



H-WORK

**MULTI-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH
IN SMEs AND PUBLIC WORKPLACES**

D 7.5

**POLICY BRIEFS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND POLICY
MAKERS**



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Policy Briefs and Recommendations for Health Professionals and Policy Makers

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Authors	<p>Sabine Steyaert, EFPA, sabine.steyaert@efpa.eu</p> <p>Bruna Zani, EFPA, bruna.zani@efpa.eu</p> <p>Christine Marking, EFPA, christine@markingpublicaffairs.eu</p> <p>Ole Tunold, EFPA, ole.tunold@efpa.eu</p> <p>Julie van den Borre, EFPA, julie.vandenborre@efpa.eu</p>
Contributors	<p>Davide Giusino, UNIBO, davide.giusino2@unibo.it</p> <p>Lucia Volpi, UNIBO, lucia.volpi@unibo.it</p> <p>Marco De Angelis, UNIBO, marco.deangelis6@unibo.it</p> <p>Luca Pietrantoni, UNIBO, luca.pietrantoni@unibo.it</p> <p>Annalisa Senatore, OPEN, annalisa.senatore@be-open.it</p> <p>Alessandro Gabriele, OPEN, alessandro.gabriele@be-open.it</p> <p>Francisco Javier Garcia Gonzalez, VALORA, fjgarcia@valoraprevencion.es</p>



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Maria Jose Gisbert Jorda, VALORA,
mjgisbert@valoraprevencion.es

Marit Christensen, NTNU, marit.christensen@ntnu.no

Siw Tone Innstrand, NTNU,
siw.tone.innstrand@ntnu.no

Leoni Van der Vaart, NTNU,
leoni.van.der.vaart@ntnu.no

Emmanuel Aboagye, KI, emmanuel.aboagye@ki.se

Cristian Vasquez Guerra, USFD,
c.vasquez@sheffield.ac.uk

Carolyn Axtell, USFD, c.m.axtell@sheffield.ac.uk

Karina Nielsen, USFD, k.m.nielsen@sheffield.ac.uk

Steve Bell, ENWHP,
steve@enwhp.net

Elena Heber, GETON,
e.heber@geton-institut.de

Reviewers

Richard Wynne, ENWHP, wynne.richard@gmail.com

Steve Bell, ENWHP, steve@bell.scot

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Executive Summary

The H-WORK project, funded by the EU Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, is a comprehensive initiative to promote mental health in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and public workplaces. Mental health in the workplace is a critical concern affecting employees' well-being and overall productivity. The project recognises that effective interventions require a multilevel approach involving employers, health professionals, national policymakers, and EU policymakers.

This deliverable, titled "Policy Briefs and Recommendations for Health Professionals and Policy Makers," represents a key milestone within the H-WORK project. It is a compilation of evidence-based policy briefs and recommendations designed to guide stakeholders in fostering better mental health in the workplace. These stakeholders include employers, health professionals, national policymakers, and EU policymakers.

Eleven policy briefs and recommendations, available for download on the Mental Health at Work Platform (<https://www.mentalhealth-atwork.eu>), have been developed and produced about the following topics:

- recommendations **from psychologists to managers** about how to make room for mental health;
- recommendations on **digital interventions** for employee well-being and teamwork;
- the importance of ensuring **participation** and selecting interventions based on **workers' needs**;
- the **needs of SMEs** in intervention design and implementation when it comes to mental health and well-being;
- the **role of social partners** in mental health and well-being promotion in SMEs;
- the **role of EU policymakers** in improving workplace mental health;
- **training** for workplace mental health promotion;
- implementing **artificial intelligence (AI)** for promoting well-being in organisations;
- recommendation for managers about the use of **social media** and mental health at work;
- the **economic benefits** of promoting mental health in SMEs and public organisations.
- recommendation for **health insurers** in the EU.

Overall, one obvious but necessary lesson from the policy briefs is that mental health matters to policy, and policy matters to mental health. This is a crucial point if connected to the **potential for policy to shape culture**. Policy can impact, influence and affect the culture of people, and things that are part of policies at some point become part of culture as well. There is a critical opportunity here for policy to underscore the importance of taking care of mental health, both within and outside the workplace, and change the current culture about mental health to break the stigma that still surrounds mental health topics nowadays, especially in work and organisations.

Another vital lesson is prioritising mental health promotion in SMEs and public workplaces. Investing in employee mental well-being benefits individuals and leads to **economic and societal benefits**, making it a wise policy choice. Also, the policy briefs stress the importance of a holistic approach to mental health, including addressing work-related factors, fostering a supportive workplace culture, and providing access to mental health services. Policymakers should consider **strengthening legal frameworks** to protect employees' mental health rights, ensuring employers have clear responsibilities.

In conclusion, the present deliverable is a crucial component of the H-WORK project's mission to promote mental health in SMEs and public workplaces. By providing evidence-based guidance to employers, health professionals, national policymakers, and EU policymakers, this deliverable seeks to catalyse positive change, foster healthier work environments, and ultimately improve the mental well-being of employees across Europe. The H-WORK project remains committed to creating workplaces where mental health is a top priority, benefiting both individuals and society.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Term	Description
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALTAI	Assessment List for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
DI	Digital Intervention
EAPs	Employee Assistance Programs
EC	European Commission
EMPL	European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EPSCO	Environment, Public Health, and Social Affairs Council
ESENER	European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks
EU	European Union
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HAT	H-WORK Assessment Toolkit
HET	H-WORK Evaluation Toolkit

HIT	H-WORK Intervention Toolkit
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
IT	Information Technology
IGLO	Individual, Group, Leader, Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
MH	Mental Health
MHP	Mental Health Promotion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHP	Occupational Health Professional
OHS	Occupational Health & Safety
DiRA	Online Interactive Risk Assessment
OSH	Occupational Safety & Health
PB	Policy Brief
QoL	Quality of Life
ROI	Return on Investment
SANT	European Parliament's Committee on Public Health
SLIC	Senior Labour Inspectors Committee
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
US	United States

WHO	World Health Organisation
WHP	Workplace Health Promotion
WMH	Workplace Mental Health
WMHP	Workplace Mental Health Promotion
WP	Work Package

1. INTRODUCTION

The present deliverable constitutes D27 of the H-WORK project (De Angelis et al., 2020), which aims to design, develop, implement and validate multilevel assessment, intervention, and evaluation toolkits to promote workplace mental health in public organisations and SMEs. The document contains policy briefs and recommendations for employers, health professionals, national and the EU policy makers. It is part of WP7 - "PROMOTE: Communication & dissemination, policy briefs and recommendations". Together with deliverable 7.4 "Final communication and dissemination report", represent the last two deliverable of WP7.

