

Occupational Psychosocial Risks and Mental Health of Older Workers

Strategies and pathways for progress

EuroHealthNet webinar

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Why we need to act:

- Graying European workforce, especially in key sectors (health, social, care); By 2030, older workers (55-65+) will represent 55% of the European labour force, 25% more than in 2005
- Healthy and health-promoting workplace environments will increasingly become a priority for EU legislators and European MS (economy, longer working lives, disability/sickness costs); firmly set in EU frameworks & instruments
- Responsibility to act and 'get better' not just on individuals but on governments, organisations and employers
- While psychosocial risks affect all workers, certain groups are more vulnerable than others; Gender dimension and aspects related to the Covid-19 pandemic important concerns
- Little research into what works & why (translation & implementation research), how to maximise the assets of the silver economy, good practice exchange between MS => => => EuroHealthNet policy brief on strategies

EuroHealthNet launched

 **PROTECTING OLDER WORKERS FROM PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS**

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE WORKPLACE WELLBEING

EUROHEALTHNET.EU /WORKPLACE-PSR

21 October, 2022

Central focus on psychosocial risks specific to older workers to protect, prevent and promote mental health & wellbeing, in order to mitigate further social and economic challenges and eventually contribute to achieving an Economy of Wellbeing.

www.eurohealthnet.eu/workplace-psr

Main Psychosocial Risks and Older Workers



- **Effort-reward imbalance** – social value of work carried by ageing population
- **Workload and work schedule, work content and task design** – fast changing working demands, mental & physical needs & conditions
- **Control, role in organisation and participation in decision-making** – isolation, value of seniority
- **Work-related stress** – help-seeking behaviour & coping mechanisms
- **Job insecurity and career development prospects** – type of contract, CPD & LLL
- **Work-family interference** - work-life balance & caring responsibilities
- **Labour market policies** – return to work, unemployment & activation benefit, income inequalities & cost of living

Gender

Occupational psychosocial wellbeing and older female workers

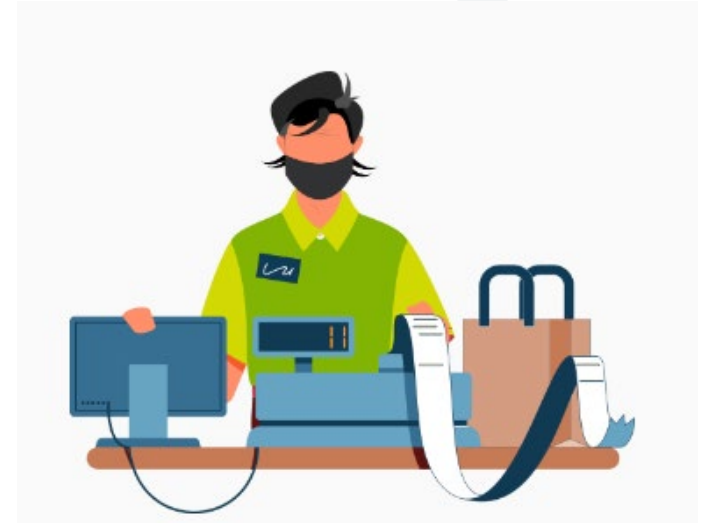


- **Prevention along the life-course**, including a focus on jobs predominantly carried out by women & with heavy emotional burden
- **Older women more exposed to harassment, bullying and psychological violence than men**
- **Women of menopausal age** constitute the fastest-growing group in the workforce, accounting for 11% of the G7 workforce alone, and **report the impact of menopause on their labour participation and work performance**, in particular in association with hormone imbalance and emotional cycles
- **Research gaps and very few practice and policy interventions for this group of workers**, in particular with regards to designing preventive and psychosocial health-promoting interventions
- **Some guidelines for occupational settings exist** (e.g., flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programmes and a positive organisational attitude)

Strategies

to create a healthier workplace for older workers
HOW, WHAT & WHO?

- slowdowns attributable to population ageing are avoidable and amenable through policy interventions & practice
- Becoming an age-friendly and a (mental) health-promoting employer



- Find the right mix: the responsibility of the government (regulations, directives, strategies), organisational structures (employer/company), within remit of individuals
- Interventions as targeted actions or integrated/long-term build –up into the business structure/model
- Enforcement, monitoring & evaluation, including in low-resource settings
- Leadership & participation, along adequate investments, employee/management implementation skills, evidence, good practice collection & exchange

1. ENCOURAGE LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE SKILLSETS

- Offering autonomy & use of varied skillset
- Increase control over work environment, motivation & ability to manage workloads & time pressure
- Manage age-related changes & improve help-seeking behaviours
- Managers gain knowledge & positive age-attitude



Creating smaller & inclusive teams



Creating participatory approaches to job & task design



Providing training on new management systems & digital platforms; older workers goal orientation skills

BECOMING AN AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

2. OFFER OPTIONS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

- Proactive yet non-stigmatising approaches
- Employee assistance programmes based on personal needs & preferences
- Support through digital infrastructure & digital skills development



Balancing flexible working with activities that include older workers in organisational decision-making



Applying participatory approaches to work/task scheduling



Consulting to understand limitations, preferences & enablers

BECOMING AN AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

3. LEVERAGE 'BIDIRECTIONAL' MENTORING PROCESSES

- Assets through 'traditional' mentoring old=>young
- 'Reverse' mentoring young=>old to develop new skills, re-connect, gain agility to fast-changing working environments



Consulted, needs & preferences-based



Career training & retraining prospects



Supportive performance management

BECOMING AN AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

4. OFFER FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT STRUCTURES



Actions designed & tailored according to workers' psychological profiles



Increase literacy on wider social protection & care systems



BECOMING AN AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

5. ESTABLISH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES & STRENGTHEN ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR HEALTH BENEFITS

- Focus on workplace culture, organisation of work & community participation
- Training to managers/supervisors & workers in occupational mental health literacy & awareness



Lower threshold for psychosocial support , counselling & health benefits



Establishing & enforcing measures to combat workplace harassment, bullying, stigma of age & mental ill-health



Open communication & active listening, encouraging help-seeking behaviour & investing in individual stress management skills

BECOMING A (MENTAL)
HEALTH-PROMOTING
EMPLOYER

6. IDENTIFY '(MENTAL) HEALTH PROMOTORS' AND PROMISING PROGRAMMES

- Engaging older workers to benefit from programmes
- Supporting SMEs in mental health promotion/prevention efforts



Developing & implementing explicit promotion/prevention organisational policy or plan with actions for various groups of workers/ages/gender



Top-down inclusive, intergenerational culture



Appointing internal/on-site wellbeing & diversity focal point

BECOMING A (MENTAL)
HEALTH-PROMOTING
EMPLOYER

Finland: VERO 55+ programme

**Finnish Tax
Administration
department
to increase the feeling of
being in control of the
workplace
monthly workshops for
management and older
workers what support is
needed to accomplish
their career goals
helped in feeling heard &
more in control**

Slovenia: STAR-VITAL programme

Publicly funded

**To promote 'Vitality in
Older Workers', healthy
lifestyle habits, prevent &
manage chronic diseases
in the workplace (esp.
SMEs)**

**Stress management,
interpersonal relationships
& intergenerational
cooperation, coaching &
mentoring**

CHRODIS+ Training Toolkit for Workplaces

**127 evidence-based
resources for managers &
workplaces to foster
wellbeing, health & work
ability for all employees;
to prevent chronic
diseases development; to
support individuals, such
as older people with
chronic health problems
(incl. mental health) to
continue working**

Thank you

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