



**Employment strategies and senior policies –
aiming for a higher employment among unskilled and short-term
educated people above 45.**



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS DG
Social protection and social integration
Social protection and inclusion policies

PREFASE

In the framework of the European project “Inclusion of seniors in the Labour market” partners from Italy, Spain, Romania and Denmark have implemented a multi task research at national levels focusing on inclusion of older unskilled workers in the labour market.

One of the problems that we are facing in Europe is a rising tendency to labour market exclusion of older and manly low skilled persons. In general older workers don't face a higher risk to become unemployed but at the same time they often face high difficulties in finding a new job. This explains why a big part of the persons being long-term unemployed can be categorized as older persons with a low level of education. Even though the total employment rates in period's has been rising in some of the European countries tendencies has been showing that older persons with a low level of education being unemployed in a longer period does not get a job. At the same time there is a rising tendency towards the fact that greater parts of those being dismissed due to economic crises or restructuring processes are older persons.

During the research national educational-, employment and social policies has been studied. Focus group interviews with employed, unemployed and inactive older workers representing both service and industry sectors have been carried out. Additionally shop stewards and HR- mangers in different enterprises from the service and industry sectors has been interviewed. Results have been discussed within the national and transnational partners in the project forming the results of the analyses.

The results of the models and recommendations forming our suggestions for “Employment strategies and senior policies “described in this booklet are based on the findings in the surveys and analyses carried out in the project.

The objectives of the “Employment strategies and senior policies” are to develop concrete methods and tools to support the process of maintaining and including older low skilled workers in the labour market in Europe. The strategies are aimed at supporting the process on a national and regional level. The recommendations in the strategies are developed in order to provide stakeholders including public authorities, employment services, adult educational institutions and the labour market parties with concrete tools and methods on which they can cooperate in building a further development process supporting a higher employment rate among low skilled older workers.

In accordance to the differences in employment systems and social security systems in Europe the context in which the strategies are to be implemented are facing strong differences. Even though that many of the challenges and objectives towards a higher employment of older workers remains the same in the different European countries, implementation of new strategies, tools and methods will be regulated by means of the existing social security and employment systems. Especially the differences between Denmark as a “flexicurity” country with a high labour market flexibility and a high social security compared to Spain, Italy and Rumania building on a tradition with long term employment contracts and less social security for unemployed people makes a difference influencing on implementation of the tools and methods recommended in this project. By means of implementing the strategies developed in this project it is important to be aware that the recommendations developed are to be considered as tools and methods on which a further regional development can be built according to the existing regional framework formed by employment policies, unemployment systems, educational policies and social security systems.

The recommendations developed in this project forming the “Employment strategy and senior policies” are developed in accordance with the future challenges expressed by the demographic changes in Europe and the changes formed by the technological development influencing on the working processes and the qualifications needed on the labour market.

Caused by the demographic changes the labour force will be reduced in the future. At the same time the average age of the labour force will become higher. This means that the enterprises in the future will have to hire employees which are older than those who are normally hired today. The reduced labour force will at the same time influence on the possibilities of hiring both higher educated specialist and employees to work in production and service industries as for instance health care. The capability to attract and maintain older workers will currently with the aging of the labour force become one of the central challenges for enterprises in the future. It is a realistic scenario that the future enterprises will have more employees with a higher average age and or with an ethnic background. This will bring a general need to focus on the individual qualifications and needs which will have to be reflected in the employee policies. At the same time the employees will have to be open minded to new ideas and be able to cooperate with many different people despite age and cultural background.

In order to be able to maintain older workers in the labour market the enterprises will have to deal with the fact that the majority of older workers don't want to be treated as a weak group and don't want to be categorized because of their age. In general they want to be treated as individuals with their own values.

A greater part of the older workers who have been participating in our survey are pointing out that a good working environment and a higher support from their employer are influencing on their decision to postpone their retirement from the labour market. This is indicating that there is a need for a change of attitude and a general respect towards older workers in the enterprises. This does not mean that some of the older workers suffering from attrition don't have special needs in order to maintain their job. Instead of treating all older workers the same way some of the prejudices towards older workers could be eliminated if focus are changed to a more individual estimate of the qualifications and need of the employees. At the same time the employers in general should be having the same demands towards older workers as any other group in the company regarding personal development and education if they want them to feel that they are needed in the enterprises.

In general employers and employees agree that older workers are valued because of their experiences. At the same time many older workers are in lack of competences like adaptability, knowledge about new technologies especially It-based solutions etc. and at the same time they are in lack of language skills, especially in order to read, write and speak English.

Having in mind these differences, which underline the need to adapt and calibrate general recommendations also to individual personal exigencies, our recommendations has been developed.

On behalf of the transnational steering committee in the project we would like to thank all the persons who have been participating in the activities in the project contributing with their opinions and experiences towards inclusion of older workers in the labour market. At the same time we would like to thank all the persons who has been interviewed as a part of the survey conducted, who has made it possible to collect a broad universe of experiences which have allowed us to develop

employment strategies and senior policies aiming for higher labour market participation among low skilled older workers.

**Employment strategies and senior policies –
aiming for a higher employment among unskilled and short-term
educated people above 45.**

October 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Framework for development of strategies and policies

When we focus on older workers as a group we find out that we are dealing with a very heterogeneous group both in a regional and European dimension. Differences remain quite strong even when we decide to focus on low skilled persons, as in the framework of this project.

In the framework of developing “Employment strategies and senior policies” we have decided to focus on older workers in the age group from 45 to 65 in accordance to the fact that workers in Romania are considered as old when they reach the age of 45 while the same thing is the case in Denmark at the age of 55. At the same time the process of becoming older are an individual process meaning that a person on the age of 45 might behave older than a person on 55 from the same region depending on life style and life experiences.

The fact of being “unskilled” may also mean different things: it may refer to different levels of education – in some cases even high, but with a long “absence” of use of literacy skills – it may mean basic education but with an high level of technical practical competences, it may even mean the absence of basic skills such as the capability to read and write.

Another element making the difference is related to “physical conditions”: depending on several elements – physical involvement in work performed but also work place environment conditions – older workers may suffer from different level of attrition or other physical disease, hardly conditioning their availability to continue to do the work, they have been used to do. (Especially among those with a low level of education.) Different surveys have been pointing out that education and employment conditions has a higher impact on the health than the age it self. At the same time it seems to be a common tendency all over Europe that health conditions is a major fact influencing on the decisions of whether older workers decide to withdraw from the labour market. At the same time a greater part of the unskilled older workers decides to stop working in order to be able to enjoy life at a time where their health conditions allow them still to be active.

In general we have found that the definition of when you are becoming an older worker varies from country to country but also in the enterprises in the same regions, they have different ages of which they consider the workers to be old. At the same time it seems to be a common opinion in all the European Countries that the definition of older workers in a labour market context are connected to the connotation that the person is no longer able to maintain the same job functions as they have been used to. In this context it becomes a negative thing to be a senior or an older worker.

In general it seems to be a common tendency all over Europe that the fact of being older is looked upon as a competence related to experiences and overview. At the same time the fact of being weak and having a lack of competences compared to younger persons are in many cases connected to the fact of being classified as an older worker as well. In most cases older workers are gaining respect because of their experiences. At the same time the story about older workers who is suffering from attrition and for that reason are having a need for being pensioned are still characterising the opinion of older persons all over Europe. This traditional opinion of age and what it means to be older have been participating to make the opinion of older workers stereotyped and connected with words like attrition, loss of capability to work, lack of qualifications etc. In many cases older workers are looked upon as a contrast to younger persons.

This explains in many ways why the majority of the population doesn't want to be categorized as older workers and why they in many cases react negative to the suggestions of developing senior policies in the company they are working in.

Even though we have found that many older workers maintain their job functions when they become older we also find that there is a great deal of older workers especially among the group of unskilled or low skilled workers suffering from attrition or having problems to keep up with the temper and qualifications needed in the enterprises. For instance qualifications related to new technologies and IT based solutions seem to be causing problems to older workers in all the European countries participating in the project. Especially among the group of low skilled older workers we have found that a greater part expects to leave the labour market involuntarily, which both can be caused by health conditions and lack of adaptability and skills. At the same time it is a clear tendency that unemployed older workers especially among those with a low level of education are facing big problems in order to re-enter the labour market.

The working conditions and environment in the enterprises in Europe has been improved during the last decades. Still we find unskilled workers being forced to stop working at the age of 40-45 because of serious attrition problems. At the same time many older workers have been at the labour market since they were 15-17 years. Doing a hard job for many years in a period where health and safety conditions at work were in a bad condition means that they in a many cases are suffering from attrition problems.

The technological development is looked upon as the major factor behind the changes in production design, working life and working competences during times. It is referred to as the means of the development from agricultural to industrial to knowledge society. The development in employment can be illustrated by the historical development. Even though we still produce food articles and agricultural products it is produced by less persons. The same thing can be said about the industrial production which is today characterized by automation, outsourcing and enterprises moving to countries with a lower manufacturing burden. At the same time the service industries are becoming the growth area.

In the coming years we will be facing new information and technological development which means that both our everyday life and working life will be changed. The consequences of the changes mean that many enterprises will be in a constant process of optimizing and updating the production according to the new technological possibilities. This will influence on the demands of qualifications in the enterprises. The focus on knowledge and innovation means that the employees will have to be engaged in life long learning in order to be qualified to understand new challenges and recognize new innovative solutions. This means that life long learning will become more important than sex and age when it comes to fundamental conditions as income, health and the feeling of influence in the enterprises.

Methods and content

The analysis implemented, at all its levels, shows that despite a formal attention in National Action Plans toward senior policies there's still a lack in concrete initiatives and, mainly, in the definition and implementation of comprehensive approaches.

As we have tried to delineate, when we talk about older workers we talk about a complex target group, very rich in terms of characteristics but also in terms of experiences and, in many cases, in terms of tacit knowledge's deriving from these experiences.

If we reflect on the fact that in all societies older workers have been traditionally considered the *wise ones*, often owing the power because of their age, their knowledge and their experience together with the fact that only in so called new societies - in which knowledge is linked to innovation and change and not to tradition - they have started to be seen as the “weak ones”, we become even more aware of the fact that we are talking about a concrete revolution, whose effects are getting more evident in the last 30 years.

Seen in this perspective it is clear that we are not simply talking about a “labour market issue” but, on the contrary, we are considering a fundamental social issue concerning the future – and not only the past – of our societies, and moreover in a time in which, due to demographic changes, “older workers” will become more important on the labour market than youngsters.

This is the reason why when talking about strategies and action plans we should always have in mind the complexity of the problem, which should result in the definition of a system of solutions, taking care of all different aspects and suitable to provide a differentiated approach focalising on individuals.

