

Mens sana in corpore sano - A Sound mind in a sound body (B-SPORT+)

1. INTRODUCTION (purpose, contextualization, comments from users...)

Describe the purpose of the intellectual output included in the template and in which context it was used. The Introduction should also include who where your identified stakeholder.

How did you identify your stakeholder and/or multipliers (some sentence about the process)

How did you establish a connection and collaboration with your stakeholder and/or multiplier?

"Mens sana in corpore sano". Even the Romans already knew that being physically active and a good mental health go hand in hand. Because burnout and other stress-related disorders are more and more often occurring as work-related problems, we want to encourage employers to offer their employees the possibility to practice sports during working hours, the lunch break or after the working hours to improve their resilience. This way they can avoid absenteeism because of burnout or depression.

Only 30 minutes of exercise per day is enough to boost our overall well-being. Some benefits of regularly practicing sports or exercising are: a better heart health, weight loss, the reduction of stress, an increase in productivity and an improvement of our memory.

2. NEEDS (Overview of problems, statistics, target group description)

Shortly write an overview of the problem that the intellectual output tries to tackle. If applicable include statics and the intended target group.

In Belgium, 62% of all workers suffer from excessive stress and 1/3 of the disability benefits in Belgium are due to mental problems. In 2020, there were 111.732 workers in Belgium that were no longer able to work because of a depression or a burnout, according to numbers from the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (Riziv, 2021)¹. This number is an increase with 39,23% in comparison with numbers from 2016. More specifically, the numbers for workers with a depression increased the most over these four years, with 42,02%.

Mental disorders, like burnout and depression, are often caused by chronic stress. This chronic stress affects the brain and deteriorates the short-term memory and reduces the ability to concentrate.

It is proven that practising sports decreases stress. Assistant-professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Michael Craig Miller, states "exercising can be as effective as antidepressants in some cases. This is because exercising starts a biological cascade of events resulting in many health benefits like protecting against heart disease and diabetes, improving sleep and lowering

¹ [Riziv, 2021](#)

blood pressure. Exercising supports nerve cell growth in the hippocampus, improving nerve cell connections, which helps relieve depression."²

Practising sports has positive effects on our physical and mental health. It not only results in better fitness, but also in more social contacts, meaningful leisure activities, the development of a talent, a healthy outlet and more well-being in general.

The target group we want to reach are employees, because a job can cause a lot of stress, and probably even a burnout or a depression when the stress is chronic. Therefore, we aim to develop a programme to be more active at the work floor. This not only strengthens the well-being of the employees, but gives them also the opportunity to get to know their colleagues in another context. This results in a better team spirit and a nicer work environment.

3. EXPLANATION OF THE ACTIVITY

The aim of the activity is to increase physical activity among people with an occupational disease (such as depression and burnout) and other employees at the work floor. We want to offer inclusive low-threshold and local initiatives to companies to increase participation and access to sports for their employees.

Practicing sports at the work floor can have various formats. The employer can encourage its employees to 'go to work' in an active way. This can be by bike or by foot for example. Another possibility of providing sport activities for employees is by installing sport infrastructure that can be used during the lunch break or installing dynamic office furniture for example. This way, workers can practice sports really at the work floor during working hours. It is also possible to encourage employees to practice sports after the office hours, by providing a gym subscription or organizing small challenges and competitions among the colleagues for example. Of course, employers can also invest in all of these formats. Certainly in these times of homeworking, employees can use some tools to be more active and practice sports.

Some good existing practices already rolled out in Belgium, are:

- [Sport at work](#): wants to support companies in improving the level of movement and sports participation of their employees at the workplace. This is done by organizing walks or yoga sessions during the lunch break, installing sport facilities or providing dynamic office furniture (like desk bikes, sit-stand desk etc.) or by nudging for example.

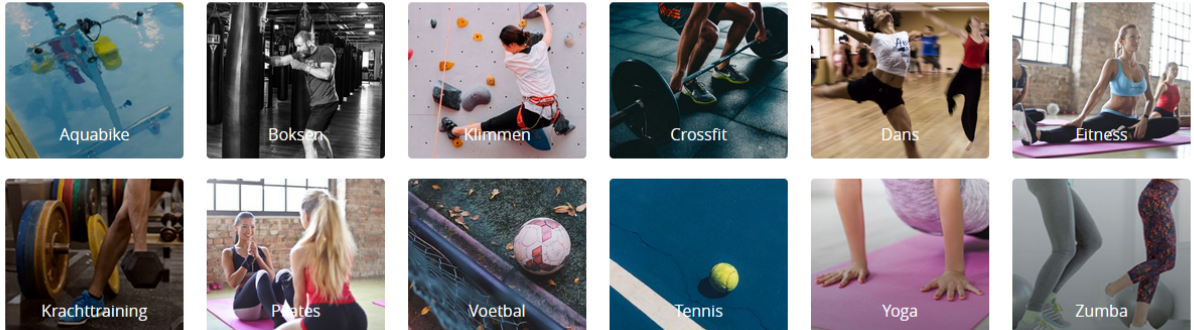
² Michael Craig Miller. (February 2021). Exercise is an all-natural treatment to fight depression, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/exercise-is-an-all-natural-treatment-to-fight-depression>



