

## **Age Power - Challenging the myths related to the handicaps of senior employees**

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### **Introduction and objectives**

Ageing work force is a challenge that all OECD countries are facing, Finland in first row. It is a necessity to find ways for supporting longer work careers, if we intend to maintain the funding base of our societies. Our conception of the senior employees and their potential for contributing in work life is usually rather pessimistic. In many respects, this conception is actually based on false assumptions

This presentation describes a comprehensive training programme that has been designed at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health by Life Course and Work -theme. The aim of the training programme is to provide research-based knowledge about the consequences of ageing. Understanding that ageing actually is not endangering our ability to perform work tasks helps to turn attitudes towards senior employees more positive. With right information and age-friendly attitudes the organisations have the capacity to modify work tasks so that the strengths of all individuals are put into use and weaknesses also tackled.

### **Approach of the training programme**

The Age Power -training programme is outlined according to the Work Ability -house model. In the model, individual resources are divided into health and functional capacity, competence and values, attitudes and motivation. The fourth floor of the house covers work and its requirements, including physical and mental dimensions, work community and leadership practices, for example. Work Ability stands out from the balance between individual's resources and requirements of work. Furthermore, this relationship is also mediated by contextual factors, such as family and close community, operational environment of the organisation and also by the surrounding society as a whole.

Individual resources change in many ways during our life course. For example, the prevalence of chronic illnesses increases along with ageing. However, experienced hindrance of illnesses does not increase in similar manner. Accordingly, competence gaps can be overcome if the training is tailored to meet the needs of senior learner. Senior employees are typically also more committed to the organisation. It is important to understand that individual's resources face both positive and negative changes. Work tasks need to be revised so that we can all use our potential to the maximum and weakening factors also tackled.

### **Achievements of a widely disseminated training programme**

The dissemination of the training programme will be carried out through a network of experts who are trained at the Institute. These specialists can modify the courses according to their own target groups' needs. Thus we cover wide dissemination and different requirements. Successful implementation of the training programme supports the Finnish society in meeting the challenges of ageing labour force.