Mental Health in Clubs

External Evaluation
Final Report

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Dr. Elitsa Uzunova | Univation – Institut für Evaluation GmbH

Mental Health In Clubs

Cooperation partners:

CLUBCOMMISSION

FernUniversität in Hagen

BGF Koordinierungsstelle

CHARITÉ UNIVERSITÄTSMEDIZIN BERLIN

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Object & Methodology

+ Project context
+ Evaluation assignment
+ Methodological approach
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01

NEW WORK

„Investing in mental health is an investment in a better life and a better future for all.“

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO [1]

The practical platform of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) Initiative New Quality of Work (INQA) aims to find answers to key questions about the future of work – such as leadership, health, diversity, and skills development. The initiative is a response to the transformation of the world of work, which is often discussed under the concept of New Work. Driven by the historical rise in knowledge work, continuous globalization, and digitalization over recent decades, the demands placed on work are changing. This is further intensified by a shortage of skilled workers, which is being exacerbated by demographic changes [2], [3].

In this context, organizations and businesses are faced with the challenge of positioning themselves sustainably for the new world of work and creating a high-quality working environment. The INQA Experimentation Spaces funding program now offers for the third time selected companies in Germany the opportunity to test new approaches in dealing with the demands of the new world of work. This round focuses on strengthening organisational resilience through managing/creating good working conditions in times of accelerated change [4], [5].

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

„Berlin is the city of freedom, and our clubs are part of the Berlin spirit as spaces of freedom. They make Berlin's culture more diverse and are both an economic factor and highly significant for tourism."

Franziska Giffey, Senator for Economy, Energy and Enterprises of Berlin [6]

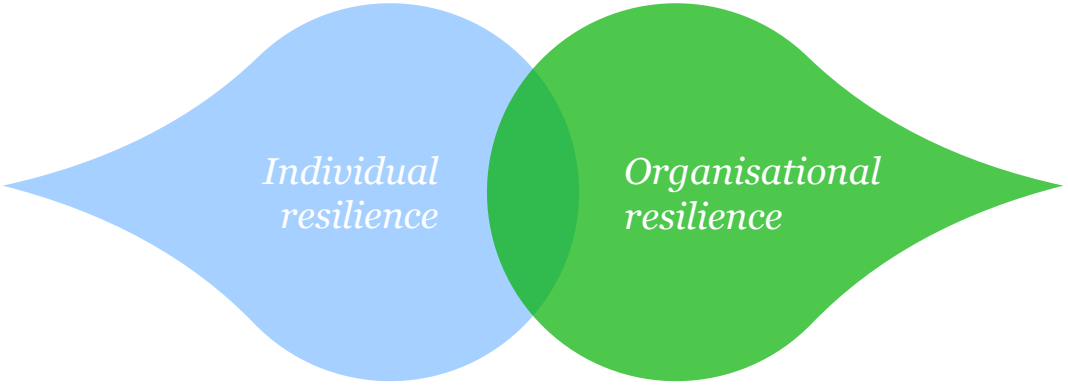
The night-time economy refers to economic, cultural, and social activities during the evening and night – including gastronomy and clubs, events, mobility, and urban infrastructure. Over the past decades, it has established itself globally as an independent field of urban development. Driven by changing lifestyles, tourism, and creative scenes, the night is increasingly being recognized as a relevant economic and creative space.

Especially in major cities, it contributes significantly to economic value creation, cultural diversity, and social participation.

With the growing importance of the night-time economy come both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, new spaces for innovation, diversity, and urban development emerge – on the other, questions around noise protection, working conditions, safety, and sustainability move into focus.

Berlin is taking a leading role in this international dialogue: With its diverse club and cultural scene, focused political attention (e.g. through the activities of the Clubcommission), and initial strategic approaches to integrating health and resilience into night-time work, the city is significantly shaping the debate around a sustainable and fair night-time economy.

MENTAL HEALTH IN CLUBS



Berlin is internationally renowned for its diverse nightlife and unique club culture. But clubs are not only places of entertainment – they are also workplaces for many thousands of Berliners. However, working in clubs can involve specific stressors such as working in darksness, loud environments, or high workloads due to staff shortages.

Moreover, clubs as businesses are currently facing challenges such as rising operating costs – particularly for energy and rent – declining revenues due to changing leisure habits, threats from urban development projects and gentrification, neighborhood conflicts as well as difficulties in retaining staff long-term.

The pilot project „Mental Health in Clubs“ by the Clubcommission – Netzwerk der Berliner Clubkultur e.V. has been funded as an INQA Experimentation Space since June 2023. The project is developing and testing measures to improve the mental health of employees and strengthen the organizational resilience of clubs. These measures will then be made available to all Berlin clubs. Additionally, the findings will be used to formulate practical recommendations for workplace health promotion, which will be shared with statutory health insurers.

Seven recognized clubs* are participating in the Clubcommission’s pilot project to strengthen the individual resilience of their staff and leadership through the measures offered. In light of the turbulences clubs experienced during the pandemic, the pilot project also aims to enhance the organizational resilience of clubs and better prepare them for future challenges.

* Fitzroy & Lark, Gretchen, Renate & Else, RSO, SchwuZ, Tresor & Ohm, Zenner

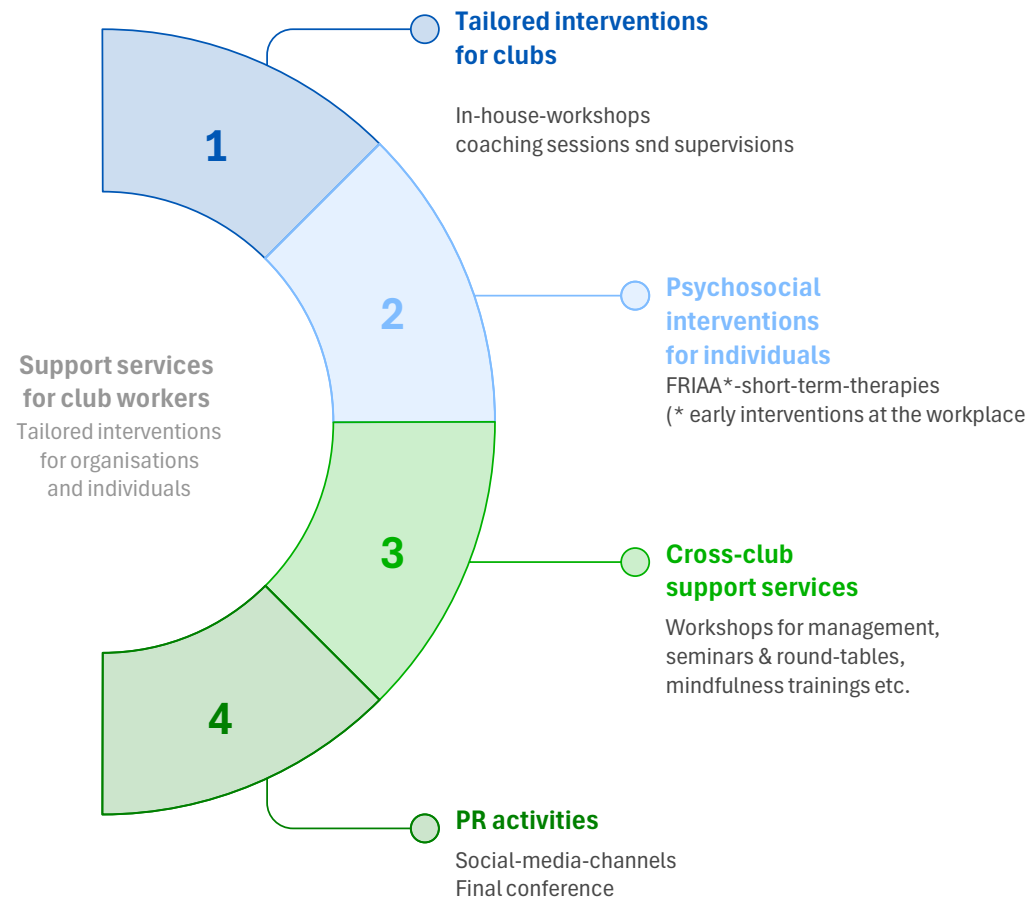
INTERVENTION

Measures at both the individual and organizational levels interlock to strengthen employees' mental health and sustainably promote the resilience of clubs.

Interventions such as in-house workshops, coaching sessions, and supervision are offered, tailored to the specific needs of each participating club and designed to support structural process changes at the organizational level.

Additionally, cross-club psychosocial support services are available, including short-term therapies based on the FRIAA model, as well as seminars, trainings, and roundtables on topics such as resilience, stress management, mindfulness, and substance use.

The project is accompanied by extensive public outreach, including a final conference and regular publications on social media.



EXTERNAL EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT

The external evaluation aims to…

- *enable improvement by helping the project achieve more desired results with the target groups.*
- *Generate knowledge to initiate learning processes and disseminate the effects achieved beyond the pilot clubs.*

To this end, the organisational and leadership culture of the pilot clubs is assessed in terms of organisational resilience based on ISO standard 22316:2017 [7] , and through the lens of the Human-Technology-Organisation (HTO) approach – a method for analysing human working conditions, which helps identify relevant influencing factors when planning system and organisational changes [8].

To achieve these objectives, the evaluation specifically aims to examine the outcomes of the pilot project at the meso and macro levels, involve various interest groups and stakeholders, make learning processes within the organisations visible, and observe the establishment of participatory structures.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

*Final**

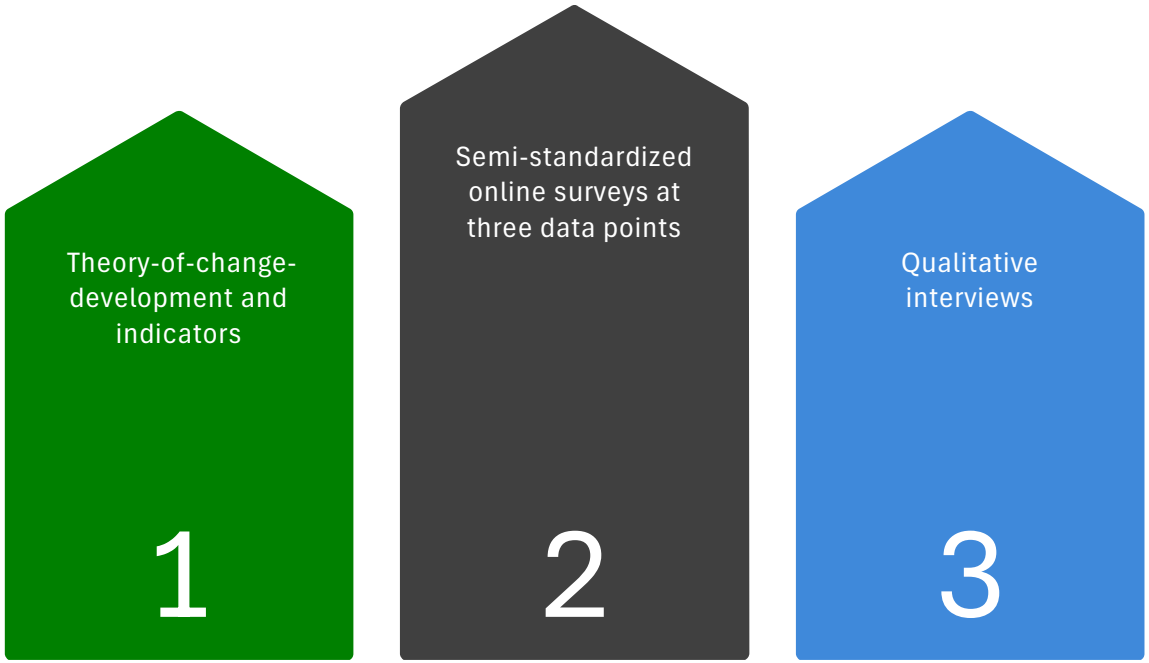
evaluation questions:

- ☑ To what extent do the project activities raise awareness among employees (E), team leaders (TL), and management (M) of the need for structural changes to strengthen organizational resilience?
- ☑ What structural changes are team leaders and management testing within their organization?
- ☑ How do employees, team leaders, and management evaluate the tested structural changes?
- ☑ What effects do the tested structural changes have from the perspective of employees, team leaders, and management?
- ☑ What beneficial and obstructing factors for strengthening organizational resilience can be identified?

* The originally formulated evaluation questions were revised based on the workshop for evaluators from the INQA Experimentation Space, held on 11.09.2023 by the funding organisations, and further developed and refined together with the commissioning parties.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Mixed-Methods-Approach:



The evaluation began with a workshop for goal clarification and the development of a theory of change to make the project logic explicit and provide a basis for selecting relevant indicators.

To answer the evaluation questions, club employees were surveyed at three points in time using a semi-standardized online questionnaire.

The aim of the online surveys was to track the temporal development of previously defined indicators, which capture the current work situation in clubs, identify changes that have occurred, and determine any remaining need for change.

At the end of the project term, in-depth interviews were also conducted with relevant stakeholders to validate and deepen the survey results.

PROGRAM LOGIC

The project concept aims to anchor health promotion in club operations through systematic development of support structures. Across three consecutive phases, individual and organizational competencies are being strengthened, new structures are established, and long-term impulses for change within Berlin's club landscape are initiated.