This approach should include several issues, targeting all the stakeholders concerned:

- **European, national and local policy makers** should consider and mainstream the target group perspective in the definition of job policies, foreseen special measures such as the possibility of flexible contracts, flexible working time tables (according to individual life stages), incentives for SMEs and older workers and tailored training and guidance services for employed and unemployed older workers. At the same time the working environment conditions should be strengthened in order to minimize attrition and physical problems among workers with a low level of education. They should also focus on a re-definition of *older workers image* within society. Moving from the lessons learnt while fighting against other kinds of discrimination they should promote awareness campaigns presenting the *value* older workers express, in terms of *experience, knowledge and wisdom* deriving from their life stories. At the same time support to investigations and surveys clarifying positive images of older workers as for instance sickness absence compared to younger workers or expenses connected to hiring and adaptation of new workers in the company can help to underline the importance of maintaining older workers in the company. Surveys regarding the cost of unemployment benefits can support to establishment of a higher awareness regarding employment of older workers among policy makers.
- **SMEs associations and trade unions** should offer a concrete support to employers as well as to employees in terms of *information, guidance and tailored services*? They should act as sensitising agents selecting and promoting the most innovative and effective practices suitable to *improve working conditions and working environment* as a pre-condition for enhancing older workers permanence into the labour market. They should also commit themselves in *monitoring labour market from a competence perspective*, supporting SMEs express their needs in these terms and recognise that older workers may be the solution they are looking for.

- **Job centres** should implement specific measures helping older workers finding a tailored job task but also promoting older workers to SMEs, valorising the competence they own (and not only in terms of knowledge but also in terms of personal characteristics such as liability, sense of responsibility, team working skills). Innovative methodologies and tools – and mainly all those focusing on *competences* – should be promoted in order to support the match demand/offer of specific skills at local level. The survey has shown that, once overcome prejudices, company managers do recognise that older workers often own exactly the skills they are looking for.
- **Learning providers** who should define *tailored contents as well as tailored approaches* in order to make effective the right older workers own to access lifelong learning. They should work in a cooperative network with SMEs associations, trade unions and job centres in order to *identify needed competences* and to define a learning methodology effective for a special target group as older workers are. They should make an effort in preferring *on the job and practice oriented* learning modalities, avoiding traditional training means which have proved to be inadequate for a public of adults (and especially for low skilled older workers). In the aim of including unemployed low skilled older workers in the labour market targeted job search and training courses should be developed including elements as individual competence clearing, training in specific qualifications according to the needs of the enterprises, development in personal qualifications, networking activities, establishment of contacts to enterprises, on the job training and job seeking.

The strategies should be implemented and constantly improved taking benefits from cooperative networking activities with representatives from the labour market partners, public authorities and learning providers, as the pilot course being implemented in the framework of GOL'D national networks.

An important part of the survey conducted in this project has been dedicated to the analysis of education and learning systems in different European countries.

This choice finds its motivation on one side in the growing importance lifelong learning is acquiring in labour market dynamics – and mainly in determining competitiveness in European economy, as expressly stated in European policies and strategies - on the other side on the need to identify the gap our target group faces in re-entering a learning pathway, with the aim of identifying suitable means to support it.

In other words: in a changing society, in which change is driven by ITC and knowledge, lifelong learning is a priority and the right to access to it becomes one of citizenship fundamental rights. In this context unskilled older workers are one of the groups more affected by the risk of social exclusion.

When analysing education and learning systems in different countries, G'OLD partners have found out that, despite relevant differences, in the last years all systems are facing important changes moving towards the promotion of lifelong learning itself but also towards the research and - in some case - the implementation of pilot initiatives sustaining the recognition of learning acquired outside traditional educational pathways (as non informal and informal learning; very interesting in this sense is the English NVQ – National Vocational Qualification - System).

At the same time there's an increasing attention towards SMEs' needs which brings to the identification of competences and skills as the skeleton of new learning models: among these G'OLD partners have identified technical ITC based competences and relational as the most important ones from companies perspective.

The results of these efforts is that, at least "formally" and in theory, it is in many cases easier today than 20 years ago to have access to continuous learning even with a basic education. Nevertheless G'OLD partners have found out in the survey that older workers often feel to be excluded from training activities in companies and, even more often, they do not attend training courses when proposed to them.

When analysing the reasons for this attitude a few elements emerge, very similar in different country contexts: at a first level older workers declare that "they do not need to be trained", "training is a lost of time" since they feel "they know well the job they have been performing for several years"; going more in depth it emerges that they are often afraid of confronting themselves with "learning", something that, as a structured process, they are not familiar with since when they left school, many years ago (and, in many cases, since they are "unskilled" they have left school quite early and they do not maintain a positive memory of it); going even deeper it may emerge that often they suffer from a relevant lack in basic literacy (reading and writing capability in own language), which makes it very difficult for them to follow a learning activity based on traditional approaches.

All these elements stress the urgency to define tailored training methodologies and tools: conceived in order to motivate older workers and support their learning efforts, including a specific attention to the psychological dimension.

In this perspective it is important to underline the fact that education of older workers or other adults with a low level of educations should be closely related to the practical performance of the job tasks. At the same time the learning process should be built on the life experiences and the working experiences among the target group. Experiences has shown that practical oriented teaching based on the experiences of the participants combined with on the job training or job rotation is one of the most suitable methods when educating low skilled older persons.

Paying attention to identifying suitable methodologies and tools should be a priority for public and private learning providers.

A specific part of the survey has been dedicated to investigate companies' owners and manager's attitude towards older workers, with specific attention to senior policies or other measures implemented to maintain older workers in companies.

In general terms senior policies are still not very diffused in involved countries; companies' managers and HR managers are still far from being conscious of the dimensions of older workers' issues as well as of the characteristics of the target group.

In most of the cases a specific, differentiated approach towards older workers does not exist. When a special attention exists it is only in terms of "finding a solution to a problem". In this view older workers are seen as a problematic group due to a decrease in their productivity (which may depend from different factors, among which the most frequent are the difficulties in copying with

innovation as well as physical problems), a decrease which in some cases is true, in other is just presumed, on the basis of a prejudice.

In this sense older workers often are one of the groups most exposed to the risk of dismissing when an economic crisis occurs: the first ones to be fired, often taking benefits from their possibility to access to pension's schemes or to other kinds of social incomes.

A part from these negative examples only few companies have shown a specific experience in implementing senior policies, in terms of tailored strategies aiming to offer adequate working conditions to older workers, considering their needs and wishes in order to maintain at the labour market for a longer period of time. It is interesting to underline that when these experiences exist they are in many cases linked to enterprises having difficulties in hiring younger workers either because of the salary or because of the working time or enterprises especially in the service industry who has recognised the value of older workers. At the same time there is a tendency towards the fact that employment of older workers except from motivation are increased by incentives and supporting measures promoted by local authorities, as in the case of a Spanish parking company, hiring over 45 years old workers since the Local Authority supports the intervention through fiscal reductions.

What is lacking, in most countries involved, is an "age" policy, possibly based on individual life stages. In order not to discriminate older workers a possibility might be to define a life stage policy within companies, structuring flexible working conditions according to specific exigencies individuals face in their life (time for family when they are young; time for their health when they are elder, or when they need it; time for studying,).

Having in mind the points from which we have started – older workers are individuals with individual competences and needs, it can be concluded that enterprises who wants to maintain older workers in the future should implement employee policies which in the same time makes sure that older workers feel worshipped and makes it possible to structure the work in a flexible way according to individual needs and wishes.

Based on these findings our recommendations for "Employment strategies and senior policies" will be following. The strategies are divided into four main areas focused on the following issues:

- Good practices in Public policies
- Companies demand of qualifications in different sectors
- Training and job provision for low skilled unemployed older workers
- Strategies to maintain older low skilled workers in the enterprises
- Lifelong learning addressed to older low skilled workers

The recommendations described are forming an overall strategy to be implemented in the European countries. The strategies are meant to form the basis of further development either as a tool to be used for development of certain areas or as an overall strategy depending on the specific context in which it should be implemented.

GOOD PRACTICES IN PUBLIC POLICIES

Introduction

One of the problems that we are facing in Europe is a rising tendency to labour market exclusion of older and mainly low skilled persons. In general older workers don't face a higher risk to become unemployed but at the same time they often face high difficulties in finding a new job. This explains why a big part of the persons being long-term unemployed can be categorized as older persons with a low level of education. Even though the total employment rates in period's has been rising in some of the European countries tendencies has been showing that older persons with a low level of education being unemployed in a longer period still does not get a job. At the same time there is a rising tendency towards the fact that greater parts of those being dismissed due to economic crises or restructuring processes in enterprises are older persons.

During the next ten years there will be a significant change in the trend shown by the European demographic cycle, where the continual aging of the populations is predominant. This means that the working population in the future will be constituted by an increasing number of older workers while the groups of younger workers will be decreasing. In order to ensure that the older workers gets an opportunity to have a job affected by the effective demand of employees it has to be ensured that the group of low skilled older workers is able to meet the demands of qualifications expressed by the enterprises. These aspects, among others, are directly related to the future because they affect the sustainability of the pension systems, and in general, the viability and stability of the social welfare policies, as we know them today in Western Europe.

This situation can be extended to Romania, Spain, Italy, and Denmark who has been participating in the GOLD project: "Inclusion of seniors in the labour market". Even though that many of the challenges and objectives towards a higher employment of older workers remains the same in the different European countries, there is a strong difference between the existing social security and employment systems. Especially the differences between Denmark as a "flexicurity" country with a high labour market flexibility and a high social security for unemployed people compared to Spain, Italy and Rumania building on a tradition with long term employment contracts and less social security for unemployed people makes a difference influencing on development and implementation of new strategies and policies in the aim of ensuring a higher labour market participation among low skilled older workers.

The objectives of the recommendations for "Good practices in public policies" has been to create a framework to be used for further development of public policies supporting an active labour market participation among low skilled older workers. The strategies contain a description of political priorities which intend to form a generic framework transferable to different European contexts. Under each priority you will find recommendations for good practices to be implemented. The differences in employment strategies and social security systems in the different European countries mean that not all recommendations will have the same relevans in all European countries. By means of implementing the strategies it is important to bear in mind that they are mainly meant to serve as inspiration for further development according to the situation and context in which the strategies will be implemented.

Public policies

Development of "Good practices in public policies" are based on the hypothesis that job permanence and employment levels of older workers are intimately related to their educational and

vocational level, as well as the position they have in the job market, determined by the job situation and sector in which they are present. Older workers with a low educational level are in general having lower labour market participation than workers at the same age with a higher educational level. At the same time older workers with a low educational level are in greater risk of suffering from attrition after many years of hard work.

Furthermore, legislation and public policies in the matter of the fight against discrimination for age reasons can undoubtedly play an essential role to overcome the obstacles which hinder access to employment and training as well as help to eliminate the stereotypes and prejudices in relation to the capacities of older workers.

Our recommendations for further policy development and actions are divided into five main areas, described in the following.

I: In order to ensure a higher labour market participation for target groups in risk of exclusion it is important to develop and support policies ensuring a higher degree of educational and vocational training targeting older workers, women and immigrants with a low educational level to prepare them to meet the future demands of qualifications in the labour market. At the same time legal framework and policies will have to ensure that health and safety measures at work are minimizing the risk of suffering from attrition problems.

