

# State of Prevention & Longevity – Germany, EU & Global

## Executive Summary

Health systems in Germany, the European Union and worldwide are shifting from reactive acute care to strategic prevention. The gap between life expectancy and healthy life years is widening, while non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer account for around three quarters of deaths. Psychosocial stress and musculoskeletal disorders drive high absenteeism, reducing productivity. In Germany, healthy life years stand at 57.1 for women and 56.7 for men; across the EU the figures are 63.3 and 62.8 years. Coordinated prevention strategies across companies, health insurers and policymakers are essential to safeguard health, productivity and employability.

## Key Findings

- **Healthy life years vs. life expectancy:** In 2023, EU citizens could expect 63.3 (women) and 62.8 (men) healthy years out of 84.0 and 78.7 years of life expectancy. In Germany, healthy life years were 57.1 (women) and 56.7 (men).
- **Non-communicable diseases:** NCDs cause 74 % of global deaths. In the EU they account for over 91 % of deaths and 87 % of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs).
- **Prevention spending:** Germany invests about €298 per person in prevention and health protection (~5 % of total health expenditure). The EU average is 5.5 %, with Germany leading at 7.9 %.
- **Demographic change:** There are currently about 33 retirees for every 100 working-age people; by 2070 this could rise to 43–61 depending on the scenario. The EU's old-age dependency ratio was 33.9 % in 2024.
- **Mental health burden:** Mental health problems cost the EU more than €600 billion (>4 % of GDP). Media reports estimate that sickness absences in Germany may cost around €200 billion annually, with employees averaging 17–19 sick days; these figures should be treated as tentative.
- **Policy and regulation:** Europe's Beating Cancer Plan earmarks €4 billion for cancer-related actions, including €1.25 billion from the EU4Health programme. The European Health Data Space (EHDS) regulation entered into force on 26 March 2025 and will roll out in stages through 2035.

## Stakeholder Playbooks

### Mittelstand HR

- Integrate comprehensive workplace health programmes

- Conduct regular risk assessments and metabolic screenings
- Cultivate a health-oriented culture and lead by example

### Health insurers

- Design bonus programmes and selective contracts to incentivise prevention
- Collect and report process and outcome KPIs
- Implement secure data governance in line with EHDS and GDPR

### Policy makers (DE/EU)

- Increase funding for prevention and health literacy
- Reduce regional disparities in healthy life years
- Promote outcome-based financing and interoperable health-data systems

### Top-100 companies

- Pilot evidence-based programmes (e.g., ergonomics, mental health)
- Establish cross-functional governance for corporate health
- Incentivise executives to achieve health-related KPIs

## Intervention Portfolio

Intervention	Mechanism	Key outcomes
<b>MSK &amp; Ergonomics</b>	Ergonomic workstation design and movement breaks	Reduced pain and absenteeism
<b>Mental health</b>	Cognitive behavioural therapy, resilience training, peer support	Lower stress and fewer absences
<b>Nutrition &amp; metabolic</b>	Healthy canteen options, plant-rich menus, metabolic screening programmes	Improved weight and metabolic markers
<b>Movement &amp; sleep</b>	Active breaks, walking groups, sleep hygiene education	Increased activity, better sleep quality
<b>Hypertension</b>	Blood pressure monitoring, digital coaching, sodium reduction	Controlled blood pressure
<b>Digital tools</b>	Wearables and apps for activity, sleep and stress monitoring	Behaviour change and self-monitoring

Intervention	Mechanism	Key outcomes
<b>Culture &amp; leadership</b>	Participatory leadership, role modelling, health communication	Improved motivation and employee retention

## Consensus and Controversies

- **Consensus:** Experts agree that NCDs are the main driver of disease burden and that investing in prevention, especially behavioural and environmental interventions, yields high returns. Structured programmes and data-driven management enhance effectiveness.
- **Controversies:** Estimates of economic loss due to sickness absences vary; official statistics and journalistic sources differ. There is also debate over the optimal balance between high-tech longevity approaches (e.g. AI diagnostics, gene therapy) and systemic lifestyle interventions.

## References

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5. RKI (2025) – Prevention expenditure.
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7. Destatis (2025) – Population projections.
8. Eurostat (2025) – Population structure and ageing.
9. European Commission (2024) – Mental health costs.
10. Fortune (2025) – Europe absenteeism and economic cost (journalistic estimate).
11. European Commission (2021) – Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.
12. European Commission (2025) – European Health Data Space Regulation.