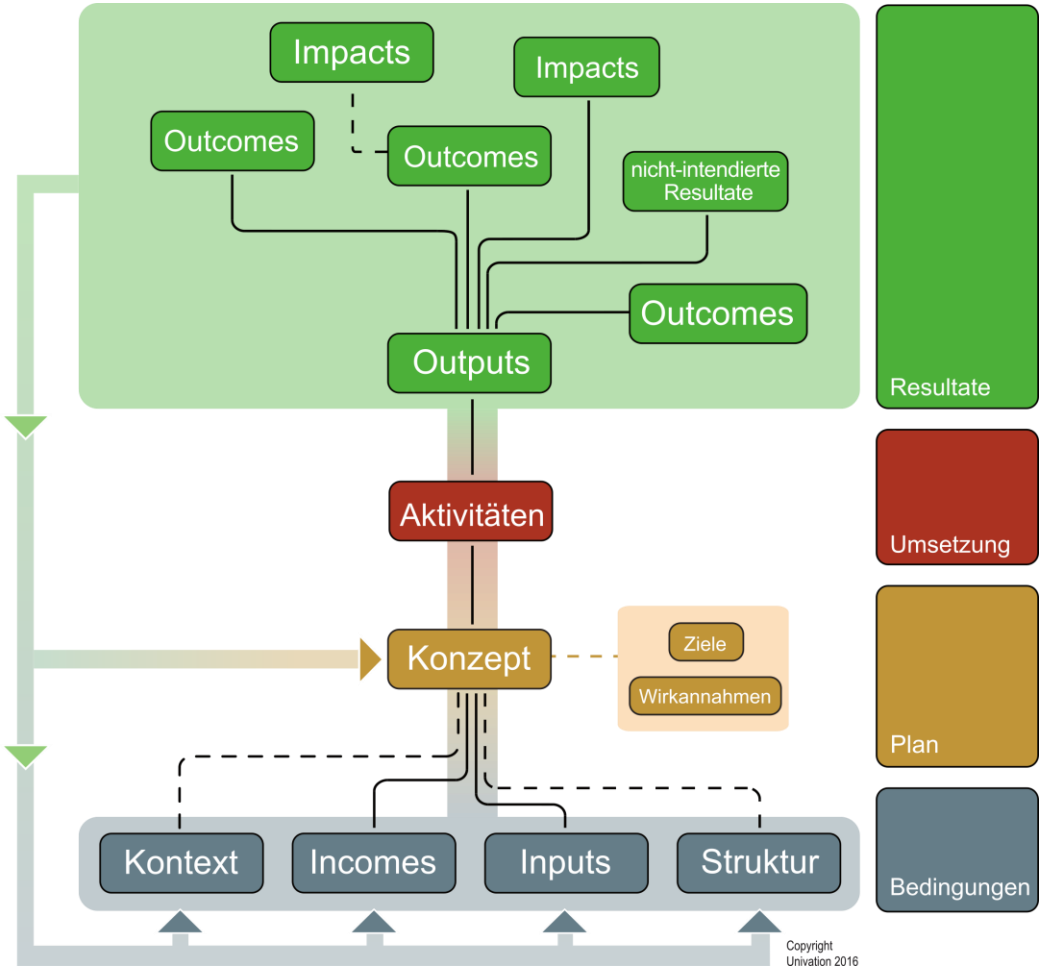
The developed impact model is based on the program tree by Univation. Evaluators use it for evaluand description and context analysis, development of methodological designs, and communication. Program executives use it to review and improve the conceptual quality of their initiatives. Its application ensures a high process use of the evaluation.

In the pilot phase of Mental Health in Clubs, practice-oriented health promotion offerings are developed and tested at the micro and meso levels, with their relevance and feasibility being evaluated.

In the transfer and final phase, these approaches are integrated at association level, communicated publicly, and prepared for use city- and nationwide.

Link to logic model of Mental Health in Clubs:

https://app.conceptboard.com/board/5471-r57o-ignb-tx3t-0o0r



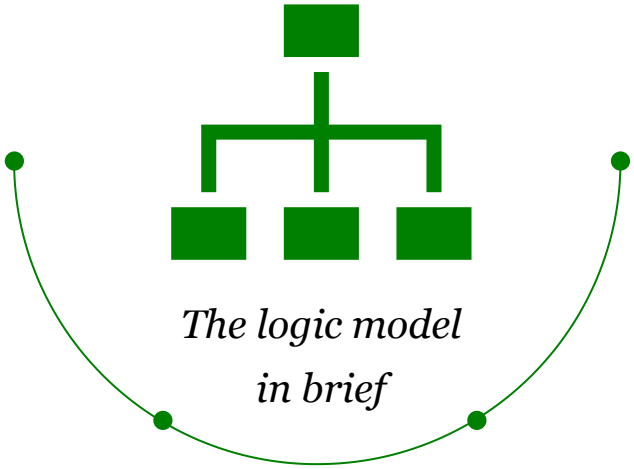
PROGRAM LOGIC

Micro-, Meso- und Macro levels

Mikroebene: Mitarbeitende, Teamleitungen und Geschäftsführungen profitierten direkt durch Wissen, Reflexion und Stärkung individueller Handlungskompetenz.

Mesoebene: Teams und Clubs entwickeln gemeinsam gesundheitsförderliche Strukturen und Prozesse, mit ersten sichtbaren Veränderungen in der Zusammenarbeit.

Makroebene: Bundesweite Akteure wie die BGF*-Koordinierungsstelle werden inhaltlich eingebunden – Gesundheit von Clubmitarbeitenden wird als Thema strukturell verankert und kommuniziert.



The logic model in brief

Final phase

Outputs: Ergebnisse werden öffentlichkeitswirksam aufbereitet, Empfehlungen formuliert und bundesweite Anschlussfähigkeit hergestellt.

Outcomes: Die Erkenntnisse fließen in bestehende Netzwerke, Formate und politische Diskurse ein.

Impacts: Das Thema psychische Gesundheit ist bundesweit in der Nachtökonomie verankert und anschlussfähig für weitere strukturelle Förderung.

Pilot phase

Outputs: Vielfältige Workshops und Formate zur Reflexion und Weiterbildung werden umgesetzt und von den Teilnehmenden wahrgenommen.

Outcomes: Erste strukturelle Veränderungen in Teams und Cluborganisationen werden angestoßen, insbesondere bezogen auf Kommunikation und Führungsstile.

Impacts: Gesundheit als relevantes Thema im Arbeitsalltag wird bei Mitarbeitenden und Führungskräften sichtbar verankert.

Transfer phase

Outputs: Die erfolgreichen Ansätze werden auf Verbandsebene aufgenommen und durch weiterführende Angebote verbreitet.

Outcomes: Es entstehen neue Routinen und Unterstützungsangebote in und für Clubs; Gesundheit wird als strategisches Thema etabliert.

Impacts: Der Berliner Clubkontext entwickelt sich zu einem Vorreiter für Gesundheitsförderung in der Kulturarbeit.

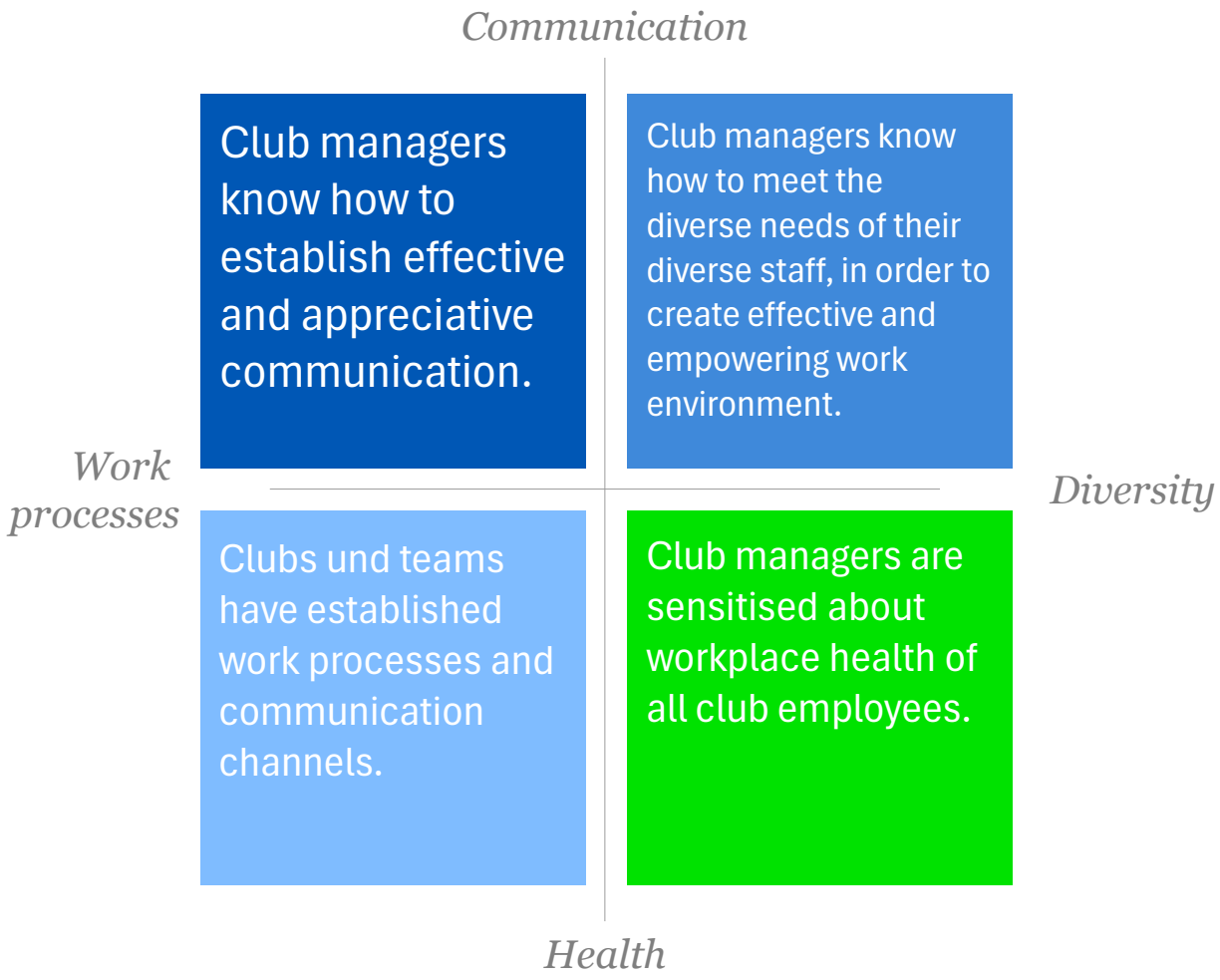
* Betriebliche Gesundheitsförderung

INDICATORS

The Mental Health in Clubs project addresses three key characteristics of resilient organizations as defined by ISO standard 22316:2017:

1. Effective und empowering leadership
2. (Individual) Resilience nourishing culture
3. Possibility to share information and knowledge

Following goals were formulated at the beginning of the project in four areas identified as central to the club context.



SURVEYS

Questionnaire items were developed for the four target areas and surveyed at three points in time, accompanied by assessment items of the internal project evaluation.

The surveys targeted employees, team leads, and management from the seven pilot clubs, as well as other clubs in Berlin.

Objective: Establishing a baseline for the indicators – assessment of the current work situation in clubs

Period: November 2023 – December 2023

Participants:

A total of 218, 72 from pilot clubs.

22 participants identified as management, 33 as team leads, and 163 as staff members. Just under two-thirds of respondents identified as FLINTA* persons, and one-third reported having a migration background.

Objective: Follow-up for the indicators measurements and assessment of introduced changes

Period: May 2024 – September 2024

Participants:

A total of 394, 128 from pilot clubs.

46 participants identified as management, 50 as team leads, and 298 as staff members.
10 case studies for the pilot clubs served as basis for advancing the initiated organizational developments.

Objective: Establishing an endline for the indicators measurements and capturing recommendations for future development

Period: March 2025 – June 2025

Participants:

A total of 259, 69 from pilot clubs.

13 participants identified as management, 30 as team leads, and 97 as staff members.
Slightly less than two-thirds of respondents identified as FLINTA*, and one-third reported having a migration background.

INTERVIEWS

To contextualise the survey results within the specific realities of Berlin's club scene, subjective interpretive patterns and reference systems in the everyday practice of the actors are of key relevance. To avoid predetermination by the survey instrument and to allow for the discovery of additional meaningful relationships, the evaluation team conducted supplementary interviews.

Six semi-structured, narrative interviews were conducted with management personnel from five pilot clubs. These interviews provided individual accounts that helped capture the internal perspectives of the actors on the organizational development process and access their specific expert knowledge.

The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. They were guided by open-ended questions, transcribed afterward, and analysed using qualitative content analysis.

A total of 328 text segments (on average 54 per interview; Min = 28, Max = 63) were assigned to six thematic categories.

„That the topic [mental health] was seriously discussed for the first time. That's already a huge icebreaker […]. It's just out there now, it's on the table."

Of the clubs represented in the interviews, four were relatively large (with around 100 employees or more). One club, with approximately 25 employees, can be classified as rather small.

+ ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION
+ EXPERIMENTING WITH STRUCTURAL CHANGES
+ BENEFICIAL & OBSTRUCTIVE FACTORS

Assessment of implementation

02

ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

„And these courses, offered by the Club Commission, were really always very valuable. There were great speakers who truly shared solid knowledge. It was real, substantial content that helped create a strong foundation for further education, to figure out what I could actually do, what the right techniques are, or what techniques are out there, and so on.“

Intensive participation in MHC activities

One result of the external evaluation concerns the uptake of the Mental Health in Clubs (MHC) activities. Feedback from all data collection rounds shows that the activities were generally well attended and positively received. Particularly popular were the short-term therapy sessions, supervisions, and all in-house workshops on topics such as resilience, time and stress management.

Participation in additional activities

There is also evidence that participation in the program significantly increased clubs' awareness of the importance of (mental) health and motivated them to organise further health promotion and prevention initiatives for their employees.

Some clubs reported having booked additional, self-initiated activities provided by the Clubcommission (e.g. various workshops, the HR work group, the Awareness Academy) as well as by external providers (e.g. Sonar, Good Night Out) for their teams.

Call for Sustainability

Respondents found the workshops and further activities to be inspiring but emphasized that they are often not sufficient on their own to provide sustainable relief.

In particular, there is a clear desire for extended formats specifically tailored to management, which address industry-specific challenges such as economic pressure, venue-specific conditions, or staff turnover. In some cases, participants suggested that certain activities aimed at management should also be made available to entire teams.

Funding is perceived as a key barrier, but at the same time as a meaningful investment in the well-being and resilience of employees. Overall, the project is seen as an important starting point that should be continued and expanded in the long term in order to achieve lasting impact.

