

Workplace Active Certification



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Evaluation criteria

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Scope

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

55 The list below contains the criteria by which organisations applying for WAC certification will be assessed.

These criteria also apply to the maintenance of Workplace Active Certification for already certified organisations.

Two levels of certification have been defined, the "WAC certified" category of criteria are the minimum requirements for achieving Workplace Active Certification, while the "WAC advanced" criteria apply to organisations seeking the advanced level of certification.

60 The modalities for assessing the implementation of the criteria are specified in the document "Workplace Active Certification - certification process and regulations 2022 - Pioneers' Phase".

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	Status
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) <p>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.</p> <p>The assessment shall be used for the identification of priorities regarding the events, programmes, activities and/or interventions to be implemented (see chapter C).</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>

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 identification and analysis.

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3. The organisation shall identify and take into account applicable national and international laws (i.e. 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).

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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].

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Criteria	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.)</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>5. Considering the results of the analysis of the needs and aspirations of its employees (see chapter A), the organisation shall define its goals and objectives regarding physical activity at work.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>6. The organisation shall appoint one or several person(s) to be responsible to plan, monitor, evaluate and ensure the sustainability of the initiatives to promote and implement physical activity at work.</p> <p>The appointment process shall take into account the person's interest in the promotion and implementation of physical activity at work, their skills and credibility.</p> <p>Note 1: Depending on the size and needs of organisations, this role may be assigned to a person(s) with other responsibilities and activities within the organisation.</p> <p>Note 2: If such roles already exist within the organisation, it is not expected that person(s) be appointed specifically to manage WAC certification. The aim is to align resources with the existing structure within the organisation.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>

<p>7. The organisation shall ensure the availability of internal and/or external resources to plan, monitor, evaluate and ensure the sustainability of the initiative to promote and implement physical activity at work.</p> <p>Note: resources may include the budget, staff, training and further training, collaboration with external partners/providers if relevant, infrastructure, facilities, equipment, etc.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>9. The organisation should specify and communicate in writing the roles and responsibilities of the management team's representative.</p> <p>According to the importance of the activities delegated to other persons by the management representative, these should also be specified in writing and kept up to date.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>10. The organisation should set up and maintain one or more steering committee(s) or working group(s) responsible to provide input and/or to assist the appointed person(s) to plan, monitor, evaluate and ensure the sustainability of the initiative(s) to promote and implement physical activity at work.</p> <p>The steering committee(s) or working group(s) should include relevant internal and/or external persons/functions/experts depending as well as at least one employee representative (e.g. a member of the employee committee if there is one).</p> <p>This steering committee(s) or working group(s) should ensure that there is an appropriate dialogue with the organisation's leadership.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>11. The organisation should identify the training needs of the person(s) appointed to be responsible to plan, monitor, evaluate and ensure the sustainability of the initiatives to promote and implement physical activity at work (see criterion 7), the persons who work under his/her delegation (if any), the members of the steering committee(s) or working group(s) (see criterion 12).</p> <p>If necessary, appropriate training activities should be designed and implemented (internally or externally).</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>

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<p>12. The organisation's leadership should establish, implement and maintain a written policy to promote physical activity at work. The policy should be communicated to the employees and revised at least once every three years.</p> <p>Note: if relevant, this policy can be included in the existing human resources management policy</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>13. To strengthen the commitment of the organisation's leadership in promoting and implementing physical activity at work, top management and managers participate in person in one or more events, programmes, activities and/or interventions that are implemented.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>

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

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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.

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Criteria	
14. According to the results of the employee's needs analysis and data collection (see criterion 1) and considering its goals and objectives regarding physical activity at work (see criterion 6), the organisation shall identify relevant events, programmes, activities and/or interventions to be implemented.	WAC Certified
15. 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 strengthen 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.	WAC Certified

<p>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 specialist, nutritionists, etc.</p>	
<p>16. 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).</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>17. The organisation shall ensure that at least some of the events, programmes, activities and/or interventions offered by the organisation are accessible and adapted for people with disabilities, if appropriate. In order to optimise the offer in relation to the resources available, an analysis of specific needs shall be carried out and shall take into account the number of people with disabilities and the nature of their disability.</p> <p>Note: this criterion may be considered as not appropriate if, for example, the organisation does not have any employees with disabilities in its workforce.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>18. The organisation shall provide access to in person or remotely delivered workshops, conferences, seminars or any other form of training that promote the benefits and support the practice of physical activity, physical activity at work and more generally promotes active lifestyles.</p> <p>The organisation ensures that part of the workshops, conferences, seminars or any other form of training offered are accessible free of charge.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>19. 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.</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>20. The organisation should encourage individual or collective initiatives for creating physical activity opportunities (For example: activities proposed by one or more employees during or outside working time).</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>

