



Developing Compassionate Workplaces in Europe for the digital and green work environment to protect employees' mental and physical health and wellbeing

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Scientific strategy of the cluster

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1 Executive Summary

This report outlines the Scientific Strategy for the Workplace Innovation for Sustainable Well-being Cluster (WISEWORK-C). As one of the key guiding documents for the cluster, it establishes a framework for fostering scientific collaboration, leveraging synergies across projects, and contributing evidence to inform policies and practices in Europe.

The Scientific Strategy establishes mechanisms for inter-project collaboration to maximize the impact of our shared efforts. It serves as a living document, adapting to the cluster's progress and the evolving needs of the projects over their duration (2023–2028). This strategy outlines the goals, working groups, and planned activities that will enable WISEWORK-C to achieve its objectives. Additionally, it sets the foundation for coordinated contributions to policymaking and science translation efforts, ensuring that the evidence generated by the cluster has a meaningful impact on workplaces across Europe.

2 Introduction & Background

2.1 WISEWORK-C Overview

WISEWORK-C is an initiative promoted by the European Commission to optimise synergies, avoid overlaps and increase the impact of the projects selected for funding from the call HORIZON-HLTH-2023-ENVHLTH-02-02 “Evidence-based interventions for promotion of mental and physical health in changing working environments (post- pandemic workplaces)”¹.

Five EU-funded projects take part in WISEWORK-C: Horizon Europe projects EU-CoWork, INTERCAMBIO, PROSPERH, SONATA, and WAge (Table 1). The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG-RTD) acts as the overall supervisor ensuring the smooth running of the cluster and oversees information flow, enabling joint agreements and long-term consistent development of the cluster.

WISEWORK-C works to identify ways in which the 5 projects can support one another to achieve their respective project objectives.

In addition, WISEWORK-C has the following goals:

- Promote the benefits of addressing mental and physical health in workplaces
- Develop and test a range of evidenced-based interventions addressing mental and physical health in workplaces
- Influence policy and decision makers to take greater action in addressing mental and physical health affecting EU workers, leading to more sustainable workplaces
- Inform via scientific findings, the future development and implementation of mental and physical health practices for workplaces

¹<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-hlth-2023-envhlth-02-02>

Table 1 WISEWORK-C Projects

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT FULL TITLE
EU-COWORK ²	Developing Compassionate Workplaces to Protect Employees Health and Wellbeing
INTERCAMBIO ³	Interventions to promote mental and physical health in changing working environments due to climate change, sustainable work practices, and in green jobs.
PROSPERH ⁴	Promoting positive mental and physical health in changing work environments
SONATA ⁵	Situational-aware Orchestration of Adaptive Architecture
WAGE ⁶	Healthy Working environments for all Ages: An evidence-driven framework

The activities of the WISEWORK-C cluster will be mainly dedicated to the creation of working groups on topics of common interest, on matters such as science translation for policy and practice, data management and protection, and communication and dissemination. It will also provide the European Commission with scientific inputs and organise training sessions on relevant issues for the promotion of mental and physical health in working environments.

3 Working Groups

3.1 Working Group 1: Science translation for policy and practice

WG1 focuses on leveraging the evidence generated by the cluster to inform occupational health policy and practice in Europe. Given its explicit science for policy-oriented mission, WG1's structure, objectives, and activities are described in detail in the WISEWORK-C Policy Strategy document. While its work is closely linked to the scientific output of the cluster, this strategy focuses on the scientific foundations and research coordination provided by the remaining WGs.

3.1.1 Structure of WG1

Table 2 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG1

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG1
EU-COWORK	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE); Sorgenetz (AT); IDEWE (BE)
INTERCAMBIO (CO-LEAD)	ISGlobal (ES); Halmstad University (SE)
PROSPERH	Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute, IMIM (ES)
SONATA	Università degli Studi di Perugia (IT), Conseil Des Architectes D'Europe (BE)
WAGE (CO-LEAD)	University of Stirling (UK); SINTEF (NO)

² <https://eu-cowork.eu>

³ <https://intercambio-project.eu>

⁴ <https://www.prosperh.eu>

⁵ <https://sonata-horizon.eu>

⁶ <https://wagehealth.eu>

3.2 Working Group 2: Inter-projects' collaborations and opportunities on data collection, analysis and management

WG2 will lead WISEWORK-C efforts to identify opportunities related to data gathering and data management activities across projects. The Data Management Working Group (DMWG) aims to document data collection, sharing, and analysis across cluster partners while initiating collaborations, sharing best practices, and enhancing the reach and impact of the projects' evidence-gathering activities.

Additionally, the DMWG will develop recommendations on data sustainability and legacy, aiming to establish sustainable metadata practices across projects.