Psychological counseling (FRIAA short-term therapy) was the most frequently used and most positively rated measure. Although primarily aimed at strengthening individual resilience, it also had an impact at the organisational level: not only employees but also managers made use of the therapy offer – a factor that contributes to strengthening the participating organisations as a whole. Participants especially appreciated the facilitated access to therapy slots, including the availability of therapy sessions in English, which provided significant added value for non-German-speaking employees. Another benefit was that the counseling was tailored to the lived realities of the club scene, allowing open conversations about challenges such as night work or substance use.

Short-Term Therapy

„But fundamentally, one great part of the project was those free therapy slots for our employees. I was told that a lot of people took advantage of that. And the feedback from staff was really good. They were thrilled. And of course, that carries on, they were able to do something for themselves. It also kind of broke the ice around therapy, making it less of a threat.“

“The option to have a therapy was great.”

“I was really dependent on the therapy session I got from this project. Was great considering how difficult it is to get therapy in Berlin.”

In a few individual cases, negative experiences were also reported, e.g., difficulties in scheduling appointments (waitlists, cancellations) or a poor therapeutic match.

Supervision was frequently mentioned as a particularly valuable measure, as it created spaces for reflection that had previously not existed and, in some cases, directly led to changes in club processes. It served as an impulse to introduce or intensify structured discussion formats within teams.

It is considered beneficial for the supported supervisions to last longer. At the same time, potential is recognized within the club to continue the initiated process internally.

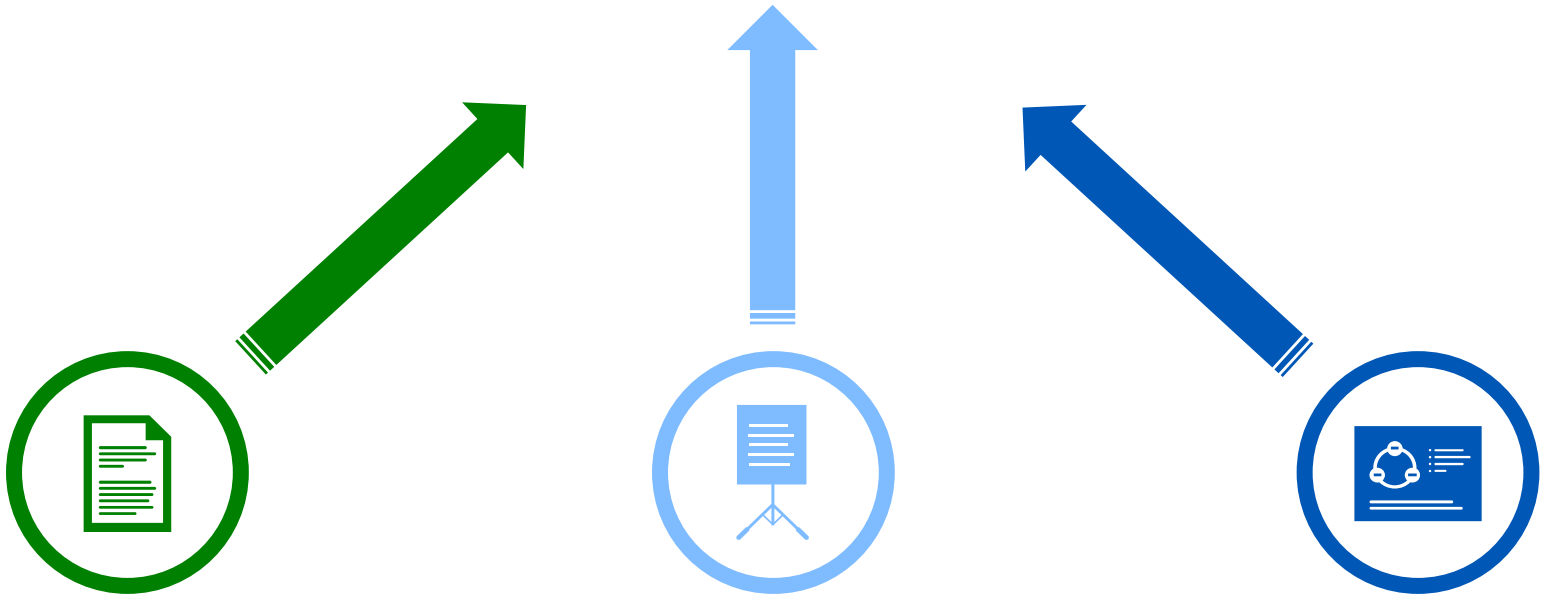
Supervision

„And we had these in-house sessions with the Charité, the supervision. We were also able to discuss topics that – I won't mention them here – the content of those discussions I mean, because they were very specific and related to incidents. But it then carries over to the staff, because they know that there is an effort to ensure that things are addressed. They really felt heard in that regard.“

„Regarding the supervision, that was interesting. I think it would be even more interesting if the supervision lasted a bit longer, but we do have other opportunities to continue pushing this forward.“

„The supervision was very beneficial to me.“

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT



Transparency

Participating clubs expressed a desire for greater transparency regarding the project's objectives, planned activities, and expected level of involvement, for example, through realistic time estimates and early consideration of participation in evaluation activities.

They would like a clearer understanding of what is expected of them and what benefits they can anticipate from participation in order to better manage the process internally.

Planning

Club representatives wished for clearer communication of the project's benefits from start and requested that the required effort on part of the clubs be kept as low as possible to provide greater planning security.

Communication

At the beginning, comprehensive information about the overall concept is seen as helpful by respondents. Subsequently, targeted reminders could be sent to employees.

The use of printed materials (e.g., posters or flyers) is also mentioned as a suitable option to bring information about the project into the clubs.

I think it would be cool if you had some kind of handout – maybe a small flyer or a little manual – that could be given to the teams so they could use it not just during the sessions but also afterwards, like after work or after a course.

Like, 'Okay, here's that meditation again' or 'Here's a step-by-step guide', something to hold on to. A kind of small SOS notebook that says: 'These are the points that really help me, and maybe they'll make me feel better'."

Experimenting with structural changes

+ Introduced changes
+ Assessment of the introduced changes
+ Effects

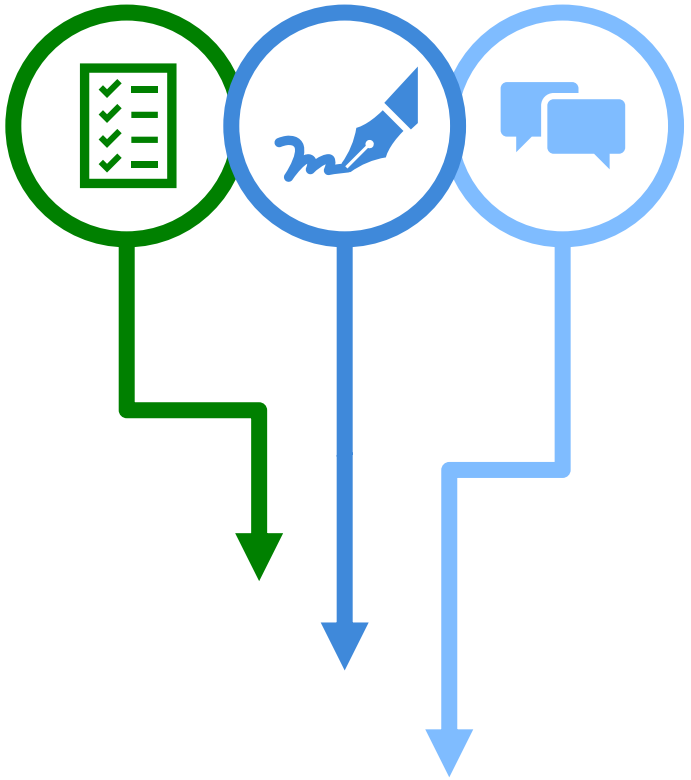
03

DATA BASIS

As part of the T1 survey, participants from the pilot clubs were asked whether, within the past six months, changes had been implemented in one of the four areas (“Work Organisation and Processes,” “Diversity,” “Communication,” and “Health”) or in another area of the club.

In each case, an open-ended question gave them the opportunity to specify what changes were implemented and how implementation was proceeding. Finally, they were asked to rate the change on a scale from 1 (positive) to 5 (negative) and describe how the change(s) had affected them personally overall.

Additional indications of changes were collected from other open-ended responses in the questionnaire as well as from the in-depth interviews.



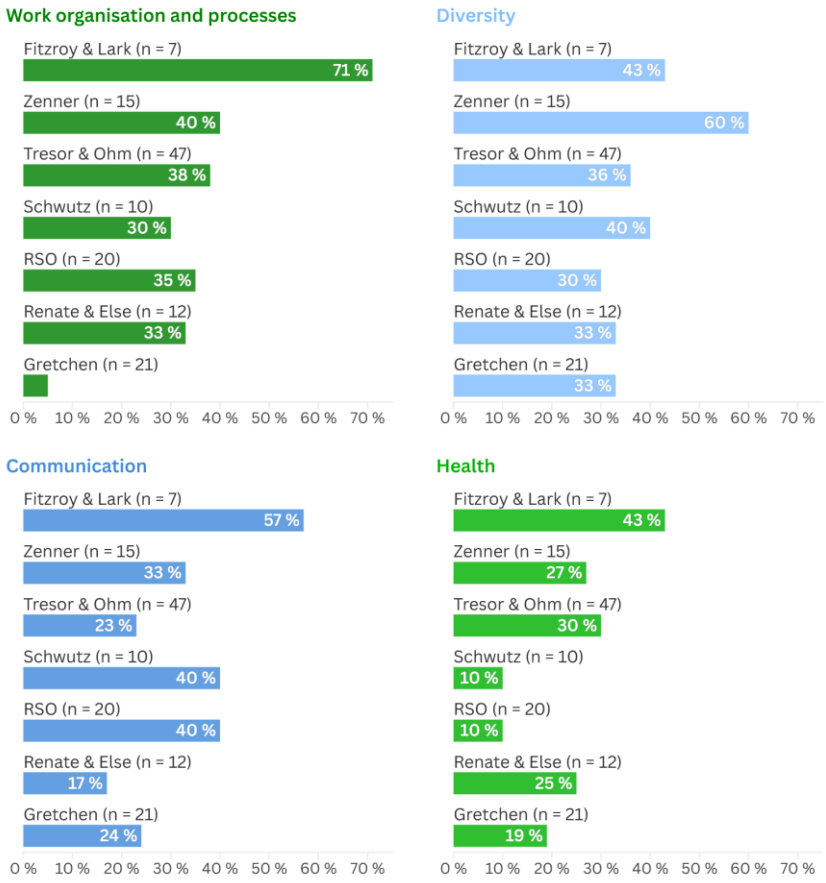
INTRODUCED CHANGES

The evaluation results show that all seven pilot clubs introduced changes across all the evaluated areas during the course of the project. Each club placed its focus differently.

Most reported changes occurred in the field of appreciative and effective communication (100 coded units across all data sources), followed by changes in work organisation and processes (89 units).

Changes in the areas of “Diversity” (77 units) and “Health” (68 units) were reported somewhat less frequently by respondents.

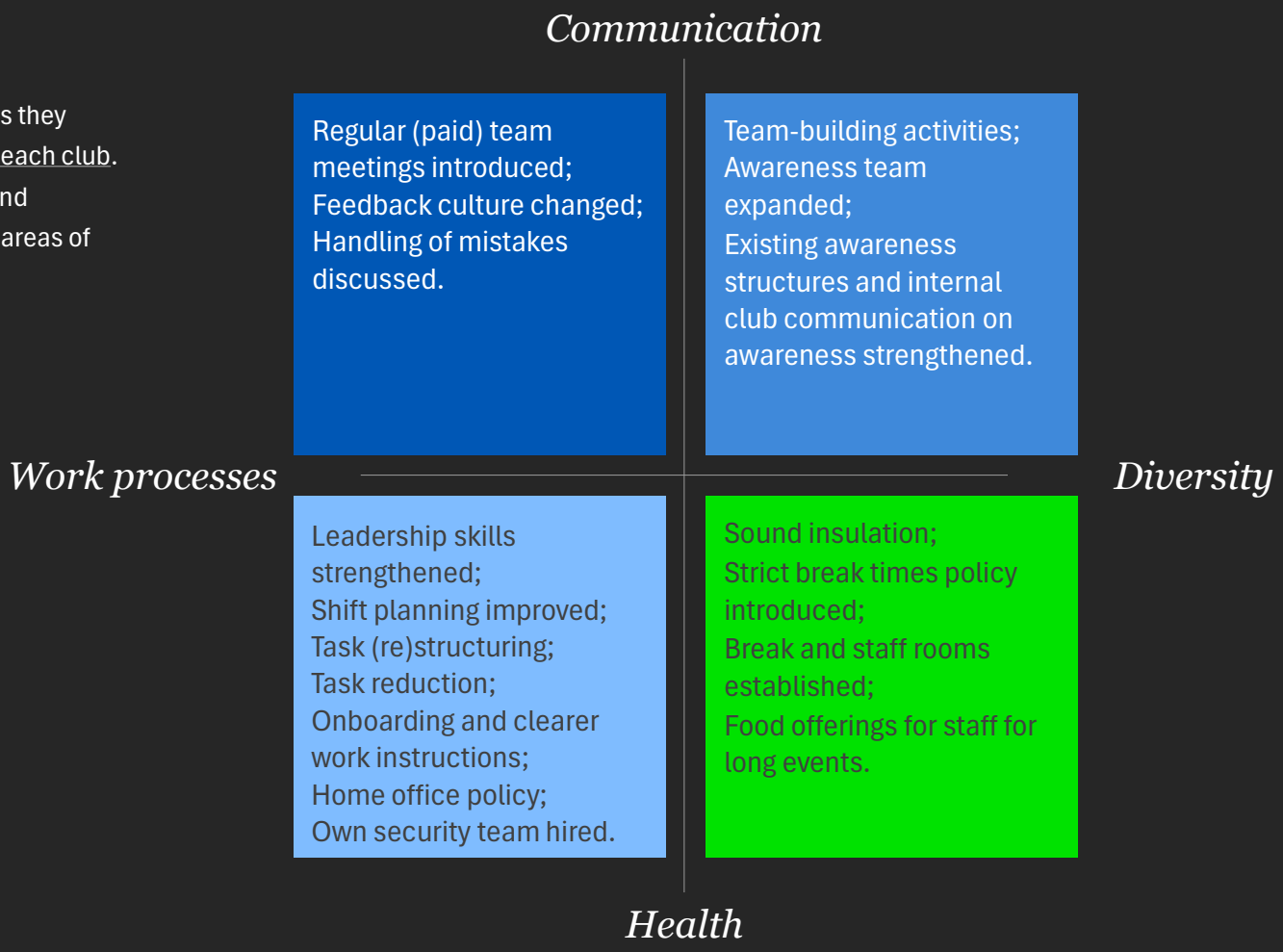
In the area of “Health”, the fewest changes are reported across all clubs – usually under 30%.



