

Good Practice in the field of Health Promotion: Workplace Health Promotion Lombardy Network Program

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BACKGROUND

Health Promotion “is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health” (...) “It not only embraces actions directed at strengthening the skills and capabilities of individuals, but also action directed towards changing social, environmental and economic conditions so as to alleviate their impact on public and individual health” (Ottawa Charter, WHO, 1986). Participation is essential to sustain this comprehensive social and political process. In this context, Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work.

METHODS

Lombardy Region implemented the Workplace Health Promotion Program as part of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP). The objectives are aligned with the strategic guidelines defined by the European Commission on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and build on the wider strategy of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA). **The Program promotes organizational changes in order to enable the work environments to the adoption of healthy lifestyles for the prevention of chronic diseases.** These represent both a health priority and a challenge with social and economic impact for the world of work in the field of management and rehabilitation of workers, also in relationship to the enhancement of human capital. The Program adopts an intersectoral approach, according to the national program Gaining Health (Guadagnare Salute), in the developing of a working culture that is based on partnership.

Companies joining the program start an internal process of “continuous improvement”, which foresees the active participation of workers and the collaboration of the Health Protection Agencies, that provide methodological expertise and guidance in the selection and planning of the most effective interventions, in line with the existing opportunities and needs assessment in the company. An annual Certificate “Health Promoting Workplace” is provided for Companies committed to implement effective and sustainable actions.

Key actions are recommended within priority areas: **nutrition, physical activity, smoking and alcohol prevention**, together with **work-life balance**, organizational wellness or individual actions involving the health system care (eg. screening).

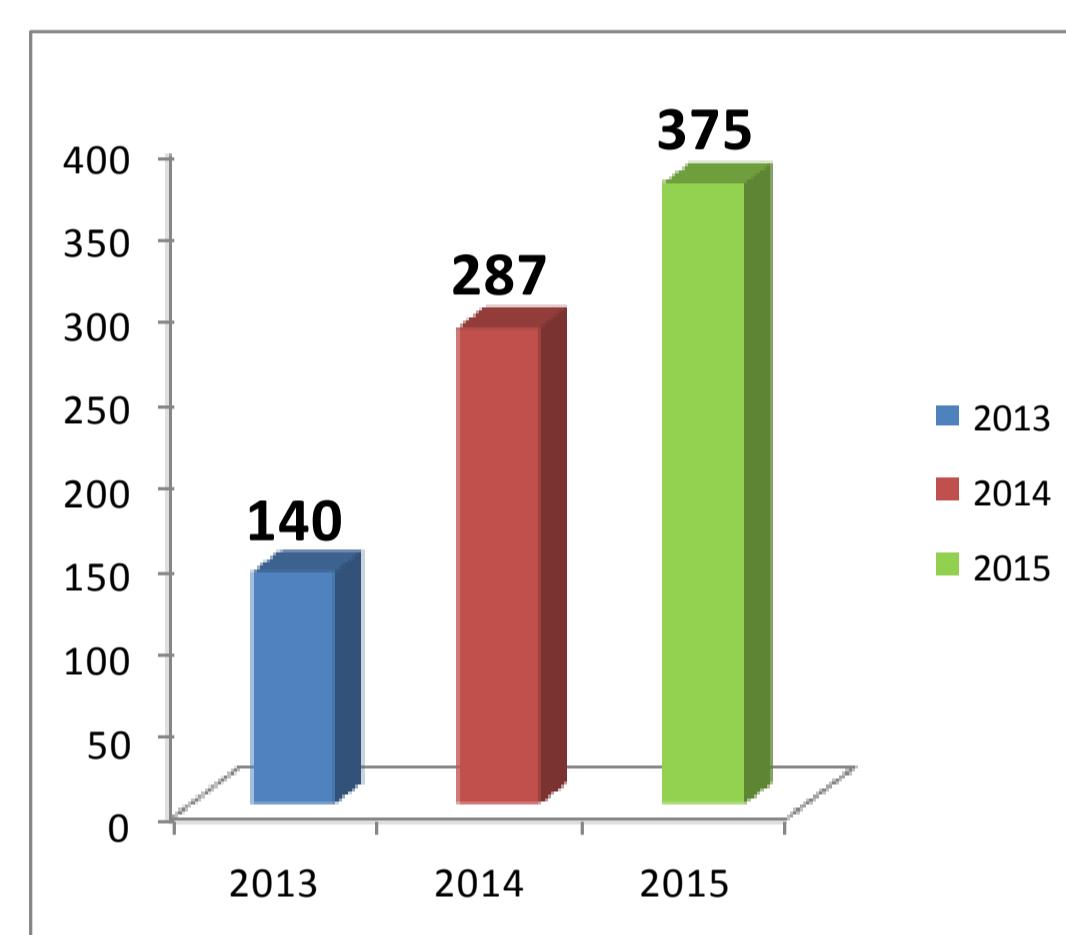
Examples of these key practices are:

- **Fruits and vegetables** in the menu of all meals served in the company (without additional payments and not replaceable with desserts or other dishes);
- Organizational Interventions on the **canteen that impact on choices and portions**;
- Full supply of bread with **reduced salt**;
- **Wholemeal bread** always available;
- **Vending machines** with fruit and/or vegetables availability and with **at least 30% of “healthy” foods**;
- Meal area with seasonal fresh **fruit and/or vegetables** availability ;
- Promotion of **bicycle** or **pedestrian street** to reach the workplace;
- Encouraging the **use of stairs** instead of elevator;
- Support for **extra activities aimed to an active lifestyle** (Walking Groups, Sport activities, Agreements with gyms, etc.);
- Policies that contribute to the requirements of the **“Tobacco-free Company”**;
- Policies that contribute to the requirements of **“Alcohol-free Company”**;

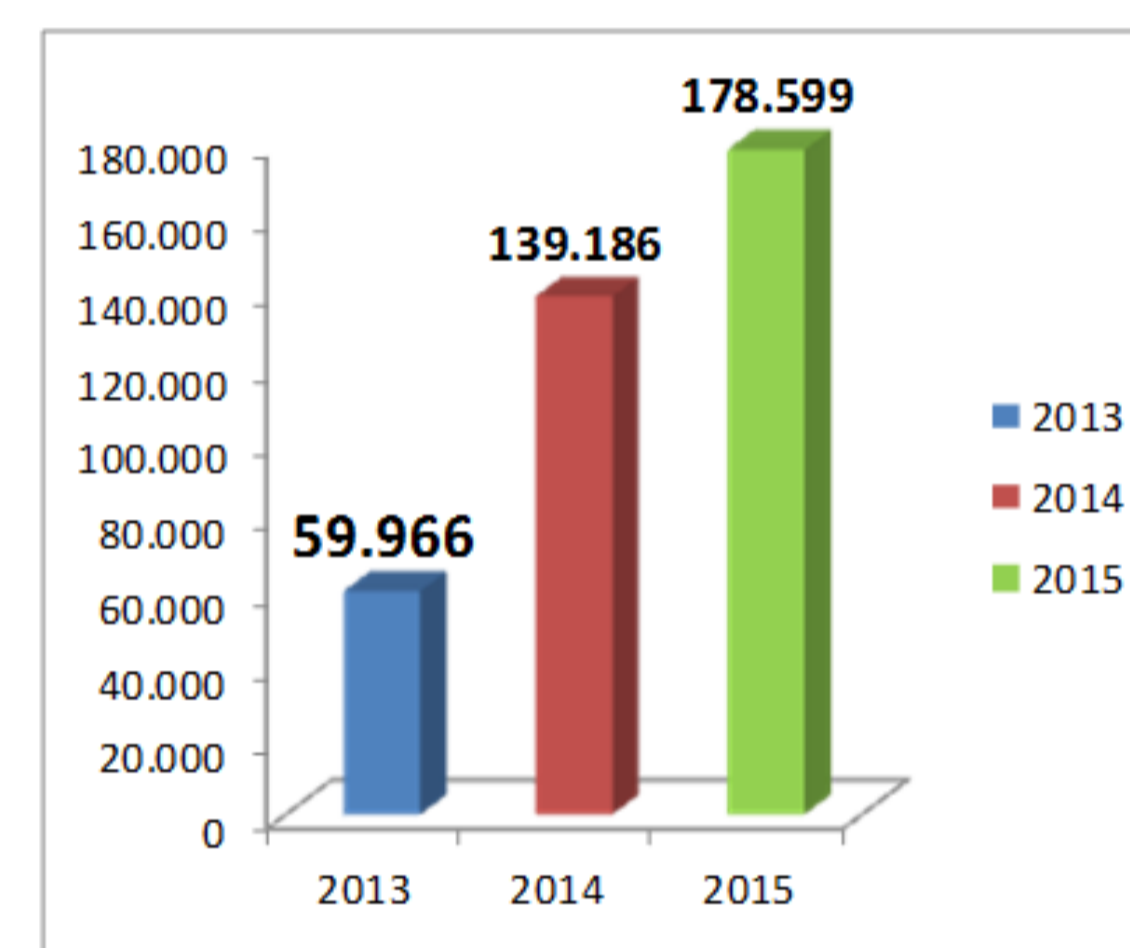
RESULTS

In the figures are the numbers of the Companies joining the Program in the first three years, together with the number of employees involved.

**Number of participant Companies
2013 -2014- 2015**



**Number of employees involved
(reached by the program)**



CONCLUSIONS

Data so far give evidence of a good adhesion and participation to the Program. Its positive acceptance lies both in the acknowledgment of a complex view of “health” and identification of priorities and interventions that are structurally and financially sustainable.

The next steps and efforts, in line with the Lombardy Prevention Plan (2015-2018), include to further develop the network and improve the impact on health, by promoting :

- the dissemination of evidence based or recommended good practices that correspond to effective and sustainable changes at work organization
 - the empowerment and capacity building of the workplaces, enabling their internal key figures or the link with other networks (eg. Work-life balance Network, Health Promoting Hospitals Network)
 - the adoption of an equity oriented approach to choose appropriate interventions and reduce health inequalities, in reaching also small-medium sized industry, informal sectors and other working populations.
- Occupational health is fundamental to public health not only to control diseases or disabilities, but to assess and improve people’s overall health as a key to poverty reduction.

Thanks to all of the Lombardy Health Protection Agencies’ professionals involved in the development of the Program at the local level

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