

**New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work
CEMR/EPSU**

Recruitment of young workers and retention of older workers, developing new skills and life-long learning

by

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The Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) investigates the impact of privatisation and liberalisation on public services, with a specific focus on water, energy, waste management, health and social care sectors. Other research topics include the function and structure of public services, the strategies of multinational companies and influence of international finance institutions on public services. PSIRU is based in the Business Faculty, University of Greenwich, London, UK. Researchers: Prof. Steve Thomas, Dr. Jane Lethbridge (Director), Dr. Emanuele Lobina, Prof. David Hall, Dr. Jeff Powell, Dr. Mary Robinson, Sandra Van Niekerk, Dr. Yuliya Yurchenko

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Executive summary

Local and regional governments employ 17 million workers across Europe. The local government workforce is ageing, reflecting wider demographic changes. There are major changes in retirement ages and attitudes to work which are impacting on the local authority workplace. In developing more age sensitive policies, a greater awareness of the different dimensions of ageing is needed. Not everyone ages at the same rate or in the same way.

Austerity measures have affected many countries, especially local authorities. Efficiency measures have been one of the major strategies to deal with budget cuts and these most often mean job cuts. Local government is also changing the way in which services are delivered which is affecting the workforce.

High rates of unemployment among young people have led to several European and national initiatives to increase youth employment. Local authorities have an important role to play in supporting young people at local level. Apprenticeships are being used as a way of drawing young people into the workforce and local authorities have encouraged local employers to take on apprenticeships as well as creating them within local government. Germany has several successful schemes for integrating young third country nationals into the local government workforce.

Local authorities have developed retention policies which will benefit women workers particularly but these need to be seen as part of a move toward lean and agile management, which is part of wider local government restructuring.

The links between encouraging older people to stay in the workforce and making public services more sensitive to the needs of older people are gradually being made. However, the relationship between the employment of young people and making public services sensitive to their needs in the long term has not yet been recognized.

Recommendations for social partners

Social partners have a major role to play in the promotion of more age-friendly policies, through the facilitation of seminars and workshops. .

Gather data on the age profile of the workforce, identifying the numbers of young and older workers and the future implications of the age profile. Monitor this data annually.

Identify the needs of local government workers in terms of the life cycle, for example, caring responsibilities, financial needs, career aspirations, new skills.

Promote the value of an annual age review interview

Compare the policies used to encourage older people to continue to work with policies adopted for young people. Identify what can be shared between the two policy areas.

Monitor the use of flexible working as part of a wider re-structuring strategy and identify the impact on the work process

Review the use of age-related benefits to see if they increase or reduce costs of employing older workers.

Glossary of terms ¹

Age management: the management and development of programmes, policies, procedures that address demographic change in the workforce, and are designed to achieve age diversity in the workplace, the recruitment and retention of older and younger workers, knowledge transfer and health and wellbeing.

Age diversity: the development of a workforce with a diversity of age groups on the basis that inter-generational knowledge and experience can enhance creativity and innovation.

Age equality: the promotion of equality on the grounds of age on the basis that older people are not discriminated against in the labour market. Age equality also intersects on other grounds of equality – race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and gender.

Life-cycle approach: this enable organisations to consider the needs of workers at all stages of the working life-cycle, so that their career development, support needs and skills requirements can be planned for effectively.

Introduction

This report examines how local authorities are addressing the recruitment and retention of young workers and older workers within Europe. It was written to inform a workshop held on Wednesday 13th April 2016 in Brussels as part of the 'New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work' CEMR/EPSU project. Additional information discussed at the seminar has been incorporated into this final version of the report.

The report addresses the following research questions:

1. How have austerity measures and the resulting financial pressures affected the recruitment, retention and training of local and regional government (LRG) workforces?
2. What strategic approaches to workforce competence planning and management have been adopted?
3. What measures have LRG put in place to attract/ retain a young workforce, including young third country nationals?
4. What measures have LRG put in place to attract / retain an older workforce?
5. How have the needs of women been addressed in recruitment, retention and training?
6. How do recruitment, retention and training schemes address the needs of older/younger workers in relation to working conditions, the provision of child care facilities and other care responsibilities?
7. What are the specific recruitment and retention challenges faced by LRG in rural and urban areas?
8. What measures have been introduced to support third country nationals in getting their qualifications and skills recognised?
9. Do we need to rethink the level of language skills required for different jobs?
10. How can social partners work together on recruitment and retention?