As such, the present deliverable relates to T7.3 - "Provide recommendations and policy briefs for employers, occupational health professionals and policy makers, organise workshops and a final event", devoted to developing policy briefs and recommendations for public and private employers, occupational health practitioners and policy makers. In this task, two European associations, partners of the Consortium, namely EFPA and ENWHP, identified priorities, gaps, new trends and key challenges for policy development in the area of workplace health promotion, and developed good practice criteria for the different types of workplaces (i.e., public and private) and actors/stakeholders. This deliverable heavily relies on the work carried out in Deliverable D2.2 "Update on Digital Technologies and Policies", as this review set the foundations for the identification of stakeholders and target audiences for all the H-WORK policy briefs and recommendations.

The policy briefs were central themes of two panel discussions held at the European Congress of Psychology (ECP), both organised by EFPA. The ECP takes place every two years and more than 4000 mental health professionals from Europe and non-European countries attend the conference. Specifically, in 2022, the first panel discussion which included insights on the role of policy briefs and recommendations took place at the 17th ECP in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in July 2022, and was titled "Building a Strong and Healthy Workplace in Europe: Psychological perspectives and insights from the H2020-funded sister projects". In this occasion the five EU-funded projects EMPOWER, H- WORK, MAGNET4EUROPE, MENTUPP and MINDBOT participated in a roundtable discussion about the role of psychology as a driving force in Europe to pave the way for a healthier workplace. Representatives from each project reported on the experiences to date, the critical organisational mechanisms and processes that had been put in place, taking into account the cultural background and mental health issues, and finally, the potential opportunities and impact of psychology in the face of ongoing changes in the digitised world of work. The second panel discussion took place at the 18th ECP in Brighton, United Kingdom, in July 2023, and was titled "Theoretical and Practical Advances on Mental Health in the Workplace"; the session featured the EU H2020-funded sister projects H-WORK, EMPOWER, MINDBOT, and MENTUPP, and shed light on the theoretical and practical advancements in promoting mental health in the workplace. Further, EFPA promoted the H-WORK outcomes by drawing upon seminars and workshops organised also during the European Semesters of Psychology, developing policy briefs and recommendations reaching about 30,000 European psychologists. EFPA also used its contacts with the European Commission and the European Parliament to promote and inform policymakers about the H-WORK project and its outcomes. The aim has been to engage with policymakers from the EU and non-European partner countries, insurers, social partners, as well as researchers, with the main scope of involving managers, supervisors, CEOs, SMEs and relevant stakeholders. Policy briefs and recommendations for employers, mental health professionals and policy makers constitute essential outcomes of the H-WORK project. All the documents are freely available to the public and promoted through the H-WORK Innovation Platform at the following link:

<https://www.mentalhealth-atwork.eu>.

Relation to other tasks and deliverables

The policy briefs are informed by and build on the research and intervention experiences as well as work activities carried out in:

- **WP2 - "CREATE:** Integration of the consortium expertise, setting the ground for the development of the HWORK Toolkits", in which innovation potentials and benefits of digital technologies in mental health promotion in the workplace were explored as part of T2.3 (see, e.g., the policy briefs "Recommendations on Digital Interventions for Employee Wellbeing and Teamwork", "Implementing Artificial Intelligence for Promoting Well-being in Organisations", and "Social media and mental health at work: Recommendations for managers" led by UNIBD), and current EU policies regarding mental health promotion in the workplace were analysed as part of T2.4, where the cross-national exploration of mental health promotion policies, regulations, practices and training programmes at organisational, national and European level enabled to define key priorities in terms of policy recommendations and legislation in mental health promotion;
- **WP3 - "COLLECT:** Development of the H-WORK Assessment Toolkit (HAT), needs analysis, psychosocial risk assessment, baseline, final and follow-up measures", in which the HAT was developed as part of T3.1 and T3.2 for conducting bottom-up participatory needs assessment activities in organisations to define and tailor interventions to be implemented in each intervention site (see, e.g., the policy brief "Selecting Interventions based on Workers' Needs: Why and how to ensure Participation") led by NTNU and USFD);
- **WP4 - "INTERVENE:** Development of the H-WORK Intervention Toolkit, implementation in the intervention sites", in which the implementation of interventions has been completed as part of T4.2 and T4.3 (see, e.g., the policy brief "Recommendations on Digital Interventions for Employee Wellbeing and Teamwork" led by UNIBD);
- **WP5 - "EVALUATE:** Development of the H-WORK Evaluation Toolkit, process evaluation and monitoring, economic evaluation", in which economic evaluation was performed as part of T5.4, sub-task 5.4.1. - "Cost-effectiveness analysis", and sub-task 5.4.2 - "Budget impact analysis" (see, e.g., the policy brief "Economic Benefits of Promoting Mental Health in SMEs and Public Organisations" led by KI);
- **WP6 - "RELEASE:** Exploitation of the H-WORK Toolkits, introducing new products and services", in which the H-WORK Innovation Platform, currently hosting the policy briefs, was created as part of T6.2.

Additionally, VALORA's expertise in workplace mental health promotion training (see, e.g., the policy brief "Training for Workplace Mental Health Promotion" led by VALORA) as well as EFPA and ENWHP competence in EU-related matters (see, e.g., the policy briefs "Making room for Mental Health: Recommendations from Psychologists to Managers", "Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Reflecting the needs of SMEs in intervention design and implementation", "Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): The Role of the Social Partners", and "Improving workplace mental health: The role of EU policymakers") were vital to developing the remaining number of policy briefs.