Percentage of individuals from the T1 survey who report changes in the respective areas.

CHANGES

The reported changes were diverse, as they were tailored to the specific needs of each club. The analysis units were categorized and summarized based on the four target areas of Mental Health in Clubs.



CHANGES | WORK ORGANISATION AND PROCESSES

To improve work organisation and processes, several pilot clubs deliberately strengthened the leadership skills of their managers. Respondents reported a more professional appearance of managers, clearer work instructions, and more active participation in team meetings. In addition, several pilot clubs modified their shift planning, with three of them introducing the tool E2N. According to respondents, this solution provides greater transparency and relieves managers in particular, although its introduction initially required some adjustment time. Some pilot clubs also restructured workflows, for example by jointly discussing processes and documenting them in the form of guidelines. To better organise collaboration within the club, regular team meetings were introduced, stabilised, or held with larger groups. New is that participation in these meetings was recognised as working time and accordingly remunerated. Moreover, more flexible employment formats were tested – for example through task reduction or the option of home office for more administrative tasks.

„Expansion of storage and bar, more structured work paths... Very good, makes my work immensely easier.“

„The shift planning is well done and enough time in advance. It is also flexible enough to feel free to change things. “

„Clear onboarding with numbers to call, when to call etc.“

One club reported that it had tried for the second time to introduce changes in shift planning, and only now succeeded. Another club announced its plan to implement a shift planning tool in the following year.

„This year we made a much stronger effort to ensure that shift lengths were not excessive. In previous years, we didn’t actually manage that. We tried, but it didn’t work. This year we really paid attention to limiting shifts to a maximum of 8.5 hours, including breaks. Of course, there were still cases when a shift ran an hour longer, but at least during planning we made sure the shifts were capped.“

CHANGES | DIVERSITY

Since joining Mental Health in Clubs, several pilot clubs have been attempting to indirectly support the diverse needs of their workforce – for example, by creating more opportunities for teambuilding that strengthen cultural sensitivity and mutual respect. In addition to more work-related team meetings, new formats for conflict resolution and informal get-togethers outside of work are being introduced to improve collaboration. Furthermore, some pilot clubs deliberately strengthen their awareness structures in order to foster more attentive and respectful interactions within teams.

„Yes, so, for example, our awareness team now functions differently, better resourced, more responsibilities, and they themselves also participate in workshops. Not all of these are about mental health directly, but they all contribute to educating oneself and getting a greater sense of security at work […]. Sometimes you are indeed confronted with very distressing stories and conditions of people, and that can be overwhelming. And all this on top of the general stress of nightlife, that is an extra challenge […]. So we printed posters with contact details of different services. We offer help, people can come to us.“

„Awareness workshops were made to discuss drug abuse within the team and guests and how to handle it. Awareness workshops were also given about deescalating and sexual harassment.“

One club reintroduced its existing awareness team to all employees and clarified the available contact channels. Another club offered all employees an awareness training, which according to one person contributed to improving the working climate.

„I've learned more about the fears and threats that being from a certain gender or ethnicity can bring. Hearing experiences of others on the subject is always enriching. I felt more empathic and closer to my team.“

CHANGES | COMMUNICATION

To improve communication between employees and managers, several pilot clubs introduced regular, paid team meetings or expanded existing formats. At the same time, existing communication channels were revised: in some cases new channels were added (e.g., a Discord channel), existing ones were differentiated (for example, splitting one WhatsApp group into several topic-specific groups), and the purposes of the channels were more clearly defined to increase communication effectiveness. These changes were generally welcomed by employees. However, they continued to point to a high proportion of "spam", highlighting the need for stronger moderation. In addition, several pilot clubs sought to further develop their feedback culture – for example through individual feedback talks, anonymous feedback boxes, or the creation of dedicated feedback email addresses.

„Perhaps the most decisive step was that we […] granted the request of the door team, meaning guest services, to have a monthly meeting. That's a major cost factor. Nevertheless, we acknowledged the need of the team to exchange experiences outside of event times about the situations that they are being confronted with. So we said, when there is need, we have to make room for it."

"We already had regular staff meetings, but I made it a condition that people participate and are paid for the time. It's one working hour, because we're talking about work."

While employees responded very positively to these changes, managers highlighted the challenge of financing the paid meetings.

„It goes well when it's about talking improvements and acknowledging we're getting better with a rich program and trustworthy cooperation partners. It's tricky to find the finances for paid meetings outside our regular business hours."

CHANGES | COMMUNICATION

“It came from the team. The feedback was that the rhythm of existing meetings – they were quarterly, highly structured, and with little opportunity for free discussion, just about coming tasks and changes that need to be made, bla bla bla […]. So this was criticised, and we then decided that if the need is there to meet once monthly, we won’t stand in the way.”

„Clear rules on how to communicate. No verbal abuse tolerated. Talks held with affected persons. Feedback given.“

„Weekly briefings, direct and quick feedback from team leads.“

„Better communication about which channels exist and who is responsible for what.“

„Announcing when, how and with whom exactly to communicate when needed.“

At the same time, constructive handling of feedback remains a challenge for management in the case of some clubs.

„Went well and not well: being fair/ not fair responding to feedbacks or criticism.“

Nevertheless, the data also shows that managers perceive these processes as opportunities for learning.

„Yes, so I had to take a really deep breath, because you try as shift manager to make everything correctly, and, I don’t know, to give people a good feeling. So, if you never really got much feedback before, it’s like, ‘Oh, shit, that hurts somehow’ that it isn’t perceived so by people at all. One example was that staff said they sometimes feel humiliated when mistakes are addressed, even though we never meant it that way and there were no consequences. That was tough to hear, but it was an important learning step.“

CHANGES | HEALTH

To promote workplace health, two pilot clubs initiated internal discussions on dealing with alcohol and drug use, which resulted in new agreements. In one club, staff and management agreed to designate consumption-free areas to make it easier to avoid substances during working hours. Two pilot clubs also addressed the challenge of providing quiet break rooms during events. Survey data suggested an increased need for this. One club created a new room for this purpose; another began planning renovations to create more space. However, implementing spatial changes sometimes proved difficult due to fluctuating financial resources or lacking landlord support. In addition, some clubs attempted to reduce noise exposure at workplaces through measures such as soundproofing or adjustments to sound systems.

„Ear protection, break regulations, compliance with the 8-hour workday, balanced shift planning, safety shoes (for runners), break rooms with a kitchen.“

„During very long events [...], providing food for employees.“

“Awareness training towards drug consumption. Regular kind reminders, that drug should be consumed with care.”

“It's VERY difficult to work properly on renovations, because of our landlord’s lack of support, and the unstable financials we have.“

In one club, soundproofing efforts were made, but it’s being noted that this intervention has practical limits.

„There are certain things I cannot change. When people work in our club, they need to be aware that some conditions cannot be eliminated. There will always be music playing and colorful flashing lights. We do our best to shield work areas from noise, but there are certain limits to what can be done.“

Different solutions were also tested to ensure that staff could actually take their breaks. Particularly successful were the use of rotating staff (floaters) who cover different stations so others can take a break, and stopping the practice of paying out unused breaks, ensuring that staff really take them instead.

Breaks

„So, this whole topic of breaks is definitely a positive one, because that was something that kept coming up a lot in recent years, like, people kept saying that it just wasn't possible to take breaks. And then, in the end, you get, like, half an hour added on, I mean, it gets automatically deducted by the system, so they add half an hour at the end just so you at least got paid for it, but, yeah, that's really just a small consolation. Because, like, if you've been working non-stop for nine hours, or eight and a half hours, with people constantly in front of you, and you're just processing, processing, processing… Then you're just completely done. So it was definitely a really positive aspect [that it works now]."

„That at least for bigger events or, yeah, actually even during regular busy shifts, there's someone who kind of works as a floater. Like, you have an extra person who doesn't have a fixed position, but just steps in wherever there's a lot going on and help is needed. And if that's not the case, they just go around and actively relieve people so they can take a break. It doesn't have to be a full half-hour for each person, but at least 15 minutes. And then you just go through the staff at one bar, then move on to the next bar, go through the people there, and then start again at the first bar."

Some clubs also reported paying more attention to balanced holiday planning and fair shift distribution.

„Awareness on not cumulating too many tiring shifts in a row. Enforcing staff on contract to take real holidays (paid holidays)."

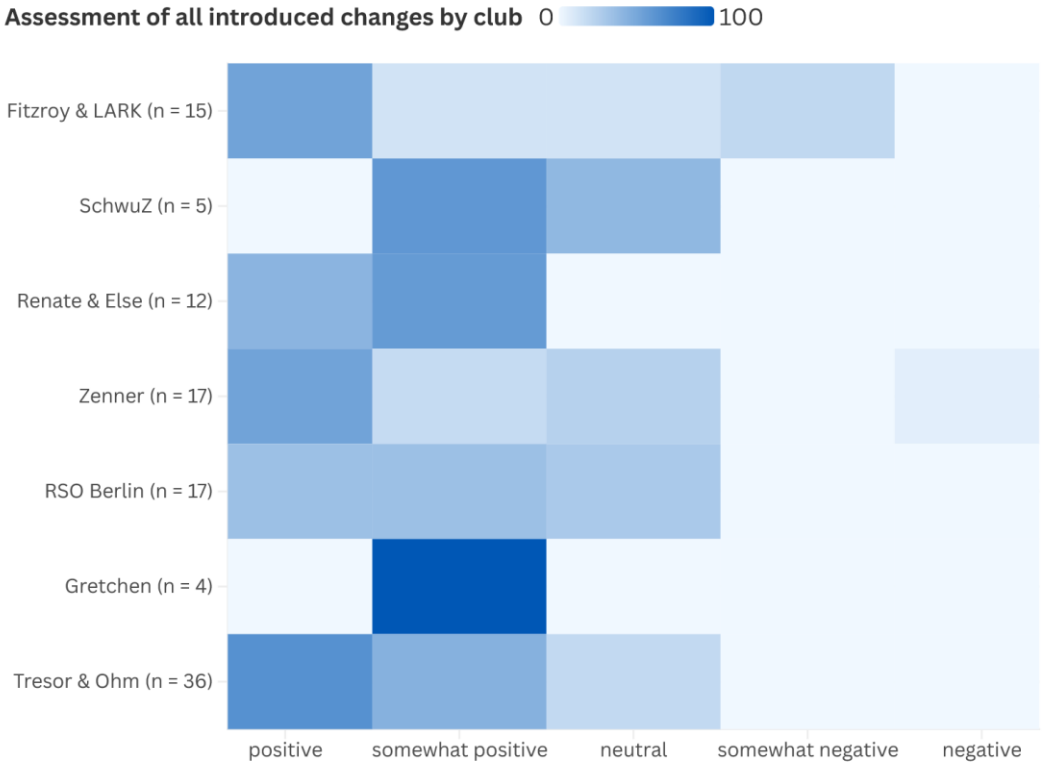
ASSESSMENT OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
BY CLUB

Across all pilot clubs, the introduced changes were predominantly rated as positive or somewhat positive.

(Somewhat) negative ratings were rare. A notable share of respondents assessed the changes as neutral regarding their effect on their own everyday work.

Despite the overall positive assessment, respondents also demanded a consistent continuation of the measures in the future.

„In this respect, everything at Gretchen is absolutely exemplary!“



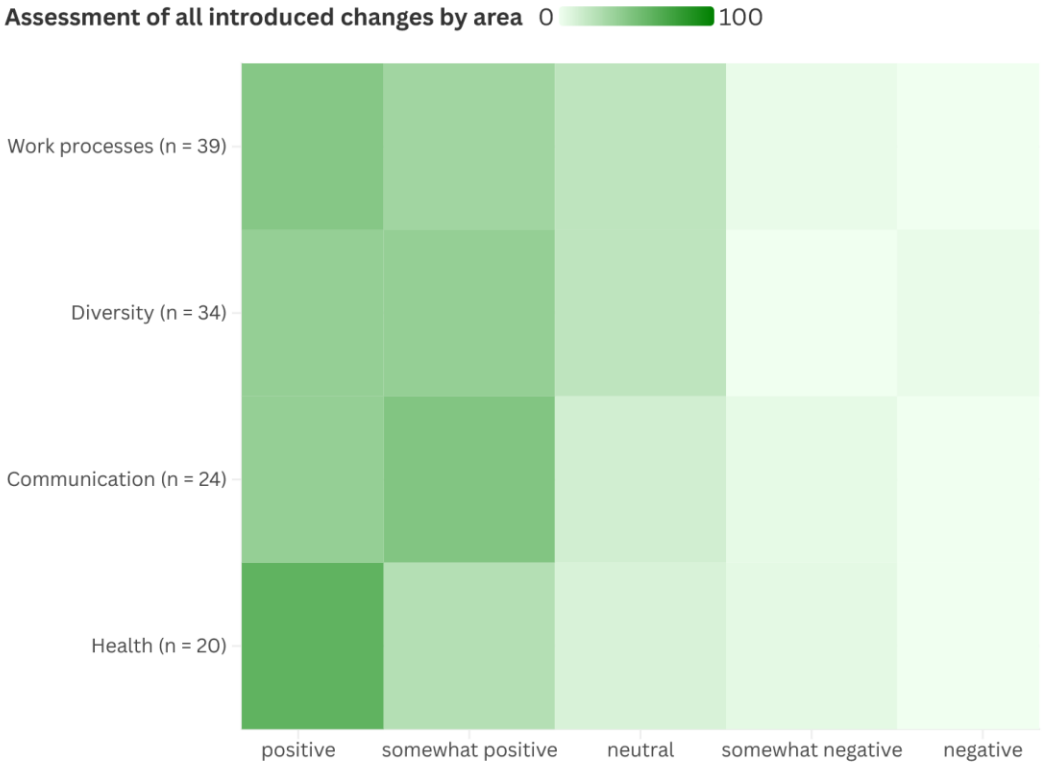
Item: How do you personally rate this change(s)?
Aggregated ratings of perceived changes within all four examined areas.