The Member States of the European Union are expected to undergo some significant demographic changes in the period up to 2060. Overall, population will reach a peak in 2050 and then decline slightly. Life expectancy is expected to increase for both men and women with a slight convergence of rates. ²

Table 1: Proportion of different age groups in the population

	2013	2050	2060
EU population	507m	526m	523
Young people (0-14)	15%	-	15%
15-64	66%	-	57%
65+	18%	-	28%
85%	5%	-	12%

Source: EU (2015)

Table 2: Life expectancy rates for women and men

	2013	2060
Women life expectancy	83.1	89.1
Men life expectancy	77.6	84.7

Source: EU (2015)

An ageing population affects labour markets because of a decrease in young people entering the labour market and a reduction in older workers due to retirement. Until recently, retirement ages were fixed, usually with different ages for women and men. Retirement was the point at which workers could claim their pension. This was part of a national welfare system which was designed when life expectancy was shorter and men formed the largest part of the workforce. With the increasing participation of women in the workforce, patterns of employment have changed. Although there are some significant differences between countries in terms of the share of women in the workforce, even where the national levels of female participation in the workforce are low, there are still a large number of part time workers.³

Although the total labour supply is expected to stabilise between 2013-2023, it will decline by 8.2% between 2023 and 2060. The working age population is expected to decline because many people of working age are expected to retire but smaller numbers of younger workers will enter the workforce. Although the labour supply will decrease, rates of employment among different groups will increase, with rates for women and older workers rising most rapidly.

Table 3: Employment rates

	2013	2023	2060
Total employment rate	68.4%	72.2%	75%
Women employment rate	62.6%	67.3%	71.2%
Employment rate older workers	50.3%	60.9%	67.1%

Source: EU (2015)

These demographic changes have been the focus of EU policies. The Barcelona Targets (2001) aimed to increase access to child care across the EU by 2010. Although these were only partially met, there has been an increase in the proportion of women in the workforce.

One of the major public policy issues in Europe is how to expand the workforce and encourage older people to remain at work for longer. This has been recognised by OECD in 'Live Longer Work Longer' (2006), which outlines ways of encouraging work at an

older age. In the short term, the EU aims to increase the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 to 75% by 2020. ⁴ Member States are expected to promote the labour market participation of young people, older workers, low-skilled workers and legal migrants. They must also make employment more attractive - focusing on flexicurity, worker mobility and work-life balance - and promote self-employment, entrepreneurship, plus job creation, including in the areas of care and green jobs. ⁵

Local and regional governments employ over 17 million workers across Europe to deliver essential public services (CEMR), the majority of them women. The effect of these demographic changes in local and regional government needs to be considered in the context of some important employment policy changes which have taken place in many European countries. The introduction of equal opportunities policies in the 1960s/ 1970s resulted in an expansion of women workers in the local government workforce. In addition, changes in technology and increasing levels of education have changed the entry point into public administrations. The use of computers and photocopiers led to a decrease in the number of basic administrative jobs previously held by young entrants. Fewer school leavers enter public administration but increasingly more highly educated older people, including women, have entered the workforce. The impact of public management reforms has led to the devolution of employment responsibilities to external agencies makes it more difficult for public authorities to monitor trends within the workforce. ⁶

The definition of 'older workers' is another issue which has an effect on the way in which employment policies are developed. A study in Ireland (McCarthy *et al*, 2014) looked at the way in which 'older workers' were defined. ⁷ Agencies and organisation define older workers in different ways. OECD and EU debates about the decline in labour market participation focus on people aged over 55. However the definition of an 'older worker' in the workforce can vary from 40 onwards. This lack of consensus of how to define an 'older worker' has implications for employment relations in the workplace. Hasselhorn, Apt, (2015) in a review of research into the participation of older people in the workforce, emphasized that retirement is no longer characterised by one pattern. ⁸ There are a growing number of alternatives which are being pursued by women and men. Although attitudes to ageing are changing, with a growing awareness that some of the traditional characteristics of ageing take place at different ages, organisational systems do not always reflect the fragmentation of conventional retirement options. ⁹

Philippe Seidel (Age Platform Europe) reported that there are big differences in the percentage of older people who work. Older workers are more likely to be unemployed. Women are less likely to be employed and the difference between male and female participation in the labour force increases with age. Training and skills development help to keep both young people and older people in work.