Overall, this deliverable fulfils MS9 - "H-WORK Innovation Platform deployed and publicly available" and MS10 - "Dissemination activities completed, final H-WORK event concluded, exploitation plan finalised". Policy briefs and policy recommendations for health practitioners and national and EU policymakers constitute an essential part of the H-WORK project's dissemination activities. Eleven policy briefs have been produced exceeding the IO set as the project's Key Performance Indicators.

Based on the experience gained through the project and the project results, the H-WORK's policy briefs aim to have a significant impact on improved policies and regulations to protect people's mental health data within the workplace. Notably, the short-term output of policy briefs and recommendations for occupational health professionals and psychologists aims to have long-term impacts, such as increased information sharing among stakeholders within the EU on effective policies on mental health promotion, improved policies for company leaders and managers to foster skills on good practices in leadership and mental health promotion, increase in organisations' expenditure on effective multi-level mental health promotion in the workplace, and improved conditions for people with mental health issues in terms of organisational and policy measures.

The document is organised into five main sections. The first section offers an overview of the conceptual background regarding the development of the policy briefs, arguing why they are essential, describing the reasons why policy and workplace mental health matter to

each other, and detailing what is precisely meant by "policy" who the relevant policymakers are for the H-WORK project. It also describes the methodological process that was set up to develop the policy briefs efficiently and effectively through the coordination of Consortium partners and external actors by EFPA and ENWHP. The following section gives additional policy recommendations to EU institutions, such as the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the EU Social Partners, and the EU-OSHA. The next section illustrates the strategies and channels through which the H-WORK policy briefs are being disseminated.

The document also includes some bibliographical references as well as an Appendix providing the whole list of full texts of the developed and discussed policy briefs.

2. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Why the policy briefs

In the context of an EU Horizon 2020-funded project like H-WORK, focused on implementing multilevel interventions to promote mental health in SMEs and public workplaces, the development of policy briefs and active engagement in policy matters is of paramount importance. This commitment to policy development and advocacy is grounded in a compelling rationale that underscores its significance.

First and foremost, policy briefs serve as a tangible bridge between research and actionable change. In a project of this nature, where the aim is to enhance mental health outcomes within workplaces, policy briefs distil complex research findings and evidence-based recommendations into accessible and digestible formats. They act as the conduit through which extensive research insights are communicated to relevant stakeholders, including employers, health professionals, national policymakers, and EU policymakers. By presenting compelling data and clear recommendations, policy briefs empower these stakeholders to make informed decisions that can directly impact mental health in workplaces.

Moreover, in the context of the European Union and its Horizon 2020 program, policy briefs fulfil a critical role in promoting **harmonisation and coherence** across member states. The EU is a diverse region with varying policies and practices concerning mental health and workplace well-being. Policy briefs developed within the framework of H-WORK provide a platform for synthesising best practices and promoting the adoption of standardised policies across member states. By facilitating the exchange of knowledge and evidence-based strategies, these briefs help align the efforts of different countries toward a common goal—improving mental health in workplaces and reducing disparities among nations.

Another compelling rationale for policy briefs lies in their ability to **drive systemic change**. Mental health in the workplace is not just a matter of individual well-being; it has broader societal and economic implications. By advocating for policy changes and institutionalising practices that prioritise mental health, the H-WORK project can contribute to reducing the burden on healthcare systems, increasing workforce productivity, and fostering a healthier, more engaged workforce. Policy briefs serve as advocacy tools that can motivate policymakers and employers to take action, recognising the long-term benefits of investing in mental health.

Furthermore, policy briefs are instrumental in raising **awareness** and **reducing stigma** around mental health issues. SMEs and public workplaces are often microcosms of society, and the policies they implement can influence societal norms and attitudes. By developing and disseminating policy briefs that emphasise the importance of mental health, the H-WORK project can contribute to a broader cultural shift—one where mental health is valued, **openly discussed**, and treated with the same importance as physical health. This can, in turn, have a cascading effect on individuals, communities, and society at large.

Ultimately, policy matters and the development of policy briefs in the context of H-WORK are indispensable for several compelling reasons. They **bridge the gap** between research and action, facilitate harmonisation of policies across the EU, drive systemic change with societal and economic benefits, and contribute to reducing stigma surrounding mental health. In the pursuit of promoting mental health in SMEs and public workplaces, policy briefs represent a powerful tool that can catalyse positive transformations and ultimately improve the mental well-being of countless individuals while strengthening the fabric of European society as a whole.

Identifying policymakers and stakeholders

The information gathered through Deliverable D2.2 "Update on Digital Technologies and Policies" played a pivotal role in the identification of stakeholders and target audiences for all the subsequent policy briefs and recommendations. It acted as a foundation for our continued work in promoting mental health in the workplace. Specifically, EFPA and ENWHP by analysing the state of the current EU policies on mental health promotion in the workplace, gained insights into the roles and competencies of the EU and its relevant networks and bodies taking actions in this domain.

The first step to identifying the target audience of the H-WORK recommendations, namely the stakeholders and policymakers, was that of defining what a policy is and its aims and objectives. In this sense, the H-WORK recognises that 'policy' can take many shapes and forms. It can take the form of binding and prescriptive legal measures that specify methods and desired outcomes. It can also be non-binding, describing the desired outcome while leaving the ways and means to obtain the goal to the players concerned. In addition, there are other measures which can be seen as 'policies', such as initiatives aiming to stimulate cooperation in specific fields, which can prepare the ground for more formal or binding policies at a later stage. Moreover, a policy can be developed at many levels: international, European, EU, national, regional, and local levels.

Since the H-WORK has mainly focused on EU-level policies as put forward by the main EU institutions and related players, we focused on the following three main European institutions:

- the **European Commission**. The European Commission is the EU's primary executive body. Its work is steered by the College of Commissioners. Each Member State has a Commissioner in this College, responsible for a certain policy area. The current Commission President is Ursula von der Leyen. The Commission proposes laws, manages the budget, implements decisions, issues regulations, and represents the EU around the world at summits, negotiations, and international organisations. The Commission is composed of several departments, Directorates-General (DG's), which are active in designated areas of policy. For H-WORK, the most important DGs are DG Health and Food Safety (DG Santé) and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Social Inclusion (DG EMPL);
- the **Council of the EU**. The Council of the EU, also known as the Council of Ministers, is a second legislative branch whose approval is also needed for all legislation to pass. This Council consists of the government ministers from all EU Members, organised by policy area. In the case of health and mental health at work, Member States' ministers for health and social policy meet in the Environment, Public Health, and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO);
- the **European Parliament**. The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU body, with representatives apportioned by each Member State's population. Unlike traditional legislatures, it cannot propose legislation, but laws cannot pass without its approval. It also negotiates and approves the EU budget and oversees the Commission. Work is done in various specific Committees. For H-WORK, the Committee on Health, Environment and Food Safety (ENVI) and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) are the most relevant. Decisions are taken by the Parliament as a whole, in plenary sessions. In many instances, the Council and the Parliament must agree on a Commission proposal, before passing it back to the Commission for implementation.