The key tasks of WG2 include:

- Creating an overview of data sources and data collection activities within WISEWORK-C projects, and identifying potential overlaps
- Coordinating data inventory efforts between projects
- Developing a WISEWORK-C FAIR data catalogue and an overview of data management tools and standards

In addition to a Common Data Management Plan describing inter-project opportunities for collaborations on data management and exploitation, the WG will aim at organising at least one thematic workshop on topics such as data protection, data security, and open data, as well as contributing directly to the development and execution of WISEWORK-C's scientific strategy.

3.2.1 Structure of WG2

Table 3 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG2

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG2
EU-COWORK (CO-LEAD)	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), Sheffield University Management School (UK), University of Graz (Austria)
INTERCAMBIO	Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ES)
PROSPERH	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (BE)
SONATA	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (BE)
WAGE (CO-LEAD)	SINTEF (NO)

3.3 Working Group 3: Communication and Dissemination

WG3's purpose is to align and strengthen WISEWORK-C's communication and dissemination efforts across its projects, focusing on shared goals. Through WG3, WISEWORK-C will engage key audiences, including policymakers, academics, trade unions, HR organizations, occupational health professionals, industry representatives, and relevant networks.

In addition, activities in WG3 will ensure that any information, materials, knowledge or scientific findings of each project shared by WISEWORK-C are only made public with the approval of the Project Coordinator of each of the relevant projects.

WISEWORK-C will build all communication activities around the following four key messages:

1. Employee wellbeing is of paramount importance to a productive workplace.
2. Workplaces are an ideal environment to promote health and well-being.
3. We collaborate as together we are greater than the sum of our parts.
4. Mental and physical health workplace interventions must be evidence-based.

WG3 has developed WISEWORK-C's Communication and Dissemination Plan, which outlines strategies for effective outreach. WG3 will implement and regularly update this plan to build relationships with a broad range of target stakeholders at national, regional, European, and international levels. This approach aims to engage both scientific and non-scientific audiences, communicate the cluster's goals, and broaden the reach and impact of the cluster's forthcoming project results.

3.3.1 Structure of WG3

Table 4 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG3

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG3
EU-COWORK (CO-LEAD)	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), Health and Safety Executive (UK), Sheffield University Management School (UK)
INTERCAMBIO	Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ES)
PROSPERH (CO-LEAD)	Pintail Services (IE)
SONATA (CO-LEAD)	EValTech R&D (IT)
WAGE	SINTEF (NO)

3.4 Working Group 4: Mental Health

WG4 was recently established through collaboration between three WISEWORK-C projects: PROSPERH, WAge, and EU-CoWork. This group aims to create synergies around mental health research by sharing core variables, methodologies, and experiences, specifically focusing on mixed-method approaches and ethics in mental health data. As a new initiative, WG4 is still defining its mandate, objectives, and the scope of its activities.

The following collaborative objectives are under consideration for WG4:

- **Common Research Variables:** WG4 partners will identify and share mental health-related variables researched in each project, facilitating future collaboration. This exchange may also contribute to the WISEWORK-C Common Data Management Plan. Partners from INTERCAMBIO and SONATO may be involved in this objective at a later stage.
- **Ethics in Mental Health Research:** The group will explore ethical considerations specific to mental health research, including GDPR compliance and data protection challenges. This will ensure a foundation of trust and transparency in research protocols across projects.
- **Changes in Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Projects will share approaches to studying fluctuations in mental health, emphasizing diverse methodologies for assessing symptoms, episodes, and broader mental wellbeing.
- **Mixed-Methods Design and Research Approaches:** Both EU-CoWork and WAge use mixed methods, and WG4 will focus on sharing insights into these approaches to improve the depth and reliability of findings.

To foster engagement, WG4 encourages early and mid-career researchers to contribute to these collaborative efforts, potentially through symposia, webinars, or specific shared-topic sessions. Future activities may include a shared symposium or other outreach events in 2026. WG4 will begin with a manageable scope and expand as projects solidify protocols and refine their focus areas.

3.4.1 Structure of WG4

Table 5 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG4

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG4
EU-COWORK (CO-LEAD)	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), University of Sheffield (UK)
INTERCAMBIO	TNO (NL)
PROSPERH (CO-LEAD)	University College Cork (IE)
WAGE (CO-LEAD)	Universitat Jaume I (ES)
SONATA	Universitaetsklinikum Aachen (DE), Masarykova univerzita (CZ)

3.5 Working Group 5: Environment and climate change

WG5 will coordinate efforts to identify synergies and jointly assess the effects of new sustainable work practices—such as those promoted by the European Green Deal—on occupational health and safety. WG5's activities will be closely aligned with the cluster's science-for-policy mission, synthesising evidence that informs sustainable practices, workplace safety, and resilience in response to climate change.

Further description of WG5's goals and activities will be developed in alignment with the cluster's evolving Scientific Strategy during the first months of year 2 of WISEWORK-C.