GOOD PRACTICES

Job permanence, employment levels and number of unemployed older workers are intimately related to the educational and vocational level of the workforce. The percentage of employee's participation in education and training measures decreases with age. In this sense, it is a priority to increase the participation of older employees in continual training actions, specifically focusing on the lesser-qualified workers, to allow them to develop their maximum potential and maintain their employment or make them qualified to find a new job. At the same time low educational levels often means performance of hard work. For many of the workers suffering from attrition problems it is hard to keep up with the job expectations, which means that they become a group highly risking to be excluded from the labour market.

In order to ensure that low skilled older workers and other groups in risk of labour market exclusion are able to meet the demands of enterprises and in order not to be causing qualification gaps in the labour market it is important to introduce suitable legislative or regulatory changes to strengthen and increase the participation of these groups of persons in (occupational, continual, and adult) training activities. Experiences are showing that for instance the possibility of performing training activities in enterprises is increasing the number of participants. At the same time it should be an obligation to ensure that all employees have the chance to gain basic qualifications as the ability to read and write and use a computer in order to allow them to attend further educational and vocational training.

Economical initiatives supporting both shorter training courses and longer vocational training would make it more attractive for employees and enterprises to upgrade unskilled workers. At the same time educational systems based on merit rating in the aim of shortening vocational training for experienced workers with a low educational level would make it more attractive for low skilled persons to enter an educational pathway.

Training methods and contents should be developed according to the specific needs in the matter of ensuring that the groups in risk of labour market exclusion becomes motivated of participating in training activities.

Both the legal framework and the possibilities to follow up and proceed penalty should ensure that health and safety at work minimizes the risk of attrition. If the legal framework are to have any influence on the working environment in enterprises economical resources for frequently following up in the enterprises has to be set apart. At the same time consultancy and support for working environment evaluation in enterprises should be an integrated part of the system.

II. In order to strengthen the motivation and possibility of older low skilled workers to maintain in the labour market it is important to ensure a higher flexibility in employment conditions for both enterprises and employees. At the same time it has to be ensured that the regulation of pensions and unemployment benefits makes it economical attractive and possible to adapt into more flexible employment conditions in the purpose of maintaining either fulltime or part-time attachment to the labour market.

GOOD PRACTICES

The possibilities of maintaining a higher number of low unskilled older workers in the labour market are connected to the possibility of making flexible agreements regarding employment conditions, employment periods and working time which is economical attractive for both employers and employees. In many cases it can be easier for older workers with a low level of education to find a job which is less attractive for younger persons because of the salary or the working time. In this connection it has to be ensured that persons close to pension age don't risk getting a lower pension due to lower salary, shift to part time employment or shift to short term contracts.

The matter of pension payments will be more important in the coming years where the number of pensioners will become an increasing economical burden for all European countries. For this reason it will be important to maintain older workers in the labour market for a longer period lowering the burden of pension payments. Older workers not interested in or not able to maintain a full time job could be maintained in the labour market for a longer period if they had an economical attractive option of being part time pensioners supplementing a part time pension with a part time job. Especially persons suffering from different levels of attritions would have a better possibility of maintaining their labour market participation if they could benefit from more flexible employment conditions economically supported by the government. It has to be ensured that flexible working conditions as for instance part time jobs are economical attractive in order to make them a real alternative to other options as early retirements schemes or jobs in the black market.

In order to make it more attractive for individuals to save up additional pension it is important that authorities make it economical attractive for instance supporting a higher interest. A supplementary pension support would make the individuals more independent and less vulnerable to employment conditions and in higher degree make it possible for them to have a part time job for a period without risking a serious cut down in their future pension level.

III. In order to increase employment among low skilled older workers it is important to optimize employment strategies for low skilled unemployed older workers and other groups in risk of labour market exclusion. It should be prioritized to develop, implement and

disseminate targeted job insertion programmes including orientation service, job search, and training activities combined with apprenticeship supporting their individual needs and competences, and guiding them to plan and implement their re-entry on the labour market. At the same time it should be prioritized to make an economical support to enterprises employing certain groups of person's in risk of labour market exclusion for instance as a part of apprenticeships agreements. The economical support should be for a limited period combined with agreements of ordinary employment for at least the same period as the period of the economical support.

GOOD PRACTICES

Experiences are showing that unemployed low skilled older workers are facing many difficulties in finding a new job especially after more than half a year of unemployment. In order to support the long term unemployed older workers to re- enter the labour market it is important to develop and implement certain initiatives as a part of the overall employment policy established as specific action programme for unemployed older workers controlled by Public Employment Services.

In this respect, personalized approaches are especially important to attend the individual needs, for example, by means of orientation services, specific training, and relocation systems. To make progress in a more specific classification of job applicants and in the design of professional itineraries agreed with the job applicant, with the aim that the actions are better adjusted to the requirements of the unemployed persons, thereby increasing the profitability of public resources and facilitating the subsequent evaluation of the applied programmes.

Complete job-insertion programmes which range from orientation, training planned according to individual needs and qualifications, and apprenticeships until insertion should be developed, implemented and promoted. Measures which allow participating employees to carry out an effective job which, together with the occupational training received in relation to this job, thus facilitating his/her professional qualification and favouring their job insertion or reinsertion. Simultaneously with this training and experience, they are provided with orientation, networking and job search activities as well as professional and business know-how.

As a part of the job-insertion programmes the unemployed participants should have a frequently contact with job consultants in public employment services from the time they enter the programmes until they find ordinary employment. Information and training actions addressed to job consultants in the public employment service should be developed and implemented in order to qualify them in the act of advising low skilled older workers in job search, job possibilities and actions to qualify them re-entering the labour market.

Economic support to enterprises employing unemployed persons classified to be in risk of labour market exclusion combined with agreements of ordinary employment for at least the same period as the period of which they get economical support has shown up to be an effective methods in order to find jobs for long-tem unemployed persons. Economical support to enterprises on specified conditions can at the same time be used as an element in job insertion programmes for persons suffering from attrition or physical problems not allowing them to fulfil the obligations in an ordinary job, but at the same time preventing them from being full time pensioners.

IV. Judicial protection to prevent against age discrimination in hiring and dismissal procedures combined with frequently following up and adequate penalty possibilities can help

to minimize the age discrimination which is a reality in the labour market At the same time it will be necessary to conduct national and regional campaigns in the aim of changing the stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards older male and female workers.

GOOD PRACTICES

The analyses in this project have shown that older workers in many cases are exposed to age discrimination both when applying for jobs and in dismissal procedures.

In general, this occurs to men and women, although as our research has shown, discrimination for age reasons in the job market in many cases are especially significant for female employees, basically (without being able to enter into greater evaluation here) due to the gender role to which women have been subjected in general. This has essentially deprived them of authority, recognition, and real possibilities in the development of a higher participation in the labour market.

Implementation of judicial protection to prevent discrimination for age reasons can help to minimize age discrimination in hiring and dismissal procedures. At the same time it will be important that both authorities and the labour market partners are precarious in strict observance of age discrimination in public and private enterprises both in single cases and in terms of big redundancies.

Given the fact that one of the main channels to force senior employees out of the job market is carried out by means of the Labour Force Adjustment Plans (EREs), the Competent Employment Administration must be much more restrictive in the authorization of EREs which are not sufficiently justified.

National and regional campaigns should be conducted in order to support the process of changing stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards older male and female workers. The campaigns should be targeting public and private enterprises focusing on information's about the future demographic changes and the ageing workforce. Well known enterprises should be participating in the campaigns promoting both their good experiences with older workers and promoting the importance of hiring older workers compared to their enterprises.

Additionally the campaigns should be promoting the importance of development of strategies for maintaining and hiring older workers in the enterprises. Examples of good practices from well known enterprises can be published as a part of the campaign.

Information and advises regarding job maintenance should be provided for employees in cooperation with enterprises and workers organizations.

V. National and public workplaces should be established as a good example towards gender, ethnic and age equality in hiring and dismissal procedures as well as in working conditions. At the same time they should ensure development and implementation of employee policies aimed at maintaining older workers. In cases of outsourcing public responsibilities, agreements on working conditions, equality and employee policies should be established as a part of the obligations in the agreement.

GOOD PRACTICES

National and public workplaces can contribute to a higher employment among older low skilled workers if they on the one side ensure that older workers have the opportunity to be hired and maintained in national and public workplaces and at the same time ensures that best practices experiences and methods are developed and disseminated to private enterprises. Future campaigns will have a very limited effect if national and public workplaces don't establish good examples in their own workplaces.

Due to the fact that the outsourcing process of activities and services by Public Administrations is increasingly more common the contracting obligations in the agreement should facilitate the inclusion of equality, working environment and working conditions and establishment of life long learning for all employees. In this matter the contracting period has to be considered to last for a longer period as for instance 8-10 years if the contracting enterprises are going to pay invest in training courses to ensure the qualifications and life long learning processes of the employees.

COMPANYS DEMAND OF QULIFICATIONS IN DIFFERNET SECTORS

Introduction

In the framework of the “G’OLD- Inclusion of seniors at the labour market” project, partners have conducted transnational analysis aimed at describing the wide universe of older workers, from different points of view.

The analysis has been realised as a desk research focusing on labour market and social systems in different European countries. Additionally a survey committing SME managers, employees and unemployed, has pointed out how complex the target group is and how different the labour market and social systems are in a European context. But it has also shown how evident it is to introduce a systemic approach.

In other words, the transnational analysis has demonstrated how employment strategies and senior policies have to take into consideration several aspects at the same time and namely as to be focused on the following issues:

- Good practices in Public policies
- Companies demand of qualifications in different sectors
- Training and job provision for low skilled unemployed older workers
- Strategies to maintain older low skilled workers in the enterprises
- Lifelong learning addressed to older low skilled workers

In this framework - and as an integrate element of the G’OLD senior strategy – the present contribution” Companies demand of qualifications in different sectors” is to be read. This approach can be used either as a guidance support tool for people working in job centres or in order to guide centres planning lifelong learning services tailored for older workers.

The context

In a European society characterised by a continuous change and a predominance of knowledge as a driving force – as it is clearly expressed in the definition of Europe as a “knowledge based economy” – the issue of qualifications and competences is addressed by several actors and starts to be perceived as fundamental also by SMEs managers.

The technological development is looked upon as the major factor behind the changes in production design, working life and working competences during times. It is referred to as the means of the development from agricultural to industrial to knowledge society. The development in employment can be illustrated by the historical development. Even though we still produce food articles and agricultural products it is produced by less persons. The same thing can be said about the industrial production which is today characterized by automation, outsourcing and enterprises moving to countries with a lower manufacturing burden. At the same time the service industries are becoming the growth area.

In the coming years we will be facing new information and technological development which means that both our everyday life and working life will be changed. The consequences of the changes mean that many enterprises will be in a constant process of optimizing and updating the production according to the new technological possibilities. This will influence on the demands of qualifications in the enterprises. The focus on knowledge and innovation means, that the employees will have to be engaged in life long learning in order to be qualified to understand new challenges

and recognize new innovative solutions. This means that life long learning will become more important than sex and age when it comes to fundamental conditions as income, health and the feeling of influence in the enterprises.