In all pilot clubs, the positive reviews outweigh the negative ones. However, the share of neutral reviews clearly shows that the introduced changes are not equally relevant to all respondents.

ASSESSMENT OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
BY AREA

Changes in all areas were mostly rated positive or somewhat positive. The highest shares of positive ratings were in the areas of "Health" and "Communication". In the areas of "Diversity" and "Work organisation and processes", neutral ratings were somewhat more common alongside the positive ones.

„Less back pain, more concentration at work due to better compliance with communication channels, fewer interruptions by phone calls during leisure time."



Item: How do you personally rate this change(s)?
Aggregated ratings of perceived changes within all clubs.

Overall, the changes across all areas are perceived as rather positive – with the measures in the area of health receiving particularly positive assessment.

ASSESSMENT OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
BY WORK ROLE

Not surprisingly, staff members usually rated their work situation somewhat more critically than managers.

It is particularly noticeable however that team leads, due to their position at the intersection between operational and management levels, are exposed to higher workloads. They frequently expressed concerns in the areas of Work organisation and processes and Communication - especially about staff shortages, the need to provide constant availability, and the feedback culture in clubs. They also rated the introduced changes in these two areas more critically.

„More work, since I have to carry through and implement the changes."

„Positive overall. But the process is still very exhausting and takes time until it is established."

„On the one hand it created pressure, on the other hand more clarity. Overall I would rate [the changes] as positive."

Scale: 1 = positive to 5 = negative
Average rating of the introduced changes by area and work role

ASSESSMENT OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES BY MARGINALISED GROUPS

„More POC's, German should not be required for bartenders."

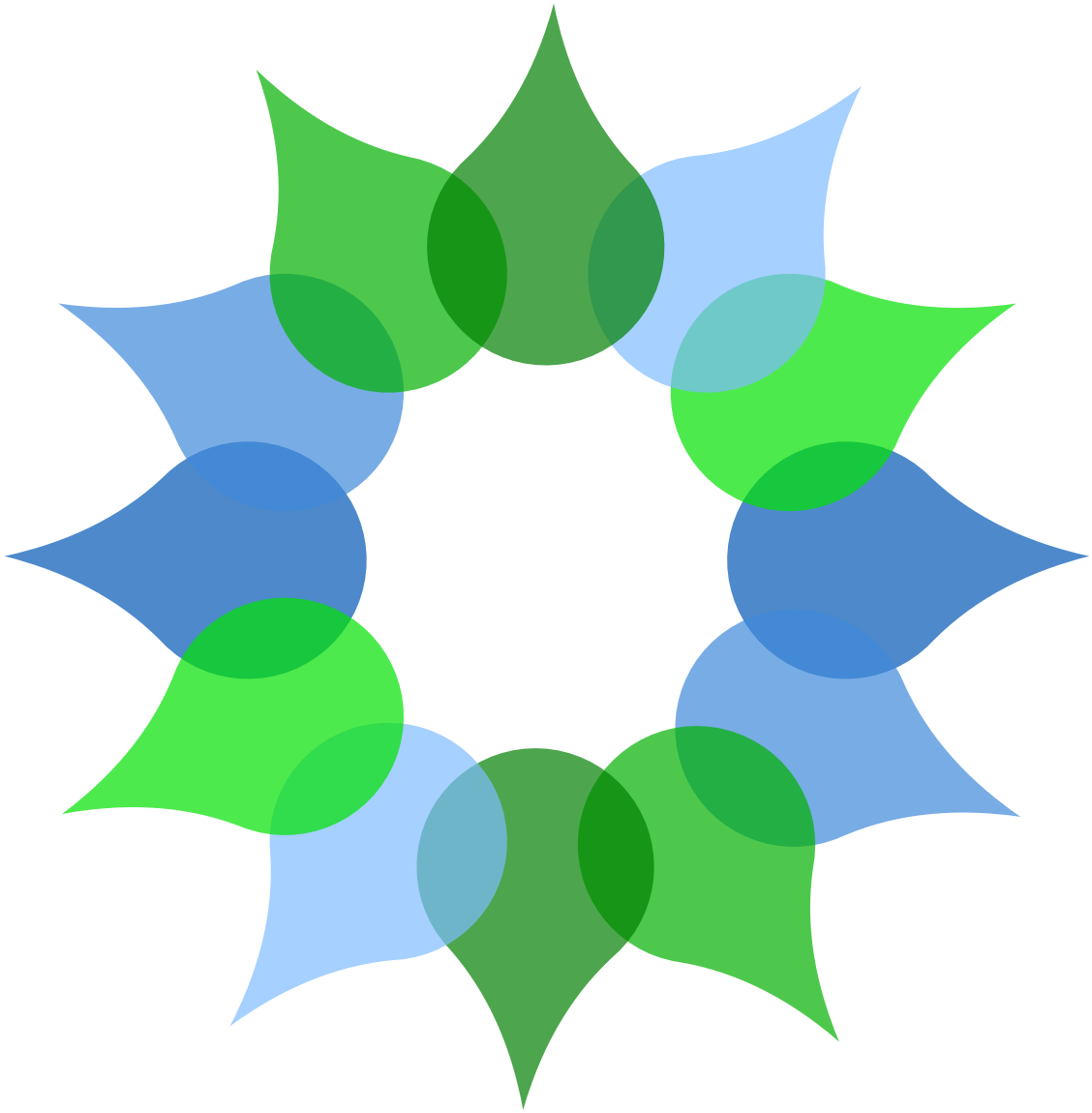
„It's not always the case, but I've experienced FLINTA folks, more than cis males, tending to care more about how other team members are actually doing and what we're experiencing. A few really sensitive and empathic FLINTA folks have low management jobs and it is great to work with them. But also, some FLINTA workers who tried to talk about issues in the club and social issues got treated as troublemakers and got mobbed by management. That affected several of us negatively. FLINTA folks were discouraged and some quit. People who try to talk about problems have been treated like they were creating the problems. That makes it feel pointless to try to improve situations in the workplace."

The data also shows that respondents with a migration background less often felt timely informed about decisions (40,9 % vs. 55,0 % without migration background) or adequately involved in decision-making (28,2 % vs. 53,6 %). Furthermore, FLINTA* respondents less often rated the feedback culture as constructive (34,8 % vs. 55,2 % among male respondents) and more frequently reported a lack of clear regulations in cases of guest violence (25,2 % vs. 9,2 % among male respondents).

Open responses highlight that a constructive handling of criticism still remains a problem in some clubs, which can be particularly unsettling for marginalised group members and negatively influence the club's working climate.

EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES

The evaluation findings show project outcomes both at the individual level (micro) and regarding the work situation in clubs (meso level).



- AWARENESS
- INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE
- ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE
- BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
- NEGATIVE OR MISSING EFFECTS

AWARENESS

The evaluation findings indicate a considerable raise in awareness regarding the importance of mental health as a prerequisite for work ability.

On the one hand, the analysed data repeatedly demonstrates that club work, especially night work, involves substantial strain. Respondents note that the topics of mental health and work-life balance are often neglected in club culture.

Representatives of the pilot clubs not only showed willingness to participate in the project activities but were also open to further initiatives addressing mental health and improving working conditions. They see the project as an "icebreaker" that for the first time placed the issue firmly on the agenda.

In addition, they perceive it as an impulse to embed (mental) health promotion more systematically in their organisational concepts.

The data shows that employees clearly voiced their needs within the project activities and that management genuinely listened.

Several clubs also reported concrete follow-up measures they plan to implement after the pilot project ends.

„But the fact that we made it known—simply by offering such workshops—that we care about our employees' mental health, or that it's important to us, I believe that this thought also brought other expectations or wishes to us. I would definitely say that. Maybe that wouldn't have happened without it, maybe it would've, I can't say for sure. But I do believe it played a role, because the mindset was and is just different."

„Yeah, I think the big challenge is really just to start engaging with the topic at all. That it's not just some issue that's floating around, but that it was actually put into practice. […] And the fact that this topic was simply brought up, that really acted like a kind of initiator. All the things people learned from it […], maybe one department head took away one thing, and someone else something different. I think that's also a matter of perspective. But basically, the topic is now on the table, and we're now integrating it into our company concept, and that's actually nice."

EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

The reported effects at the individual level are numerous, pointing to improvements in personal well-being, the working climate, and the balance between private life and work.

Sense of security

„Greater sense of security.“

„It gave me a sense of arriving, helped me overcome my insecurity.“

„More security with colleagues.“

Raise in confidence

„It made me more confident, since I had a voice and I know, people listened to me.“

„I feel more confident.“

„I feel more belonging and confident.“

Planning reliability and better integration of work and personal life

„Better planning of my months.“

„More planning predictability.“

„It make it easy to know the work scheduled and set your availability.“

Club affiliation

„I’m happy. I feel like it is also my big part of work, experience and point of view I shared here. I guess I still have what to give to this place.“

„I feel more involved.“

EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

„Feeling positive, it's fun to work like this. Happy colleagues enjoy the stressful job more and stay healthy."

„Makes for a better team work, but especially makes people happier."

„They made me feel a bit more valued."

Employees also reported moments of self-efficacy, strengthened self-confidence, and feelings of safety and belonging to the club. One person explicitly mentioned improved access to health care meaning the short-term-therapy through Mental Health in Clubs.

Several participants noted increased self-care and relief, as well as openness to new approaches in daily workflows and new tools introduced during the project.

The changes further contributed to a better reconciliation of work and private life, particularly through more predictable scheduling.

„At first, I struggled a bit with the whole topic of digitalization. But by now, I've developed a bit more access to it, because I've noticed that these tools actually help me save time, which I can then use for other things, or maybe even for myself."

„About two years ago, I was at the point where I was close to burnout. And I think the project actually helped me to some extent, because it gave me some food for thought. Not necessarily in the sense that I felt I needed to accept help offers or anything like that, but more that it made me reflect on what really matters in life and where I might be able to make some adjustments. […] And as a result, my life has actually become more relaxed. So in that sense, I do believe that it made a difference, both for me personally, and from the management's side as well. I think there were moments where people realised: okay, this is someone we need, someone we want to keep. We have to respond to that, so we don't lose them."

EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

The reported effects at the organisational level include improved physical and psychological working conditions, the introduction and consolidation of structures, and stronger participation.

Work made easier/ stress reduced/ work atmosphere improved

„I feel good at work.“

„Come to work in a better mood.“

„Better orga structure and working atmosphere.“

„Very good, I feel way less strained by my work.“

„Open, clear and honest communication for better exchange and teamwork.“

„But basically, I also found these things totally sensible, because employees were also directly involved. In other words, the information came directly from them and not from people higher up a hierarchy, who of course see it differently than the employees themselves.“

Feedback culture and participation strengthened

Work structures improved

„Better workflow and distribution of tasks resulting in lighter workload for nightmanagers and more possibilities for day work.“

„Earlier communication, better distribution of experienced employees, so that workflows are better adhered to.“

„And that's exactly what I mean with the workshops, […] we have also sat in these workshops with other clubs, that there are similar problems, but other solutions have been found for them. And then you think about whether this can somehow be implemented in our club.“

Peer exchange among clubs helps open up new opportunities

EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCED CHANGES
ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

Overall, participant note that challenging situations are – as result of project participation – detected much more quickly and responded to more sensitively.

„That you just try to respond more to the needs and react more sensitively when people say that things are too much."

The clubs feel strengthened in their ability to address such issues.

„And in the course of this, we have now also initiated a few things that build on exactly these things […]. So especially the feedback concept and this break thing […]. These are the two main things that […] have grown out of this project. There's a lot more to it than we suspected. And instinctively, we have always gone in the right direction. But now it's a bit more well-founded and structured. Or at least we are going in the right direction. "

At the organisational level, participants from all seven pilot clubs consistently report improvements in working conditions. These manifest themselves in easier work, reduced stress and a more pleasant working atmosphere. Measures that directly address mental well-being (e.g. workshops and team meetings) as well as activities to improve the physical environment, such as painting walls or setting up break rooms, contribute to this.

The changes initiated by the project not only make the working environment more pleasant, but also more clearly structured. The concrete measures that especially contribute to this from the respondents' point of view are the introduction of shift planning tools, the (re)structuring and/or writing-out of work processes (e.g. in the form of guidelines) and various formats of team meetings.

All formats of more intensive communication are rated positively by the respondents and perceived as effective levers for change. In some clubs it is 1x1 feedback meetings, in others – bi-weeklies or monthly team meetings. Some clubs rely on written communication, for example in the form of so-called night reports, others invest more in team-building measures. What all formats have in common is that they are considered useful by employees at all levels and are understood as a foundation for further change.

The data reveals a successful development of leadership skills: Managers act more professional as a result of their participation in the project and show themeselves more involved in operational processes. At the same time, the need for further interventions for this target group is emphasised, because they are key figures for changes in the clubs.

„So not only psychological conversations, but it actually also one-on-one conversation offers somehow for individual leading positions, so that you don't just say, you have to sit down in a workshop and talk openly about all your problems, but maybe just individually with a person and anonymously, where you just know, okay, that definitely remains confidential."

„I believe [...] that when it comes to mental health, you should focus a little more on the people who work in management positions. And focus less on the people who work as normal bartenders or runners or and so on. Not because it is not necessary, but because these are simply areas of work that are very fluctuating. So, most people who work as runners or bartenders do it for two, three, four years alongside their studies or because they somehow have a job break to bridge. Very few do this permanently in order to make a living for 10 or 20 years. The situation is different with the people who work in management positions, the event managers or HR managers and so on and so forth. Because these are really professions that you have studies for or where you have grown into them on the basis of experience, but where I think there is a permanent need that builds up over the years."

