

# Active Workplace, Active Europe Workshop Report

*Brussels, 21 June 2019*



These minutes reflect the discussions and exchanges that took place in the framework of the *Active Workplace*, *Active Europe* workshop on June 21, 2019 in Brussels (Committee of the European Regions), and hereby offer a collective review of the event. This event was co-organised by the [PACTE](#) and [EMoCS](#) projects, both funded under the Sport Chapter of the Erasmus+ Programme.

## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

**Promoting Active Cities Throughout Europe** (PACTE) was launched in January 2018 for a period of 36-months. The [project consortium](#) focuses on physical activity rates across Europe from a municipal perspective and on the creation of Active Cities bearing the following alarming facts in mind:

- 210 million European are physically inactive;
- This amounts to a minimal annual cost of EUR 80 billion across the EU28;
- And 66% of local European decision-makers are unaware of this situation.

These findings have therefore unveiled physical activity policies at the municipal level as an area deserving much closer consideration since it remains overlooked by physical activity researchers, when it remains a crucial level of government. PACTE has undertaken a [European-wide representative survey and analysis of municipalities' physical activity policies and practices](#), which is the first European mapping focused on municipalities of the likes. PACTE's ultimate and main objective is to create a **matrix for change for Active Cities**, which aims to **develop and offer cities and municipalities an easily understandable and adaptable digital toolkit for increasing physical activity**. The toolkit is meant to be used by municipalities to assess themselves, and to help them start engaging in active city schemes by offering them resources. To disseminate the Active City concept and promote the availability of the digital toolkit, a final communication campaign targeting European municipalities will be led to wrap up the project.

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**'Active Mobility Workshop', the PACTE project's next event will be held on October 4, 2019 in Brussels- stay tuned for more information!**



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The **European Meetings of Company Sport** (EMoCS) project intends to contribute to the European effort to raise awareness on the importance of **health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)** throughout increased participation in, and equal access to, **sport for all, especially at the workplace**. The philosophy behind EMoCS is to first raise awareness about the importance of HEPA in and around the workplace, to secondly identify provide both the private and public sector decision-makers with tools and solutions to support the development of company sport, and finally to create a certification framework for an [Active Workplace Certification](#) (AWC).

The format chosen to meet the project's objectives encompasses a series of general and issues-specific meetings and workshops and two major EMoCS:

- **EMoCS 2018**: taking place in Paris' business quarter during the *European Week of Sport*, the event gathered over 1 000 participants and was the perfect opportunity sport, companies, and institution representatives to share ideas and experience on physical activity at work.
- **EMoCS 2019**: composed of expert groups and workshops in order to make assessments of consortium meetings, EMoCS 2018 and prepare AWL label.



## Workshop Agenda

**Meeting Venue:** European Committee of the Regions, Rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels, Belgium. 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Room JDE 52

- 09:00 - 09:30**                    **Arrival of participants & partners**  
*Welcome coffee*
- 09:45 - 10:15**                    **Opening plenary session and testimonials**  
Room JDE 52  
*Musa LAMI, General Secretary, European Federation for Company Sport*  
*Maxime LEBLANC, EU Affairs Director, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*  
*Hicham IMANE, Member of the European Committee of the Regions*
- 10:15 - 11:15**                    **Roundtable - Active Workplaces, Active Cities**  
Room JDE 52  
*Danny WOODWORTH, Physical Activity and Sport Officer- MSP*  
*Kaat VAN CAUWENBERGH, Sport Vlandereen*  
*Vincent DEFERIERE, Veolia*  
*Stephan RENNEN, European Commission EASME*  
*Moderator: Laurent THIEULE, President of Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*
- 11:15 - 11:30**                    **Coffee Break**
- 11:30 - 12:30**                    **Workshop parallel sessions - Round 1**  
*Which role for municipalities in promoting active workplaces? JDE52*  
*(Facilitated by Steve MARSDEN, Evaleo & Nicky YATES, Liverpool City Council)*  
*Creating alliances and partnerships for active workplaces, JDE51*  
*(Facilitated by Jérôme PERO, FESI & Gurvan HEUZE, EFCS)*  
*Towards a European certification for active workplaces, JDE53*  
*(Facilitated by Michael GROSS & Alister DALRYMPLE, Evaleo)*
- 12:30 - 13:45**                    **Lunch**
- 14:00 - 15:00**                    **Workshop parallel sessions - Round 2**  
*Which role for municipalities in promoting active workplaces? JDE52*  
*(Facilitated by Steve MARSDEN, Evaleo & Nicky YATES, Liverpool City Council)*  
*Creating alliances and partnerships for active workplaces, JDE51*  
*(Facilitated by Jérôme PERO, FESI & Gurvan HEUZE, EFCS)*  
*Towards a European certification for active workplaces, JDE53*