Moreover, **additional EU and international bodies** were taken into consideration when outlining the target policymakers and stakeholders:

EU Social Partners

- [Business Europe](#): is the leading advocate for businesses in Europe. It represents national business federations from EU member states and provides a voice for employers' interests at the European level.
- [European Trade Union Confederation](#) (ETUC): is the major trade union organization at the European level. It represents the interests of workers and trade unions across Europe and advocates for labour rights and workers' well-being.

EU Agencies

- [European Agency for Health and Safety at Work](#) (EU-OSHA): is an EU agency focused on improving occupational safety and health throughout the European Union. It provides research, information, and guidance to promote healthy and safe working conditions.
- [European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions](#) EUROFOUND: is an EU agency dedicated to researching and providing insights into living and working conditions in Europe. It contributes to policy development related to quality of life and employment.
- [European Network for Workplace Health Promotion](#) (ENWHP): is a European network that promotes workplace health and well-being. It collaborates with organizations and institutions to advance policies and practices that support employee health at work.

International Agencies

- [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD): is an international organization that fosters economic growth and well-being. It provides data, analysis, and policy recommendations on various economic and social issues, including labour and employment.
- [International Labour Organisation](#) (ILO): is a specialized agency of the United Nations that focuses on labour and employment issues worldwide. It sets international labour standards, promotes decent work, and addresses labour-related challenges.
- [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO): is a United Nations agency responsible for international public health. It works to improve health and well-being globally, including addressing mental health and workplace health issues.

While the EU Social Partners, EU agencies like the EU-OSHA, and international bodies such as the OECD, ILO, and WHO have not directly participated in the H-WORK project, they were considered vital audiences and potential targets for the H-WORK policy briefs and recommendations. These influential organizations can play a crucial role in promoting and advocating for mental health at work initiatives within their spheres of influence, and the policy briefs can serve as valuable resources for these organizations to leverage the insights and recommendations generated by the H-WORK project, ultimately contributing to the broader adoption of effective mental health interventions in workplaces across Europe and internationally.

The process of developing the policy briefs

A participatory and consultative process coordinated by EFPA and involving Consortium partners and relevant stakeholders was structured to develop the policy briefs. Several T7.3 online meetings were set up, in which attendants could discuss and make decisions on the most crucial issues related to producing the policy briefs, such as topics, focus, target audiences, tentative titles, leading authors, and languages. Translations in languages other than English (e.g., Italian, Spanish, Norwegian) were made possible according to the availability of the partners volunteering to do them. The meetings were also used to create a common 5-page template in .docx format resembling H-WORK visual identity, which was shared among partners and that each leading author could utilise to write their policy brief. During meetings, good policy brief examples from previous projects or other institutions could be mentioned and referred to in order to inform the development of H-WORK policy briefs; some of them included the WHO & ILO's (2022) policy brief on mental health at work, the Wellcome's report about putting science into workplace mental health (Aithal et al., 2022), and policy briefs from previous European projects, like Boost on a systematic approach to promoting mental well-being among children in schools (2020), CONCISE on the communication role on perception and beliefs of EU citizens about science (2020), EXCEPT on social exclusion of youth in Europe (2017), ENLIVEN on bringing the organisation back in "organisational agency" in workplace learning (2020), RESPOND on addressing well-being, resilience and mental health related to Covid-19 (2021), the Mental Health Innovation Network on mental health and human rights (2018), and TECHNEQUALITY on how to increase training participation among vulnerable workers (2021). For the H-WORK policy briefs, a 2-stages review process was set up, whereby internal reviewers first, and external reviewers later, could provide leading authors with feedback and suggestions for improvement to be subsequently integrated into updated versions of the briefs. Internal timelines were established and, to ensure time enough for high-quality products, it was decided to divide the delivery of the policy briefs into two separate batches, the first one to be delivered by mid-January 2023, in time for the official release of the H-WORK Innovation Platform (see D.6 - "H-WORK Innovation Platform" delivered at M25), and the second one to be delivered by mid-September 2023, in time for the project's official end date.

First batch

Three T7.3 meetings were held concerning the first planned batch of policy briefs, in which participants included EFPA, ENWHP, UNIBO, USFD, NTNU, and VALORA. The first meeting took place on Thursday, October 6th, 2022, and was aimed at distributing tasks for the writing process, confirming the first titles, setting internal deadlines, and defining the review process. The second meeting took place on Thursday, November 24th, 2022, and was aimed at confirming the distribution of tasks for the writing process, updating the first titles, confirming the timeline, showing the first drafts of policy briefs, and addressing any questions or problems encountered during writing. The third and last meeting took place on Thursday, December 15th, 2022, and was aimed at providing an overview of the submitted and/or internally reviewed policy briefs and updating about the submissions and/or reviews in progress. For the first batch of H-WORK policy briefs, UJI and ENWHP were identified as internal reviewers, whereas members of the EFPA network were identified as external reviewers. This process led to the production of 4 policy briefs from the first planned batch, as follows.

- **"Making Room for Mental Health: Recommendations from Psychologists to Managers":**
- **"Recommendations on Digital Interventions for Employee Wellbeing and Teamwork":**
- **"Selecting Interventions based on Workers' Needs: Why and How to Ensure Participation":**
- **"Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Reflecting the Needs of SMEs in Intervention Design and Implementation"**

Second batch

The topics and tentative titles of the policy briefs included in the second batch were discussed, agreed and decided upon in a WP7 workshop carried out in the context of the H-WORK project's in-presence Consortium Meeting hosted by VALORA in Valencia, Spain, between Thursday, March 2nd, and Friday, March 3rd, 2023. Members from EFPA, ENWHP, OPEN, UNIBO, QED, VALORA and UJI participated in the workshop.

