

## II INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF ISSOW

### *Work, Professions and Organizations: Tensions, Paths and Public Policies*

24-25 November 2016 :: Caparica, Portugal - Faculty of Sciences and Technology (FCT NOVA)

Theme 4): Public Employment Policies

### **Active ageing and age management to favour intergenerational relations in workplaces**

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#### **Abstract**

While it needs to be implemented at the level of the organisation, age management may also be promoted through legislation or public policy for the ageing workforce as a whole, in order to strengthen labour market integration, increase or sustain productivity and improve the quality of work environment. The two approaches should be seen as mutually reinforcing, rather than as independent of each other. Good practice in age management and, in particular, those favoring intergenerational relations, are the most important precondition for a substantial increase in the labour force participation of older workers (but not only – see generational contract); its benefits can be felt all round, for public authorities, for employees and for the organisation.

This paper aims to develop a better understanding of how answers to demographic challenges may be translated into both national policies and firms practices, presenting two country case and some good practices.

**Keywords:** Age management, active ageing, generational contracts

#### **1. Active ageing as an incentive for age management**

In last decades the main changes in European demographic trends may be synthetized in continuous population ageing and persistent low birth rate. This trend is predicted to continue and intensify: by 2040, the proportion of people aged 65 years or over is expected to account for nearly 27% of the total EU-28 population. The worsening of labour market structure in consequence of the global recent crisis has doubled the negative impact of demographic issues.

The challenges related to population ageing were recognised by key international organisations at an early stage: WHO, OECD ILO, for example<sup>1</sup>. Their recommendations have influenced policy development in European countries directly and indirectly (EU-OSHA, 2016).

As a consequence, by the European Council held in Lisbona in 2000, welfare systems reforms have followed the activation paradigm, in search of a balance between public and private engagement and resources. From a theoretical point of view, it has been necessary to rethink categories and values to assume as central in welfare systems. For example, social inclusion, considering all life course phases and not only the last one. This as signified to abandon a passive

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<sup>1</sup> WHO's concept of 'active ageing' forms the basis for numerous EU policies and national strategies.

vision of individuals and a role of mere reparation for the State, in favor of an active vision of individuals and interventions *a priori* by public actor in order to prevent risks. In this way, resources dedicated to welfare may be seen as a social investment more than an expenditure. Activation paradigm aims to protect, but also to make citizens conscious and responsible for the risks that may occur. This implies an engagement of public actor to reinforce individuals capacity to choose, to act, to participate and this should be applied also to senior workers. According to the guiding idea of activation, citizenship is a function, first, of an active inclusion in the labor market. In consequence, the great part of European welfare reforms state labour as a requirement for having access to welfare services and benefits. In particular, financial incentives to work and to remain into the labour market have been increased to “make work pay”, through the creation of negative income taxes and some social benefit reforms (limiting inactivity or unemployment traps). Among active policies, those focused on mobilising human resources to boost employment and economic growth (i.e. lifelong learning) as well as measures aimed at better reconciliation of work and family life have been increasingly recognized.

Factors explaining why people leave the labour market before official retirement age are numerous and complex. They can be work-related, i.e. linked to working conditions and attitudes in the workplace, or a lack of structures and procedures for vocational rehabilitation. They can also be individual, i.e. related to a person’s health, financial or family situation. Therefore, policy-makers are faced with a major challenge when designing policies to promote extended working lives, namely how to consider the different interrelated factors (EU-OSHA, 2016).

Another relevant issue related to active ageing at work concerns intergenerational relations. Economic crisis and the subsequent rise in youth unemployment has shifted policy priorities in many European countries towards promoting younger people employment, leaving aside considerations related to the ageing workforce. For example, early retirement has been promoted to sustain young people employment. However, it may reduce unemployment in the short-run, while, in the medium and long-term, it may lead to labour shortages, inflation pressure and depressed aggregate demand (van Dalen & Henkens, 2002). Conversely, increasing the average age of labour market exit may increase the size of the labour force and boost unemployment, also for young workers (Gruber & Wise 2010). International agencies recommend an intergenerational approach to foster employment and a good quality of life at all ages. European

Commission dedicated the years 1993 and 2012 to active ageing solidarity between generations. European Green paper "A New Solidarity between Generations faced with Demographic Changes" (2005) suggests to overcome any idea of a trade-off between the older and the younger. It cites demographic forecast showing that, over the next 25 years, in Europe there will be a considerable increase of people over 60 years of age, with the result that the incoming labour workflow from the market will not be sufficient to compensate for the estimated outgoing.