*(Facilitated by Michael GROSS & Alister DALRYMPLE, Evaleo)*

**15:00-15:30**

**Coffee break**

**15:30 - 16:30**

**Workshop parallel sessions - Round 3**

*Which role for municipalities in promoting active workplaces? JDE52*

*(Facilitated by Steve MARSDEN, Evaleo & Nicky YATES, Liverpool City Council)*

*Creating alliances and partnerships for active workplaces, JDE51*

*(Facilitated by Jérôme PERO, FESI & Gurban HEUZE, EFCS)*

*Towards a European certification for active workplaces, JDE53*

*(Facilitated by Michael GROSS & Alister DALRYMPLE, Evaleo)*

**16:30 - 17:00**

**Closing plenary session**

*EFCS*

*Sport and Citizenship*

## WORKSHOP MINUTES

Over 70 stakeholders attended the workshop representing a broad diversity of backgrounds, and hence reflecting a wide range of interest for the topic- companies, sport federations and associations, academia, and local authorities to name but a few. Participants were invited to endorse an active role throughout the day notably through the 3 topical workshop sessions that each considered a specific aspect of active workplaces. Participants' input is highly valued by both projects since it enables for external constructive criticism, for shared expertise and for brainstorming ideas.

### Active Workplaces, Active Cities Roundtable

Moderated by Laurent THIEULE (President of [Sport and Citizenship think tank](#) and member of the Committee of the Regions), the panel included Danny WOODWORTH of [MSP](#) promotes sport and physical activity (SPA) at county level in Merseyside, and particularly promote SPA among employees at work; Kaat VAN CAUWENBERGH of [Sport Vlaanderen](#) works on encouraging individuals to participate in SPA throughout their lives, particularly through a campaign promoting SPA at work; Vincent DEFERIERE of [Veolia](#) where he concentrate on resources, energies and recycling, and will further participate in the 2019 European Company Sport Games; and Stephan RENNER from the [European Commission EASME](#) who was present as a member of the EU cycling group, who promote active commuting in the Agency; thus making for a diverse range of perspectives to discuss the topic.

The [Liverpool Active Workplace](#) 6-month programme was presented by Mr WOODWORTH, who explained it is offered to all employers of the city, small and big. To convince the latter, MSP highlight the proven economic and health benefits of the programme. Employers are then provided with a number of small scale initiatives that are not too demanding in budget or time such as the Step challenge, training a 'champion' among the employees who will be the catalyst of the company's cultural change, limit external interventions to specific activities and knowledge and finally offer small grants to kick start the initiative.

A '[Sport and Movement Scan](#)' for employees exists in Flanders, which Ms VAN CAUWENBERGH presented as a tool to that assesses a person's daily physical activity habits before establishing how to increase them throughout the day. Companies are not obliged to enrol in the scheme however there is a growing interest and understanding from the sector on the benefits that results from providing employees with more well-being, balance and team spirit. Sport Vlaanderen do their best to do an assessment of the situation before advising which policies would be most suitable. In her experience, management, in particular, needs to be convinced and understand the results SPA at the workplace will bring about- it has to be a shared belief.

In response to this point, Mr DEFERIERE agreed awareness is indeed rising, as is illustrated at Veolia where more and more efforts are given to offering employees more opportunities for active mobility and SPA. Although they have not carried out any formal monitoring, since the start of this change the productivity and levels of motivations have both increased.