Afterwards, to facilitate the preparation of the second batch of H-WORK policy briefs, ENWHP and EFPA organised and delivered, on Tuesday, May 16th, 2023, an interactive webinar on producing policy briefs and recommendation documents. The webinar aimed to guide those partners who had agreed to write a policy brief. Beyond going again through the established procedure for drafting the recommendations (i.e., leading author produces a first draft, internal reviewers provide comments on it, a second draft is produced, external reviewers provide comments on it, and a final draft is produced), the main content of the webinar focused on what the most important questions to be asked are when it comes to writing a document encompassing policy recommendations — for instance, who the target group(s) is/are for the recommendations, at which level they are active (e.g., local, national, EU), what the key issues are that they must address to improve MH in the workplace, what needs to change about the current situation, what has been learned from the project that the target groups need to know, whether this can be linked to project findings, what instruments/actions/initiatives are already available to/or could be used as a vehicle for recommendations, what new actions should be taken, and what to recommend that they do. Examples of recommendations were also provided to clarify the concepts. For the second batch of H-WORK policy briefs, UJI, ENWHP and EFPA were identified as internal reviewers, whereas members of the EFPA network and members of EUROFOUND were identified as external reviewers. This process led to the production of 6 policy briefs from the second planned batch, as follows.

- **"Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): The Role of the Social Partners"**
- **"Improving Workplace Mental Health: The Role of EU Policy Makers"**
- **"Training for Workplace Mental Health Promotion"**
- **"Implementing Artificial Intelligence for Promoting Well-being in Organisations"**
- **"Social Media and Mental Health at Work: Recommendations for Managers"**
- **"Economic Benefits of Promoting Mental Health in SMEs and Public Organisations"**
- **"Implementing Mental Health at the Workplace – recommendations for health insurers in the EU" *(finalising)***

3. THE RESULT: 11 H-WORK POLICY BRIEFS

In this section, a brief outline of each policy brief is presented. The full versions are available in Appendix I of this deliverable or on the Policy Brief section of the H-WORK innovation platform: <https://www.mentalhealth-atwork.eu/#policy-briefs>.

Figure 1. Policy Briefs as presented on the H-WORK Innovation Platform

The image shows a screenshot of the 'Policy Briefs' section on the H-WORK Innovation Platform. The page has a blue header with the title 'Policy Briefs'. Below the header, there is a grid of 11 policy briefs, each with a title, a short description, and an 'Open →' button. The grid is organized into two columns and five rows, with the last row containing only one brief on the left.

Policy Briefs	
Making room for Mental Health: Recommendations from Psychologists to Managers This briefing proposes several practical recommendations for action to effectuate a "mentally healthy" work environment, based on the H-Work outcomes. Open →	Recommendations on Digital Interventions for Employee Wellbeing and Teamwork This policy brief provides occupational health practitioners, HR directors, and managers of SMEs and public organisations with recommendations on digital-based interventions to improve employee wellbeing and teamwork. Open →
Selecting Interventions based on Workers' Needs: Why and how to ensure Participation This policy brief is intended for Human Resources and Occupational Health professionals, managers, and union representatives, and introduces the importance of promoting and protecting mental health in the workplace through workplace Interventions. Open →	Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Reflecting the needs of SMEs in intervention design and implementation This policy brief summarises the barriers and opportunities of introducing workplace mental health and wellbeing interventions to SMEs. It also sets out a number of recommendations relevant to policymakers, Occupational Health Service (OHS) professionals and owners/operators of SMEs. Open →
Mental Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): The Role of the Social Partners This policy brief discusses the role that social partners play in influencing and developing policy on mental health in the workplace as well as improving the practice and implementation of workplace mental health interventions. Open →	Improving workplace mental health: The role of EU policy makers Building on the outcomes of the H-WORK project, this policy brief provides EU-level policymakers with concrete recommendations to foster mentally healthy work environments and facilitate cooperation between EU Member States and relevant stakeholders. Open →
Training for Workplace Mental Health Promotion This policy brief provides concrete recommendations addressing groups responsible for training workplace actors on mental health and wellbeing issues at EU and national levels in order to ensure that appropriate training is provided to all relevant stakeholders. Open →	Implementing Artificial Intelligence for Promoting Well-being in Organisations This policy brief examines the transformative potential of AI in promoting employee mental health and outlines opportunities and challenges in exploiting AI applications to create supportive work environments. Open →
Social media and mental health at work: Recommendations for managers This policy brief addresses the impact of social media on workplace mental health, presenting recommendations to leverage the positive aspects and mitigate potential negative impacts. Open →	Economic Benefits of Promoting Mental Health in SMEs and Public Organisations This policy brief proposes strategies and calls for action to demonstrate the economic benefits of promoting mental health in the workplace. Recommendations target policymakers, organisational leaders, and stakeholders interested in maximising the economic value of workplace mental health promotion. Open →

Policy Brief 1: Making Room for Mental Health - Recommendations from Psychologists to Managers

Contributing Partner: EFPA

Languages: English, Italian, Norwegian

The policy brief presents valuable guidance for managers on effectively tackling mental health issues in the workplace, stemming from the insights of psychologists. It underscores the necessity of crafting an inclusive environment where mental health is prioritised through methods of engagement, knowledge, leadership, and participation. To make this actionable, the brief suggests the consistent use of tools, like the H-Works Assessment Toolkit, for regular assessments. Furthermore, managers are encouraged to enhance their people management and communication skills through dedicated training. A significant part of the guidance is about normalising mental health conversations in the workplace, fostering a positive management culture built on mutual respect, and setting a hands-on example. The brief also touches upon the importance of ensuring a harmonious fit between an individual's role and their capabilities, effectively addressing psychosocial risks, and offering unwavering support to workers grappling with mental health conditions. In instances where expertise is required, collaboration with mental health professionals is deemed crucial.

