Background
People with intellectual disabilities are often affected by specific health risks and face multiple barriers in health care. However, health promotion and education programmes are seldom targeting or including this group of people. The project GESUND! is investigating, how health promotion can be realized for and with people with intellectual disabilities. Starting point for the participatory research is the implementation of a health education programme in a workshop for adapted work (sheltered workplace) in Germany.

Objectives
To investigate how the health education programme (1) can strengthen participants’ health literacy; (2) support participation in workplace health promotion; (3) support participation in health research.

Methods
A practice research approach is used to explore the education programme. A qualitative content analysis is following an process of systematically reflection of the researchers’ experience in the classes and participants’ feedback.

Development of the education programme
- Basis for the curriculum are principles of participation, emphasis on competence and the involvement of participants as peer-multipliers and peer-researchers.
- The programme consists of two phases: a learning and a research phase.
- To ensure the sustainability of the project, structures for occupational health management were established in the company (health panels).

Increase of individual competencies
- Raised awareness
- Increased knowledge
- Improved communication skills

Empowerment to act for better health
- Sharing health information with peers
- Bringing complaints up to the management
- Engaging in research projects and health panels

Changes on company level
- Enhanced health communication
- Establishment of inclusive health panels
- Development of specific recommendations

Main messages
- Although people with intellectual disabilities are often overlooked in health promotion and education, they can benefit significantly from the participation of people with intellectual disabilities.

Literature

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Conclusions
Participatory and action-oriented health classes seem to be appropriate for strengthening health literacy and for preparing employees with intellectual disabilities to contribute in workplace health promotion and research.

Results
Empowerment to act for better health
- Sharing health information with peers
- Bringing complaints up to the management
- Engaging in research projects and health panels

Changes on company level
- Enhanced health communication
- Establishment of inclusive health panels
- Development of specific recommendations