Mr RENNER explained how EASME became Belgium's first '[Cycle Friendly Employer](#)' in early 2019 with a Bronze label, starting with very small steps setting up friendly competitions among colleagues and having small symbolic prizes. With certifications across 14 Member States, EASME has joined a European community that is favour of active mobility, rather than against cars. With 3 levels of certification, the label is not only a good image for companies, but it also supports them in understanding their strong and weak points- which practice proves to be an element of motivation seeking to earn the next label.

All panellists agreed that 'practicing what you preach', setting an example, and informing the company 'why and how' this is a positive idea, are all crucial elements to changing a professional culture.

In a nutshell, the panel agreed that some key success factors include: identifying the needs and desires of people, making a good case to motivate stakeholders to implement change, and finally,

everybody agreed that increased physical activity tends to increase social interaction which is always a positive outcome.

## Group reports and findings

Which role for municipalities in promoting active workplaces? Facilitated by Nicky YATES (Liverpool City Council) and Steve MARSDEN (Evaleo)

Each session started with a brief presentation of EVALEO's line of work, in particular with the [Global Active City label](#), and of [Liverpool's pioneering strategies and programmes](#) to increase healthy and active lifestyles among all their citizens- including the workforce. The presentation provided facts and the tangible example of Liverpool where physical inactivity annually costs the city 10.8 GBP million and 46% of adults do not meet SPA recommendations. Liverpool's experience with SPA at the workplace, with over 80 organisations signed up representing a reach of almost 50, 000 employees, has shown:

- 45% reduction of absenteeism
- 91% improved activity levels among staff
- And 14.64 GBP social return for every 1 GBP invested

These improvements have been reached through 4 main pillars: champion training within a workplace, step challenges, small grants, and a freely [available Workplace Toolkit](#). Each session was then asked to brainstorm on 3 main topics. The outcomes are presented below:

### The role of the municipality in influencing physical activity in and around the workplace:

- Municipalities should be neutral although they should play the role of facilitator (provide a platform for networking and creating alliance; infrastructure and public spaces; resources; funding; policy and financial incentives; bring together stakeholders that would not necessarily be in contact; etc)
- Actively raise-awareness and communicate on the stakes (facts, findings, benefits)
- Host and facilitate events linked to SPA at the workplace (like friendly competitions)
- Lead by example- implement active workplaces
- Use the city branding to attract new interest and actors to the topic
- Provide monitoring of initiatives to best adapt policy objectives

### The role of convinced stakeholders:

- Find and advocate arguments and counterarguments to convince companies of the benefits of active employees
- Adapt the message/pitch to the context and stakeholders at hand
- Think how to engage audiences outside of the usual circles
- Identify ambassadors
- Encourage co-creation of action plans
- Create a pioneering group in municipality with all actors of the alliance
- Be aware of cultural and contextual issues or barriers
- 'Every small step is a good step' as a mantra

### Examples of good practices, case studies:

- Norwegian Climate Department offers companies grants to help them be carbon-neutral
- City runs or walks under the Active workplace branding
- Liverpool city strategies

### Potential barriers:

- Mandates of elected individuals and change of governance
- Bureaucracy and working in silos
- Be careful of not favouring companies and creating conflict of interests
- Traffic management in streets
- Lack of information and topic not seen as a priority
- Companies are private, SPA is not their main concern
- Financial issues

Creating alliances and partnerships for active workplaces. Facilitated by Jerome PERO (FESI) and Gurvan HEUZE (EFCS)

Participants were invited to share their ideas and experiences on how to identify key actors, levers and messages that will boost SPA within the workplace. Their contributions help identify key tools and solutions to help decision makers and companies deliver more effective programmes. This workshop first set the scene by providing a brief introduction to the topic and key facts to participants:

- only 13% of physically active Europeans do some sort of sport and physical activity (SPA) within the workplace environment. The only reference for this number is the Eurobarometer, however unlike other elements it reviews, this number proves to be stable or even increasing in certain Member States.