Another way of understanding ageing in the workplace is to look at the different dimensions of ageing. Sterns & Doverspike (1989) identified five dimensions of ageing:

Chronological age – actual age of an individual;

Functional age – biological changes and health and wellness, physical ability to perform tasks which may impact on work;

Psycho-social – self-perception of age – how old or young an individual perceives themselves to be;

Organisational age – perception of age according to the time that an individual has worked for an organisation, career and ages of other workers and;

Lifespan age – changes in behaviour at different stages of the lifestyle.¹⁰

These different dimensions show that it is not easy to define an ‘older worker’ especially if this group is considered to begin at age 40 or 45. One of the most important issues that arise when looking at recruitment/ retention policies is how older people are perceived in the workplace and how this shapes expectations of what they can achieve. If longevity within the workforce is going to be promoted effectively, this requires a change in perception of older people and how they engage with work. If retirement planning is introduced at 55 then this may be in conflict with policies to encourage people to remain in the workplace.

A recent Eurofound survey found that some older workers would like to reduce their working hours by 45%.¹¹ 21% have problems with work-life balance especially if they have caring responsibilities. Older people are more likely to have caring responsibilities as the reduction of public services results in more informal care provided often by older women. Women change jobs less often than men.¹² This poses questions about how can women and men regularly update their skills? The recently published EC Pillar of Social Rights (2016) is recommending that as part of improving access to equal opportunities and the labour market, workers are given the right to life-long learning.¹³

A study for BMW (2010) looked at the efficiency of different work teams according to age. The Workers Council had recommended that issues of health management, skills, the workplace environment, retirement policies and change processes needed to be addressed to support older workers. Changes in work practices were introduced on the assembly line along with new designs and equipment. Job rotation across workstations during a shift was introduced so that the load on workers’ bodies was balanced. These changes resulted in increased productivity for the older worker team and a fall in absenteeism from 7% to 2%.¹⁴ This showed that rethinking how the workplace functions for older people has immediate and long term benefits. Health and safety policies have an important role to play in age management.

Although this rethinking of age and working conditions has been applied to ‘older workers’ it is also worth applying it to the concept of the ‘young worker’. How are young workers perceived and how does this influence labour force policies towards this demographic group?

Impact of austerity on recruitment, retention and training of local and regional government (LRG) workforces

The global financial crisis and resulting austerity measures have had an impact on local authorities, to varying degrees. In several countries, e.g. UK, Sweden, Greece, austerity policies have caused a dramatic decline in the number of jobs, with local government workers either losing their jobs or not being replaced, and changes in the way in which local authority services are delivered. In other countries the impact on local government has been less severe.

Hastings *et al* (2015), as part of a Joseph Rowntree Foundation research project which looked at the effect of austerity measures introduced in 2010 on three local authorities in England, found that one of the strategies adopted to deal with budget cuts was the adoption of increased efficiency measures. These included the reduction of 'back office' and fixed costs, income generation and savings from external providers as well as the redesign of front-line services, which all had an impact on the workforce. Jobs are often outsourced to external providers and changes in the pattern of work followed the introduction of new types of front line jobs.¹⁵

One of the main ways of generating efficiencies was through the reduction of jobs. In the three case studies the reduction was between 18% and 36% of the total workforce. However, the scope for continued efficiencies declined over time. By 2014, the opportunities for improved efficiency were much more limited. Respondents from the three local authorities reported that the effect of later efficiencies would be longer lasting. Staff reductions were seen as one of the areas which, over time, would have a negative effect on the ability of councils to function adequately. Respondents felt that at a time of massive change to the way in which councils were run, greater capacity was needed, not less. As more senior and long standing staff left, this reduced organizational know-how and tacit knowledge.¹⁶

A second strategy was to reduce and change the role of the council in the provision of services. Generic call centres and the use of digital communications as a substitute for face-to-face contact between council workers and citizens were the two most commonly adopted changes. These have affected the workforce with new forms of working and often less control over the labour process.