Policy Brief 2: Recommendations on Digital Interventions for Employee Wellbeing and Teamwork

Contributing partner: UNIBO

Languages: English, Italian, Norwegian

The policy brief offers a pathway for occupational health practitioners, HR directors, and managers of SMEs and public organisations, guiding them on the implementation of digital interventions to bolster employee well-being and teamwork. It advocates the adoption of digital interventions, aiming to elevate employee well-being and solidify teamwork dynamics. As we navigate the digital age, these interventions, characterised by their flexibility and accessibility, outshine traditional approaches. They've already showcased their prowess in amplifying workplace mental health and boosting performance metrics. However, the path to digital isn't devoid of challenges, especially concerning user engagement and data management intricacies. Insights gleaned from tools like Sociomapping and HelloBetter provide a roadmap to address these challenges head-on. It's paramount to gauge the organisation's digital readiness, ensuring infrastructure and workforce alignment. The design of engaging digital platforms is essential to maintain user interest, and data security cannot be compromised. In this digital transition, specialised staff should be on board to oversee the seamless rollout and management of these interventions. The ultimate vision is a harmonised digital workspace where user privacy is respected and proactive participation is championed, aiming for a holistic, healthier work environment.

Policy Brief 3: Selecting interventions based on workers' needs - Why and how to ensure participation

Contributing partners: USFD, NTNU

Languages: English, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian

The policy brief, crafted for HR and Occupational Health professionals, managers, and union representatives, underscores the imperative of addressing mental health in workplaces. Central to its core recommendations is championing a participatory approach, ensuring that every voice is heard and considered. This approach is materialised using the H-Work needs analysis, a method specifically designed to pinpoint employee requirements. The process is initiated with focus group interviews, employing a "cognitive mapping exercise" that not only facilitates open conversations on mental health but also aids in identifying areas of intervention. These sessions are complemented by interviews with middle and senior managers, offering a managerial perspective on the workplace's mental well-being. Gathering these insights sets the groundwork for a comprehensive stakeholder meeting. Here, participants collaboratively delve into the findings, translating them into tangible recommendations. The outcome is an actionable plan meticulously crafted to align with the organisation's unique needs, challenges, and objectives. Through this intricate, inclusive process, interventions are not just suggested but tailored, ensuring optimal efficacy and relevance.

Policy Brief 4: Mental Health and Wellbeing in SMEs - Reflecting the needs of SMEs in intervention design and implementation

Contributing Partner: ENWHP

Languages: English, Italian, Norwegian

Despite accounting for 2 out of 3 employees in the EU, SMEs have historically lagged in adopting workplace health and wellbeing programmes compared to larger employers. This policy brief seeks to address the disparity by highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in this realm. Emphasising that SMEs can't be approached with a "one size fits all" mindset, the brief outlines specific recommendations to ensure effective mental health and wellbeing interventions tailored for SMEs. It advocates for designing programmes explicitly for SMEs, engaging them in the process. A focus on clear cost-benefit outcomes is essential, given the prevalent "cash is king" philosophy in smaller firms. Engaging top-level management, often the owners, and ensuring active employee participation are paramount. The utility of online resources, accessible outside regular working hours, is underscored. The development of SME-specific case studies, supported by adequate funding, is crucial. Tapping into SME-focused business networks, including chambers of commerce and other business service organisations, can amplify reach and impact. Lastly, the brief suggests offering external support, both in terms of human and financial resources, especially to micro-enterprises, enhancing the efficacy of workplace health promotion interventions.

Policy Brief 5: Mental Health and Wellbeing in SMEs - The Role of the Social Partners

Contributing Partner: ENWHP

Languages: English

The document discusses the role of Social Partners in addressing mental health and wellbeing in SMEs. It emphasises the significant impact of mental health problems and suggests Social Partners (Employer Organizations and Trade Unions) can improve workplace mental health practices. Insights from the H-WORK project's field trials in EU member states support this.

Social Partners have a historical role in workplace health policy and are well-suited to address emerging mental health issues. Improved mental health can benefit employers by reducing absenteeism and enhancing morale. For Trade Unions, it improves working conditions and members' employability. Recommendations for Social Partners at EU and national levels include advocating for mental health awareness, supporting policy development, conducting research, providing training, and launching information campaigns. Collaboration at both levels is encouraged.

Policy Brief 6: Improving workplace mental health: The role of EU policymakers

Contributing Partner: EFPA

Languages: English

This briefing, stemming from the EU-funded H-WORK project, offers specific recommendations to EU-level policymakers, including the European Commission, Council of Ministers, and European Parliament. The primary goals are to establish mentally healthy work environments, prevent work-related mental health issues, and facilitate collaboration with key stakeholders. The recommendations advocate for prioritising mental health on par with physical health in all EU-level health policy initiatives. They stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to mental health at work, encompassing prevention, promotion, treatment, and care. Furthermore, it suggests the creation of an annual 'State of the Union' report on mental health at work, similar to health reports developed in conjunction with the OECD. This report would help identify gaps in knowledge and action, supporting policy development at both EU and Member States levels. The document also proposes incorporating mental health into the European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work. At the national level, the recommendations call for the development of national action plans on mental health, including a focus on mental health at work.

Policy Brief 7: Training for Workplace Mental Health Promotion

Contributing Partner: VALORA

Languages: English, Spanish

This briefing draws on the project's experience and external evidence to provide targeted guidance for strengthening competencies in recognising and addressing mental health problems in the workplace. These recommendations are aligned with statutory health and safety requirements and best practices for managing mental wellbeing at work, consistent with the European Commission's recent Communication. The policy targets a wide audience, including organisations, HR professionals, managers, occupational health specialists, workers, their representatives, and policymakers at both European and national levels. The recommendations include the following: incorporating statutory responsibilities (e.g., training content should encompass the statutory obligations related to managing stress risks in the workplace), ensuring comprehensive health and safety knowledge and skills, providing training to a broader audience, considering certification of mental health promotion training and tailor these to meet the specific needs of small and micro-enterprises, addressing their unique challenges.

Policy Brief 8: Implementing Artificial Intelligence for Promoting Well-being in Organisations

Contributing Partners: UNIBO

Languages: English

This policy brief explores the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in promoting mental well-being among employees. It discusses AI solutions like workload management systems, chatbots, wearables, and generative AIs as tools to create supportive work environments.

