

WORKPLACE HEALTH INITIATIVES COMPETITION: WORLD OBESITY WEEK (2ND – 6TH MARCH 2020)



TYPE
STATUS

Program/initiative that was successfully piloted in 2019 and then rolled out in March 2020
Fully implemented and ongoing

LAST
UPDATE

August 2021

MALTA • NATIONAL
Health Promotion at the Workplace

PROBLEM & OBJECTIVE

PROBLEM High obesity rates in Malta across all age groups and genders.

OBJECTIVE To prevent and decrease the occurrence of non-communicable diseases (including cancer) by means of educational activities that will lead to long-term health awareness. To promote health at the workplace by organizing a variety of health promotion initiatives for employees at their work settings.

CONTACT

Health Promotion and
Disease Prevention
Directorate

St. Luke's Square

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/Pages/home.aspx>

health.pro@gov.mt
+356 23266000

KEY COMPONENTS / STEPS

- Phase 1: Pilot even
 - Workplaces were invited to organize various sustainable, innovative health initiatives in 2019 (examples included organizing a healthy breakfast or lunch; staff canteen providing a larger choice of healthy options; organizing physical activity/group walks for employees; resupplying vending machines with healthier options; encouraging stair use; talks on nutrition and physical activity by qualified persons).
 - Five photos of the initiatives undertaken by workplace uploaded on social media channels by the HPDP.
 - Each workplace efforts were scored according to five key criteria (i.e., temporal sustainability, innovation, variety, participation and ecological sustainability).
 - An awards ceremony was held for the participating companies.
- Phase 2: Main event
 - The initiative was repeated in 2020 on a larger scale by promoting the competition among a greater number of workplaces.
 - In all 18 workplaces of different sizes participated in the 2020 edition.
- Phase 3: Follow up
 - A number of workplaces sought the help of HPDP to continue these initiatives beyond the competition (which was not held in 2021 due to COVID).
 - HPDP staff organized workshops with employees of interested organizations (e.g., Police Academy) and offer expert advice on improving the healthiness of the workplace environment as external consultants.

KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

- Competition organized by the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate (HPDP).
- The workplace identified as a key target site for health promotional efforts because:
 - employees spend a large proportion of their day at workplace;
 - they are often overlooked sites for health promotion initiatives.
- Initiatives aligned with the objectives of the Healthy Weight for Life Strategy 2012–2020, the Non-communicable Disease Strategy 2010, the National Cancer Plan 2017–2020 and the goals of HPDP
- Workplaces of any type and size were eligible for inclusion. Invitations were sent by email to a large number of human resources managers and CEOs of companies, ministries or entities asking their organizations to participate on the occasion of World Obesity Day (March 4th, 2020).

MAIN IMPACTS / ADDED VALUE

- The initiative was deemed to be acceptable in terms of resources utilized for the exposure and awareness generated across workplaces and the general public. This initiative involved approximately 60–80 hours of full-time equivalent (FTE) work by HPDP staff. Some long-term effects of the initiative on participating companies include:
 - the permanent sealing of a vending machine after the supplier failed to adhere to one company's demand for health products to be supplied;
 - companies continued to offer subsidized gym memberships or free weekly physical activity training sessions or classes (e.g. circuit training, yoga) to employees;
 - material aimed at promoting healthier behavior permanently placed in prominent positions (e.g. stickers attached to elevator doors recommending that stairs be used instead).
- Workshops fostered connectedness since participants had to come together to participate in different activities.
- Activities were fun events for employees.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Intense promotion of the activity through various media channels as well as promoting the activity in advance are important for the event to be successful.
- Allowing time (several weeks to months) for the organizations to prepare for the events is key.
- Different organizations came up with various innovative healthy initiative ideas including live cooking sessions, 10,000 step challenge, health checks including blood glucose and blood pressure testing and body mass index estimations.
- Outcome measures (e.g., whether participation in the competition led to a long-term change in the workplace environment or policy) should be assessed.

REFERENCES & DOCUMENTATION

- [Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate](#)
- [Healthy Weight for Life Strategy 2012–2020](#)
- [Non-communicable Disease Strategy of 2010](#)
- [National Cancer Plan 2017–2020](#)
- European Partnership for Action against Cancer (EPAAC deliverables):
<http://www.epaac.eu/final-deliverables>
 - European Guide on Quality National Cancer Control Programme (2013)
 - Boosting Innovation and Cooperation in European Cancer Control (2013)

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