

VOLKSWAGEN

AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT

Statement on the Volkswagen Group's strategy for maintaining, promoting and restoring the mental health of employees

Responsible: Group Health Care and Occupational Safety (K-SG)
Status: approved
Version: V1.0
Date: 24.07.2020

Statement on the Volkswagen Group's strategy for maintaining, promoting and restoring the mental health of employees

In light of the growing national and international awareness of the importance of mental health, the head doctors at the Volkswagen Group have provided the following statement:

Today's society and the modern working world are undergoing rapid transformation, which is creating new challenges for prevention and healthcare. Increasingly, psychological illnesses are impairing the health, quality of life, and productivity of individuals, and are currently responsible for 7% of the burden of disease in the world today¹. This means that mental health is also becoming a significant factor affecting the success of companies. With its position paper on mental health, the Health department for the VW Group brands is pushing ahead with its efforts to tackle the new challenges associated with the global megatrend that is health, and has defined areas of action which have been amended to this end.

From a clinical standpoint, the position paper on mental health contains the following premises:

- *Healthy climate* – As a guiding principle, mental health must be embedded as a fixed component in the company's policy, values and objectives to ensure that the conditions for a working environment which is conducive to good health are ensured both across the entire Group and at all levels.
- *Comprehensive analyses* – Health comprises physical, mental and social well-being. All three factors have an enormous influence on employee performance, and thus the productivity of companies. Evaluations of working conditions must take psychosocial burdens in the workplace into account in a way that is as objective as possible. To ensure a comprehensive approach, health check-ups also focus on mental health to ensure that health problems and vulnerable employees are detected at an early stage. Both analyses serve as the basis for a health programme that is successful from an economic point of view.
- *Healthy workplace design* – At the workplace level, the focus lies in particular on how employees are affected by the working environment and the organisation and content of work, and how these should be structured. An ergonomic and safe workplace design and meaningful work content and organisation represent important resources when it comes to ensuring the mental health of employees. This includes, for example, appropriate processes, clear objectives, the freedom to act and make decisions, creation of development opportunities, and participatory and appreciative leadership.
- *Management understanding* – A basic understanding of mental health is an important resource and valuable production factor for all organisational processes. Managers

¹ Rehm, J. & Shield, K. (2019). Global Burden of Disease and the Impact of Mental and Addictive Disorders. Current Psychiatry Reports. 21. 10.1007/s11920-019-0997-0.

should be advised, trained and educated at regular intervals on the impact of their actions on the mental health of their employees. As role models, managers should also be given the opportunity to learn about their own mental health as well as how to interact with employees suffering from mental illness.

- *Knowledge management* – All employees benefit from having a basic understanding of mental health. In many regions, there is still a stigma attached to mental illness. This often leads to delays in treatment, which can subsequently be quite protracted and lead to considerable working restrictions. Employees educated in this field understand such issues and can offer vital social support. A targeted communications strategy aimed at destigmatising mental health problems can have a preventive effect and also makes it easier to approach and interact with employees suffering from mental strain or illness.
- *Promoting good health* – Measures to promote good health within the company have a positive impact on maintaining employee health. Classic preventive approaches to mental health should include targeted measures, such as strategies for preventing stress. New trends and types of stress, such as the demands surrounding digitalisation, must be taken into account when planning new activities.
- *Comprehensive care structures* – A logical consequence of the early detection of risk factors and mental illnesses is the emergence of needs-based preventive measures, in addition to psychological, psychosomatic and psychiatric care measures aimed at early intervention. These measures can take the form of internal or external consultations, and can also be offered by external network partners and service providers. Here, the Health department plays a vital role in guiding employees to the most appropriate care structure. Low-threshold consultation, information and support services must take into account the needs of various groups of people at different stages of their lives, as well as the variety of private stress factors. For example, e-mental health products can be used during various phases of an illness to alleviate psychological symptoms and reduce the impact of burdens.
- *Integration management* – The reintegration of employees suffering from mental illness can often be difficult and protracted. It goes without saying that all employees throughout the Group should have access to employment opportunities that are suited to their abilities, as well as accompanying case management measures. At the same time, employees should be encouraged to take personal responsibility for their performance, well-being, and health.

The premises for maintaining, promoting and restoring the mental health of VW Group employees are to be based on current interdisciplinary research findings and scientific information, and are to be assessed regarding their viability within the company. The Health departments at the VW Group brands support research activities and pilot studies relating to mental health.

© Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft

Group Health Care and Occupational Safety (K-SG)

Mailbox 1599

38440 Wolfsburg

Germany

Date 07/2020