In the H-WORK project, AI emerged as relevant for workplace mental health. The brief suggests several ways AI can enhance employee mental health, such as using AI tools to optimise work organisation, assist employees in managing stress, promote healthy habits, and automate repetitive tasks. Moreover, collaboration and consultation with relevant stakeholders are essential due to ethical, practical, and personal concerns. Thus, managers who are willing to implement AI tools for Mental health must engage unions and representatives in discussions, conduct case studies, and communicate transparently to build trust. This policy brief also warns its audience to ensure ethical and transparent AI usage by addressing data protection, privacy, and stigma. Furthermore, before implementing AI interventions, managers and employers are recommended to assess their organisation's technological infrastructure and employees' digital literacy, identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as educate employees on potential psychosocial risks. These recommendations aim to facilitate the successful integration of AI technologies, ultimately fostering employee well-being and creating a positive work environment.

Policy Brief 9: Social Media and mental health at work: Recommendations for managers

Contributing Partners: OPEN, UNIBO

Languages: English

This policy brief examines the impact of social media on workplace mental health, highlighting its potential benefits and challenges. Social media can blur work-life boundaries, increase feelings of being "always on," and lead to distractions and decreased productivity. Cyberbullying and pressure to maintain a perfect professional image can exacerbate stress and anxiety, while constant exposure to success narratives can lead to self-doubt. On the positive side, social media can provide support, foster community, and facilitate open dialogue on mental health. Recommendations for organisations include setting clear social media boundaries with a policy, providing social media literacy training, promoting healthy engagement and authenticity online, creating communication channels for awareness and support, implementing "Digital Detox" periods, upholding the "Right to Disconnect," and empowering employees as mental health ambassadors. These recommendations align with the European Commission's comprehensive approach to mental health in an increasingly digitalised work environment (2023). By addressing these recommendations, organisations can harness the positive aspects of social media while mitigating potential negative impacts on employee well-being and mental health.

Policy Brief 10: Economic Benefits of Promoting Mental Health in SMEs and Public Organisations

Contributing Partner: KI

Languages: English

This policy brief outlines strategies and recommendations to showcase the economic benefits of promoting mental health in SMEs and public organisations. The proposed actions target policymakers, organisational leaders, and stakeholders interested in quantifying the economic value of workplace mental health promotion. Employers are advised to encourage SMEs to integrate evidence-based mental health policies

by creating incentive guidelines supported by government agencies, labour unions, and business associations. This fosters a culture of well-being within organisations. Further, fostering collaboration and networking, promoting education and training to inform stakeholders about the economic advantages of investing in mental health promotion initiatives are also believed to be good practices SMEs and Public Organisations employers should implement. Lastly, establishing a task force of experts to enhance tools and approaches for assessing the economic impact of workplace mental health promotion and encouraging early and regular monitoring and evaluation can help organisations cultivate a culture of well-being, improve access to mental health interventions, assess their impact effectively, and make informed investment decisions.

Policy Brief 11: Implementing Mental Health at the Workplace – recommendations for health insurers in the EU

Contributing Partner: GETON/HELLOBETTER

Languages: English

Status: As of the preparation of this deliverable, this policy brief is currently undergoing the second round of reviews and is anticipated to be uploaded to the Innovation Platform by the project's conclusion.

This preliminary document offers initial insights and suggestions concerning the potential role of health insurers in the EU in promoting mental health at the workplace. As this topic is still under review (it will be published soon), the recommendations provided here are subject to further refinement and development. Specifically, with their unique position and resources, health insurers can play a pivotal role in shaping and supporting mental health initiatives within organisations. Health insurers are encouraged to collaborate with experts, employers, and other stakeholders to gather data on workplace mental health. This will help in understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by organisations. Health insurers might explore the feasibility of pilot programs that support organisations in offering or implementing mental health initiatives. These could range from benefits and direct-to-employee mental health insurance packages for organisations to more comprehensive interventions.

4. ADDITIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy recommendations for the EU institutions

This section outlines specific policy recommendations, built on D2.2, targeting the EU level, though they may be relevant at national and transnational levels.

Recommendations for the European Commission

- Organise an annual mental health at work summit for Ministers of Employment and Health to highlight the main issues and aim to gain commitment to minimum standards of policy and service supply.
- Prepare an annual 'State of the Union' report on mental health at work (including prevalence, type of issue, measures taken, etc.) at the Member States and EU levels.
- Ensure that MH at work training is an explicit topic in Erasmus Plus calls for proposals.
- Ensure that the upcoming proposal on EU action in MH explicitly addresses mental health at work.
- Ensure that mental health and well-being at work becomes a standard dimension of other policies that impact mental health at work, taking the 'mental health in all policies' approach as advocated by the Commission's January 2023 feedback paper (e.g., EU Semester Process, EU4Health, Employment Guidelines, work on social inclusion, digital developments in the workplace, research on MH and well-being in the workplace).
- Work closely together with WHO on the implementation of its MH action plan, to ensure synergies as well as the broadest possible attention for this topic.
- Stimulate research and innovation via EU-funded programmes as well as by Eurofound.

Recommendations for the Council of Ministers (national governments)

- Ensure the development of national action plans on mental health. Following the examples of earlier action on cancer and rare diseases, these plans should address mental health in general and contain a workstream on mental health at work. These plans should have clear and measurable objectives and function as a framework for exchanging experience and practice between Member States.
- Hold an annual meeting to take stock of mental health at work and how it is addressed. The Council for Ministers of Employment and Health should hold an annual meeting devoted to mental health at work to exchange data and experience (including from the national action programmes), highlight the main issues and gain commitment to minimum policy and service supply standards across the EU. This will ensure a formal and regular exchange of good practice, experience and data and promote mutual learning.

Recommendations for the European Parliament

- For the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and the Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), monitor the Commission and EU-OSHA about its MH at work activities to ensure strategic compliance with overall policy goals.
- Provide recommendations for the Council of Ministers.
- Implement the Commission's future MH approach and ensure the development of national action plans on MH, which address MH at work in a comprehensive way.
- For Ministers of Employment and Health, issue a joint statement on MH at work issues.

Recommendations for the EU Social Partners

- Ensure that the working environment and mental health are a central part of any workplace health and safety initiatives.
- For the Social Partners, develop integrated and coherent policies for their memberships on MH at work. These should cover occupational stress prevention, mental health promotion and return to work following mental health breakdown.