The key element is the awareness that qualifications and competences are changing, which means that companies' demands are not definite – they need to be continuously updated – but also that individual' qualifications need to be continuously improved.

These two elements explain the need of a model suitable to support job centres operators in “reading” companies demands in terms of qualifications, in order to help older workers “express” in their curricula - or to gain new qualifications in the case they do not own the specific qualifications.

Is it important to underline that, given the nature of some of these qualifications – they are “transversal” to several job positions, they are personal related, they concern personal behaviours – it might happen either that companies face difficulties in expressing clearly their demands but also that people are not aware of the competencies they own.

In this sense it's very important that job service centres support older workers to express all their heritage in terms of knowledge valorising all kind of experience and expertise, even if not supported by a specific diploma.

The latter is an aspect on which the European Commission is strongly focusing in its promotion of the recognition of non formal and informal learning. We consider this approach extremely interesting for unskilled older workers mainly because it offers them the opportunity to have recognised qualifications and competences related to personal development and personal behaviours which are linked much more to personal experiences and own life experiences than to traditional educational pathways.

This element is even more interesting if compared to what emerges from G'OLD research. Not only qualifications demanded by companies are undertaking a continuous changing process but, in general terms, also the so called “basic set” of competences normally required to be “employable” tends to change.

This evolution can be related to the general change addressing the organisation of work - a change moving around two main trends:

- The *ITC based revolution*, which has transformed “technical manual” qualifications into “technological” qualification – as a result of the fact that, if we exclude craft activities, manual processes have been substituted by mechanical ones; this radical change has also made *communication* a key aspect of several working processes.
- The increasing *predominance of “service”* based industry instead of traditional industry.

Due to the combination of these trends we see how company's demands even to low skilled and unskilled workers are increasing. Some of the competencies which were once considered as high profile qualifications such as foreign languages (English) and PC –skills are becoming more basic qualifications.

With specific relation to qualifications demanded by companies, we have identified 4 different types of qualifications:

- Technical qualifications
- General qualifications
- Personal qualifications
- Customer related qualification

In the following description we give a general overview on the technical qualifications - mostly affected by the specific characteristics of the company expressing the demand. We will be going more in depth on the other three types of qualifications, more suitable to be adapted in different contexts.

As a final consideration we would like to underline three elements:

- There's often an high degree of inconsistency among qualifications demanded/job position offered: companies tend to search for high profiles with high level of education even when job tasks to be performed are very technical and very basic, causing an high level of potential conflicts within the organisations since high profiles tend to be more ambitious and looking for career pathways, being ready to leave at the first occasion. This is key information to be used in order to sustain older workers in their job search: In general it seems to be a common experience that older workers often are reliable and will maintain the job, if it suits their profile.
- When we talk about these last three groups of qualifications there's often the risk that there isn't much difference between what companies demands to older workers and what they demand to younger job seekers: in order to have a chance to win this "competition" older workers should be helped to present the added value their life experiences bring. In this sense a strong attention should be paid by consultants to stress knowledge acquired through non formal and informal learning.
- Consultants in job centres need to be aware of the fact that any indication contained in this document needs not only to be localised to the social and economic context they are working in, but also needs to be updated in terms of demands of qualifications changing during time.

Technical qualifications

The analyses in the project has confirmed that technical qualifications are strongly affected by ongoing changes, either process changes - with the massive introduction of technological approaches in the industry as well as in the service sector – but also product changes.

In this sense when a company - or a sector – strongly faces innovation this innovation in most of the cases directly affects technical qualifications.

Another important element emerged from the analysis is the fact that technical qualifications are linked not only to a specific company but also to a specific job task: it might be very difficult to "move" the employees from one job task to another, even within the same company.

A person being performing the same "technical" task for several years will face difficulties in changing, even if he/she is very "skilled" in that specific task.

On the other hand companies demand people to be able to perform “a specific technical task” , often not being able to describe which competences/knowledge the qualification requires.

As a result of this many companies are not aware of the fact that older workers do own a great part of the *new technical qualifications*, they just need to be trained for the part they don't know.

In very general terms the requirement of technical competences varies a lot from industry companies to services companies.

In the first case – as said above - technical competencies are strongly related to work process and the capability to perform a very specific job task – in some cases specific to that department in that company.

In the case of service companies technical competencies are still related to working processes but they are also linked to communication skills, seen as specificity for the job task performed.

With reference to these contexts a solution to support older workers permanence in companies as well as their entrance in new job positions may be to help them *describe their previous experiences in terms of tasks performed/knowledge owned* in order to show to a potential employer in *detail* what they are able to do.

Methodologies and tools supporting a “visualisation” of knowledge/competence and abilities – such as the “balance of competence” methodologies or more sophisticated skill inventory means – have proven to be very useful also in supporting HR managers in identifying “proximity” between jobs when an organisational change is needed in a company. In other words these methodologies help to see - through *images and metaphors* – the elements in common (as if they were bricks) between the job task an individual is used to perform and the new job task he/she might be asked to perform.

In this sense it might be very useful either for older workers – in order to help them visualise the amount of expertise they own – either for managers – showing them they can benefit from expertise and knowledge already present in their company. They just need to invest in training for what concerns brand new skills.

Moreover these methodologies can be very useful also in job rotation cases in order to relieve older workers from very physically demanding job tasks, in the case they suffer from attrition or other physical disease.

General qualifications

As mentioned above our survey has been pointing out that companies' demand of general qualifications is facing a consistent change towards the same direction - an increasing in terms of quantity as well as of quality – of requested general skills.

The analyses pointed out how the changes in general qualification are connected with the changes societies are facing in terms of “access to new languages”: new languages are appearing as a result of innovation and globalisation which means that the capability to communicate on different levels and in different situations becomes a priority, also for low skilled workers.

In the framework of this general consideration, general qualification requested refers to:

- Basic literacy in own country language– considered as a pre-condition in order to have access to any kind of job tasks. Actually job tasks not demanding at least a basic literacy level are very rare and in any case a basic ability in reading and writing is a key element in order to be able to have access to any empowerment / training pathway.
- Basic literacy in English – in a globalised economy English is more and more a universal language and a “key” to open several doors. There are still job tasks within companies not demanding qualification as compulsory, nevertheless companies tend in a higher degree to demand it when hiring new employees.
- Basic PC literacy – Europe defines itself as an “information society” in which computers are heavily diffused in all working processes; having at least the capability to use basic programmes becomes more and more a key qualification requested also in order to perform basic tasks.

In addition to these new basic qualifications companies still demand a set of general qualifications useful in order to be able to understand companies’ dynamics/to behave correctly within a company.

In this set we find:

- Basic knowledge on work laws individual rights and individual duties, including information on access to training. This element is very important in building individual autonomy and responsibility towards own job
- Basic knowledge on maths and economy in order to perform basic computation tasks transversal to different job tasks.

These qualifications are generally acquired through educational pathways but may also derive from own life experience. This is the reason why also for this set of qualifications it is very important to develop systems focusing on the possibility to recognise qualifications not recognised formally but deriving from personal experiences.

Older workers are for sure the ones who can benefit most from the development of these systems.

Personal qualifications

Personal qualifications are a group of qualifications acquiring an increasing relevance in job profiling, also for low skilled persons.

This element is in a certain perspective a new element, highly linked with the increasing role communication and team dynamics are acquiring in almost all working processes, in the service but also in the industry sector.

The attention to personal qualifications may cause an initial difficulty for older workers. Through the analyses in the project we have found that many older workers are less used to express and describe their personal qualifications than younger persons. It may also represent an opportunity for them, in the sense that their “longer” life experiences are for sure a source of personal development.

When analysing these qualifications a special attention should be paid to personal life experiences, taking into consideration gender perspectives giving value to skills developed in own life and to how these can be useful in a working context.

A typical example in this sense is the case of women having developed organisational, planning and communication skills in a family context which could be used in a working context.

If we analyse the typology of qualifications demanded by companies we find – transversal to sectors and to countries:

- **Flexibility:** as the capability to accept new contexts and situations
- **Adaptability:** seen as a positive attitude towards change and mainly when facing new situations and new job tasks. Adaptability may be a personal characteristic but may also be improved through job rotation.
- **Team working skills:** since working in teams and groups is getting more and more common in different organisational settings employees have to be able to cooperate in teams, to share job tasks and to finalise efforts to a common objective
- **Conflict resolution skills:** as a consequence of the fact organisations are conceived more and more as teams conflicts may arise more frequently thus individuals are asked to be able to cope with personal involvement in potential conflicts as well as to contribute in conflict resolution in the case they occur
- **Capability to innovate and to find creative solutions:** With the production changes in the 21st century knowledge and innovation are highly ranked qualifications in many enterprises. The capability to transform knowledge into innovative products is becoming an important factor of production. This means that the employees in companies are not only asked to accept changes but also to involve their intelligence and their creativity in finding solutions to new problems, never experienced in the past. In order to perform this qualification experiences and education is a key resource.
- **Communication skills:** as we have seen communication, together with the capability to understand and use new emerging languages, is a key qualification whose importance is increasing in the development of new working processes in all sector. It involves not only the knowledge of the code – the language – but also a set of personal skills supporting the use of the code: things as being able to listen to others, being able to express in an understandable way including both speaking and writing, being able to catch others attention.
- **Attitude to be responsible and autonomous:** companies ask their employees to work according to defined individual or team objectives, in many cases simply defining which objectives need to be reached and within which times. This means that both in the service and the industry sector individuals is asked to be responsible for their performance and to be autonomous, within defined frameworks.
- **Problem solving attitude:** as part of an effective work – and mainly of an effective team work – a positive attitude towards problem solving is required. Older workers can be a resource in this aspect since they in many cases are highly experienced in problem solving during their life experiences.
- **Risk management skills:** in any working processes, and moreover in a changing context, there is a certain level of risks. Companies ask employees to be able to manage at least risks they have already experienced, recording and tracking them.
- **Self management:** in a work organisation being more and more demanding towards individuals, persons need to have a clear idea of their expectations towards work as well as of the level of commitment they will have to invest in performing their job tasks. Personal

awareness is a first step towards self management, a key qualification in order to cooperate effectively within a team as well as to work in continuously changing environments.

Older workers often own a great deal of these qualifications but they may face difficulties in getting aware of them as well as in expressing and describing them.

Job centre operators should invest time in supporting older workers to identify the competencies and qualifications they own as well as how and when they have implemented them. A key tool in this sense may be the last part of the new European Curriculum.

Customer related qualifications

This last group of qualifications has been introduced in our model with reference not only to the service sector – in which it is of course of greater importance – but also to the industry sector since G’OLD analysis has confirmed the general trend of prevalence of “customer oriented processes” also in manufactory activities.

In general terms we consider customer related qualifications as qualifications oriented to deal with a customer, being an *internal customer* – colleagues, other departments within an organisation – as well as an *external customer* – a client.