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<p>21. The organisation should implement measures to make it easier for employees to balance active working time and private life.</p> <p>Examples: flexitime models, flexible handling of procedures on absences, part-time working</p>	<p>WAC Certified</p>
<p>22. The organisation shall provide opportunities (e.g. communication campaigns, corporate teams, financial support) for its employees to participate in regional, national or international sports events or championships.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>23. The organisation should offer events, programmes, activities and/or interventions that allow the employees to conduct an evaluation of their personal situation in terms of physical activity participation and fitness level.</p> <p>The organisation ensures that the information collected is treated confidentially and is intended only for the person concerned.</p> <p>Note: this might be implemented, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – through collaboration with a sports center (or other professional structure) that offers employees specific physical activity assessments by professionals – by inviting professionals to an event/activity where specific physical activity assessments can be offered to employees. 	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>24. Events, programmes, activities and/or interventions offered by the organisation should take into account 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.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>25. In compliance with leadership commitments (see criterion 5) and considering its goals and objectives regarding physical activity at work (see criterion 6) the organisation should draft, develop and implement an action plan.</p> <p>It should be developed or updated taking into account the results of employees' needs and aspirations assessment (see criterion 1).</p> <p>It should include, at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Actions to be implemented for the development, management, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the WAC initiative – The prioritised events, programmes, activities and/or interventions (see chapter C) to be implemented according to the results of the employees' needs and aspirations assessment (see criterion 1) – Measurable and achievable objectives and indicators 	<p>WAC Advanced</p>

<p>The action plan should be communicated to the employees and should be reviewed and modified if needed at least every two years, according to the update of the employees' needs and aspirations assessment (see criterion 1).</p>	
<p>26. When developing and implementing the action plan, the organisation should consider and refer on existing policies and/or strategic plans made available at the local, regional, national and/or international level relevant to physical activity at work.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>27. When developing and implementing the action plan, the organisation should demonstrate its alignment with and contribution to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>28. When developing and implementing the action plan, the organisation should demonstrate its alignment and contribution to the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 (WHO GAPPa).</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>29. The organisation should promote and facilitate the adoption of professional meetings which reduce sedentary behaviour time (e.g. walking meetings, standing meetings).</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>

D. Work environment

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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.

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Criteria	
<p>30. The organisation shall create physical activity opportunities at all level, especially in the work environment (buildings, offices) and outside the premises (natural resources)</p> <p>Note: natural resources and built environment typically include green and blue spaces, parks and open spaces.</p>	WAC Certified
<p>31. The organisation should provide an indoor exercise facility easily accessible by foot.</p> <p>Note: it is recommended that this facility is accessible within a 10-minute walk of the workplace (e.g. a gym, a sports center, other type of indoor area designed for physical activity).</p>	WAC Certified
<p>32. The organisation should provide an outdoor exercise facility easily accessible by foot.</p> <p>Note: it is recommended that this facility is accessible within a 10-minute walk of the workplace (e.g. playing fields, public park, outdoor gym, street workout).</p>	WAC Certified

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<p>33. The organisation should have a mobility plan that promotes physically active ways of getting to and from work and travelling between meetings.</p> <p>Note: the mobility plan can for example include actions such as making bicycles available to employees</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>34. The organisation should provide showers and changing facilities for employees (e.g. for people who commute to work or travel during their work by cycling or walking)</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>
<p>35. The organisation should provide and maintain secure bicycle and/or e-bicycle storage facilities (e.g. bike rails, cages, lockers)</p>	<p>WAC Advanced</p>

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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]

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Criteria	
<p>36. According to the needs and aspirations identification and data collection, available resources, nature and extent of events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented, the organisation shall determine what needs to be monitored and measured.</p> <p>Note : if relevant, the determination of what needs to be monitored and measured can be supported by internal and/or external stakeholders (e.g. the steering committee(s) or working group(s) if it exists (see criterion 12)).</p>	WAC Certified
<p>37. According to the identified needs for monitoring and measurement (see criterion 38), the organisation shall determine the methods, tools, processes and responsibilities to ensure their implementation.</p>	WAC Certified
<p>38. 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).</p> <p>Employees' feedback shall be taken into account in the revision of the workplace policy and the action plan, every two years.</p>	WAC Certified
<p>39. The organisation's leadership (and/or the appointed responsible person) should carry out, at planned intervals, a review of its initiative to promotion and implement physical activity at work in order to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness.</p> <p>The output of each review should include decisions related to continuous improvement opportunities and any need for changes to the strategy and/or action plan as well as any need to adapt and/or strengthen the offer of events, programmes, activities and/or interventions.</p> <p>The organisation should retain document evidence of the results of each review.</p>	WAC Advanced

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40. The organisation should draft, at least once a year, a WAC progress report which contains at least a summary of:
- the evolution of its initiative(s) to promote and implement physical activity at work, in relation to the evolution of the internal and external context of the organisation.
 - the events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented.
 - the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy and/or action plan (qualitative and/or quantitative)
 - the measurement of outcomes and impacts

The progress report should be communicated to the employees.

Note 1: the WAC progress report can also be communicated to the relevant stakeholders (e.g. clients, partners, etc.)

Note 2: the WAC progress report is an annual communication through which the organisation informs its employees and relevant stakeholders on the implementation and evolution of the WAC initiative, the nature and extent of events, programmes, activities and/or interventions implemented, as well as the outcomes and impacts observed and measured.

Note 3: the WAC progress report can be delivered as a stand-alone document or integrated in the organisation's annual report (or any other similar type of communication addressed to employees and stakeholders).

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