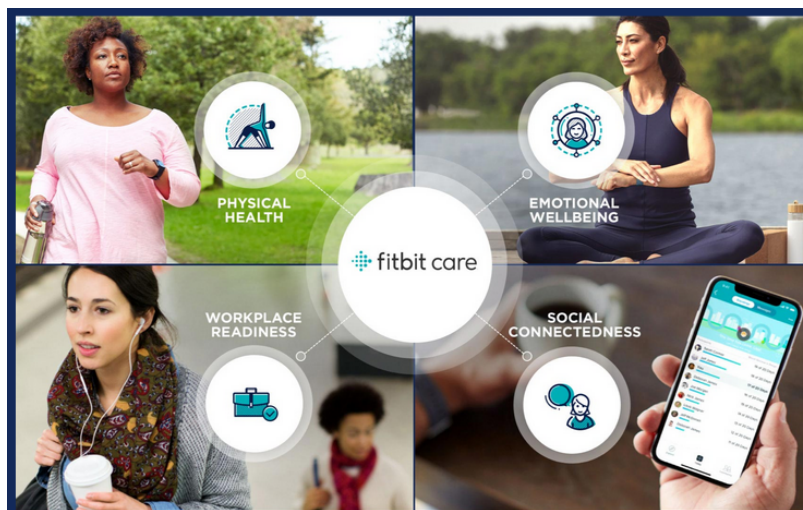
- ['No steps, no glory'-challenge](#): challenges companies and organizations to participate in encouraging the employees to take 10 000 steps each day for a month.
- [Wellbeing@Work](#): supports companies to reduce absenteeism, to find a way to encourage employees to exercise more, to concentrate better and to adopt a better posture, guide the employees personally or in group to experience less stress, prevention against burnout and depression, better communication and time management, create an ideal working environment and higher job satisfaction for employees.
- [Bicycle allowance](#): this is some sort of kilometre allowance that an employer can give to its employees who make all or part of their home-work journey by bicycle. The employer can choose himself how much he wants to offer per kilometre, but until €0.24/km it is free from taxes. This way it is a good financial incentive for both employers and employees to travel (partly) to work by bike.
- [Corazón](#): the program contributes to more productivity, less absenteeism, less staff costs and a more positive work environment. Practicing more sport activities can be achieved by sporting at the work place during or after office hours, in team building activities, small group trainings, personal training sessions and more.
- [Gymlib](#): some sort of sports voucher that gives access to more than 3500 sports and wellness facilities. The target group of this voucher is employees, to strengthen their quality of life and overall wellbeing.

Bekijk al onze sport- en wellnesspartners bij u in de buurt [door hier te klikken!](#)

Onze activiteiten



- [Fitbit Care](#): this health platform motivates employees to own their health across the care continuum, from general wellness to chronic condition management. It is a deeply personal health experience, powered by trackers & smartwatches, apps, digital interventions and human health coaching, that meets employees where they are in their health and safety journey, and engages them to take the next step.



4. RESULTS

Research of the influence of practising sports on the level of burnout and depression is rather limitedly available. However, there are some studies about the relationship between practicing sports and the absenteeism rate of workers.

Results from a research of van den Heuvel et al. (2003)³ show that sporting employees have significantly less days of absenteeism than colleagues that are less physically active. The results are

³ Van den Heuvel et al. (2003). Sporten, type werk, arbeidsverzuim en welbevinden: resultaten van een 3-jarige follow-up studie. Retrieved from:

stronger for workers who have sedentary jobs. Non-sporting employees with sedentary jobs have a higher but not statistically significant risk of a less well perceived health and a lower job satisfaction. A research review from Amlani and Munir (2014)⁴ conclude that the available studies provide limited support that physical activity is effective in reducing sickness absence, due to the low quality of many of these kinds of studies. Research from Gerber et al. (2013)⁵ concludes that participants with a moderate and high level of fitness report fewer symptoms of burnout and depression than participants with low fitness. In this case, better cardiovascular fitness seems to be associated with decreased symptoms of burnout and a better capacity to cope with stress.

5. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS (Communication, participation, motivation...)

A key success factor might be that workers really want to practice sports more after this year of working from home because of Covid-19. Moreover, by having the opportunity to practice sports at the work floor or during working hours, they can get to know their colleagues in a different way.

Another success factor might be that people want to avoid having a depression or a burnout and therefore want to be more physically active. Even an 'overall better mental health' can be a key success factor to practice more sports.

Practicing sports and being active is the most important factor in living a healthy life.



https://www.kenniscentrumsportenbewegen.nl/kennisbank/publicaties/?sporten-type-werk-arbeidsverzuimen-welbevinden&kb_id=3097

⁴ Amlani and Munir. (2014). Does physical activity have an impact on sickness absence? A review. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40279-014-0171-0>

⁵ Gerber et al. (2013). Cardiorespiratory fitness protects against stress-related symptoms of burnout and depression. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2013.03.021>

6. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

How was funding done and can it be done in a sustainable way? (some sentence)

During the pilot of these activity what went well and what need to be improved? (some sentence)

Most of the funding is done by the employers themselves. However, in Belgium, sports vouchers can be given as an extra-legal benefit. This way it might be an incentive for employers to give their employees the opportunity to practice more sports. With a sports voucher, the employee can pay for the subscription in a gym or a sports association.

7. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS USED (leaflets, assessment materials...)

Add your additional material as Appendix or is separate files if needed.