All these qualifications are in general terms related to *communication* skills such as:

- **The capability to listen/understand customers**
- **The capability to supply information: general, concrete, specific**
- **The capability to be available/careful towards clients**
- **The capability to manage conflicts**
- **Problem solving attitude**
- **Patience and calm**
- **The attention to own behaviour and dressing** – which may be influenced at different levels by the company, reaching the definition of specific procedures.
- **The capability to manage Information and Communication Technologies**

In general customer related qualifications include qualifications belonging to personal qualifications as well, but it acquires importance as a consistent group due to the great attention company’s show towards it.

TRAINING AND JOB PROVISION FOR LOW SKILLED UNEMPLOYED OLDER WORKERS

Introduction

The following is a description of methods and best practices experiences including a targeted training and job provision course for short term educated unemployed older workers in order to transform present barriers for employment among the unemployed older workers into concrete plans of action and proposals for best practices. The training course is prepared to be implemented as a part of the activities administrated by job service centres. The courses are meant to be conducted by adult educational providers providing training and job provision for unemployed people within the framework of national employment policies. Additionally a module for workers in the job service centre is described to prepare them for their role in development and planning of the training courses and in assisting and advising unemployed low skilled older workers in their search for a new job.

During the analyses in the project “Inclusion of seniors in the labour market” we have found that unemployed older workers in many cases are facing great difficulties in re-entering the labour market. Statistics are showing that the number of unemployed older workers all over Europe is high especially for those with a low level of qualifications. A rising tendency towards exclusion from the labour market among certain groups of older workers are a reality all over Europe even though the age differs from 45 to 55 years among the excluded groups in the different European countries involved in this project.

Lack of qualifications, a limited knowledge about the labour market and a limited insight in how their qualifications and competencies can be valued are among some of the most important elements influencing on the motivation towards job search and future job possibilities among low skilled older workers. In order to prepare older workers to enter the labour market, targeted training courses including a common knowledge about the labour market and insight in own qualifications and how they can be used are needed.

At the same time many enterprises are reluctant in hiring older workers. Establishment of a network among enterprises in order to make interrelations and agreements on in service training and job provision matching the needs of enterprises and the specific qualifications among the unemployed older workers joining the courses will be important in order to overcome the barriers and prejudices hindering older workers to find a job.

The following recommendations will give concrete proposals for: content and form of a targeted training course including definition of personal qualification, personal plans of action, on-the-job training, provision of work in the form of subsidised jobs and regular employment and professional and general upgrading.

The model for training and job provision will be developed so as to allow for implementation as a part of the services administrated by the employment service system and the unemployment insurance funds within the framework of national employment policies. As a part of the implementation process it is recommended to conduct an introduction course for relevant workers in the employment service system to support them in the process of implementing targeted training courses and job provision for unemployed low skilled older workers, as a part of the unemployment services.

Model for training and job provision of unemployed low skilled older workers:

The overall objectives for a targeted training and job provision course for unemployed low skilled older workers is to develop and carry out a personal plan of action for all participants in order to prepare and support them in the process of job provision. Experiences and evaluations are showing that a duration of 18 weeks are appropriate in most cases, even though that some participants will find a job in a shorter period and other participants need much longer time.

By the end of the training course of 18 weeks at least 30% of the unemployed should have a job or attend training. If the unemployed older workers do not have a job or attend training they should be registered in a common job club or attend a similar activity supporting their job search.

Preconditions for possible framework:

One of the preconditions for ensuring a process that the older workers find successful is that there is a match between the older workers' expectations for job opportunities and the actual opportunities for on-the-job training, subsidised jobs and regular employment.

To ensure this, an enterprise network must be established with the participation of enterprises within several branches of industry. The enterprise network will be introduced to the older workers in the form of enterprise visits and an enterprises' day at the training institution.

As a part of the guidance and job applications process the wishes of the participants should be described as early as possible, allowing for action to be taken for an extension of the enterprise network.

The 18 weeks' training course should be containing guidance that connects the wishes of the participants, their experience, opportunities and new knowledge with support and assistance in active job search, and preparation of personal plans of action that may contain on-the-job training, subsidised jobs, and regular employment.

When the older workers' wishes for future employment have been clarified, an individual competence clarification will be conducted with the purpose of preparing a training plan matching their job wishes. The training plan is incorporated in the personal plan of action.

The participants who have not started on-the-job training, a training course or have found a job by the end of the 18 weeks of guidance and training must as a minimum have a personal plan of action drawn up as well as an offer for continuing as a group in a job club or another similar activity supporting their job search. Follow-up on the plan of action will take place in the job club.

Information meetings for the unemployed

It is advised that two information meetings are promoted and conducted by the employment service system, giving all interested unemployed the opportunity to participate. Caseworkers from the unemployment insurance funds and staff from the employment service system should be in charge of information at the meetings.

At the meetings, of duration of no more than 1 – 1 1/2 hours per meeting, the course is presented briefly, allowing for time for dialogue and questions from the participants. Clear and concrete information should be describing the opportunities of the unemployed, the target of the course and

any limitations, use of enterprise network, opportunities for on-the-job training, opportunities for job training and regular employment, individual guidance, assistance in job search, economy during the course etc.

After the information meeting, an interview for the course is made with the participants.

Attendance interviews

A calendar is drawn up for the attendance interviews so that each participant knows when the interview will take place. If many people attend the first information meeting it may be agreed that a few will come back for the next meeting. The unemployed will then have an appointment immediately after the information meeting while the other participants fill in papers. In case of too many attending the second information meeting the group will discuss how to deal with this.

Before the attendance interviews a table is drawn up, containing all the necessary personal information, information on health (if this is to be considered), wishes for change of sectors etc. (see annex 1). The unemployed fills in page 1 – page 2 is filled in during the interview.

The attendance interview is made in co-operation between the caseworkers from the unemployment insurance funds and the employment service system. The interview must be an open dialogue between the unemployed and the caseworkers. The purpose is to clarify immediate expectations and wishes of the unemployed, any physical limitations, wishes for change of sectors, training etc. Time schedule for interviews: no more than 30 minutes should be spent for each participant, of which 5 minutes is earmarked for summing up among those responsible for the interview. A prioritisation for attendance is made on a scale where 1 is best.

Immediately after the interview with the unemployed, the interview is assessed among the caseworkers. The caseworkers prepare a short memo, supplementing the information table with regard to interview content beyond what is noted in the table as well as additional information on change of sectors, participation in previous guidance and job search courses etc.

Criteria for participation should be agreed before the information meeting. The criteria's should be corresponding to the objectives of the course and the issues stated in the national and regional action plan for employment. For example: the unemployed is above 50 years of age, is a benefit claimant, has been unemployed more than six months, can speak, read and write the mother tongue, coming from a certain area in the country, and most importantly, do they wish to participate. Aiming at equal distribution of men and women should be criteria as well.

After the attendance interviews, the groups meet, go through results and recommendations, after which a final list is drawn up of those accepted for the course, waiting list, and rejections, if any.

Training course for unemployed low skilled older workers:

The training course should be lasting at least 18 weeks. of which the first seven are conducted as a common guidance and job search course. Our experiences in testing and evaluating the course have shown that guidance and clarification of unemployed low skilled older workers is a process that takes time, especially when the persons being clarified are going to change working area. As a result of the clarification and guidance process, individual plans of action are drawn up for each participant. They may entail further guidance and job search, specific training courses, on-the-job

training, subsidised job or regular employment, as well as a combination of these elements. Proposal for model, see annex 2.

The first seven weeks should contain, as a minimum:

- New knowledge about the labour market
- Being senior on the local labour market and in private life
- Assistance for CV and applications
- IT upgrading
- Opportunity for on-the-job training in established enterprise network
- Individual guidance and clarification supporting their self esteem and motivation and ensuring a realistic individual target towards their future job provision
- Individual plan of action containing professional upgrading focused on job wishes and opportunities.

The last eleven weeks are conducted in accordance with the personal plan of action. The last eleven weeks of the course will be flexible and adapted to the individual needs, which means that some participants have few weeks with guidance etc., and more weeks with short, technical courses (such as vocational training).

During the 18 weeks, the older workers get professional sparring and support both in the group and from the trainer. Teaching methods will take into account that both planning of the course and conduction of the course are based on the experiences of the participants. Discussions are established on the different subjects in order to actively involve the participants. At the same time there has to be paid a special attention to the planning of the course in order to ensure an appropriate mix of theoretical and practical oriented methods.

The 18 weeks training course will be focused on three main elements: Guidance and clarification, job search and specific technical courses. The content of the three main elements in the course are described in the following.

Guidance and clarification

- Career guidance in relation to job options and opportunities (Individual competence clarification)
- Guidance in relation to own resources, any physical limitations etc.
- As a minimum, an individual plan of action must be drawn up
- Personal and professional experiences
- Tools for guidance and job search
- Value standards with regard to oneself (the senior) and the labour market
- Readiness for change – what does that mean?
- Preparedness for taking up new challenges at work
- Senior life: economy, dwelling and inheritance
- Working environment
- Communication
- Co-operation
- Network – own network and how to use it
- Facts: unemployment insurance, early retirement etc.
- Knowledge about enterprises: out into real-world – visit to and by enterprise network

- IT

Job search

- Labour market in the local area
- Job opportunities and limitations
- Concrete job search

Technical courses

- The participants are attending shorter courses providing them with the specific qualifications they need in the certain area in which they are going to apply for jobs according to their individual plan of action and as a result of their Individual competence clarification.

After 18 weeks' guidance, training and job search course the participants should have offered a job, in some cases with subsidy; and as a minimum they should have prepared an individual plan of action with agreements on training, affiliation to job club etc.

Training of caseworkers in the employment service system and the unemployment insurance funds

The following is recommendations for short supplementary training courses for caseworkers in the employment service system and the unemployment insurance funds providing knowledge about qualifications and background of the target group as well as requirements and need for older workers prevailing on the regional labour market. It is recommend that follow-up and contact to the unemployed is going on for at least six months or until the person has found an ordinary job.

Purpose of course for caseworkers:

To acquire increased knowledge about the labour market and older workers

To acquire increased understanding for older workers' existential and psychological life situation

To acquire increased understanding for the psychological impact that changes have on older workers

To work with difficult conversations

To be better at handling difficult conversations

To get acquainted with collegial supervision as a method for own learning

To have the opportunity to contribute to developing methods for guidance, training and job provision of older workers

Proposed contents:

Labour market in the local area and unemployed older workers

Company's demands of qualification in different sectors

Life stages and identify

Social roles throughout a lifetime

Existential living conditions

Psychology of change

Guidance theories and methods

Definition of difficult conversations

Conversation model to handle difficult conversations

Clarification methods

Collegial supervision

Proposal for methods:

Presentations and discussions

Theory presentations in dialogue with participants

Involvement of participants' own knowledge and experiences

Group discussions

Conversation exercises/training based on cases

Reflection

Own plan for learning/action

Contact between unemployment insurance fund and employment service attached to the unemployed and trainers at the training institution

Contact is established between trainer and caseworker in the unemployment insurance fund of the unemployed. Dialogue on the individual person takes place between the unemployed, the trainer and the caseworker of the unemployment insurance fund and the employment service. Caseworkers receive information from the trainer on: what did the unemployed apply for, training started, place of on-the-job training, if any, employment (is it subsidised or regular) etc. Immediately after training, the caseworker arranges an interview with the participant, in case he/she is still unemployed – by then the unemployed must have prepared a personal plan of action that forms the basis for a dialogue between the caseworker of the unemployment insurance fund and the unemployed. The caseworkers having participated in the training course follow their own members for at least six months or until they find an ordinary job.

