

# Evaluation Criteria

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## Scope

The Workplace Active Certification (WAC) is aimed at European organisations (companies, institutions, federations, associations, etc.) that promote health and well-being at work through physical activity, and which wish to have their approaches and initiatives recognised.

The Workplace Active Certification is accessible to any type of organisation which resides or have its operations within the European Economic Area, irrespective of its size, location, culture, sector of activity, social and economic situation.

## Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following definitions shall apply:

### Physical activity

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.

### Physical activity at work

As a complement to the definition of physical activity, it includes organised or informal physical activity and exercise within the workplace itself or in any other location recognised by the organisation. Such activity may be realised either individually or in groups.

### Physical exercise

Physical exercise is, by definition, a planned activity that is usually performed for an extended period of time (i.e. beyond 10 minutes) and is intentional in the sense that the goal is improved health and fitness.

### Organisation

Any company, corporation, enterprise, firm, institution, partnership, charity, association, or institution irrespective of its legal status or its activity. The term also covers public bodies such as a non-governmental or public agency, department, etc. It may be part of a larger entity.

### Workplace

Any location where the organisation performs its operational functions. The workplace may designate all or part of a single location (e.g. a factory, an office, a school, home office, etc) or a multisite arrangement.

### Employee

Any member of the organisation's workforce, irrespective of the legal structure of the organisation. Such persons may be salaried, volunteer, interns, working part or full-time.



## Evaluation criteria

The list below contains the criteria by which organisations applying for WAC certification will be assessed. Where a criterion is obligatory, this is indicated by the verb “shall”. Notes and other comments in the form of recommendations or good practice use the verbs “should”, “may” and “can” and may be implemented at the discretion of the organisation.

Each chapter is preceded by a short introduction. Further reading on the subject can be sourced by the bibliographical references in brackets.

These criteria also apply to the maintenance of WAC for already certified organisations.

The modalities for assessing the implementation of the criteria are specified in the document " Active Workplace Certification - certification process and regulations".



## A. Needs identification

*The latest evidence shows that initiatives to promote physical activity that focus on the specific needs of employees are more likely to achieve positive impacts [1-6].*

*It has also been shown that the confidentiality of employees' personal data (including medical data and data related to their lifestyle) is critical. If it is not taken into account, it can strongly limit the willingness of employees to participate in the initiative(s) [5, 7].*

### Criteria

1. The organisation shall assess the needs and aspirations of employees regarding physical activity at work. As a minimum, it shall cover the following areas:
  - individual (what each individual can do). The organisation shall ensure the consent of the individuals involved.
  - interpersonal (what can be done in groups or teams)
  - organisational (what can be done by the organisation and its leadership)
  - environmental (what can be done through cooperation with external stakeholders, and in the physical environs of the organisation)

The needs and aspirations assessment shall be regularly updated. The frequency of updating the assessment shall be adapted to its level of formality, its representativeness and the proportion of employees involved.

The assessment shall be used for the identification of priorities regarding the events, programmes, activities and/or interventions to be implemented (see chapter C).

Note 1: a written assessment, for example based on a questionnaire and/or a specific methodology, involving a large sample, can be updated every 2 to 3 years. Whereas a more informal assessment, for example based on information gathered by managers through collaboration interviews with their staff, can be updated every year (or even on an ongoing basis several times a year).

Note 2: the assessment results, in an appropriate format, can be communicated to employees and relevant stakeholders.



2. The organisation shall evaluate the internal skills available to carry out the assessment of the needs and aspirations of employees regarding physical activity at work (see criterion 1). In the event of a lack of skills, the organisation shall collaborate with one or more external providers (or partners) to carry out the assessment.

3. The organisation shall identify and take into account applicable national and international laws (e.g. EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) to ensure the confidentiality and preservation of information collected within the framework of the needs and aspirations assessment of employees (see criterion 1).

