

Position Paper 3

Health, demographic change and wellbeing: Occupational safety and health in the context of demographic change

Regarding demographic issues at the labour market we focus on the **ageing working population**, on **migrants** and **female workers**. The success of the EU 2020 Strategy will depend largely on the EU's ability to face up to the major demographic transformations of the coming decade and its capability to use the strong potential of the two fastest growing population segments: older people and immigrants and to further increase female employment rates.

Ageing workforce

The share of older workers (aged 55 to 64) in the labour force (aged 20 to 64) is projected to rise by around 40%, rising from 13.2% 2010 to 18.7% in 2060 in the EU27. **By 2030, in many countries older workers will make up 30 % or more of the total workforce.**

Female workers

In the coming years, more than previously, the labour market will be characterised by increasing diversity as more women enter the labour market. Over the past 10 years female employment rates have increased throughout Europe (EU-27), from 57.9 % in 2001 to 62.3 % in 2011. **As the Europe 2020 strategy envisages a 75 % total employment rate in the EU by 2020, involving more women is seen as one of the major factors in meeting this target.**

Migrants

Over the past decade, unprecedented levels of immigration both from third countries and within the EU-27 have substantially increased the proportion of EU-27 inhabitants who do not live in their native country. As most migrants are relatively young, they contribute to the size of the EU-27 labour force. In the future, the labour force will increasingly include people with a migration background. **By 2060, close to one-third of the EU-27 workforce will be of foreign descent.**

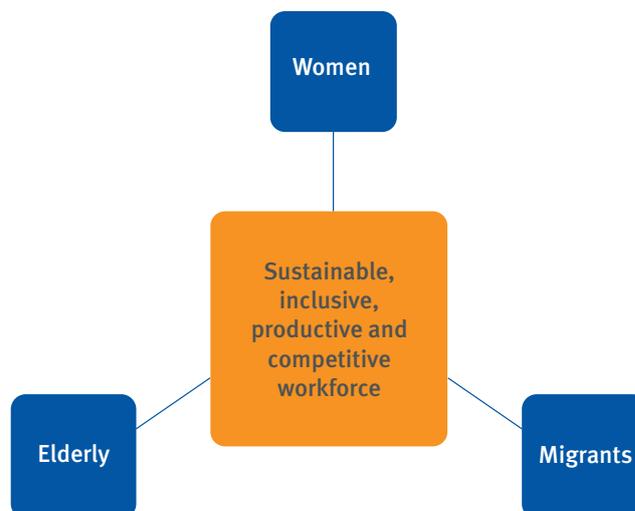
Specific challenges:

- Given current policy directions, which are focused on preventing early retirement and prolonging workforce participation, identifying and influencing the factors affecting retirement decisions becomes crucial. Ageing leads to an increase in the risk of developing disorders and diseases, and **health issues are the most common reason for leaving the workforce before the statutory retirement age.** The challenge is to organise work and to design workplaces in such a way that work related

ill-health can be prevented and people are able and motivated to work until the retirement age and to retire in good health.

- As a consequence of the diversification of labour supply, there is an increasing need to engage with a more demographically diverse workforce (female, migrant, younger and older workers, and workers with disabilities). These demographic groups are disproportionally represented in precarious employment and in non-standard working time arrangements. There is a lack of information and research on these groups of workers and the jobs they occupy. Monitoring and research of the changing scale and nature of the risks is crucial, as the proportion of these groups in the workforce increases.
- The goal of higher female employment underlines the need to more effectively address the health and safety issues that affect women at work. A more targeted gender-sensitive approach of the different effects of exposure to hazardous substances on men and women, including their impact on reproductive health, the physical demands of heavy work, the ergonomic design of workplaces, and the length of the working day considering also domestic duties is needed. It is necessary to integrate the gender aspect into all work-related research topics in a more consistent way.

Scope:



Ageing workforce and OSH

- Investigate the physiological, pathological and psychological effects of prolonged workplace exposures to physical, chemical, biological and psychosocial hazards on workers and how these exposures affect the trajectory of normal ageing throughout the working life, and functional abilities and the occurrence of diseases later in life.
- Investigate the association of work, health, work ability and work motivation with work participation. Further research on the determinants of early withdrawal from the labour market is needed, with a specific focus on the age group 45-54, to support the development of efficient interventions. Conduct high quality intervention studies, including organisational, training and job accommodation interventions aiming at promoting healthy ageing and well-being at work, and to evaluate their efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Develop and evaluate models of integrated and collaborative health management (including work design, work organisation, workplace health promotion and rehabilitation) for workers with chronic diseases and health conditions, including mental illness and disorders, to prevent work disability and unnecessary job losses. Interventions also need to address the psychosocial aspects of working with a chronic disease.
- Develop the methodology for designing and implementing complex, high-quality workplace interventions, aiming to reduce the duration of time off work and improve the sustainability of return-to-work (RTW) following long-term sick leave or work-related disability, using a tailored and multi-faceted approach directed at various groups and settings and including process, effect and cost-effectiveness evaluations. Priority target groups for work disability prevention (WDP) and RTW are ageing workers with chronic health conditions at risk for early retirement; and temporary workers in insecure, flexible work arrangements without a job to return to after the disability occurred, which is a growing group of vulnerable workers representing 15–20 % of the workforce in the EU.

Differences between women and men at work, gender aspects in OSH research

- Improve OSH research, epidemiological methods, monitoring and prevention activities by systematically including the gender dimension in order to provide the evidence base for gender impact assessments of existing and future OSH directives, standard settings and compensation arrangements.
- Focus on specific female-dominated sectors and types of jobs in which women are over-represented, such as health care, education, retail, hospitality, personal and household services, and part-time and precarious jobs. The health and safety needs of domestic workers (who are predominantly female) should be a particular focus, especially as they currently fall outside the terms of existing EU legislation.

Migrant workers and other vulnerable groups

- Identify major challenges for OSH arising from an increasing proportion of workers with a migration background in the labour force and ways of improving their integration in the labour market to make full use of their potential.

- More research is needed on migrants and other vulnerable groups of workers and the jobs they occupy: as the proportion of these groups in the workforce is increasing, monitoring and research on the changing scale and nature of the associated risks is needed.

Proposed future research & innovation projects:

1. Elaborated, causal modelling and empirical, databased analyses of the individual-, company- and society-level factors that affect individuals' decision on labour participation and their motivation to work longer (until and beyond current pension age).
2. Analyses of multifactorial work-related diseases and occupational diseases with long-latencies such as occupational cancer and stress which particularly play a role for the health and work ability at a later working age.
3. Development of an occupational exposome for occupational diseases and a European work-related exposures database containing information on individual workers' exposures through the life-course. This could be linked with the development of a digital 24h, on-site exposure monitoring system.
4. Innovative diversity-adjusted health promotion and workplace design solutions as response to major demographic changes in the workforce within the upcoming years. Including the development of a safety culture approach and an accompanying ICT-based platform containing certified prevention and safety culture measures for a multinational and multi-ethnic workforce.

Expected impact:

- Better health promotion, disability prevention and return to work practices can make a significant contribution to improving the general health of the EU population, including both working-age and elderly people. Consequently, promoting the sustainability of the health care and social security systems.
- Enabling more migrants and female workers to participate productively and healthy in the labour market will increase the competitiveness of Europe in the war for talents and will render economic growth inclusive to all groups within society.