To avoid any risk of discrimination linked to age in enterprises, since the late Nineties, European Commission recommend to interpret policies concerning the active life from the perspective of management by age, developing devices to support the (re)entry and permanence into the labor market of individuals, according to the specific needs of each age group. Recommendations goal is to enhance the unique contribution that each person can provide to business results, while assuring motivation and quality at work, as well as a productivity increase. Policy guidelines concern, for example, the diffusion of practices to limit pre-retirement, or to protect older workers employment in cases of restructuring, the use of flexible contractual arrangements to incentive the staying at work beyond retirement age. Other measures introduced seek to strengthen complementarities between young and older workers by promoting the transfer of competences, the creation of jobs for youth and the retention of older in employment.

Then, European Union experts underline other benefits deriving from the presence of both groups in the world of work. The decision of seniors to work longer or with less intensity, along with technological developments, for example, can favour the work-life balance of young people. In particular, a crucial role for seniors in the coming years is assumed, as it forms a junction between the generations of active pensioners in significant numbers and in reasonably good health and generations of young people with a (working) present and a (retirement) future with decidedly fewer benefits and guarantees. This prompts a more sophisticated reassessment of the problems of distribution of social security than simply increasing the rate of pensions as an end in itself, requiring instead the creation of a global system, based on the consideration of many variables and of the life cycle. Van der Veen et al. (2012) propose the idea of "soft law" (or the similar "open method of coordination") that is a regulation process which promotes answers to specific issues through an interplay between policies executed at national and local level.

This work will cite the cases of France and Italy, where welfare reforms (especially concerning retirement and labour) have provided pacts and programmes age-oriented and referred to the solidarity between generations. In Italy, policies have mainly focused on increasing senior employment through pension reforms, employment and health-safety measures. Some cross-policy work are realized, although they remains limited.

In France there have been initiatives in several policy areas. The role of working conditions in prolonging working life has been recognized. This country has developed comprehensive measures to promote the employability of older workers in a holistic way. Social dialogue plays an important role in policy development and implementation.

Examples of good practices included in this work are intended to illustrate the positive actions taken by employers in the two countries, without claiming to be complete.

## **2. Active ageing and age management in France**

Ageing process is particular evident in France where old-age dependency ratio<sup>2</sup> was 28 in 2013 and it is projected to increase of 15 points until 2060 (Eurostat, 2015). A greater increase is estimated for the economic old-age dependency ratio<sup>3</sup> (+18). Employment rate of those aged 60-64 (21,7%) is far below European average (32,2%) and that of aged 44-64 remains below 40% (European average, 46%).

The French case is interesting because national government has developed a regulatory system for enterprises, in order to improve the functioning of the entire labour market, adopting a long-term perspective and avoiding to limit its effectiveness with emergency measures. The regulatory provisions, inspired by European Union's recommendations, are operational and provide precise directions on how to set human resource management policies and tools, aimed at preventing that age represent a factor of discrimination. In particular, between 2003 and 2009 labour legislation was aimed at promoting *seniors* employment and employability.

Pension reform (2003 and 2010) extended the duration of contributions necessary to qualify for a full pension and increased the age for pension entitlement (from 60 to 62 years) and automatic

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<sup>2</sup> Population aged 65 and over as a percentage of the population aged 15-64.

<sup>3</sup> Inactive population aged 65+ as % of employed population 15-64.

access to the full rate (from 65 to 67 years). Finally, taxation on early retirement benefits has been increased in order to discourage it.

In 2006, French government launched the "National Action Plan for Senior Employment 2006-2010". This has required that, by the end of 2009, companies with more than 300 employees have to enter into agreements to improve seniors employment, both by increasing their number through targeted recruitment processes and improving their permanence in enterprise through internal management measures. Firms with 50 employees could, and still can, be limited to adhere to a sectorial agreement. This last must correspond to a commitments default schema, indicating at least three among the following measures: recruitment of older workers; anticipation of the plan of career; improvement of working conditions and prevention of penalty situations; skills development and access to training; management of the last part of career and the transition between active life and retirement; knowledge transmission and promotion of mentoring. Then, for each measure one or more provisions should be identified, accompanied by a quantified objective and measurable by at least one indicator.

