REINTEGRATION TO WORK

One of your colleagues is on long term sick leave or has just come back from long term sick leave and you may ask yourself what you could do to help your colleague reintegrate into work.

Here are some suggestions and ideas we have put together after counselling many colleagues on long term sick leave during the last years.

We hope you'll find them useful and they will help you and your returning colleague.

Thank you for your willingness to support your colleague!

Tanja Schmidt, Ann Diependaele, Maria-Rosa Morello - Psychosocial sector - Medical service in Brussels

DURING THE SICKLEAVE

Keep contact with your colleague during his/ her sick leave by email/phone/Whatsapp.

Respect the desire of your colleague not to have contacts at the moment.

Colleagues usually appreciate a **get-well card** from their team.

Be available for the colleague in case s/he needs your help/information.

Inform your colleague about the **reintegration to work programme** offered by the psychosocial sectors if he expresses some fears/difficulties regarding his return to work.

COLLEAGUE BACK IN THE OFFICE

Welcome the colleague back at work, e.g. say "Hello! Good to have you back" in person or online/ by email.

The team could consider **welcoming the colleague with flowers** on the first day back in the office.

Show your care for the returning colleague (e.g. "How are you ?" or "How can I help you?")

Respect if your colleague does not want to share details of his/her sickness.

If you have moved to open space during the colleague's long term sick leave offer to **show him/her around** the new working place.

Introduce the returning colleague **to new colleagues/ introduce yourself** to the returning colleague if you have recently joined the team.

FOLLOW UP

Expect the returning colleague to start with **medical part time** and try to respect this when planning meetings with the colleague.

Be prepared that the returning colleague might not be 100% operational and could sometimes suffer from **medication side effects, concentration and memory problems**, e.g. asking the same questions, taking longer for his/her tasks than before, getting tired more easily, having difficulties following discussions with more than 2 people, being more sensitive to noise or suffering from mood changes.

Take good care of yourself, don't exhaust yourself because you want to help your colleague.

Inform your colleague that the psychosocial teams in the Medical Services can help in case of difficulties with the reintegration to work. **Brussels:** 02/2988000- HR-BXL-EMPLOYEE-ASSISTANCE@ec.europa.eu; **Luxembourg**: HR-LUX-ASSISTANTS-SOCIAUX@ec.europa.eu; **Ispra:** +39 0332789965

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Psychosocial sector in Brussels organises **training for managers and staff** on **how to support the reintegration at work**. You can enrol in EU Learn.
These training are also advertised in the weekly Learning bulletin.