The Kiruna Regional Administration (RA) in Sweden, which had an age management policy, was affected by a fall in tax revenues and so the number of employees fell from 1830 in 2008 to 1595 in 2010. Temporary staffing levels were reduced and redundancies were introduced. However, due to strict rules in the Swedish labour market which uses a 'last in, first out' principle, this would have meant that more young workers would have left. Young workers often do not return when there is a skills shortage. Kiruna RA offered a programme of voluntary redundancy for older workers aged 61 or more with an offer of 25% of salary until age 65 for voluntary departure,

taking out their final pension entitlements through redundancy. This arrangement covered about 20% of the redundancies that were needed. ¹⁷

Austerity measures have had a major impact on local government workforces in several countries. Efficiency and restructuring strategies have reduced jobs, introduced new ways of working and increased outsourcing of many 'back-office' services, which have altered the nature of work within local government.

Some of the questions and comments that emerged in the seminar discussion on 13 April 2016 drew on the experiences of different countries in earlier periods of economic recession. In Finland, where the local and regional government sector has experienced restructuring in the past, the importance of developing employment policies which met the needs of people to support the development of society, was emphasized. Currently, social partners are developing active ageing policies. Some of the restructuring processes taking place are much deeper than in previous recessions and the results are not yet clear. If people have to work longer and change careers during their working lives, this has implications for training but also for their income which may increase or decrease.

The experience of Ireland, a country where no one had been recruited to the public sector for 9 years and where pay was reduced following the economic crisis, showed that when recruitment started again, there may be changes in the skills expected of local/ regional government workers. For example, library services are now interested in recruiting academically qualified library workers which is a threat to existing workers who have gained on-the-job experience.

Attracting / retaining a young workforce, including young third country nationals

The impact of the recession in Europe affected young people most strongly, with growing levels of unemployment among young people. Austerity policies have contributed to this increasing level of unemployment. There are 5.5 million young people unemployed in Europe. The EU response has been to promote several Europe wide initiatives (Youth Employment Package, 2012 and Youth Employment Initiative, 2013). An EU report, published in 2013, entitled 'Working Together for Europe's young people – a call to action' asked national governments to develop strategies to reduce youth unemployment together with other stakeholders. Local authorities have the potential to play an important role in national strategies. ¹⁸

In 2013, in response to this report, CEMR called for the establishment of an EU-Starter initiative which would promote youth engagement in local public services. The EU Starter would offer a year of work experience in a public institution or non-profit organisation to young Europeans without a job, training or an education. This would provide work experience and training as well as contributing to the delivery of public services. This initiative was aimed at regions with youth unemployment rates of more than 10%. Each candidate would be given a one-year contract with pay and social security which would be renewable for a year. ¹⁹

The use of apprenticeships has been traditionally been one way of supporting young people to enter the labour market. The current unemployment crisis for young is again emphasizing the importance of apprenticeships. European countries have different policies towards apprenticeships, influenced by the effectiveness of vocational education and training systems. For example, Germany, has a well-developed system of apprenticeships, including federal public sector apprenticeships in 130 occupations. Several German lander have set up schemes to encourage young third country nationals to apply for apprenticeships. 'Berlin needs you!' is an example of a municipal government campaign to recruit young third country nationals. It is an initiative of the Commissioner of Berlin for Integration and Migration and is coordinated by BQN Berlin, the Vocational Qualification Network for Immigrants in Berlin. The scheme offers training in 12 occupational fields and over 100 qualified jobs and operates as a partnership between schools, public administration and companies. An evaluation in 2012 found that there had been a gradual increase the number of trainees from migrant families in Berlin. In 2012, 19.3% of trainees in public administration and public companies had a migration background, compared to 8.6 % in 2006. ²⁰