## B. Leadership

*The latest evidence shows that initiatives to promote and implement physical activity at work that are included in the organisation's mission statement, commitments, policies and processes led and supported by the organisation's top management are more likely to achieve positive impacts. [8-12].*

4. The organisation's leadership shall demonstrate its commitment to plan, monitor, evaluate and ensure the sustainability of the initiative(s) to promote and implement physical activity at work.

The organisation's leadership shall regularly communicate its commitment to all employees and relevant stakeholders (e.g. board of directors, managers, employee representatives, employer representatives, trade unions, works councils, external stakeholders if relevant, etc.)

Note: leadership commitment can be demonstrated, for example, through the definition and dissemination of policies, the signing of charters, the provision of resources, in-person participation in events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented, as well as exemplary professional practices.

5. Considering the results of the needs and aspirations assessment of its employees (see chapter A), the organisation shall define its goals and objectives regarding physical activity at work.



6. The organisation shall appoint one or more persons to manage and implement physical activity at work.

Note 1: the appointment process should take into account the person's interest in the promotion and implementation of physical activity at work, their skills and credibility.

Note 2: Depending on the size and needs of organisation, this role may be assigned to a person(s) with other responsibilities and activities within the organisation.

7. The organisation shall ensure the availability of internal and/or external resources necessary to promote and implement physical activity at work.

Note: resources may include the budget, staff, training, collaboration with external partners/providers if relevant, infrastructure, facilities, equipment, etc.

8. The organisation shall advocate and communicate to employees and relevant stakeholders the benefits of physical activity at work in an inclusive manner (e.g. by considering the specific needs and aspirations of people with low fitness levels, little or no interest in sport, with disabilities), using suitable communication channels and customising messages to address the target audience(s).

Note: suitable means may include workshops, conferences, seminars accessible remotely or in person.



## C. Planned actions - events, programmes, activities and/or interventions

*It is important that programmes to promote and implement physical activity at work are based upon a sound rationale, specific goals, and the needs and aspirations of employees. Evidence suggests that programmes which lack such details are less likely to succeed, because specific types of physical activity aren't equally effective in achieving all goals (e.g. stress reduction, social cohesion, increasing cardiovascular fitness, improving productivity) [2, 4-6, 9, 12-18].*

*Physical activity programmes can target different health-related fitness components including aerobic endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition, while preventing the risk of injury, reducing stress and developing social cohesion. Different programmes can focus more specifically on certain components, however, very often they overlap. Promoting certain changes at the workplace, for example, the use of stairs instead of lifts, or active workstations, can also reduce sedentary behaviour, which is an independent risk factor for various diseases, while increasing productivity.*

*As noted, not all physical activity programmes have the same benefits. For example, yoga and qigong helps stress reduction [13], walking, aerobic exercise can help with weight loss, physical health and productivity [10, 14, 19], encouraging walking or informal physical activity (e.g. use of stairs or active workstations) can help with changing workplace activity in situ and reduce sedentary behavior [20, 21], whilst flexibility exercise, strength training and other calisthenics are effective with stress and injury reduction [22].*

*The implementation of the following criteria can be managed either by the organisation internally or through collaborations/partnerships with external individuals and/or organisations.*

### Criteria

9. According to the results of the employees' needs and aspirations assessment (see criterion 1) and considering its goals and objectives regarding physical activity at work (see criterion 5), the organisation shall identify relevant events, programmes, activities and/or interventions to be implemented.

Note: if relevant, the organisation should maintain an updated directory which lists and promotes opportunities (e.g. events, conferences, training, programmes, activities, etc.) to participate in physical activity within the organisation or in its socio-cultural environment.

10. The organisation shall develop, maintain and strengthen a network of individuals and/or organisations to increase opportunities for the promotion and practice of physical activity as well as to reinforce the resources, skills and expertise available as needed.

Note: the nature and extent of the network can be adapted according to the sector of activity, culture, size and resources of the organisation.