Just like the with school context, companies are clearly key stakeholders when it comes to leveraging more SPA at work. While the market is still a recent one, initiatives are blossoming everywhere, media coverage of the topic is increasing and research now proves the benefits of SPA in the workplace (absenteeism, performance, turnover, corporate culture).

- According to Decathlon Pro (2017) 7% of companies encourage their employees to practice sport at work and 78% of the survey respondents would practice sport at work if the necessary conditions were met.

**But what exactly are these conditions? Are companies the only responsible entity to fill this gap? How to foster collaboration between stakeholders within the company? And how to mobilise required stakeholders outside the company?** Group work sessions may be summarised through the following section.

**Internal stakeholders in a company** could be categorised as follows:

- **Top management positions** (CEO, HR, internal and external Communication, General Direction) that can take decision regarding budgets, to engage in a large way although they do not always have the time or resources to deal with SPA issues.
- **Specific departments** such as Chiefs Happiness Officers, Protection and Welfare, Health and Safety at Work, Quality of Work Life, Corporate Social Responsibility- these actors possess the expertise and specific budgets to promote well-being at work. They could be facilitators to include middle management.
- **Sport associations** inside the company are one of the easiest actors, however they are often limited to big multinationals and are scarce following the company size and country.
- **Specific individual(s)** who will act as the ambassador, and who will carry the initiative. Could imagine the individual is a sport enthusiast with good interpersonal and communication skills.

**External stakeholders to the company:**



- **Company sport federations** are the most knowledgeable partners since they possess both know-how and contacts. Additionally, they have regular calendars and events that companies can integrate. There is a need for these federations to gather all stakeholders and promote their key messages to relevant decisions makers.
- **Sport clubs** must be a reference when implementing SPA since they have the practical knowledge and qualifications for such activities- they should be assisted in approaching the specific context that workplaces present.
- **European authorities** should advocate among Member States and their own countries the facts and existing strategies for specific policy-approaches or regulations
- **Governments and ministries for Sport, Work, Labour, Health, Economy** can endorse a crucial role when it comes to developing SPA at the workplace through communication campaigns, incentive regulations and by offering tools for companies to use. In terms of decentralisation, regions and municipalities have a crucial role to play.
- **Associations of corporate positions** (HR, Communication, etc.), **Trade Unions and employers** who could promote the importance of SPA at work throughout their members while also providing them with tools, programmes and contacts to implement such initiatives.
- **Universities and students** since they are the employees of tomorrow
- **Recruitment and job agencies** as unemployed people are the most concerned by sedentarity and sport can act as a tool for social inclusion

#### Proposed key messages and recommendations:

- SPA should not be imposed, but should rather benefit from flexibility and freedom
- Awareness around the term 'sport', it discourages and dissuades many people for a variety of reasons- sedentary individuals being the target it is important to attract them.
- Active Mobility schemes should be complementary to other SPA activities.
- The aim is not to create sport champions, but to promote healthy and active lifestyles
- Bearing in mind work-life balance, companies need to be creative when elaborating SPA programmes (gamification, digital devices, incentives, fun, low intensity, include women, etc.)
- Open up SPA possibilities to employee relatives
- Include employees in the SPA programme from the very start- what would they like, what timeslots suit them best, how physically active are they already, do they have any goals or ambitions?
- There is a need for multi-level, integrated and holistic approaches and partnerships, which include a variety of actors around the table. It often works as SPA at work is often one of the only "white flags" between managers and employees.
- Participants highlight the difficulty to target SMEs when it is the most widespread setting. Efforts are required to in this direction, in favour of co-creation, mutualisation and synergies

**Participants all agreed about the wide variety and differences in each situation and each company. It is today considered as one of the major difficulties faced.**

Towards a European certification for active workplaces. Facilitated by Michael GROSS and Alister DALRYMPLE (Evaleo).

In order to gather new experiences and knowledge from each group, the moderators used the data collected throughout the sessions to adapt their questions and raise new answers on new relevant subjects. The initial questions included: **What do we have to recognise? What is the context and management of companies? What impact are we expecting from recognition?** The main points of discussion can be summarised as follows:



**Wording:** It is important to broaden the approach from health to wellbeing and talk about sport and exercise, since it is more motivating for individuals. It is also understood to speak of workplace instead of company.

