

Executive summary

Throughout the OECD, mental ill-health is increasingly recognised as a problem for social and labour market policy; a problem that is creating significant costs for people, employers and the economy at large by lowering employment, raising unemployment and generating productivity losses.

Over the past two decades, the Dutch Government has strengthened obligations and incentives for individuals and employers to co-operate in return-to-work management. These investments have successfully improved labour market outcomes for people with health problems. Sickness absences and disability benefit claims have fallen overall but absences remain high for people with mental ill-health and the share of mental disorders in disability claims is increasing.

Important challenges persist in the area of mental health and work, including the lack of attention for people with mild-to-moderate mental disorders (such as psychological distress, depression or anxiety) in all sectors; little attention on the prevention of mental ill-health at work; limited public support to help sick people return to work; and the lack of co-ordinated and integrated (mental) health and employment support.

To improve sustainable labour market inclusion of people with mental illness the OECD recommends that the Netherlands:

- Provide direction to schools to: i) support pupils with mild-to-moderate mental health problems; ii) implement preventive activities; and iii) improve the transition from school to work for adolescents with mental health problems.
- Implement and monitor employer obligations to prevent mental ill-health at work and ensure sufficient support for employees by providing training to return-to-work case managers and occupational physicians in mental health issues.

- Improve the activation approach of the Employee Insurance Agency to better support their clients with mental ill-health in re-entering the labour market.
- Make sure municipalities have the appropriate means and multidisciplinary knowledge to activate clients with severe labour market disadvantage, especially including people with mental ill-health.
- Develop employment-oriented mental health care and experiment with ways to integrate health and employment services.