In England, local authorities have played an active role in promoting apprenticeships as part of a wider strategy to engage the under-25 year olds who are not currently in employment, education or training (NEETs). Although the national Youth Contract scheme, with £1 billion funding, aimed to increase the number of vulnerable young people in education and work, only 27% participants have been able to enter education or employment. ²¹ However in pilot schemes which have been run by local authorities, over 57% of young people entered employment and / or education, which is a much higher success rate. ²²

Leeds City Council has worked with local employers to expand the number of apprenticeships and to promote them to local young people. As an employer, Leeds City Council created apprenticeships for young people so that they can access entry-level jobs. Apprenticeships within the City Council have also been used to allow existing workers to retrain for new roles. In a four year period, 883 staff undertook an apprenticeship to gain new skills. 149 were aged 16-24. Leeds City Council set up a partnership with Leeds City College to run a two week employability skills training course for young people and a six week placement work placement at the City Council. ²³

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) set up an initiative called 'Get Oldham Working' to try and create sustainable employment opportunities, by working with stakeholders –Job Centre Plus, the Work Programme and local employers. By influencing its public procurement role, Oldham MBC ensures that any company which wins a council contract or partnership will commit to using local labour and local businesses as well as providing new jobs and apprenticeships. Oldham MBC created council-based traineeships for unemployed young people aged 16- 24. These provide employability training and support for finding jobs. 83 traineeships had been created between 2013 and 2015. The aim is for 60% of trainees to continue into some form of

employment. 'Get Oldham Working' has supported 474 young people through 61 jobs, 44 in traineeships and 41 on apprenticeships. ²⁴

Both these examples show how local authorities in England have been playing a role in the creation of jobs and apprenticeships for local young people. The creation of employment for young people within local authorities is part of a wider set of initiatives to support young people who are not in employment, education or training living locally. Local authorities are better able to influence local employers and educational institutions to provide integrated systems to support young people but they have less influence on the quality and sustainability of jobs which young people need. Although local authorities can provide a few apprenticeships it is becoming more difficult as cuts in local authority budgets are reducing the role of local authorities in service provision and commissioning. Whether local authorities are able to play an active role in economic development is unclear although this is a strategy that many local authorities are pursuing.

Generation Pact FNV

In 2013, FNV launched the 'Generation Pact to combat the crisis' report, which has been written by trade unionists working in the municipal, private and semi-public sectors. The Pact aimed to integrate FNV's bargaining practices on younger and older workers. Younger workers needed extra measures to address the problems of the economic crisis and older workers also needed measures to encourage them to remain in the workforce. Skills from younger and older workers have to be successfully combined to create benefits for workplaces. Younger workers can learn from older workers but older workers can also benefit from the energy that younger bring through new knowledge and ideas. Employment should be distributed across the generations.

There are several measures which result in decreasing working hours and flexible retirement arrangements for older workers and increased mentoring/ coaching for younger workers. This involves a transfer of hours from older workers to younger workers. Older workers have a lighter work load. Craft and professional skills of older workers in part time jobs will be maintained. New, younger worker have to be trained and mentored by older workers.

This required tripartite collaboration at local level to increase employment benefits and planning by municipalities to increase the recruitment of young workers. 25 municipalities have generated action plans to re-organise work. Benefits include older workers working fewer hours and being able to transfer knowledge and young workers being given 'real' jobs. ²⁵
(Presentation by Bert de Hass, FNV)

Another example of how local authorities are addressing recruitment and training of third country nationals can be seen in a scheme to train Romanian social workers to work in England. ²⁶ This project illustrates some of the problems facing the recruitment and training of professionals from other countries. The group were in their late twenties and early thirties who had all qualified to Masters' level and had been involved in some form of policy development. Most of the group viewed working in England as an opportunity for career development as well as providing higher salaries and a higher standard of living. They had moved to England to meet the demand for social workers and to improve their career and pay prospects. UK approaches to social work training have been used in many countries. As a result, the group of Romanian social workers had read English social work texts and were familiar with social work approaches. However, social work involves working at local level and although training can be described as increasing internationalised, the delivery of social work still has to take place in a local context.