Development and Implementation

When the training course for unemployed low skilled older workers are developed the following issues should be considered in the process:

- How to recruit the older workers
- Contents of the information meetings
- Contents and methodology during visitation
- Senior resources and barriers
- Model for training
- Targets of the different modules
- Methodology during training
- Contact between trainer and caseworker
- Enterprise network – Through presentation of network at information meetings and visits to schools, can older workers contribute to extending their enterprise network
- Use of opportunities for on-the-job training during the training course
- Contact between unemployed and caseworker
- Responsibility for those who do not have a job or attend training by the end of the 18 weeks

One of the important issues to be aware of for a successful implementation of the model may be lack of accordance between the older workers' expectations for the course, the existing enterprise network and the older workers' own barriers to belief in own resources, the need for older workers on the labour market etc.

Other important issues to have in mind may be, the flexible planning of training, meaning that not all older workers are at the place of training for all modules – which requires visible targets for the different training modules that are known by all. Furthermore, it may be a limitation that the caseworkers do not have sufficient resources to follow the older workers both during the training course and after the 18 weeks. Last, but not least, existing legislation in the field and social systems can be a limitation of the possibility to implement the courses in the existing employment system.

STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN OLDER LOW SKILLED WORKERS IN THE ENTERPRISES

Introduction

The following is a description of methods and best practices experiences to maintain low skilled older workers in the labour market.

To maintain older workers in the enterprises are closely connected to the employment situation. In periods where it is easy for enterprises to attract younger and maybe cheaper employees it may be difficult to convince enterprises of the necessity to maintain older workers in the company. In this situation special initiatives should be established by the authorities as for instance a legal framework protecting against age discrimination, campaigns informing about future recruitment problems according to demographic changes, economical support to employment of groups in certain risk of labour market exclusion, development of suitable adult educational systems and economical support to training and education of employees.

In many cases it has shown up to be expensive for enterprises to hire and introduce new people. It takes along time to adapt them into working routines and tasks. For these reason investment in education and training for those employees who is in lack of qualifications can be a cheaper and better solution than dismissing them and hiring new people.

Today we are facing a situation where the demographic changes during the next ten years will affect both the age and number of the working population. Many enterprises are aware of this fact but still they don't establish the needed initiatives to maintain older workers in the company. Our analyses has shown the fact that the ability to both maintain and hire older workers will be an important aspect in the next ten years considering the ability to ensure the needed workforce in enterprises. At the same time it can be concluded that it can't be taken for granted that older workers especially with a low level of education wants to stay in the labour market if they don't find the job and the working conditions attractive according to their personal values.

When asked if they would be available to continue to work once reached their pension age, most older workers generally answer that they are not interested unless they could have a different job position (more money and/or a recognition of their value and experience/or a job requiring a reduced physical involvement) or different time schedules (part time /short times) and better environment/health conditions. At the same time we have found that many older workers value the possibility to pass on their experiences to colleagues at the working place.

As to say any policy to maintain older workers in the labour market cannot be based only on older workers availability to work longer at the same conditions, it should include a comprehensive strategy in order to define how the labour market can be made more attractive to older workers.

To maintain older low skilled workers in the labour market it is important to focus on the individual limitations, wishes and possibilities in order to plan how the job could be organized in the future if it should be interesting for the employee to stay longer at the labour market.

This is the reason why we have decided to focus our recommendations on a strategy focusing on an individual approach taking into consideration the different needs and values of the employees. Using this approach means that a strategy with the objective of maintaining older workers in the

enterprises for a longer period should be able to deal with the reality that employees have different needs, wishes and qualifications. Which is the true for not only older workers but for all employees in a company?

The recommendations should give concrete proposals for implementation of senior policies as an integrated part of the employee policies allowing for an individual approach and taking into consideration the individual needs and the chance to have a defined role in the company being worshipped and having the opportunity to pass on experiences to other colleagues for instance as a part of an official mentoring system in the company. In this way a senior mentor could at the same time have the role as a senior agent supporting new and experienced older workers being hired or already having a job in the company. The recommendations following are developed so as to allow for implementation in enterprises. When senior polices are implemented in enterprises as an integrated part of the employee policies in the aim of maintaining older workers in the company some of the indicators influencing on the decision to stay longer in the labour market should be taken into consideration. The indicators are described in the following chapter.

Indicators to be taken into consideration to maintain older workers in the labour market?

In order to maintain older workers in the labour market the analyses in this project has been pointing out some indicators which should be considered.

When older workers are considering whether they want to postpone their pension age some of the fundamental things influencing on their decisions are health, salary and working time.

Among those who have decided to withdraw from the labour market the size of their salary and the working time are issues which have been influencing on their decision. In general the group of persons who decide to withdraw from the labour market before pension age are highly represented by persons with a lower educational background. Among those persons their job are in many cases looked upon as a way to finance their existence.

In general it seems to be a tendency that men with a higher salary are making a later withdrawal from the labour market. It is not the same case for women as it seems like a tendency that wealthy women decides to make an earlier withdrawal from the labour market. In general it seems like those persons who are having the most attractive pension schemes, seems to make an earlier withdrawal from the labour market.

If the older workers consider that the basic things including health, salary and working time according to their personal values allows them to postpone their pension age they might consider staying some more years at the labour market if they find the working environment satisfying. When talking about working environment compared to the values of older workers some of the most important things that they are pointing out are:

- The working place are supporting older workers in the decision to maintain in the job
- The possibility to pass on the experiences to colleagues at the working place
- A more flexible working schedule or the possibility to work part time

A greater part of the older workers in our survey are explaining that they would consider postponing their pension age if the enterprises they are working in develop a framework which can ensure that they feel valued in the enterprises.

At the same time a more flexible working schedule or the possibility to work part time are highly valued by many older workers. Also job security seems to have an influence on the decision whether to maintain in the labour market or not. In general statistics are pointing out that older workers who are unemployed in general decide to be pensioned at an earlier age than those who is having a job.

The value and culture at the specific working place towards withdrawal from the labour market seems to be influencing the decision as well. At the same time persons who have a partner being pensioned seems to decide to make an earlier withdraw from the labour market than those who does not have a partner being pensioned.

Development of senior policies as an integrated part of the employee policies in enterprises

Senior policies in enterprises are mainly found in enterprises in Scandinavia. During our surveys and other surveys made in Denmark we have found that a greater part of the older workers employed in enterprises with senior policies find that the policies in many cases are focusing on phasing out the older workers in the enterprises instead of trying to maintain them .

If we don't want to strengthen the picture of older workers as a group who by definition needs special arrangements but at the same time wants to participate in the support of maintaining older workers in the labour market it is advisable to integrate the senior policy in the enterprises as a part of the employee policies, with emphasis on the fact, that specified conditions and needs will be present in the different phases of your working life. The framework of the employee policy should be based on a dialogue in the enterprises focusing on the needs of the enterprises and the employees.

More general aspects as a good physical and mental working environment minimizing attrition should be a compulsory part of the employee policy. This is an important aspect especially when we are talking about persons with a low level of education that in many cases has been performing a physical hard job for many years. As written above health condition are a major fact in the decision and possibility to postpone the pension age.

At the same time life long learning and continuous education for all employees should be a part of the employee policy as well. Many older workers and especially those with a low level of education are having difficulties in living up to the new and constantly changing demands of qualifications in enterprises.

When a senior policy is developed in a company the following content should be considered:

- A senior policy should be able to pay attention to needs and wishes of both the company and the employees. At the same time the policy should be dealing with the fact that older workers are a heterogeneous group with different needs who does not want to be categorized as a special group. A possibility to focus on the different needs of older workers in the enterprises could be to make an employee policy where the employees can choose their

personal policy within the framework of the policy for instance flexible working time, different working tasks, salary etc.

- An active senior policy should be able to include the different factors influencing on whether the employees are willing to postpone their pension age. At the same time the policy should be able to incorporate the many different and individual opinions about a meaningful job among the employees in the company.
- In an active senior policy it should be considered what originally inspired the employees to seek a job in the company. The values of the employees should be paid special attention in the aim of maintaining older workers in the company.
- When the senior policies are developed the company should be aware that the aim of the policy is to maintain and keep the employees in the company. This means that the senior policy should be ensuring a good working environment and life long learning and continuous education for all employees including older workers.
- It is advisable that the representatives from the management, the trade unions and the shop stewards in the company agree on a framework for health and safety in the company to ensure a good working environment satisfying both the needs of the employees and the needs of the company. The policy should be calculating with the fact that time pressure, missing precautions in maintaining the job, outsourcing of departments, lack of influence in planning the daily work and missing information's are contributing to mental attrition.
- It should be considered that older workers in many cases have a low motivation towards education and life long learning which means that a special attention should be paid to development of this part of the policies.
- The senior policies should be practical orientated. A special attention should be paid on how the policies are implemented in order to assure that the policies don't remain a policy statement.
- As a part of the policy a frequently personal evaluation of the working conditions with special emphasis on working hours and working tasks should be made once a year for instance during a meeting between employee and employer. On behalf of the result of the evaluation it should be decided whether working time or tasks should be changed in order to maintain the person in the company for a longer period.
- All employees should have the possibility to get advisory help to plan their pension period in time to save up a pension
- As a part of the senior policies it should be decided how the last period of a persons working life is planned. All older workers should have the possibility to plan the last part of their working life in cooperation with their family, their colleagues and their manager in the company.
- Development of an organizational system where older workers have the opportunity to be educated and functioning as mentors/agents advising other older colleagues, participating

actively in implementing senior policies and being responsible for or taking part in training of new employees in the company could be a part of the system which would give older workers the possibility to pass on their experiences to colleagues at the working place.

Aspects to be considered when a senior policy is implemented

When it has been decided to develop a senior policy in a company the following aspects should be considered in the planning of the process.

- It has to be considered in which period the policies are developed and implemented. It has to be assured that the company is not involved in big organizational changes in the same period which could be removing focus from development of the policies.
- The representatives from the management in the company should be considering and explaining the needs and intentions of developing senior policies in the company. At the same time it should be considered and communicated how the employees will be participating and actively involved in the process of developing and defining the policy.
- It has to be ensured that all departments involved in the process are informed properly. It is a good idea to agree on who is responsible for information's in the different departments.
- All employees and actors influenced by or influencing on the policies should be actively involved in the process including all levels of the company for instance: employees, shop stewards, middle management, management and representatives from the trade unions.
- All information meetings about the process should be arranged during the working hours.
- An introduction course could be arranged early in the processes in order to make the discussions on the policies more concrete.
- To arrange a future seminar focusing on the senior policies is a good way to make the process more democratic among all employees
- When developing a senior policy it is important to be aware that it takes time to develop a good senior policy involving employees and actors on all levels of the company.