Recommendations for the EU-OSHA

- Ensure consistent and more attention for MH, not just on a project or campaign basis but as an integral and standard part of health and safety measures.
- Ensure synergies with the Commission's future MH plan, ensuring that MH in employment is being addressed.
- Continue to monitor approaches and identify good practices through tools such as the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER), the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) committee and the Online Interactive Risk Assessment (DiRA).

5. DISSEMINATION

Innovation Platform

The Innovation platform represents the primary dissemination channel of the Policy Briefs. As reported in the final Communication and Dissemination Report (D 7.4), the innovation platform has performed very well, reaching 2083 visits and 1523 unique visitors (this number indicates how many visitors are accessing the website for the first time) since its final release in May 2023. Moreover, as reported in the Innovation Platform validation report (DG.4), the policy briefs section of the platform accounted for part of the material for the usability and acceptability testing. Given the heterogeneity of the sample recruited for the testing, which included diverse areas (e.g. Education, Communication, IT, Health) and professions (e.g., health and safety managers, researchers, and digital innovation managers), the testing process itself contributed to the dissemination of the Policy briefs in a wide range of sectors.

Conferences & Events

The H-WORK Policy Briefs, either as part of the Innovation platform presentation or as part of dedicated policy brief presentations, were showcased at the following conferences:

- Congresso Associazione Italiana di Psicologia (AIP), 6-8 September, Cagliari, ITA:
 - La validazione di una piattaforma digitale sulla salute mentale nei luoghi di lavoro: uno studio sulla user experience, presented by Giusino, D., Volpi, L., Fraboni, F., De Angelis, M. & Pietrantonio, L.
- European Congress of Psychology (ECP), 3-6 July, Brighton, UK:
 - Improving mental health in the workplace: H-WORK's policy briefs and recommendations presented by Marking, C & Wynne, R.
- EFPA Presidents' Council Meeting, gathering the presidents of the national psychology associations of 37 European Countries, November 18th 2022, in Vilnius, Lithuania
 - Mental Health at Work Platform: Helping practitioners address mental health in the workplace, presented by Giusino, D., Fraboni, F. De Angelis, M., & Pietrantonio, L.
- The Policy Briefs were mentioned at the [EU Health Policy Forum](#), an interactive tool to stimulate discussion about public health concerns and provide an easy way for stakeholders to share knowledge and good practices.
- H-WORK Final Even, 29th September, 2023, Bologna, Italy
 - A Roundtable on the H-WORK Policy Briefs and Impact was hosted by EFPA members with the contributions of 9 panellists from the consortium.
 - Demonstration of the Innovation platform, including a case study on the policy briefs section, presented by the UNIBO team

General press releases and mailing list

Thirteen articles have been published in the EFPA News Magazine as general press releases. In these articles, some leading researchers from each partner group were interviewed to offer their perspectives on the project and share insights and recommendations drawn from their practical experiences. The policy briefs were also mentioned in some of the articles. In this way, through the EFPA Newsmagazine, the policy briefs have reached around 300,000 psychologists.



Bruna Zani



Davide Giusino is member of the Unibo team in the H-WORK project, member of the leading team of WP6, focused on exploitation of the H-Work project through the development and validation of the Innovation platform "Mental Health at Work"

H-WORK interviews

Bruna Zani has interviewed:

➤ Davide Giusino - The Mental Health at Work Platform



The Mental Health at Work Platform

Interview with Davide Giusino

Can you please explain what the innovation platform "Mental Health at Work" is? The Mental Health at Work Platform is one of the main outcomes of the EU-H2020 research and innovation project H-WORK, which aimed to design, develop, implement, and validate multilevel assessment, intervention, and evaluation toolkits to promote mental health in SMEs and public workplaces across Europe. As such, it constitutes the result of a huge collaborative effort between the project Consortium (coordinated by the University of Bologna) and the Italian software house Indici Opponibili (from Bologna as well!). Concretely, it is a free digital platform that aims to help employers, HR managers, and OHS professionals address mental health at their workplace based on EU-funded international scientific research.

What is the rationale behind the platform?

According to empirical evidence from European reports, we know that most European managers are concerned about stress and mental disorders in their workplaces. However, only a minority of them have procedures in place to deal with mental issues effectively. Due to a lack of knowledge and guidance, deciding which interventions should be implemented is a common issue facing employers. One of the main challenges in this sector is, therefore, to support organisations and their

Figure 2. A screenshot from the EFPA News Magazine article authored by Bruna Zani, featuring an interview with Davide Giusino regarding the Innovation Platform

Additionally, the Policy Briefs were sent to other stakeholders such as SME organisations, EU Agencies, EU Commission DGs, European institutions, Trade unions, social partners, and professional bodies of Workforce in MH through mailing.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In total, 11 policy briefs were crafted in two batches, exceeding the 10 envisioned in the H-WORK project KPI. The development of the Policy Briefs resulted from the collaboration among consortium partners who jointly determined the policy briefs' scope (e.g., national, local, European), focal issues, and primary themes about mental health promotion in the workplace. These discussions also encompassed the formulation of practical recommendations. The process of identifying key stakeholders and policymakers drew upon the groundwork conducted by EFPA and ENWHP for deliverable D2.2, which entailed an examination of the latest EU policies concerning mental health promotion at work, as well as an assessment of the principal EU and international organisations significantly influencing mental health promotion in workplaces.

The development of the Policy Briefs followed a meticulous procedure that incorporated input and feedback from internal and external reviewers, ensuring the documents' pertinence and quality. These 11 policy Briefs addressed various themes, encompassing digital interventions for mental health, the selection of interventions based on needs assessments, practices for raising awareness about mental health, tailored intervention design for SMEs, mental health training, the role of EU policymakers in advancing mental health at work, the influence of AI and social media on mental health promotion and well-being in the workplace, and the economic advantages of mental health promotion in SMEs and public organisations. These Policy Briefs were disseminated through the Innovation platform, presentations at diverse conferences and events, publication in the EFPA magazine, and distribution via mailings.

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Appendix

Full texts of the developed policy briefs are provided below.