**Physical activity in the workplace:** what is the role of a small group of people and how can they improve physical activity in the workplace. Creating a Physical Activity (PA) policy could start by being implemented through existing activities in the workplace. It is important to trigger PA within all employees, including those working from home.

**Company sport:** is part of a company's culture so it is important to focus on activities already organised by the company, in and around the workplace, in teams and not individual activities practiced externally. A model of active school exists, and active workplace could benefit from it (travel and transport, lunch break, active breaks, afterwork activities).

**Methodology and deliverables:** several methodologies already exist and should be considered in order to define a clearer framework for certification conditions. The certification should compete with existing methodologies, labels and certifications already in use. The added value of creating a database was also highlighted.

EMoCS aims to assess the interest and relevance of creating a new certification before undertaking such a task.

The certification could potentially endorse different levels- this would cater for the vast differences across Member States in terms of PA and inactivity rates, preventive programmes and campaigns.

The evaluation process (investigative stage) could be an in-person visit to the workplace to assess the situation at the start of the process and application.

**Criteria:** inclusive activities (gender, disability, age...); level of motivation and fun; impact of the activity (sustainability, scalability...); promotion and implementation (imposed or encouraged within the workplace)

**Recognition and arguments to promote to companies:** A company would only be interested in the process if the certification is well known, since it could potentially broadcast a positive image to attract new talents and promote brand awareness. An external recognition could also be a facilitator to convince people to start sport and PA (SPA) within the company. Within the same circle, internal endorsement of SPA could trigger recognition within and outside of the company. Using ROI arguments can further trigger the interest of top management who will be more willing to get involved.

**The impact of a certification:** three levels of certification could be implemented depending on complexity.

**The stakeholders of the certification:** the certification should promote an inclusive approach and not focus solely on leaders, HR directors and management. It is recommended to have ambassadors as it is a social topic targeted to the many.

**Role of municipalities:** municipalities can create communication material and campaigns to promote SPA in the workplace.

**Role of employers:** employers should promote the message within the workplace and organise workshops animated by HR.

At the end of the workshop, it clearly appeared that an external recognition at a European level would be beneficial to promote physical activities within companies. It was also underlined that all representatives of this field (workplaces representative, sports people, external recognition specialists, worker representatives...) must work together in order to propose a complete and shared set of criteria to the recognition scheme. Throughout the sessions, some elements found common agreement while others proved to be divergent:

Points of agreement	Diverging point
<p><b>Wording:</b> physical activity and movement preferred to sport; workplace preferred to company.</p> <p><b>Definition of Physical Activity (PA):</b> promote all kinds of PA not only those focused on health</p> <p><b>Interest:</b> true interest exists for the creation of an external European recognition regarding PA within the workplace</p> <p><b>Internal stakeholders:</b> representatives from both management and the workforce should be involved in PA policies</p> <p><b>External stakeholders:</b> different external stakeholders to the workplace should be involved. Consistently named entity, but not limited to, are public authorities</p> <p><b>Public:</b> PA policy shouldn't focus entirely on the workplace but also take care of home workers and flexible workers.</p> <p><b>Methodology and existing recognition schemes:</b> already exist, this new recognition should learn from what already exists in order to become a competitive recognition. Need to recognise PA in the workplace, organised by the workplace (at least partly)</p>	<p><b>The level of recognition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some participants emphasised the difference in size, shape and domain of companies- this aspect should be considered in order to promote different levels of recognition that cater for the variety of working environments</li> <li>Some others think it would be more effective and clearer to communicate on a single level of recognition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Criteria of the recognition:</b> at present inclusive criteria appears to be shared by all, while others suggested criteria based on levels of motivation and fun, activity impact, promotion and implementation</p> <p><b>The investigative stage necessary to obtain the recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some participants claim the recognition guidelines should be as complete as possible to ensure the recognition rewards effective active workplaces</li> <li>But some participants claim too thorough and complete a process could prevent workplaces from applying, they therefore vouch for the process to be as easy and completable as possible</li> </ul>

## CONTACTS

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