



**Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health**

Elderly Employees in companies experiencing Restructuring - Training tools and recommendations

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Content

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Actions to support work careers

- In Finland research, development and other activities have been conducted to find reasons for early retirement and solutions to support job retention.
- There have been several:
 - national programs (like *Respect for Ageing* 1990-96) to support employees' well-being by maintaining and promoting their work ability and thus making it possible for them to be actively involved in the work life.
 - inter-ministerial programmes (like *Programme "Improve the Employability, Career Prospects and Length of Work among the Least Educated Adults 2000-2007)* on work life development
 - other programs in Finland aimed at improve employment, working capacity etc. (like *Research Programme on Ageing 2000-2002)*

Example: Towards Successful Seniority (TSS) method

- Goal: prevent employees' work-related mental health problems and promoting their career management in changing organizations.
- Implementation inside organizations: a tool for collaboration between OHS and HR.
- Connects the goals of early prevention, work ability maintenance and personnel training
- The intervention study found that employees' preparedness to manage their work career can be strengthened with resource-building group interventions in the changing work life



Policy issues

- A broad revision of the Finnish earnings-related pension system became active in the beginning of 2005
 - the pension age ranges from 63 to 68 years
 - the percentage of accrument increases with age
- Even though a lot has been done in Finland to support job retention, prolonging work career is still a focal issue.
 - For example, in beginning of 2009 the Finnish Government and Labour market parties agreed that their shared goal is to prolong Finns working careers with three years before 2025.
 - Practical proposals are presently discussed.

Current situation of elderly employees'

- According to Statistics Finland's Labour Force Survey 2008
 - the employment rates of elderly people have grown notably in Finland (56 % in 2008) and the financial recession did not have much influence
 - the financial recession struck men's employment hardest, and the decline focused on the youngest (15–24-year-old) age group
- According to Work and Health 2009 Survey
 - The proportion of permanent labour relations has remained at 86 %, it is young workers who have fixed-term employment
 - on a three-year time scale 46 % of respondents had experienced such workplace changes, that had influenced their own job and/or workload
 - despite this 63 % of over 55-year-old men and 50 % of women had experienced no changes
 - 87 % of respondents were satisfied with their work
 - especially the over 55-year-old were satisfied with their work (90 %)
 - Most respondents experienced, that workers of various ages are treated equally on workplaces (fully equally 59 % and almost equally 26 %)

Protection in the event of restructuring

- In 2005 the Finnish labour market parties decided to implement law of "change security" for events of organizational restructuring
 - The aim was to promote re-employment of redundant employees
 - Nearly all employees who have a work history of three years are entitled to change security.
 - The law includes e.g. paid leave for redundant employees in order to search for a new job, re-employment promoting plan for the personnel and a personal reemployment plan.
- However, the so called "unemployment pension tube" is a major reason why aging employees quit working in restructuring situations
 - older employees first get higher level earnings related unemployment benefit and then unemployment pension and finally regular pension.
 - nowadays only those long-term unemployed born before year 1950 can apply for unemployment pension.

Recommendations of Finnish ELDERS-seminar: *Society*

- More information about the protection in the event of restructuring (Ministry of Employment and the Economic)
- Restructuring are part of the every day work life nowadays, and laws etc. should be modified for changing situations:
 - Companies should be financially supported to use occupational health (OH) services during organizational restructuring
 - Companies should be financially supported to offer OH services to their former employees (for example, for one year after the employment had ended) to make sure that their work ability stays in good level
 - More flexible, individual solutions on retirement is needed

Recommendations of Finnish ELDERS-seminar: *Organisation's management and supervisors*

- Co-operation with OH services is important when changes to the way work is carried out are done, for example they can help to evaluate the work ability of the employee, ergonomics etc.
- Co-operation with OH services, Employment and Economic Development Office and other actors is important when major organizational restructuring is carried out in the organization
- Supervisors (and other important actors like industrial safety delegate) should be trained to handle organizational restructuring process
- Different kind of support (information, discussion possibilities, training etc.) should be offered to everyone at the workplace
- It is important to discuss with the employees about the changes and give them possibility to influence to the decisions
- It is important to give information again, again and again

Recommendations of Finnish ELDERS-seminar: *Occupational Health Services*

- Should participate to the organizational restructuring processes
- Should support individual to be responsible for her/his own health and for their future
- Should know what kind of other protection there is available in the event of restructuring, and advice organizations about it

Recommendations of Finnish ELDERS-seminar: *Elderly employees*

- Should make sure that their work ability: health, well-being and know-how stays in good level
- Should actively participate to planning of the changes when possible
- Should use support available (it is not a sign of weakness to ask and receive support)
- Not feel guilty about keeping their job

Conclusions from the Finnish Elders-report

- Work situation of elderly employees and their working conditions looks good in Finland
- Organizational change influences the health and well-being of those, who lose their jobs as well as of those who keep their jobs
- One ought to observe especially management by change, as well as how management and superiors act during change process
- In change process planning and realization the person subject to change should be taken into account even better than before
- Respecting workers (taking into account, listening etc.) is important
- One should respect the know-how and experience which elderly employees have and they should even more than before be offered possibilities to continue working

Recommendations

It is widely acknowledged in Finland that

- communication, appreciation and cooperation between all parties during the organizational restructuring process are key elements of a successful change
- also the society offers support for employees going through restructuring (change security).
 - To improve the current system it is important to evaluate its implementation and effectiveness in current, changing work life.
- organisations should treat elderly employees in a respectful way
 - it will also affect to the way young workers see them as a potential employers and how valuable know-how of elderly employees is transferred to younger workers.
- OH services and other parties should evaluate their capabilities and readiness for organizational restructuring of their customers.
- Elderly employees, like all employees, should make sure that their own work ability, their health, well-being and know-how is at the sufficient level, so that can continue working even though the work is changing.