Implementation of mentoring systems in enterprises

Development of an organizational system where older workers have the opportunity to be educated and functioning as mentors being responsible for/ or taking part in training of new employees in the company could be a part of the employee policy which would give older workers the possibility to pass on their experiences to colleagues at the working place.

At the same time the mentors could be functioning as senior agents advising other older colleagues and participating actively in implementing senior policies to ensure that the framework of the employee policies in the company supports older workers to maintain their job in the company as long as possible.

Implementation of a mentor organisation in the company would help the company to ensure that new employees feel welcomed and well informed in the company. In-service training would never be able to replace formal education but the use of mentoring and in-service training as a supplement to formal education and as a method of introducing new employees to the standard specifications and rules in the company- by means of learning as being a part of a social process- has been recognised as one of the best methods of learning and developing.

At the same time the mentors function as a senior agent could help the company in building capability to attract and maintain older workers witch currently with the aging of the labour force become one of the central challenges for enterprises in the future.

Definition of a mentor

Originally the word mentor is coming from the Greek mythology. The word is found in the old poem about King Odysseus who had to go to the Trojan war for twenty years before he could go back to stay with his wife and son. While he was away his friend was taking care of his wife and bringing up his son. The name of the friend was mentor, who has been giving inspiration to the idea of a mentor.

During times many situations or processes including learning and development has been performed as a kind of mentorship either formal or informal where thoughts, experiences and knowledge have been transformed from one person to another. This has been and is still a fundamental element in learning- both in educational institutions and in enterprises where in-service training has been used for many years.

A mentor will traditionally be one or more persons who have been chosen to be responsible for a trainee in a limited period where the trainee is in the company. A mentor could also be persons in the company who have been chosen to be responsible for training of new employees. At the same time a mentor could be a person who in a more informal way is advising his/her colleagues on different issues for instance senior related aspects.

Mentoring are often used as a relation where less experienced employees gets the opportunity to gain new personal and technical competences from more experienced employees. The new employee will be introduced to the organization, policies, values, culture etc. in the company.

A mentorship will always be for a limited period of time.

The role and tasks of a mentor

A mentor has many different roles and tasks to fulfil. A mentor does not have to take care of all the tasks, for instance introduction of technical working specifications can be done by someone else but the mentor. The important thing is that the mentor has the responsibility to ensure that the new employee or the mentee is having a good introduction to the company. It is advisable that the mentor makes an introduction plan and has the responsibility to follow up on the plan frequently. Examples of the role and tasks of a mentor are mentioned in the following:

- Technical: Ensure that the mentee gets knowledge and instructions about the specified technical tasks in the company
- Social: Ensure that the mentee gets the opportunity to become a part of the social environment in the company and that the menthe is aware of relevant collaborators

- Psychological: Ensure that the mentee is getting support and back up
- Framework: Ensure that the mentee gets the opportunity to learn and reflect
- Organizational: Ensure that the mentee is introduced to policies, organizational structures, employee arrangements and formal and informal ways of behaviour in the company

Organizational structures for the mentorship

It is a good idea to formalize the mentorship through an agreement on the aim and content in the mentorship. The agreement should be signed by mentor, mentee and a representative from the management. Through an agreement it can be ensured that the performance for mentor and mentee are adjusted compared to the time they need to talk about the mentorship.

An agreement that involves colleagues and leaders will make it possible to make agreements about division of labour in order to make it possible for mentor and mentee to concentrate on certain technical issues for a specified period. At the same time it will be possible to involve the colleagues in different parts of the mentorship where it is found suitable according to their different qualifications.

It is important that mentor and mentee are getting support from their leader. The leader has an important role in supporting the mentee in the process of gaining new qualifications. While the mentor should be supported and supervised in the role as mentor. At the same time the leader should be ensuring that the aim and content of the mentorship is satisfied according to the agreement made on the mentorship. If any situation should occur where the mentor are in doubt of how to act or if the mentor feels that a decision is outside his or her authority to be decided the leader should be involved.

The leader should be responsible for feedback, following up and evaluation of the mentorship. The mentee should be able to reflect and evaluate the mentoring process but at the same time the mentee should have a feedback from the leader according to how he/she is fulfilling the rules and demands at the working place.

It can be a good idea to establish a project group around the mentorship. The group can be supporting and supervising mentor and leader during the process. If there is more than one mentee at the same time the project group can use each other to exchange ideas and best practices solutions. At the same time the project group can be responsible for internal information about the mentorship in the relevant departments.

Senior agents

If the company has decided to implement a senior policy and a mentoring system in the aim of maintaining older workers in the company it could be a good idea to let the mentor have a function as a senior agent. The senior agent could besides from being a mentor have a role in helping the company to build capability to attract and maintain older workers witch currently with the aging of the labour force become one of the central challenges for enterprises in the future. The senior agent could be participating actively in a constant development of the senior policies in enterprises and at the same time be the person from whom the older workers can get advises on what to be aware of when they are planning the last part of their carrier. The role as a senior agent is very familiar to the role as a mentor, besides the fact that the role of the senior agent will be established towards more experienced colleagues and on a more informal basis.

Education of mentors and senior agents

To become a mentor is not something that can be reached only by joining a course or because you are good at doing your job. To become a mentor you need to have certain qualifications in order to be interested in and able to communicate with many different persons. At the same time you need to have patience and you have to be able to give feedback and appreciation. At the same time a mentor should have a basic knowledge on the history, culture and organization of the company. Even though a mentor has got all of these qualifications it can be a good idea to join a mentor course in order to learn how to use the mentoring techniques and be aware of how the teaching and learning process is functioning.

If the mentee is presenting a certain group as for instance immigrants, unskilled persons, older workers or another specified target group a bigger knowledge about the target group can help the mentor to understand how the mentee is acting.

In the following we are suggesting some of the elements which should be a part of a mentoring course preparing mentors for the role as a mentor and a senior agent.

- What does it mean to be a mentor
- Organizational aspects in mentorship's
- Elements in teaching of adults
- Communication and cooperation
- How to handle conflicts and stress
- Presentation of senior policies
- What does it mean to be a senior agent

We suggest that the course is lasting for at least three days. The main elements in the course should be containing the following headlines:

- Mentors and mentorship's
- Teaching of adults and communications
- Senior policies and senior agents

Some parts of the course can be taken out or replaced with other parts according to the specific needs and aims of the course. At the same time it would be a good idea to plan a day where following up is made according to the experiences gained by mentors after the course. For further details see annex 1.

Motto:
*When planning for a year, plant corn.
When planning for a decade, plant trees.
When planning for life, train and educate people.*

LIFELONG LEARNING ADDRESSED TO OLDER LOW SKILLED WORKERS

Introduction

During the analyses conducted in the project we have found that many low skilled older workers are facing difficulties to meet company's demands of qualifications mainly because we are talking about people not very familiar to traditional learning means and educational pathways.

When we are focussing on the process of Life long learning regarding low skilled older workers it is important to be aware that, we are talking about people with a very low level of education, who in many cases has been leaving school at an early age. In some cases their early school leaving additionally has been linked to learning problems or social problems, which might have increased in time passing. In any cases the image they have of traditional teaching and learning are often connected to less successive experiences. At the same time many older workers haven't been concerned with education for many years. For those used to perform a practical oriented job it can be difficult to be engaged in theoretical learning in a class room for many hours.

Learning can be defined as the act, process, or experience of gaining knowledge or skills. Learning helps us move from novices to experts and allow us to gain new knowledge and abilities. Learning can be happening both in an informal way for instance by watching, discussing or reading and as a formal process established as on the job training or as formal education. In most cases learning will be a process effected as a combination of different methods and acts.

Lifelong learning is seen as building upon and affecting all existing educational providers, including schools, adult educational and vocational providers and institutions of higher education. It extends beyond the formal educational providers to encompass all agencies, groups and individuals involved in any kind of learning activity. It rests on the belief that individuals are, or can become, self-directing, and that they will see the value in engaging in lifelong education. Remarkably, people can learn from the moment of birth. Learning can and should be a lifelong process. Learning shouldn't be defined by what happened early in life, only at school. We constantly make sense of our experiences and consistently search for meaning. In essence, we continue to learn.

Lifelong learning is now a mechanism for exclusion and control. As well as facilitating development it has created new and powerful inequalities. These are issues influencing on access to knowledge; and individualization. In knowledge-based economy, those who have the lowest levels of skills and the weakest capacity for constant updating are less and less likely to find paid employment. Individualization has also meant that access to social support mechanisms has been weakened.

The European Council held in Lisbon in March 2000 marks a decisive moment for the direction of policy and action in the European Union. Its conclusions affirm that Europe

has indisputably moved into the Knowledge Age, with all that this will imply for cultural, economic and social life. Patterns of learning, living and working are changing apace. This means not simply that individuals must adapt to change, but equally that established ways of doing things must change too.

Since the early 90s Lifelong Learning has been a key element in European Employment strategies and policies. The attention to a learning pathway not ending with compulsory education but continuing all through individuals' life is a relevant part of the concept of "Employability".

The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council confirm that the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. Therefore, Europe's education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes. They too, must adapt. The Commission and the Member States have defined lifelong learning, within the European Employment Strategy, as all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences. Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts.

According to these facts some elements are to be taken into consideration when promoting life long learning initiatives addressed to older low skilled workers.

Life long learning addressed to older low skilled workers

In order to ensure that life long learning can be implemented for all persons being a part of the working population special circumstances has to be considered to ensure that low skilled and older workers are actively taking part in the life long learning processes going on in the enterprises and as a part of the unemployment systems.

Governments and social partners should ensure that the policy frameworks are in place to meet the new training requirements for a competitive and skilled labor force and to ensure equality and social cohesion. Education and training authorities, and employers, need to consider more strategically how to better prepare young people for labor market entry, and in addition to ensure that those already employed and those without work can be provided with training provision to meet evolving demands. Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, or as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood. Adult education and learning should be a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong.

Educational planning for adults

The transnational survey conducted as a part of this project, has shown that many unskilled older workers are in lack of basic literacy skills. These are in most cases to be considered as pre-conditions for a lifelong learning pathway. If there's the need preliminary learning should be provided in order to develop basic literacy skills, at least on a basic level.

In many cases low skilled older workers are difficult to engage in educational activities on the one side they explain that "they don't need to learn anything else" since they have been performing their job for several years and on the other side we have found that a greater part of the older unskilled working population are frightened by comparing themselves to something new, difficult and for "youngsters". In this sense it might help starting by individual guidance and clarification interviews

focusing on the knowledge they do own and aimed at identifying how they could use it and what they need to improve or learn in order to be able to meet the demands of qualifications in the different job tasks.

Since life long learning and life wide learning affect all aspects of individual life – personal life included – it is important for older workers to be supported to acquire awareness on all their skills, whenever they have implemented them, through a wide balance of competences. For instance unemployed women over 45 who have dedicated parts of their life to family care have developed for sure some skills suitable to be converted into a job context (planning skills, relational skills, practical skills). Moreover it is important, to offer follow up to specific training, and guidance to other learning activities, if necessary, in order to support them in conceiving lifelong learning as a continuous pathway, not an occasional event.

