



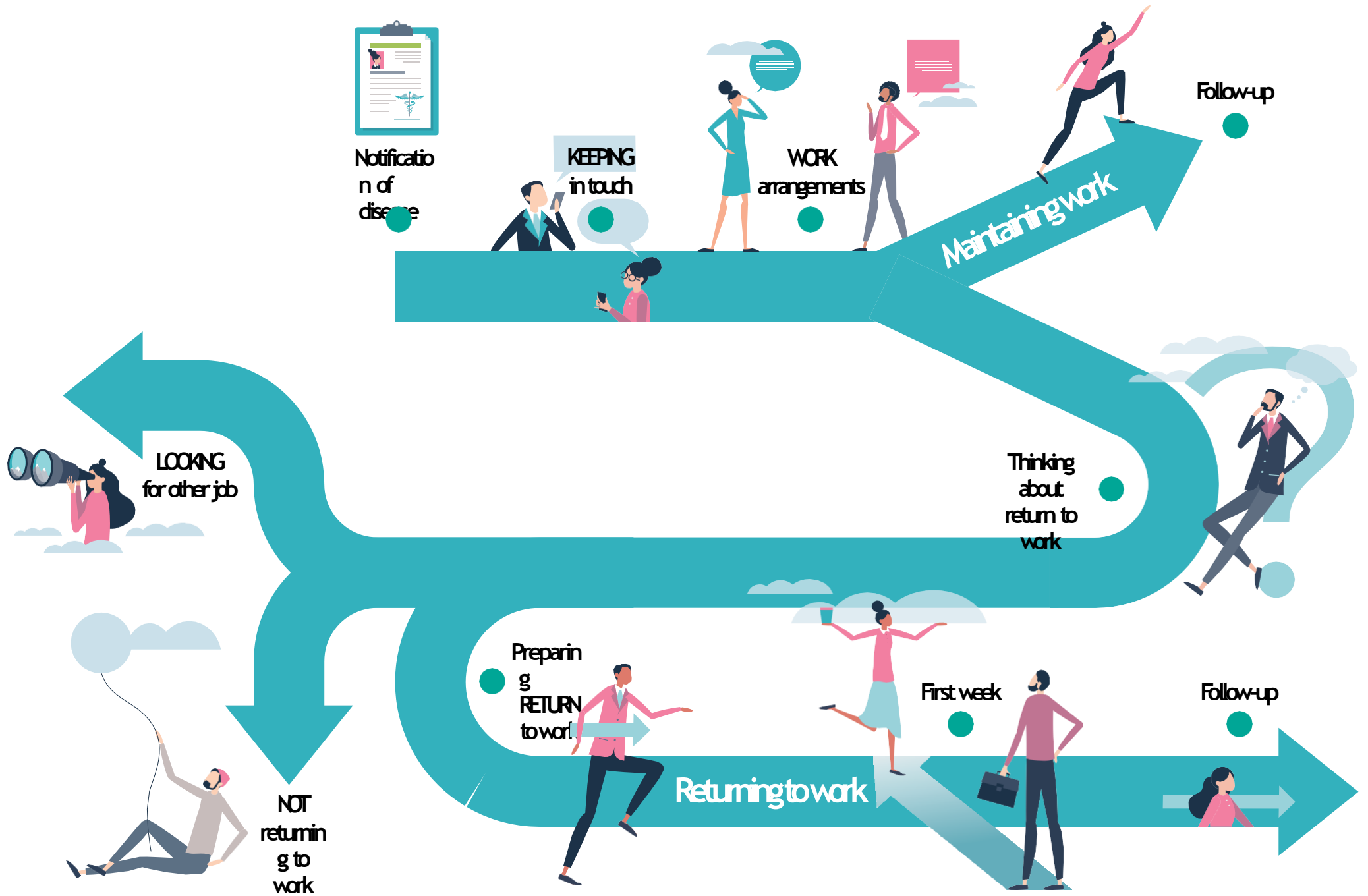
I KNOWHOW

(INTERREG 2 SEAS)

TOOLBOX

For employers who want to promote the wellbeing and return to work for employee's who have a cancer diagnosis.

Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION
2 Seas Mers Zeeën
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Keeping in touch with your Employee

1a

An employee who has cancer may be absent for a period of time that will be more or less long. By formalizing a contact with him, you maintain the link with the company environment and you will allow the person to project himself and facilitate his return to work.