3.5.1 Structure of WG5

Table 6 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG5

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG5
EU-COWORK	EU-CoWork will not be part of this WG
INTERCAMBIO (CO-LEAD)	Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ES)
PROSPERH	National Research Centre for the Environment (DK)
SONATA (CO-LEAD)	Università degli Studi di Perugia (IT). Universitaetsklinikum Aachen (DE)
WAGE	SINTEF (NO)

3.6 Working Group 6: Physical health

WG6 aims at bringing together WISEWORK-C projects' activities with a focus on physical health concerns in the workplace. This working group will focus on collaborative research and shared knowledge on physical health risks and preventive measures. Core areas under discussion include musculoskeletal health, multi-

domain exposure (including air quality, thermal, visual, and acoustic conditions), and risks from chemical exposures.

Initial goals for WG6 include:

- **Identification of Common Variables:** Projects in WG6 will share key physical health variables under study, which could include indicators of musculoskeletal strain, exposure to workplace contaminants, and temperature impacts.
- **Ethical and Safety Considerations in Physical Health:** Like WG4, WG6 will also discuss ethical and safety aspects of physical health data, use of technology to assess physical health in workplaces, and workplace compliance and safety standards for exposure to environmental factors.
- **Comparing Physical Health Research Approaches:** WG6 aims to map the diverse research designs across WISEWORK-C, including both qualitative and quantitative methods.

WG6 will encourage contributions from early and mid-career researchers, providing opportunities to engage in collaborative research. Possible future activities could include symposiums or webinars on key topics related to workplace physical health as projects results become available from year 2 of WISEWORK-C.

3.6.1 Structure of WG6

Table 7 WISEWORK-C partners involved in WG6

PROJECT NAME	PARTNER INVOLVED IN WG6
EU-COWORK	EU-CoWork will not be part of this WG
INTERCAMBIO	Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública (PT), Lund University (SE), Erasmus MC (NL)
<u>PROSPERH</u> (CO-LEAD)	Erasmus MC (NL)
SONATA (CO-LEAD)	Università degli Studi di Perugia (IT), Universitaetsklinikum Aachen (DE)
WAGE (CO-LEAD)	Faculdade de Motricidade Humana (PT), Instituto de Biomecanica de Valencia (ES)

4 Thematic Workshops

The WISEWORK-C Cluster Coordination Team will organize at least four thematic workshops on common topics of interest. These workshops will facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration across projects. The themes and responsible projects are currently under discussion within Working Groups, with a preliminary schedule and topics for at least 2 thematic workshops expected by M18 To facilitate an efficient use of resources and enhance the impact of these events, the Coordination Team will aim at aligning thematic workshops to the cluster's annual meeting.

Additional workshops may be organized if needed, including the organization of thematic webinars for maximizing reach and participation across countries and sectors.

The WISEWORK-C thematic workshops will support the dissemination of research findings and further strengthen inter-project collaboration, as well as provide a channel for early career researchers to present their work and establish a network across projects.

5 Early career researchers in WISEWORK-C

WISEWORK-C aims at providing meaningful roles for early career researchers (ECRs) in driving innovation and fostering collaboration across projects. To support their development, the cluster will facilitate cross-project communication, creating opportunities for ECRs to engage with peers and senior researchers within the WISEWORK-C projects' networks.

In addition, WISEWORK-C will encourage ECRs to actively present their findings, participate in workshops on scientific publication, and engage in networking events. All working groups will incorporate ECRs in their activities, ensuring that their perspectives and contributions are an integral part of WISEWORK-C's initiatives.

The WISEWORK-C website will include a page dedicated to highlighting, promoting, and disseminating the work of ECR's across projects and in the context of WISEWORK-C's activities.

6 WISEWORK-C Scientific Advisory Board

The cluster coordinating team have concluded that WISEWORK-C will not establish a separate International Advisory Board. Instead, the cluster will leverage the Advisory Boards and stakeholder networks of each individual project to support coordinated policy recommendations and evidence-based contributions. Together, these boards represent a rich pool of expertise across disciplines and sectors relevant to the cluster's overarching mission.

The advisory board members collectively cover areas such as occupational health and safety, epidemiology, psychology, ergonomics, health technology, ageing and working life, organizational behaviour, environmental health, climate adaptation, workplace design, and public health policy. To support cluster activities, the coordination team will map advisory board members across projects to identify common areas of interest and shared challenges. Selected members may be invited to contribute to joint efforts — including thematic workshops, review of cross-project outputs, or specific scientific and policy-related deliverables developed under Working Groups.

This distributed and collaborative structure ensures effective use of resources and helps maintain continuity and relevance, and it will enable targeted engagement of advisors familiar with WISEWORK-C's evolving needs. Further details on the role of advisory boards in supporting policy goals can be found in the WISEWORK-C Policy Strategy.