The Romanian social workers needed to learn about the realities of English social work practice. If this is understood in the context of social workers shortages, social workers from outside the UK were often pressured to carry high workloads. There is evidence that the effect of this can reduce the professional self-confidence of the social worker. Training and mentoring was seen as a way of providing support to international social workers. After consultation with the social workers a training programme was designed which aimed to develop a 'local' knowledge base. This included an historical account of social work in England, political social and legal contexts, recent policy changes and language and local knowledge. Language and local knowledge covered terminology and local expressions and dialects. This group of Romanian social workers also experienced racism in England and this raised issues of how to develop anti-racist strategies. ²⁷

Attracting / retaining an older workforce and addressing the needs of women

Policies to improve retention are being introduced at the same time as local authorities are reducing the number of jobs and changing the way in which public services are delivered. This is providing opportunities for flexible working which can benefit older workers, particularly women.

In England, the Timewise Pilot Programme is funded by the Local Government Association (LGA) in partnership with Timewise, a company specialising in the promotion of flexible working. It aims to support local authorities to work with Timewise and create flexible working arrangements, which will attract and retain a workforce by using flexible working to encourage applicants. The scheme will contribute to the creation of a more diverse workforce and is expected to increase productivity in the context of budget cuts. Local authorities which become part of the Timewise scheme will be expected to share the learning from this new workforce practice with local employers. ²⁸

Local authorities will receive £5k on becoming a 'Timewise' council. They will be supported in the accreditation process and will have opportunities to share experiences and best practice with other participating councils. Councils apply for Timewise status through the development of improvement plans to improve flexible working in five areas: leadership; workforce; residents; local employers; suppliers and effective partnership working. The Timewise plans have to be located within existing council plans for workforce development, agile working and economic development strategies, an indication that the initiative is part of a wider re-structuring of local government. Accreditation is expected to be achieved within 3-6 months of the completion of the plan. ²⁹

Camden Council in London was the first council to achieve Timewise status in 2014 but five new councils joined the scheme in 2015. All councils reported that a main reason for applying for Timewise status was an internal resistance to new ways of working which made the implementation of organisational change difficult. Timewise initiatives have helped these councils to support managers in promoting flexible working and "to move away from a culture of "presenteeism"." In this sense Timewise is part of the introduction of agile management. It is supporting the reorganisation of councils which are reducing the number of sites and introducing 'hot desking' (Lambeth Council).

Flexible working can benefit people of all ages, especially women. Camden Council advertises all its posts as open to flexibility and as a result new staff have started with flexible working arrangements. Stoke City Council found that the retention rate for skilled workers who returned from maternity leave has improved. 36% of employees returned to work after maternity leave and all are still in post. Stoke City Council has found that Timewise has improved the way in which it meets the needs of its older workers because of an emphasis on workforce planning, the 'shape' of the organisation and job redesign. An example of this can be seen in the way Stoke City Council has started to work, in a project funded by the Department of Health, with local employers to ensure that workers who have caring responsibilities, mainly women, remain in employment. ³⁰ Flexible ways of working are likely to benefit women.

The term 'flexibility' stimulated the most discussion in the seminar. There are different concepts of what flexibility means and who benefits from it. Flexible working can be defined as working weekly hours in flexibly during a week or longer. It can also mean short or part time working, which may benefit the worker but an employer may use flexible working to impose fewer working hours. This is when flexible working becomes precarious working. Who defines flexible working is important. Some forms of flexibility are needed and wanted by workers but others are not. With growing pressure on public services as a result of lack of funding, some public sector workers are finding it more difficult to work full-time. Flexibility should be defined as part of a collective responsibility. Deals made between individuals and employers should be made within the framework of a collective agreement. Flexibility in retirement ages can be included in collective agreements or individual contracts.

Time banks have been introduced in some sectors/ countries. Individuals can bank up time over a year or even longer. It is unclear what happens when a worker changes jobs but a system could be put in place at national level which would facilitate the carrying forward of hours over a lifetime of working.