Note: the network may, for example, include other organisations that share the same goal of promoting physical activity such as neighbouring organisations, sports clubs, universities, representatives of municipal services/departments, sport and exercise scientists, sports medicine practitioners, primary care physicians, physical activity specialists, fitness professionals, health promotion specialists, nutritionists, etc.

11. Events, programmes, activities and/or interventions offered by the organisation shall take into account the diversity of employees' fitness levels (from low to high fitness levels).

12. Events, programmes, activities and/or interventions offered by the organisation shall take into account different user groups with specific needs (e.g. people with disabilities, seniors) or different social customs.

13. The organisation shall encourage individual or collective initiatives for creating physical activity opportunities (for example: activities proposed by one or more employees during or outside working time).

14. The organisation shall consider means to implement measures for employees to balance active working time and private life.

Note 1: this can include flexitime models, flexible handling of procedures on absences, part-time working.

Note 2: consideration may be given to the needs of employees who want to be physically active during working hours and/or outside working hours, at the workplace and/or outside of the workplace.

15. The organisation shall encourage its employees to participate in appropriate local, regional, national or international sports events or championships.

Note: this can include communication campaigns, establishing corporate teams, providing financial support.





## D. Work environment

*Every workplace has an existing physical activity environment waiting to be optimised: hallways, sidewalks, and stairwells. Changes need not be drastic, and might be as simple as improving lighting and placing signs to encourage stair use or upgrading the landscape around the worksite [18]*

*Where possible, encouraging employees to move around more at work (for example, by walking to external meetings), putting up signs at strategic points and distributing written information to encourage them to use the stairs rather than lifts if they can, providing information about walking and cycling routes and encouraging them to take short walks during work breaks [2]*

*Businesses can work together with local government and communities to increase the opportunity for physical activity around the business (neighbourhood walkability, walk/bike to work, local gyms, ...) [2, 18]*

*The implementation of the following criteria can be managed either by the organisation internally or through collaborations/partnerships with external individuals and/or organisations.*

### Criteria

16. The organisation shall create physical activity opportunities both in the work environment (e.g. buildings, offices, open spaces) and outside the premises (natural resources) where appropriate.

Note: natural resources typically include green and blue spaces, parks.

17. The organisation shall provide an accessible indoor and/or outdoor exercise facility.

Note: it is recommended that this facility is easily accessible within walking or cycling distance from the workplace (e.g. a gym, a sports center, a park, other type of area designed for physical activity).

18. The organisation shall consider means to facilitate the transition between physical activity and the requirements of the working environment.

Note 1: this can be achieved by providing access to showers and changing facilities for employees.

Note 2: this can also include people who commute to work or travel during their work by cycling or walking).



## E. Monitoring, measurement and evaluation of progress and results

*Adherence to physical activity programmes is highly dependent upon employee buy-in, satisfaction and other factors (including their general activity levels). That require monitoring and measurement in order to assess effectiveness. Such measurement might take the form of tracking participation rates, assessment of physical activity and sedentary behaviour levels, but also monitoring their levels of satisfaction, enjoyment, self-efficacy and feelings of belonging or ownership of a programme [8, 9, 14, 23]*

### Criteria

19. According to the needs and aspirations assessment, available resources, nature and extent of events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented, the organisation shall determine what needs to be monitored and measured.

20. The organisation shall determine appropriate methods, tools, processes and responsibilities for monitoring and measurement.

21. The organisation shall enable employees to express the level of their satisfaction with the implementation of the goals and objectives defined (see criterion 6), as well as with the events, programmes, activities and/or interventions provided (see chapter C).

Note : this can be achieved by various means, such as questionnaires, digital apps, suggestion box.

22. The organisation shall inform employees and relevant stakeholders of the results and outcomes of events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented.

Note: this can be done by using different channels such as newsletters, intranet, press releases, events, social media.



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