From the survey conducted as a part of the transnational analyses in the project we have found that unskilled older workers in general prefer to learn by doing. In most cases they prefer practical instead of theoretical approaches. At the same time the subject should be relevant and closely linked to performance of new or on-going job tasks. Even if in most cases there's the need of working on relational competences these should be clearly linked to job tasks and in situational training as for instance re-creating a job environment within the classroom or establishing a mix of theoretical learning and in situational training in enterprises.

When education for low skilled older workers are developed it has to be considered that there is a balance between personal life and working life. First of all we are talking about a target group which is not used to stay for long time in classrooms. Moreover people often have to take care of a family and/or to perform some kind of economic activity (in some countries unemployment income is very low which means that it is necessary to have other “irregular” jobs to survive). These considerations should lead to session's not too long, balancing practical activity and theory.

The resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience which means that all genuine education should connect doing and thinking together. These concerns seem rather idealistic when placed in the context of the emphasis on the acquisition of competencies for employment and upon accreditation that came strongly into force in the 1990s. However, they link very strongly with the concerns and practices of informal learning. It is not only that education carries on throughout life, it is also part of living.

To define clear learning objectives is one of the most important things for adult's education. The question “why should I do it?” immediately arises when talking about learning. The answer is as difficult as learning content is far from a concrete application. In any case learning objectives should be clearly stated, and when possible case studies and examples should be presented and discussed. People attending learning initiatives should have clear in their mind that they will strengthen their opportunities in the future.

In conventional education the student is required to adjust themselves to an established curriculum; in adult education the curriculum should be built around the student's needs and interests. At the same time, instructing older workers must take into consideration that motivation: starts from what they like and need. Since education and lifelong learning, may result in a hard experience for this target, personal interests are a key to foster motivation and participation. For this reason it can be effective to identify if the group shares any interest and use it as content when dealing with

for instance technical skills (e.g: if they are to learn how to use internet it might help to show how useful it can be also in personal life, to find news related to personal interests)

When selecting instructors and learning facilitators a specific attention has to be paid to their attitude towards adults and in this case older persons and, in some cases, also to their age. Older workers might prefer to be taught by “adult” teachers or young persons who “respect” the life experiences older workers own. The instructors should at the same time be able to bring the practical experiences owned by older workers into the discussion and content of the training activities. When teaching low skilled persons it is important to be able to communicate in a clear and “easy language” even when complex issues are explained.

Young workers – let’s say from 18 to 35 years old – are prepared to be asked to continuously implement and update their competencies and skills in order to promptly answer to always new demands from the labour market. Moreover, they own in most cases the basic skills “for learning” as well as a correct attitude to be in this process, such as to be prepared to maintain their brain in “exercise for learning” once left school...and for all their lives.

This attitude is often a brand new element for older workers whom are not prepared to the fact that knowledge – and mainly technical knowledge – risks to become obsolete in a ITC based society and often think the basic knowledge they acquired at “school times” is enough - and will remain enough - for their working life.

It’s often very hard to experience that the knowledge on which own professional life has been based risks to become of no use when a new machinery/ a new process is introduced.

Motivation for life long learning

A suggestion is to implement other learning modalities such as learning by doing/learning on the job initiatives, based on a situational learning approach. People learn by being engaged in a task very similar to the tasks they face when implementing their daily works.

We live for the moment in a technological era that change permanently and that introduce day after day new technologies of work. To be sure that older workers are able to meet the new demands from enterprises as described earlier it is important to prerare older workers for the new technological demands. At the same time many older workers are stating that technological tasks and the problemes they are facing to meet these tasks makes it difficult for them to fullfill the new job tasks. The same thing can be said about language skills. Living in Europe and being a part of a working environment where tasks connected to especially english will become more common in the future makes it important to developpe new laguage skills.

Both computer and laguage skills can be used as a method to teach other subjects relevant for the actual job. At the same time both subjects can be used for private purpose.

Inclusion of computer training and laguage skills in other educational programs or as shorter courses lasting for few hours in a period of time can be important for the overall motivation to adabt into new learning processes and gain new skills.

At the same time the ability to use a computer and to access the internet will improve the technical skills of the participants and make them prepared for adaptation into new working routines. Additionally it will improve their ability to make job applications and job search. In this way lifelong learning will represent a new task for employers and also for employees.

In many cases it has shown up to be expensive for enterprises to hire and introduce new people. It takes a long time to adapt them into working routines and tasks. At the same time it has proved to be difficult for older and especially low skilled workers to find a new job once they have been dismissed. For these reasons investment in education and training for those employees who are in lack of qualifications can be a cheaper and better solution than dismissing them and hiring new people.

Implementation of life long learning activities will be important in the future especially in order to qualify low skilled workers in risk of exclusion from the labour market. When talking about older workers the possibility of gaining new abilities would support them in prospecting of the educational process and support them to change the idea of not being able to study after a certain age close to the pension age.

ANNEX 1 : TABLE FOR ATTENCE INTERIVEWS

Name _____

Civil reg no. _____

Address _____

Postal code: _____

Tel.no. _____

Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

Member of which union: _____

Member of which unemployment insurance fund: _____

I wish to have holidays from _____ to _____ (max. 2 weeks)

I am skilled as / have attended courses within:

1
2
3
4
5

I used to work as: (start with most recent job)

Position	Work functions	Employment period
1		
2		
3		

I am looking for a job within the following fields / sectors:

1.
2.
3.

I am considering changing sectors: **Yes** **No** **Maybe**

I can no longer handle my original profession and therefore seek support, guidance and/or inspiration to find new options. **Yes** **No**

Reason:

In case of wish for change to another sector:

Priority 1: _____

Priority 2: _____

Any health-related limitations (shoulder, knees, back, or similar):

Other comments:

Date: _____

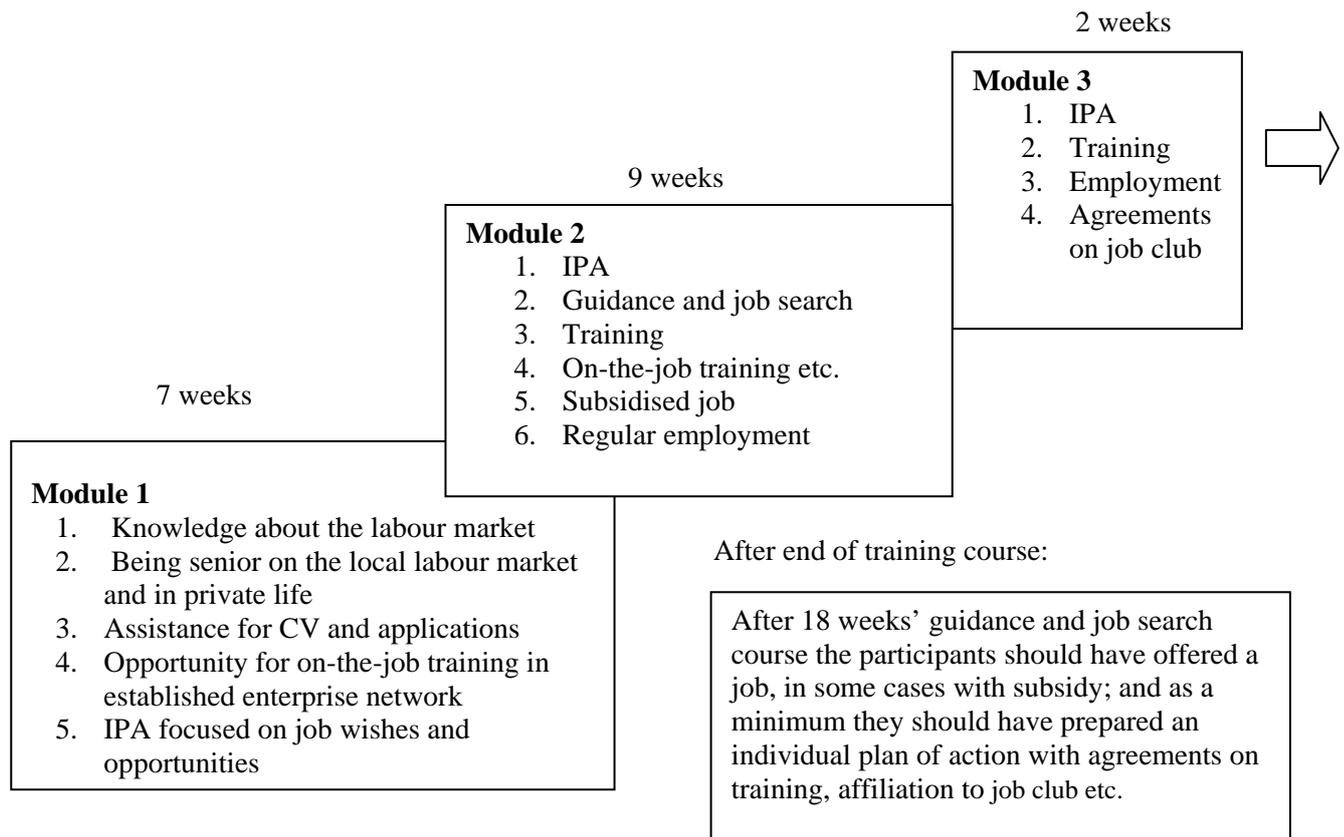
Signature: _____

ANNEX2: TRAINING AND JOB PROVISION FOR UNEMPLOYED LOW SKILLED OLDER WORKERS

The training course is flexible and adapted to the individual, which means that some participants have few weeks with guidance etc., and more weeks with short, technical courses (such as vocational training)

General: 18 weeks' training: 8 and 12 weeks' guidance and job search, incl. option for 4 weeks' on-the-job training and 6 weeks' technical training

All participants attend 7 weeks under module 1 – after this, individual plan of action (IPA) is followed.



ANNEX 3: EDUCATION OF MENTORS AND SENIOR AGENTS

Modul 1: Mentors and mentorship

Duration: 1 Day

What does it mean to be a mentor?

- Historical background of the mentor idea
- Experiences with mentorship's in enterprises
- The role as a mentor
- The tasks as a mentor
- Special aspects that a mentor should be aware

Organizational aspects in mentorships

- How can mentorship's in a company be Organized
- What is the role of the management and the colleagues
- Experiences with mentorship agreements
- Methods for evaluation of the mentorship
- How can a network among mentors be established

Modul 2: Teaching of adults and Communication

Duration:1 Day

Adults learning

- Basic elements in adults learning

Teaching of adults

- What should you be aware of when you are teaching adults
- Basic teaching methods

Communication

- What happens when we communicate
- What is influencing on how we understand the communication
- Which methods can be used to ensure that the means of the communication has been received.

Modul 3: Senior policies and senior agents

Duration: 1 Day

Senior policies

- Examples of senior policies in enterprises
- What should you be aware of when you develop and implement senior policies

Senior agents

- The role as a senior agent
- The tasks as a senior agent
- Special aspects that a senior agent should be aware of
- How can a senior agent support the aims of the senior policy in the company

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