Local authorities in rural areas in many parts of Europe face significant barriers in recruiting and retaining a workforce. The Kiruna Regional Administration (RA) is located in the north of Sweden and employed 1,595 employees in 2010. 87% of workers were women and the average age was 48 years old. Almost half the workforce was aged 50 years or more. The retirement age was 63. This case study can be seen as a way of addressing some of the needs of rural authorities but it is also an example of good practice which could be applied to urban and rural authorities. ³¹

Along with other local authorities, Kiruna Regional Administration (RA) has changed its human resource policies to provide incentives for its workers to remain in the workplace. Starting in 2003, Kiruna RA began by raising awareness of the attitudes towards an ageing workforce, as seen by its own employees and then identified some of the issues emerging from an older workforce. The authority used external consultants, who had worked on similar projects in Finland, to interview a sample of managers and employees. The results of this research were presented to managers and trade union representatives. Two issues that had emerged from the research was the relationship between work environment and sick leave and how working conditions could be adapted for the specific needs of individuals. There were further presentations to 60 managers and to employees as a way of raising awareness and to promote improved practice among managers in the management of their workforce. ³²

Since 2003, age management has been integrated into human resource policies. The focus is on negotiation between the individual worker and manager which is guided by the human resources policy which states that managers should “have the ability to find individual solutions that are suited to the strengths and weaknesses of older workers.” ³³ This might involve discussion of new work tasks and whether more training could be provided for an older worker or how work could be allocated to an older worker which they are more familiar with.

All workers aged 50 plus have an annual meeting with their managers to discuss age management issues. The aim of these meetings is to try and identify whether there are parts of the individual’s working life which could be managed better, whether there are health issues that could be treated and to see if the individual worker would like to try out new tasks or remain with their existing job. This policy was closely related to changes in national legislation which increased the retirement age to 65 and extended employment protection until age 67. Workers may retire between 61 and 67 but there are financial incentives to retire later. These national policy changes have also changed the attitudes of workers to their chosen date of retirement. Some employees remain in part time employment until age 70 and continue to do certain tasks regularly. It has also become increasingly difficult to recruit staff since 2003. Gender differences in attitudes to retirement have emerged over this period. Women in relationships tended

to want to retire at retirement age because their partner was often already retired. Men in relationships often agreed to work longer if their partners were likely to be working anyway. ³⁴

Best Agers Lighthouse – Norrbotten County Council public dental service

The Best Agers Lighthouse project created local age management partnerships in several Baltic States. An example of Norrbotten County Council, Sweden shows the benefits of a local age management partnership in a region with a scattered population with recruitment problems in the local public dental service. Dentists, dental hygienists and dental nurses work together. In Norrbotten there is a lack of dental nurses because there are no training institutions in the area and many dental nurses have retired early.

The age management partnership started with an information session for HR managers and unions in the County Council and municipalities in Norrbotten. A reference group for the project was formed. In May 2013 meetings with all managers and employees at the seven clinics participating in the intervention were held. Information was gathered through a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews and a 'post-it session', which informed an action plan which integrated age management into the HR strategy. All managers attended a one-day seminar on age management and all staff at the clinics had a two-hour training on age management. Further development work on strategies and opportunities for employees aged 55+ to work until the age of 65 or longer began in 2014, which include working with occupational health to introduced a check-up for all employees. ³⁵

Diversity Flanders Initiative - Bert Decoster (VVSG)

Austerity measures, introduced in Belgium and Flanders, had led to cuts in working hours and older workers having to take early retirement measures. The increase in the retirement age has led to an increase in sick leave.

Diversity Flanders was set up not just to address issues of diversity for migrants and older people but also addressed the interests of VVSG (Flemish local government) and trade unions. VVSG offered HR support and dissemination of good practice. The initiative was dependent on Flemish government funding, EU social funds and revenues from training seminars. Protocols were developed by the Flemish local government, employers and trade unions. There were three central topics:

1. School to work training
2. Lifelong learning
3. Diversity – disability, gender, ethnicity

The initiative led to debates about “heavy” duties which highlighted that “heavy” could also be interpreted as higher level psycho-social stress rather than physical lifting. Training workshops were organized. HR tools were developed for use with

municipalities and cities. Diversity plans were developed for Flemish municipalities but due to austerity measures, the plans have been cancelled and the 100 project developers have been sacked. The work of Diversity Flanders has not completely ended though. In June 2016, there will be discussions about psychological well being and how to measure the impact of an increased workload. In November 2016, a workshop on age HR management will discuss HR tools that can help municipalities deal with age management. The report of Diversity Flanders is still being written. (Presentation by Bert Decoster (VVSG))

Recruitment and retention of older workers requires a holistic approach to ageing which highlights how attitudes to work, to older workers, to the management of health problems all need to be considered together. Gender differences in attitudes to work and the introduction of new skills need to be better understood.

