

Final report of the Veto Programme 2003–2007, Helsinki, Finland 2009. Summary

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health started the Veto Programme in 2003. The aim of the action programme was to ensure citizens' full participation in working life, affect the extension of working life, improve the reconciliation of work, family life and free time, improve equality, and increase attractiveness of work as an option in different situations. The programme consisted of four sectors which had the following themes:

- high quality of working life and good safety culture
- efficient occupational health services and rehabilitation
- diversity and equality in working life
- minimum income guarantee and working life incentives.

The programme was carried out in cooperation with other ministries, labour market organisations and entrepreneurial organisations, research institutes, insurance and pension institutions and rehabilitation organisations. The programme was led by a management group. Each sector had its own action group functioning under the management group until the beginning of 2006. In 2006–2007, the action groups were combined to form the action group Parempi työkyky ("Better work ability"). The operational period of the programme was 12 March 2003–31 December 2007.

In the Veto Programme, the strategic policies of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health were implemented, and the projects of the already finished National Programme on Ageing Workers and National Well-being at Work Programme, which ended in 2003, were continued. In addition, the programme functioned in synergy with other ongoing national development and action programmes. The Veto Programme was prepared in close cooperation with other ministries and labour market organisations.

As regards its methods, the Veto Programme represented the programme policy adopted in the past couple of decades. Alongside management by norms and management by resources, the role of management by information was emphasised, and that is what the different programmes particularly aim at doing. In the continuously renewing operational environment of the social welfare and health policies, it is necessary to assess how the objectives of different operations models have been set and what is their profitability. In this report, the starting points and measures of the Veto Programme are presented in a summarised form, and the success of the programme is evaluated. The final evaluation has been carried out as a self-assessment among the central actors in the implementation of the programme. An external evaluator was not used in the final evaluation, as an external evaluator carried out an intermediate evaluation in 2005.

Different parameters of actions, feedback, evaluation surveys and evaluation discussions have been utilised in compiling this evaluation. The measures taken in the programme have been reported in the annual reports, which have not been repeated here due to their extent. The material of individual projects such as publications, web pages, etc. can be found with the assistance of the Annex of this publication. Only the central contents of the projects and their evaluations have been introduced in this report. A number of recommendations have been gathered in this report as well.

The key results of the evaluation of the Veto Programme are as follows:

1) The central objectives of the programme that is, postponing the retirement age and improving the employment rate, have been achieved.

However, the significance of the programme's role in the positive development is difficult to distinguish from other factors. There have also been advances in developing occupational health services and making the minimum income guarantee and pension schemes more encouraging.

2) Other objectives of the programme, such as reducing the number of sick leaves and accidents and decreasing the consumption of alcohol, were not achieved in the desired extent. The reasons for this, however, lie partly in decisions made elsewhere, such as lowering of the alcohol taxation.

3) The programme has had an impact on the attitudes towards work of aged people, although verifying this is not simple. According to the received feedback, the best offerings of the programme were communication campaigns affecting attitudes and seminars focusing on awakening the workplaces. Regional seminars may be considered especially successful.

4) Looking for, supporting and distributing good practices are a useful way to implement the programme. To distribute good practices, the communications and training relating to them have to be planned carefully.

Good, distributable practices must not be strictly defined and they need to enable modifications, as no workplace is capable of adopting experiences of another workplace as such.

5) The Veto Programme contributed to creating a more comprehensive approach to develop the factors affecting the attractiveness of working life.

The Veto Programme created an umbrella that supported communication and interaction, under which issues relating to the quality of work, working conditions and working life could be developed further. In the management by results of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's administrative sector, the Veto Programme and its objectives could be seen as a theme steering the activities of agencies and institutes in the administrative sector.

6) The programme networked several researchers, authorities, organisations and experts working with the same subject matters together. The cooperation between the programmes coordinated by different ministries and the wider network created thereof were particularly beneficial. Nevertheless, the programme did not manage to create enough networks of any other kind of cooperation between the different ministries.

7) The strategic objectives of the programme were clear, and keeping a record of the objectives with the help of the developed and gathered indicators made the discussion on available means more vigorous.

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