

EU RESEARCH ON RETURNING TO WORK AFTER ILLNESS

Ireland is one of six countries involved in a pan-European research project that is investigating how employees return to work after experiencing long-term debilitating illnesses. The project will particularly focus on people with cardiovascular diseases, cancer, mental health and chronic muscular/skeletal diseases.

Funded by the European Commission, the REWIR project includes six country partners – Ireland, Italy, România, Slovakia, Belgium and Estonia. The Irish research team is led by Dublin City University and includes Dr Eugene Hickland, Dr Margaret Heffernan, Dr Aurora Trif and Dr Tish Gibbons.

The DCU team will conduct research in Ireland into return-to-work practices and policies for those experiencing long-term debilitating illnesses.

This will be conducted among national level actors including NGOs, government agencies, businesses employers' organisations and trade unions and at company level across a range of sectors in Ireland.



Leading the Irish research, the DCU team will conduct research into return-to-work practices and policies for those experiencing long-term debilitating illnesses.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To strengthen expertise on the role of social partners in designing and implementing return to work policies at the European and national levels through social dialogue initiatives.
- Analyse the implementation of particular targets of Europe 2020.
- Enhance knowledge on information, consultation and co-determination of employee representatives at company level in issues that are relevant to an increasing part of the work force and enable work retention of people exposed to chronic diseases.
- Extend the knowledge on preventing risk of marginalisation, discrimination and the threat of poverty for workers who suffer from long-term illness; enabling their return to work and interest representation at the labour market.
- Rethink how industrial relations play a role in the (re) definition of concepts as intergenerational fairness, longer labour market involvement, job performance, presence at work, and fitness for work.

TREATMENT ADVANCES

Dr Eugene Hickland said: “In Ireland we are living longer and our working lives are extending. Advances in medical diagnostics and treatments have meant that many more employees are returning to work after suffering chronic illnesses.

“It is important to understand policies and practices for those employees returning to work as part of a healthy ageing agenda in Ireland and the EU.”

He said that the REWIR research project aims to investigate the situation in Ireland and the EU and make recommendations to employers and Government on best practices in the field.