EFFECTS OF INTRODUCED CHANGES
SUSTAINABILITY

„This is a process that needs continuous evaluation and adaptation to the needs of everyone involved.“

„Maybe I can round this up and evaluate that the whole project had a good start and it must definitely take at least years before you feel the effects. It has already brought something good.“

„Not necessarily only psychological but offers in general. I think it's just very difficult when you live past normal daytime life, because you always work at night. But if there were general offers for clubs, we are a huge community here in Berlin. […] Someone once, I think, gave me a number of 8000 or something like that, of people who work in clubs and club-like situations. So there should actually be enough people who could be addressed with it. That would be great, of course. Such things as relaxation techniques or simply further training, workshops, seminars, whatever.“

Many respondents stressed that it is still too early to judge long-term effects. They view the clubs as facing ongoing challenges and the changes implemented as first, sometimes small, steps toward lasting improvement in staff mental health.

„What I mean is that it would take years before you really feel something, because people just can't accept it right away and make room for it, and it always takes a little time to really adjust to it.“

They valued the external expertise provided through the project and requested ongoing external support.

On the one hand, participants see the need for continuing individual measures (providing therapy opportunities, workshops) in a low-threshold and cost-neutral way. On the other hand, they ask for long-term organisational support (supervision, evaluation, consulting). Centralised networking opportunities for the whole event sector are also cited as useful.

„Low-threshold access to therapy.“

One option mentioned is the setting up of a central, cross-club contact point for mental health. It would have the added value that employees could break away from their club's internal hierarchies and receive independent help if necessary and also make use of it in emergencies.

„RL and digital networks between club workers from different clubs would be really supportive.“

EFFECTS OF INTRODUCED CHANGES
SUSTAINABILITY

Employment security as well as fair, timely pay remain central concerns of respondents.

„Higher salaries for full-time club workers so they can access mental health services and improve their overall living conditions. I am aware that it's a complex issue (rising operation costs in clubs, entry fees already expensive etc), but I feel like this is the only thing that could bring a big improvement in the long run."

Respondents also underlined as fundamental that people in leadership positions actively support changes, model their values and put the well-being of employees above their own interests.

„Also, I would suggest the leading positions to visit the club during nighttime, so that they can get an idea about the implementation and real issues of the workers, before taking decision/proposing solutions."

Work processes should continue to be improved by shorter shifts, balancing of night and early shifts, and provision of sufficiant staffing (especially for closings). Adequate rest times between shifts and the possibility to actually take paid vacation are also important. Transparent structures and clear workflows are seen as priorities.

„Better staffing of shifts, especially closings. Shorter shifts (10-hour shifts are common now)."

In the area of diversity, measures to strengthen team cohesion as well as safety and awareness trainings are still required. In addition, it is seen as important to actively promote a culture in which everyone looks out for each other (*„Everyone checking on everyone"*).

„More FLINTA and BiPOC support and networking. More recognition of the needs of neuro-divergent folks in nightlife - there are so many."*

Regular team meetings, feedback rounds, and 1:1 conversations (also with mini-job and part-time employees) are seen as important. Decision-making processes should be transparent and inclusive, systematically incorporating marginalised perspectives.

„Good communication is essential. Above all, from management to club employees."

The respondents also consider clear regulations on substance use in the workplace, targeted information and support services as well as a work culture that does not marginalize sobriety to be important. Break regulations, retreat rooms, ergonomic training and measures for psychological relief should be established/expanded.

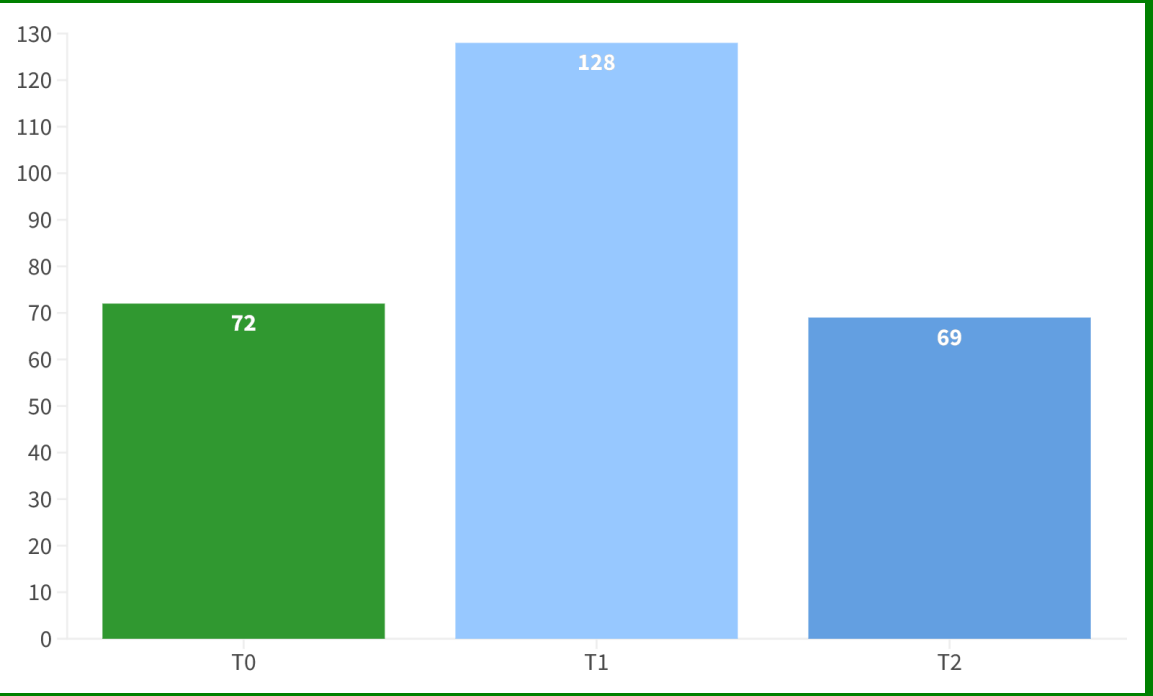
„Strategies to overcome fatigue without drugs, […] employ more people who are sober or do not consume at work, so that you can support each other better […]."

BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
DATA

Most of the responses are recorded during the transfer phase.

In addition to the assessment of introduced changes, the club employees were asked to assess their work situation via standardised measures at three points in time. The first survey was carried out as part of the pilot phase (T0), followed by a survey in the transfer phase (T1) and a survey at the end of the project (T2).

The questionnaire was strucured along the four target areas of the project – "Work organization and processes", "Diversity", "Communication" and "Health". The rating was based on a 4-point scale ('agree', 'tend to agree', 'tend to disagree', 'disagree'), supplemented by the answer options 'I don't know' and 'doesn't apply to my club'.



BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
WORK ORGANISATION UND PROCESSES

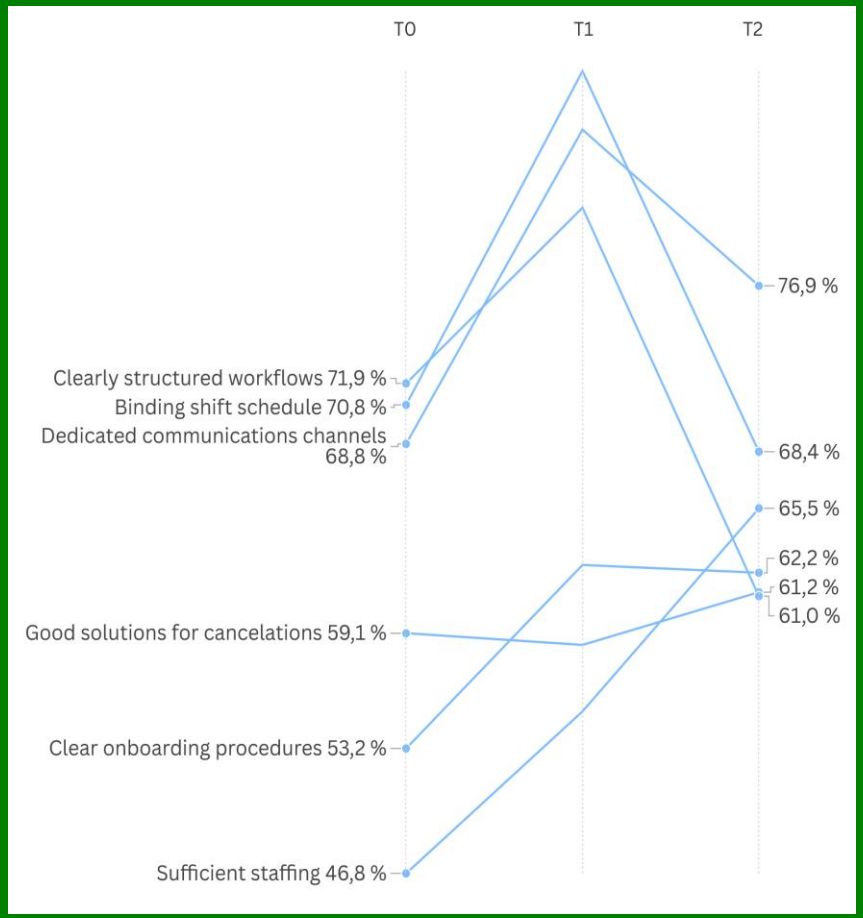
In all but one area examined, an improvement can be seen over the three measurement points.

It is notable that the three factors “Clearly structured workflows", “Binding shift schedule" and “Dedicated communication channels" initially increase sharply at T1 but fall significantly at T2. This is a sign that these factors are being intensively addressed during the transfer phase (T1), but that there is no continuation of the efforts. Nevertheless, there are clear positive developments: The factor “Sufficient staffing” recorded an increase of 19 % over the three survey dates, which indicates a targeted effort to reduce understaffing. “Clear onboarding procedures” increases by 9 % and “Dedicated communication channels" by 8 %. Only the “Clearly structured workflows" factor decreases by 11 % compared to the baseline.

The results suggest that the topic of “Work organization and processes” is becoming increasingly important in club work. However, it seems to be challenging to establish the introduced structural changes and the successes achieved with them in the long term.

„There are private WhatsApp groups among employees who work in the same environment/at the same time. In addition, the use of the e2n program helps enormously.“

„The shift planning is well done and enough time in advance. It is also flexible enough to feel free to change things.“



Scale: from 1 = "agree" to 4 = "disagree";
Proportion of the answers "agree" and "tend to agree".

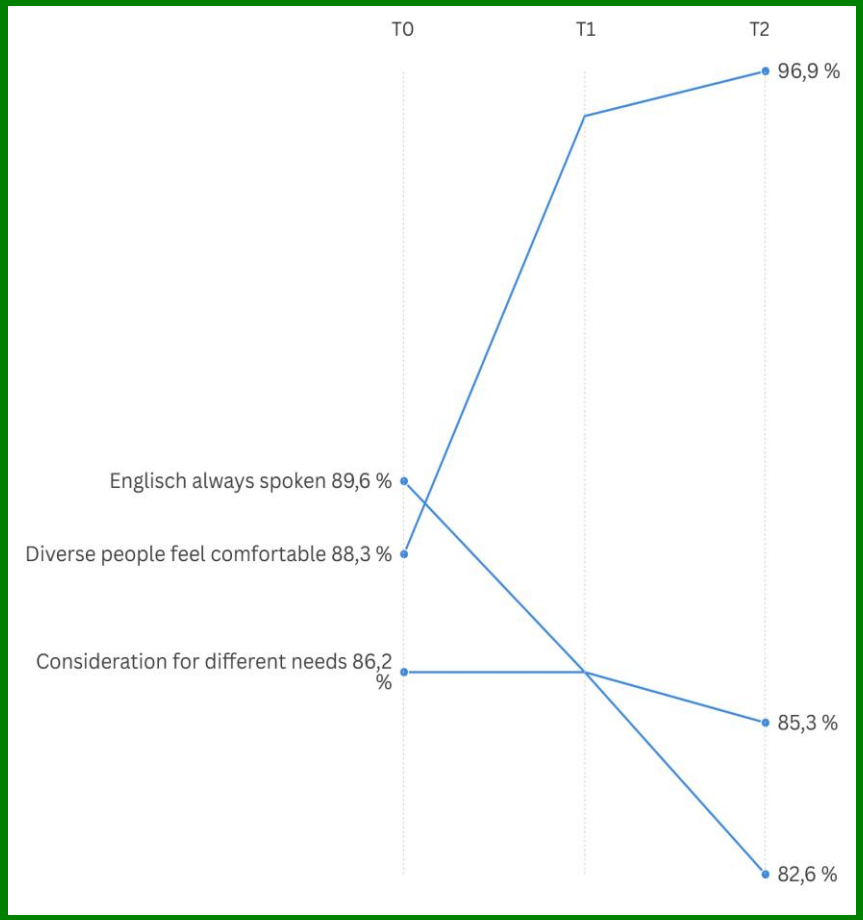
BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
DIVERSITY

Clubs are considered places of diversity and the indicators in this area show comparatively high values.

In the area of "diversity", it is – unsurprisingly – clear that the pilot clubs represent (working) places where diverse people generally feel comfortable. Agreement with this statement increases significantly at T1 and peaks at T2. The other two indicators ("English always spoken" and "Consideration for different needs") show less consistent trends but remain at high levels of agreement (over 80 % for all three factors across all measurement points).

Despite these overall positive numbers, the qualitative data reveals ongoing need for improvement. Clubs responded by introducing more team meetings, new conflict resolution formats, and informal get-togethers (such as dinner parties or seasonal kick-off events) to strengthen cohesion and appreciation of diversity. In addition, existing awareness teams are being expanded and awareness training for employees is being conducted.

„The things I find more important to improve it, are the meetings we have outside work, like team events, where we spent time together outside working hours and being able to create a stronger connection between us."



Scale: from 1 = "agree" to 4 = "disagree";
Proportion of the answers "agree" and "tend to agree".

