in a way which enables them to live an independent life.

- **Working with a chronic condition is possible and desirable.**

Many employees have a chronic disease and this number is increasing because we have to work longer and the need to earn an income from work also increases.

Specifically for the target groups of employers, employees, healthcare professionals and the government, the conference pronounces the following recommendations:

Employers

- Make it possible to discuss working with a chronic condition at the workplace, create openness and indicate that support is available.
- Design tasks jointly with employees in a way that they can handle the job, learn from it and and supports their health and workability.
- Make use of the knowledge, skills and expertise of workers, especially with regards to the abilities of employees with chronic conditions.
- Organise exchanges with other employers in the region and/or branch to learn from each other's experiences and facilitate job to job transitions if needed.

Employees

- Be functionally open about the chronic condition or disease.
- Make use of your knowledge, skills and opportunities to arrange the work in such a way which enables you to sustain the work.
- Ask for support and advice in the workplace and beyond. For example, obtain medical advice from your healthcare provider(s) to support your workability.

¹ Over 150 people participated at the conference, among which representatives from workers- and advocacy groups, employers- and trade associations, professionals from consultancy and healthcare organizations, governmental advisory bodies and programs, policy makers and (political) decision makers.

Government (NL & EU)

- Create a coherent government policy on job retention with a chronic condition. Develop an integrated, intersectoral approach with all ministries involved: Social Affairs, Healthcare, Economic Affairs, Finance and Education.
- Give meaning to the European Agenda 2014 – 2020 for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth aimed at economic growth, employment and social protection.
- Make use of the Social Investment Package of the EU to improve the opportunities for people to participate in society and on the labour market. Healthy, safe working conditions and equal opportunities contribute to this.
- Learn from best practices in other EU countries and initiate partnerships, amongst others through the EU Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee and the European Parliament.
- Create incentives for employers for job retention for employees with chronic conditions:
 - Create a safety net for temporary diminished workability (similar to a safety net for pregnant workers).
 - Create tax appreciation for investments in job adjustments to enable job retention.
- Support carers: financially, practically and by providing information.

Healthcare Sector

- Social and technological innovations in healthcare and beyond contribute to active and healthy ageing, working longer and job retention for people with chronic conditions.
- Encourage and reward work participation as a clinical outcome in healthcare (Target@Work) and make it part of the DBC/ DOT structure.
- Emphasize amongst the boards of healthcare institutions and medical centers that workability of patients is a solid indicator of quality of care.
- Organise healthcare in a way that enables patients/employees to work, to earn an income and to be socially active.
- Encourage skills of (healthcare) professionals that enable them to support the workability of people with chronic conditions (professional profiles).
- Improve the cooperation between regular and occupational healthcare professionals and facilitate them to make use of each other's expertise. The Fit for Work checklist provide a first guidance.

About Fit for Work



Fit for Work is committed to job retention for people with a chronic condition. We provide practical tools for employees, employers and healthcare professionals, and we raise awareness for the importance of workability with a chronic conditions amongst politicians and policy-makers.

Fit for Work is led by the Centre Work Health and is supported by AbbVie. For more information:
info@fitforworknederland.nl and www.fitforworknederland.nl

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