

# FIT FOR WORK EUROPE CALL TO ACTION OCTOBER 2013

## **Policy positions on chronic conditions the Lithuanian Presidency should adopt**

The Lithuanian Presidency has an opportunity to lead the Chronic Conditions Reflection Process towards a more explicit recognition of the workforce and productivity issues originally intended. The Fit for Work Europe Coalition calls upon the Lithuanian Presidency to consider the following Policy Positions:

- **Develop and implement National Plans for Chronic Conditions, including, MSDs, to maximise chances to stay and/or return to work as soon as possible.** These should focus on the coordinated planning and budgeting of services which deliver prevention, accurate diagnosis, early intervention and the management of chronic conditions which impact on the working-age population. These National Plans should encourage **enforcement of existing national legislation** requiring reasonable, flexible workplace adjustments by employers that can help people with chronic conditions stay in work or reintegrate into the workforce.
- **Appoint and empower National Directors for Health and Work who report to and coordinate policy among Health, Social and Finance Ministries.** A core part of this role should be to prevent and overcome the dysfunctional effects of policy 'silos' which obstruct coordinated action or the sharing of the benefits of joint investments. These National Directors should be experts who command respect among all stakeholders and who will deliver novel, strategic and integrated approaches to health and work policy and practice across national health, employment, social affairs and finance departments.
- **Make Early Intervention (prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care) and return to work a priority of Chronic Disease management.** Despite the magnitude of MSDs in Europe, they are still undiagnosed in over 40% of cases. We highlight two tools which can serve as useful best practices:
  - **MSD Early Intervention Pilot in Spain.** The Spanish Early Intervention clinic pilot demonstrates the positive impact on MSD patient health and the economy, resulting in a **39% reduction in temporary work disability and 50% decrease in permanent work disability.**
  - **UK Fit Note.** The Fit Note, introduced in 2010, promotes effective prevention and accurate diagnosis via regular meaningful dialogue on a patient's workability status (capacity to perform specific tasks) between people with chronic conditions and healthcare professionals - either GPs or occupational health physicians.

In conclusion, the Fit for Work Europe Coalition calls on the Lithuanian Presidency and relevant stakeholders to prioritise strategies that provide for an appropriate and integrated policy framework based on the concept of Early Intervention. Such a framework can be instrumental in maintaining the well-being and work ability of those with Chronic Conditions, including, MSDs, and thus contributing to sustained EU public health and economic growth.