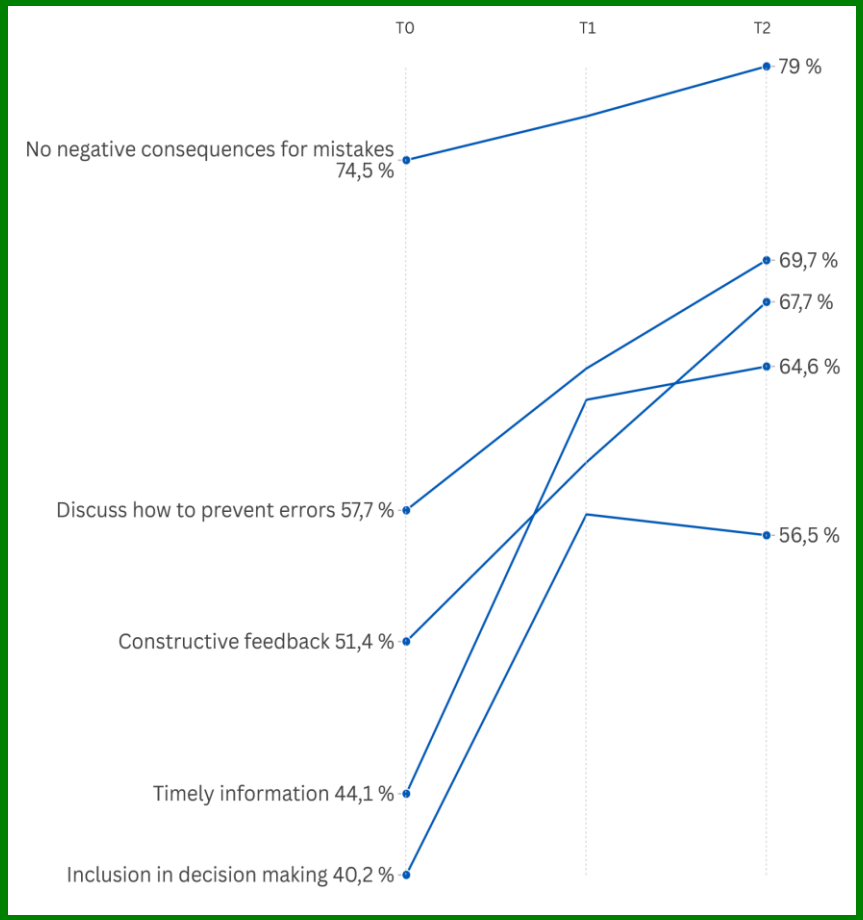
BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
COMMUNICATION

The results show a significant improvement in the area of communication – all indicators are rated better than at the beginning of the project.

A consistently positive development can be observed in the area of "Communication". The "No negative consequences for mistakes" factor, which is already strongest at T0, increases by further 5 %, indicating that a basic error tolerance is already established and is being further strengthened. The factors "Discuss how to avoid errors" and "Constructive feedback" also show significant improvements and are developing into important pillars of a mature feedback culture. However, the most important advances are made by the two factors "Timely information" and "Inclusion in decision making", with an increase of about 20 %. This development points to a systematic change towards more transparency, participation and an open learning culture. The respondents cite the different forms of team meetings, which are newly introduced, further established or held in larger groups, as reasons for the improvements. In addition, several clubs are billing participation in the meetings for the first time, even if sometimes only partially, as paid working time. The creation of transparent communication channels and introduction of separate communication positions also contribute to this.

„Team meetings, consultations, conflicts resolution, personnel changes."

„Weekly briefings, direct and fast feedback from team leaders. "



Scale: from 1 = "agree" to 4 = "disagree";
Proportion of the answers "agree" and "tend to agree".

BEFORE-AFTER-COMPARISONS
HEALTH

Significant improvements can be observed in break management and the availability of retreat spaces. However, there is still a need for further action in this area.

The graph shows two opposing development patterns: The upper factors, which already had high values at T0 (regarding the regulations on assaults by guests, support for substance use problems and personnel accessibility), show a downward trend and fall by 10 to 16 % by T2. In contrast, the two factors “Retreat rooms or possibilities” and “No time pressure when scheduling” increase by about 10 % in the endline survey. In the three areas with the greatest deficits at the beginning, an improvement can therefore be observed. The results show a mixed picture, but the observed developments could indicate a change in priorities – away from formal regulations to the provision of essential opportunities for recreation and retreat, which leads to genuine improvements in the well-being of employees.

„Back training for runners, safety instructions.“

„Substance-use-free areas.“

„More people are working sober.“

„Free qualitative hearing protection.“

Scale: from 1 = "agree" to 4 = "disagree";
Proportion of the answers "agree" and "tend to agree".

NEGATIVE OR MISSING EFFECTS

However, there are also reports of missing and negative effects.

About a quarter of all respondents from the pilot clubs (33 people in total) say they have not noticed any changes.

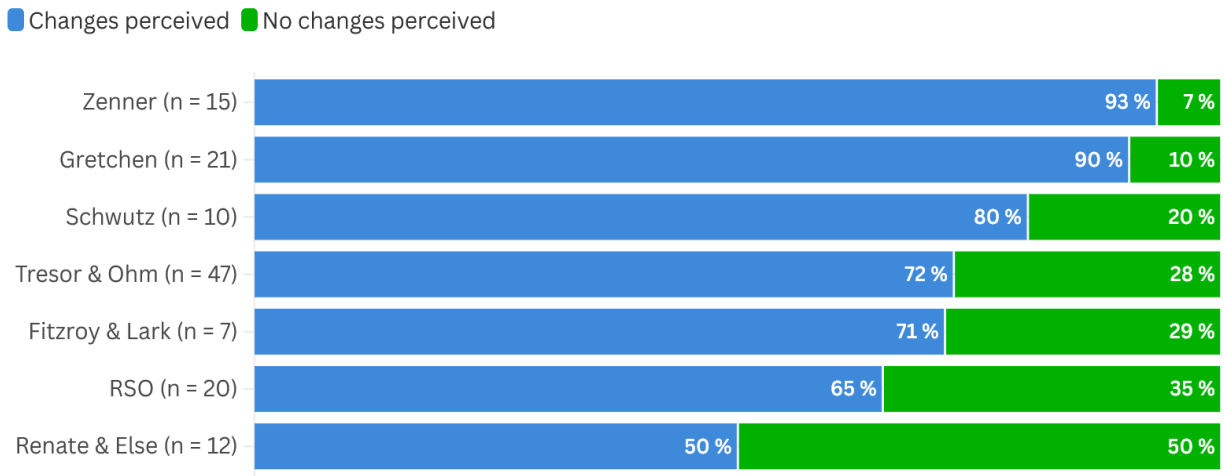
„Not much“, „They didn‘t“

About half of these people say they are onboard since the beginning of the project.

„It is the same as before.“

It is noticeable that within individual pilot clubs, the ratings of introduced changes can vary strongly – from positive to missing or negative. This indicates that either the introduced changes are not sufficiently known by all staff members or not relevant for some club employees.

„Team very large, so not everyone could be reached or included.“



Proportion of responses “Changes perceived” of the total number of respondents per club

NEGATIVE OR MISSING EFFECTS

Individual respondents from five pilot clubs state that the changes have had no positive effects on them personally, although only a few statements are clearly articulated.

Individual respondents from four pilot clubs expressed rather negative sentiments in the survey, but these cannot be clearly traced back to specific project activities.

„I feel a bit sadder about the reality, future and society I live in.“

Still, in addition to two bad experiences with the short-term therapy offer (suboptimal fit with the therapist, problem with making an appointment), some negative feelings are reported, especially in connection with the lack of perception of change in the club.

„Due to being no positive changes in the workplace, I am feeling burnt out, on my days free I spend sleeping all the day because I invest all my energy into my workplace.“

Additionally, a few participants from middle management describe an increased burden due to the changes introduced in the club.

In at least three pilot clubs, managers report experiencing increased expectations on their performance. They feel pressured by this and, according to their own statements, have to work more to implement changes or communicate new processes to their employees. However, reports of personally perceived increased burden due to the introduced changes cannot necessarily be combined with a negative assessment or rejection of the measures based on the data collected.

„We do not succeed in deriving actual recommendations for action, but it is always said that the team leaders or the management as such should please take care of it. A lot of dissatisfaction is expressed, and it is said that you have to do something, but actual ideas are not being developed, at least in the committee. […] This is not fundamentally wrong either, but it does massively increase the pressure on those who lead teams in this way, because there are also expectations involved.“

NEGATIVE OR MISSING EFFECTS

It is clear from the statements of the team leaders concerned that they would like to see more constructiveness on the part of employees in determining their needs as well as more active participation in the development and introduction of solutions instead of passive expectations.

„The challenge is [...] that it is more of a way of ventilating in terms of negative criticism. This is quite an understandable human need, if something bothers me, then I want to get rid of it at some point. But to get the whole thing into something constructive is the actual challenge. “

„And then you think like, yes, on the one hand you want us to communicate more. If we communicate more, you don't communicate back. Of course, that makes the whole thing a bit difficult.“

In some cases, there is also feedback that the changes that have taken place are not consistently enforced or communicated straightforward enough, which leads to frustration at all levels.

„Most of the points went well, only the work instructions are forgotten and not followed by night managers and employees after a few weeks, despite being prominently posted.“

„Personally still very confused about the structure and communication as well as other staff. Also everyone always gets different information.“

At the same time, employees complain in isolated cases that managers continue to fail to deal constructively with criticism expressed and show little sensitivity to the concerns of employees.

It is hardly surprising that this has negative effect on the motivation of employees.

„People who try to talk about problems have been treated like they were creating the problems. That makes it feel pointless to try to improve situations in the workplace.“

„I think that even if you try to go through the world more mindfully and have somehow taken courses there, unfortunately that doesn't make it any better. There are other things missing that function with appreciation, also from the club management and from the company management and so on, which simply have to be acknowledged. “

Beneficial & Obstructive Factors

04

CONFIRMATION OF NEEDS

The evaluation results clearly validate the identified mental health needs that initiated the project and continue to be significant at its end.

High (work) load on employees

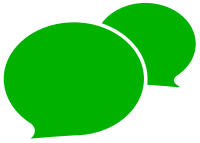
Employees in the club culture sector are exposed to exceptionally high levels of psychological stress. Among the contributing factors are night shifts and working in darkness, alternating between day and night work, extended working hours, delayed wage payments, the necessity of holding multiple jobs, and frequent last-minute changes.

Work organisation

In terms of work processes, shift planning poses a major challenge – due partly to collaboration with numerous external partners, the need for fair distribution of shifts (and tips!), and switching between different event formats. The lack of clear workflows makes onboarding more difficult and places significant pressure on middle management.

Diversity

With regard to diversity, it continues to be strongly emphasized that – despite efforts and progress 'in the right direction' – it remains essential to place greater focus on FLINTA* and BIPoC individuals in change processes as well as in leadership positions.



Communication

Communication continues to be a key factor, as it can lead to both challenges and solutions. Clearly defined agreements and transparent expectations – directed at both employees and management – are crucial. Appropriate communication is also a means of conveying appreciation to teams.

Health

The significance of workplace health became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading many clubs to take proactive measures to support employee wellbeing. Although some working conditions are difficult to change, it is essential to create greater opportunities for detachment from work, to address substance use, and to foster work-life balance.

OBSTRUCTIVE VS. BENEFICIAL FACTORS

Health-related changes in the club context are significantly shaped by structural, organisational and personnel factors. The main obstacles to this are time constrains, role conflicts and structural challenges that are difficult to change – such as financial uncertainties in the industry. On the other hand, a supportive working atmosphere, active involvement of all hierarchical levels as well as practical tools and external impulses offer strong potential to facilitate change processes.

Obstructive Factors	*Beneficial Factors*
Age of employees	Work atmosphere incl. management's understanding of health
Time factor	Insight and participation of employees (involve all hierarchical levels, promote team cohesion)
Role conflicts	Employment model (club as a part-time job, paid working hours)
Unchangeable venue-related factors	Practical tools that can be easily used
General changes in the event industry, especially financial difficulties	External support (peer exchange among clubs, external evaluation as an impulse for change)

OBSTRUCTIVE FACTORS

„And this whole topic [mental health] has probably only been around for what feels like... So, in the 90s there wasn't anything like it. That's why there is a large part of the workforce here that is very far away from it, depending on the generation. Yes, that's why it just made sense to participate [in the project].“

From the respondents' point of view, the age of employees plays an important role in how the topic of mental health should be addressed. Paradoxically, younger generations are more aware of preventive and health-promoting measures. At the same time, the topic of health at a younger age does not yet have the urgency and importance that it will receive at a later date.

Older employees who have been working in clubs since the 1990s, on the other hand, are more likely to have both physical and mental health risks, but are less willing to actively take care of their health.

In addition, the time factor proves to be crucial for the long-term success of the measures. A one-time participation in group or individual activities is comparatively easy to organize. Nevertheless, it must be ensured that club employees can also physically participate in the offers. For example, it must be taken into account that they are only available to a limited extent during the day because they have to recover after night work. Even more challenging is the permanent integration of new formats such as team meetings or feedback discussions, as the resources of several people must be coordinated.

Some clubs have to contend with unchangeable venue-related factors (restrictions imposed by landlords or due to the physical boundaries of venues) that can complicate structural measures such as setting up break rooms, soundproofing etc.

As hurdles in the process, various conflicts of interest and roles are also mentioned. For instance, an interviewee remarks that the Clubcommission is a representative of club owners/managers and is therefore not eligible to represent the interests of club employees.

The composition of workshops participants also does not seem appropriate to this person, as it calls into question the extent to which employees at the operational and management levels can talk to each other about problems in a trusting manner. Furthermore, the person notes that middle management is heavily under-resourced regarding the additional tasks that come with promoting mental health. In addition, it is difficult to delegate tasks for some positions because they handle confidential information. This makes internal restructuring, which may be quite necessary, more difficult.

UNESCO's recognition of Berlin's techno culture as an intangible cultural heritage in 2024 acknowledges the cultural significance of the club scene.