Supporting third country nationals in recognition of qualifications and skills

There are several initiatives in Europe, which operate at local government level which support third country nationals in having their qualifications and skills recognized. In Belgium, new third country nationals can now access basic information about how to have their foreign diplomas recognized, through the 'My Diploma' website.³⁶ In Austria, the 52/2012 Amendment of the federal law on Universities shortened the procedure for recognizing foreign qualifications from six to three months. The 'one-stop-shop' and qualification recognition through the National Agency for Recognition and Comparison for International Qualifications and Skills (NARIC) was accompanied by a new website³⁷ and a network of regional competence and advisory centres. In Italy as a result of EU immigration directive 97/2013, EU long term residents, refugees and other beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can work as civil servants under the same conditions as EU citizens. Knowledge of Italian is needed for civil servant posts.³⁸

Social partners

Many of the examples and case studies mentioned in this report involve social partners working together on age management. There is a shared understanding that to successfully recruit and retain older and young workers, employers and employees have to work together. Demographic changes will dictate the need to maintain the existing workforce. This will have to be considered in the context of continued reductions in budgets for local/ regional government and wider reductions in public services. The nature of some public services is also changing, which will require new relationships between local/ regional government workers and service users. The impact of austerity on local / regional government will take several years to be felt and its impact on the workforce is likely to continue in the near future. The terms 'sustainable employment' and 'sustainable public services' are used frequently but much more needs to be understood about what sustainability means. Social partners will have to work together to define and implement measures to ensure sustainability. Much will depend on how the workforce is supported.

There is learning from other sectoral social dialogue committees which can be shared. As demographic changes will be taking place over the next forty years, there is a need to plan for how to use an older workforce and put supportive measures in place, for example, skills updating and life-long learning. For younger workers entering the workforce, their careers will change over time. How to provide adequate opportunities for workers to adapt to changing working environments over time will be the responsibility of social partners, in recognising the nature of the problem and finding solutions.

Conclusion

The issues that arise for local government in increasing the recruitment of young workers and improving the retention of older workers are different for each age group. There is a greater recognition of the changes which are needed to increase the recruitment and retention of older people in the work place. This has been informed by a change in the way in which working life and retirement are perceived, although much needs to be done. There is a growing awareness that public services have to be more sensitive to the needs of older people.

The high rates of unemployment for younger people is a major policy issue in Europe. Although there are many employment initiatives aimed at young people at EU, national and local levels, there are still more connections to be made about how to attract and recruit young people to local government jobs and to make services more sensitive to their needs. At the moment the long term implications of the position of many young people in different countries has not led to any rethinking of public policies which will be needed in future.

Recommendations for social partners

Social partners have a major role to play in the promotion of more age-friendly policies, through the facilitation of seminars and workshops. For example, the Austrian 'virtual consultancy' *Arbeit und Alter* provides information on all age-related work and social insurance issues as well as a forum for exchange.

Gather data on the age profile of the workforce, identifying the numbers of young and older workers and the future implications of the age profile. Monitor this data annually.

Identify the needs of local government workers in terms of the life cycle, for example, caring responsibilities, financial needs, career aspirations, new skills.

Promote the value of an annual age review interview

Compare the policies used to encourage older people to continue to work with policies adopted for young people. Identify what can be shared between the two policy areas.

Monitor the use of flexible working as part of a wider re-structuring strategy and identify the impact on the work process

Review the use of age-related benefits to see if they increase or reduce costs of employing older workers. For example social partners have agreed to remove the extra days of annual leave given to older workers.

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