The recommended Contact Times

- When notified of the diagnosis
- Before the employee goes on sick leave to discuss the employee's planned absence.
- During treatment: to check on their wellbeing.
- After treatment: When the employee start considering returning to work. Identify the employee's expectations and learn about the side effects of treatment and their possible impact on their work. Express your expectations about the work load.
- When they come back to work: write the reintegration plan.
- Post-restart follow-up: make regular updates of the reintegration plan.

When the employee notifies you of their diagnosis, it is important to ask the right opening questions.

Often, we start a conversation with the question "How are you?" But because of your employee's illness, this question may suddenly seem inappropriate.

If you instead start the conversation like this, "How are you today?" or "How are you, given the circumstances?", you will approach the topic gradually and with empathy. These questions take into account difficult circumstances and allow you to listen to your employee. Let your employee talk and tell you their story: it all starts with listening.

Express your compassion by showing that you understand the situation. "Do you want to say anything about the reason for your absence?" What are your expectations during your absence? At this point you can ask the employee if they would like to take time off for treatment.

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Respect for privacy and medical confidentiality:

What questions can I ask as an employer?
What information can I pass on to colleagues?

As an employer, you can ask questions, but your employee does not have to disclose their diagnosis if they don't wish to. The employee must however inform you of their ability to work.

In the context of the General Data Protection Regulation, no reason needs to be provided for a person being off sick unless agreed otherwise.

Contact the person to find out what information they are comfortable with being disclosed to other members of staff. Does the person concerned want to inform their colleagues themselves, or would they rather that HR, their Team Leader or another colleague does it on their behalf?

"What agreements can we make (about further contact, recovery or return)?", **"I would like to stay in touch. What can I do for you?"**, **"Can your colleagues contact you? What can I say to your colleagues, your customers?"**

Some people are very preoccupied and do not want to be contacted often during their sick leave. Therefore, check how and how often you want to communicate with your employee.

Ask your employee to what extent they want to stay informed about what's going on in the company during their absence: "Would you like to continue to receive emails?"

Regularly inquire about how the employee is doing.

Send a card. Talk to a colleague who is close to your employee and offer to stay in regular contact.

"What can we do for you?" Support your employee, ask what you, as a company, can do during and after treatment.

Can you facilitate administrative formalities with your employee and the company's HR department?

Did you know that it is possible to communicate with the occupational therapist or the internal adviser?

An employee may request a spontaneous consultation with the occupational therapist. A spontaneous consultation is by definition a consultation that you can request as an employee because you want to discuss a work-related issue.

If the employee is physically limited as to what they can do, then they are entitled to see the occupational therapist before they return to work, so that suitable adjustments can be made.

The occupational therapist may also communicate with the employee's Doctor, if permission is given. The employer can ask the employee whether they would like to carry on working during their treatment.

Communication with the team:

In order to avoid misunderstandings or rumours about the employee, it is important that you, as an employer, communicate well with the team.

What does the employee want to share about their situation with colleagues ?

Keeping privacy laws in mind: you need your employee's permission to share information about their health with others. Ask what you can share, and what you can't.

If the employee concerned doesn't want to share anything, prepare what you might tell their co-workers to avoid unnecessary hearsay.

Remaining at work, redistribution of tasks

Be aware that as an employer or team leader, you are responsible for the redistribution of duties/work tasks.

Is there anything with regards to alternative working arrangements we should consider ?

It may be advisable to involve your employee in the redistribution of tasks during their absence.

Premier jour

Returning to normal after sick leave of several months off work, it is important for the employee to have the opportunity to reconnect with their colleagues and workplace. The day of the employee's return to work may be a very emotional event for them, so as an employer you must ensure that you make that transition as smooth and comfortable for them as possible. This is important in order for the employee to be able to successfully remain at work after a long-term absence.

Leading up to the return to work:

As with new employees, your returning employee may also feel as if they are a new member of staff once again

Here are some ways to prepare for their return.

Directly inform other members of staff of the employee's imminent return.

Prepare a friendly and informal team meeting upon the employee's return to make them feel more at ease.

- Invite the employee to come and meet the team in preparation for their upcoming return
- Set up their workstation (computer, accessories, etc.) in preparation for their return.
- Make sure that their key or badge has been reactivated, etc.

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First day back at work:

- Welcome your employee back: organize a convenient time when you can liaise with the employee about anything they need to know about their role.
- Inform them of the most important changes within the organization
- Briefly outline the elements of the return-to-work plan
- Review the first assignment together.
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Aftercare:

Ask how things are going. You can do this directly with the employee or by inquiring with HR.