Economic importance and situation of Berlin's club scene

However, the economic situation of Berlin's clubs is currently strongly marked by uncertainty and challenges. Although the club scene is considered the vibrant heart of the city, many clubs are confronted with rising operating and energy costs, fluctuating visitor numbers and increasing gentrification, which entails rising rents and real estate prices or direct displacement of clubs by new construction projects such as the expansion of the A100. With a turnover of around 1.5 billion euro, their importance for the local economy is considerable, yet almost half of the clubs are at risk of closure. In addition, there is a change in leisure behavior: Generation Z shows a growing interest in healthier lifestyles and prefers alternative leisure activities, which leads to a decline in (night) club visits and/or related consumption.

Despite these challenges, Berlin's club scene remains an important cultural sector with potential for innovation. Some clubs are responding to the changing needs of visitors by offering alternative event formats that rely less on alcohol and more on communal experiences (day or breakfast raves, sober parties, flea markets, etc.). Furthermore, various initiatives are committed to the preservation of the clubs, for example by making their cultural significance visible or by working to minimise conflicts with their surroundings, e.g. through exhibitions or projects for noise cancelling measures.

„So there was kind of a high or kind of a peak. And it is now flattening out a bit again. And now it's just a matter of looking a little further ahead in management and reacting to it. And that's why the number... it depends on the contracts. What kind of contracts are there? Are they permanent? What is the situation? How many event days do we have? That's somehow a constantly changing concept. So, it's not Rewe, which works from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., but difficult to predict because we depend on how the guests behave.“

„It goes well when it's about talking improvements and acknowledging we're getting better with a rich program and trustworthy cooperation partners. It's tricky to find the finances for paid [staff] meetings outside our regular business hours.“

BENEFICIAL FACTORS

„And it was just nice to simply exchange ideas and say, 'Hey, we're from the club'. And then there were some people from the [other club] or from other clubs who participated. And then you can also connect. And then you realize that we actually all have the same problems and also the fact that our hearts are stuck in there. So it's always very nice to stimulate the exchange, so to speak.“

The work atmosphere is mentioned as a particularly important conducive condition for the introduction of measures for the mental health of club employees. It is helpful if management acknowledges the problem and actively shapes the process. In addition, it is important for employees to take an active role in the process by proposing solutions and participating in the offers.

Furthermore, it has a positive effect to strengthen team cohesion in a targeted manner and to involve all hierarchical levels in the processes in order to create acceptance for the planned changes. Various formats could be used for this purpose, depending on the specific situation and the relationships in the respective club. However, it is important that employees are involved in all decisions that affect them.

The employment model can also be a beneficial condition. It is often cited as an obstacle that club work is usually done on a small scale and with comparatively low pay. One respondent, on the other hand, reports that their main job has a relieving effect, as financial security creates additional resources to carry out club activities in a more relaxed manner. Regardless of the employment model, it is important to record and account for all work-related activities (e.g. team meetings, feedback activities) as paid working time.

It is also considered beneficial if the health-promoting activities can be easily integrated into the employees' everyday (working) lives. Specifically, the following suggestions are mentioned:

- Offers and resources that can be used independently/at any time, e.g. audio meditation that can be accessed online or an SOS handbook.
- Resources that remain accessible after an intervention (brochures, flyers, etc.) and can be used “with the team” or home.
- Tangible, simple resources, similar to sugar cones, condoms, rescue blankets.

Last but not least, external support is considered particularly helpful. Both the peer exchange between clubs and the feedback of external evaluation results are cited as important impulses for change. An external support centre for mental health questions for employees in the club scene is also considered conducive to the further development of the industry.

Reflection & Outlook

+ Conclusions
+ Recommendations
+ Takeaways

05

CONCLUSIONS

The project is very well received by the clubs, raises awareness for the mental health of club employees and initiates change.

Implementation:

High acceptance of the measures

The implementation of the Mental Health in Clubs project in the pilot clubs can be described as successful. The respondents express a high level of acceptance of the various measures and report numerous impulses for structural changes. Participation in the project helps the pilot clubs to create a solid foundation for long-term development, but there is also a need for more sustainable planning and more intensive communication.

Individual resilience:

Individual resilience noticeably strengthened

The project manages to noticeably strengthen the individual resilience of the employees of the pilot clubs. This is expressed in particular in more self-care, appreciation and relief, but the structural safeguarding of these effects remains a challenge for the organisations.

Organisational resilience:

Important steps towards a resilient organization

With the project, the clubs are taking substantial steps towards more resilient organisations. Short-term successes can be achieved, for example, through the introduction of shift planning tools, task structuring, sorting of communication channels or through new meeting formats. However, leadership development needs more time.

Sustainability:

Long-term support necessary

The sustainability of the initiated changes depends crucially on long-term structural and financial support.
The clubs have laid important foundations through participating in the project and experimenting with different formats but still need support and (de)centralised offers in order to achieve lasting impact.

The project provides important impulses, and initial changes are being accepted well by the club community. Still, stable, resilient structures must be further developed that are sustainable in the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

The active participation in the project activities shows a high need for measures that promote mental health in everyday club life as well as a high willingness to systematically address the associated challenges. Supervision and short-term therapy are particularly well accepted.

All project activities have been overall well received. The few points of criticism concern clearer communication and the desire for more transparency regarding project goals and requirements. According to the respondents, these could largely be remedied in the course of project implementation. However, it should also be noted that some club employees have not noticed any changes, although changes were introduced, which represents a development potential to strengthen internal communication in the clubs in this regard, e.g. through easily accessible materials for dissemination, such as posters or flyers.

A central learning moment for clubs lies in the realisation that health-promoting structures are not created by individual measures, but by process-based and well-embedded changes.

Individual resilience is a prerequisite for the resilience of organisations. The evaluation results contain ample evidence that the project gives club staff access to spaces for reflection, therapy and practical support that strengthens them personally. It reports on increased self-confidence, more self-efficacy and a better work-life balance. Particularly relevant for resilience-promoting organisational development is the fact that respondents state that their needs are heard, which is a central factor for staff retention and motivation.

At the same time, it is evident that individual resilience does not arise solely from personal strength but is also shaped by organisational conditions. A major challenge is the fact that middle management is largely responsible for the desired changes and is therefore exposed to a greater strain. In order to develop clubs into health-promoting organisations, long-term structures are needed that systematically promote resilience at all levels, e.g. by activating internal resources and/or calling on external support services.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation results show that the project is a catalyst for far-reaching organisational change: New meeting and feedback formats promote clarity, participation and transparency. The introduction of shift planning tools and the (re)structuring of work processes are described by employees as relieving and structuring. The physical environment is also improved (e.g. retreat rooms, sound insulation). These developments not only strengthen the working atmosphere and well-being, but also the coping abilities of organisations because they help optimising internal resources.

The development of leadership skills is particularly important for organisational resilience. According to the evaluation results, managers act more reflectively and are more involved in the design of operational processes. At the same time, there are still reports on managers who do not promote the mental health of employees with their actions but even counteract it. Targeted offers for managers should explicate and disempower these bad practices and seek to turn them into good practice.

At the same time, the need for targeted offers for these key actors becomes clear: Managers need specific, protected spaces for reflection and further training in order to be able to cope with the complex demands between operational pressure and duty of care.

In order for clubs to position themselves as resilient organisations in the long term, health promotion should not be understood as isolated project measures, but as a core component of continuous organisational development and should be integrated accordingly.

Many respondents describe the project as an "icebreaker" that makes the topic of mental health visible and enables the first steps. But it is just as clear that many of these steps remain provisional. The understanding that sustainable change takes time and resources is present in the clubs, but the structural prerequisites for this are often lacking. Financing issues, human resources, and structural restrictions continue to be frequently cited as challenges.

That is why it is necessary for clubs to mobilise more available institutional resources on the one hand. On the other hand, it will be an advantage that they see themselves more as economic actors in addition to their role as cultural venues. This would make it easier for them to achieve financial stability, which in turn could give them more room for manoeuvre for health-promoting measures.

The idea of a central, cross-club support centre for mental health, which can act independently of hierarchy and provide continuous, cross-club help, seems particularly promising.

Regular supervisions, further training and evaluations should also not be isolated measures, but a long-term component of organisational health strategy. To become health-promoting organisations, clubs need to move from one-off actions to sustainable, structurally anchored strategies – with clear commitment from management level and sufficient resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Information platform

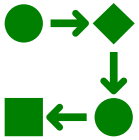
An online platform could further promote mental health in clubs on an individual and organisational level through SOS resources such as self-help tools available 24/7, contacts of helping persons or institutions.

Ambassadors

Mental health should be considered as part of all operational processes and treated as a cross-sectional task. It might be beneficial to appoint internal mental health ambassadors, but with a clear embedding in their job profiles.

Leadership skills

The qualification opportunities for managers at all levels are to be expanded. Peer exchange or mentoring by experienced management professionals could facilitate organizational learning. Representative structures could help uncover additional resources.



Organisational development

The development processes of the clubs need continuous support. Formats such as regular supervisions or intervisions and/or regular external evaluations make it possible to reflect on and readjust the introduced changes.

Diversity

The clubs are already quite diverse, but the participation and protection of marginalised groups are not yet sufficiently secured. Awareness teams should be further developed, e.g. with a focus on power relations in the organisation. Develop protection concepts not only for guests, but also for staff.

Support centre

The establishment of an external mental health focal point would provide access to long-term support for the clubs and at the same time relieve internal hierarchies. The sponsorship could be provided by an independent organisation established in the club culture or by an institutional cooperation.

Institutional Support

Institutional support from public bodies, professional associations or health insurance companies is essential for the transfer of the piloted measures. This can take the form of financing, advisory services or strategic partnerships and help secure the clubs as stable workplaces in the long term.

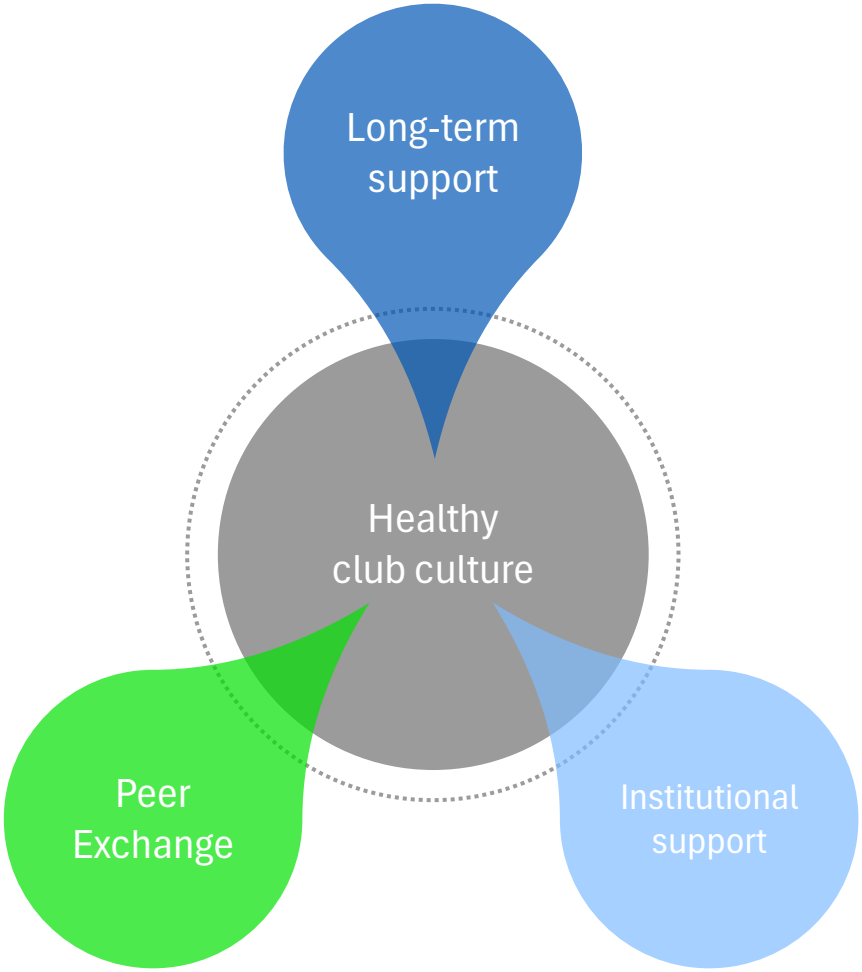
Networking

Expand professional collaborations with external providers who work on various mental health issues, such as discrimination, substance use, sexual education, etc., to build internal competence. Strengthen peer exchange among clubs to make good practice available to others more quickly.

TAKEAWAY

In order for the developments that have been initiated to continue to produce effects, sustainable structures are needed. Institutionally secured resources, strategic partnerships and long-term support services can make a decisive contribution to a healthy club culture.

While the project measures are generally met with high acceptance and set in motion numerous organisational changes, the data show a need for further support measures for the clubs. To this end, further partner organisations could be identified and involved in the process, and/or suitable peer-to-peer offers could be initiated. In the interests of sustainability, resources for health promotion and prevention in the night-time economy are to be secured in the long term, because the support needs of club employees go far beyond isolated project or club measures. It is important to develop long-term solutions on how these costs can be met institutionally in the long term.



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IMPRESSUM

Univation – Institut für Evaluation
Dr. Beywl & Associates GmbH
Hohenstaufenring 63
50674 Köln

https://univation.org/
+ 49 221 421 8071
info@univation.org

Univation @ LinkedIn

Information on the contents/results:

Elitsa Uzunova

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Our logic model Program tree© helps structure concepts of programs and projects and facilitates evaluation. We explain it in a short film on our homepage: https://univation.org/programmbaum

About the author:

Dr. Elitsa Uzunova is a psychologist with many years of experience in program evaluation across the fields of education, labour market, and health promotion, often with a focus on digitalisation. Since 2008 she has been working with Univation – Institut für Evaluation GmbH on complex evaluations with a particular focus on participatory approaches and digital transformation processes. In addition to her evaluation work, she is active in teaching and continuing professional education, at times in the areas of market research and digital marketing as well as in the field of evaluation. Her publications and presentations deal, among other topics, with user-centred digitalisation of preventive services, interfaces between evaluation and digitalisation, and visualisation of evaluation results.