To promote the observance of the device, the law provides for a penalty of 1% of the total salary, for companies which do not conclude the agreements.

The monitoring system requires that action plans are followed up annually by the works council, or by the staff delegates, so as to ensure their effective translation in practice. In the same direction it goes the obligation to renegotiate agreements and plans every three years.

The quality of the dialogue within the sectors and companies is so crucial, it allows to integrate dynamically mature workers issues within policies dedicated to human resources.

The 2009 on vocational training introduced: the obligation of mid-career professional evaluation, in order to program the second part of the career; the principle of equal access to training for all categories of workers; the portability of the right to education in every workplace; the establishment of tutoring programs for workers over-55, as well as flipped mentoring, where is the young man who transfers skills to the senior.

In 2013, French government introduced the "Contrat de génération", a tool dealing simultaneously with young insertion and older retention in labour market. The key idea is that the employment of younger and older workers can be rendered more complementary by

promoting knowledge transfers across generations within firms. In practice, with this measure, a person under 30 is granted an open-ended contract against a new part-time work contract for a worker over 55. The senior, in fact, devotes about 25 or 30% of his time in training and mentoring the young employee. French law allows particular ways to apply “Contrat de génération”, according to the type and to size of the company<sup>4</sup>. Benefits progressively increased between 2013 and 2016.

Turning to the implementation level, some good practices have been selected with respect to the number and innovation of measures put in place and generating an obvious added value.

The AXA France “Resources plus” service, started in 2003 through a trade agreement, encourages skills development and retraining of senior, offering them temporary missions in different firm services, as assistant to volunteers experienced employees. The advantage for AXA is having flexible employees with good knowledge of the company and able to occupy temporarily vacant jobs with ease. Implementation phase has provided a structured accompanying service for collaborators and an individual training plan of three years. The added value is represented by the set of detection and assessment tools recognized by a network of human resources mobilized thanks to intensive communication to “internal customers”. Assessment tools are: the monthly barometer of internal customer satisfaction, detecting the quality of performance for each employee and the implementation of the training plan; an annual survey for services to internal customers and one for collaborators.

Data improved since the beginning of the project (6%), as well as senior motivation (measured through interviews) and performance (measured in terms of the degree of completion of the assigned objectives) and allowed those responsible for the service to evaluate it positively.

The project “Age management and knowledge transfer between generations” has been promoted by Bourdarios –Vinci Construction Group. Started in 2005 and still in force, it involves all employees at the end of career in order to facilitate the transfer of skills between generations and accompany them to retirement taking advantage of their know-how. Concretely, the initiative included a discussion with each employee about 5 years before retirement and presenting several

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<sup>4</sup> These ways are stated in the ANI (Accord National Interprofessionnel) signed in October 2012 by the representatives of trade unions and company unions.

options: to continue with the same work; evolve towards the function of guardian and operate with a new employee; to join training initiatives enabling a new role; to reduce or revise the working time. Project managers have expressed as added value the 300 senior trainers, along with the spirit of solidarity among the six companies participating in the initiative, which has allowed to initiate inter-company mobility processes (for those who had opted for the job change) and their assignment to young inexperienced group. In addition, to avoid possible discrimination, the processes of personnel selection and evaluation using anonymous CVs.

Another original experience is that of Areva. In 2008, the firm launched an action program based on a double process: of career and transmission of management skills, which makes use of individual interviews to detect experience and wishes of workers over 50. In order to achieve talks it made use of an unusual figure on the staff, the *career referent*, professional in human resource and knowledge management processes providing internal advice to seniors workers, guiding them to reflect on their career and to establish a professional development plan with the management. The added value is calculated in terms of quantity, by the number of trained referents: 110 in the first two years (higher than expected) and the 300 interviews made by referents. Given the crucial nature of the reference of career, one of the first difficulty has been designating appropriate persons to carry out this role, but also the coordination between representatives and management has not been granted, implying communication and sharing of unconsolidated roles in the company.

From the initial assessments carried out by the Government (it has created a sort of guide for companies wishing to adopt agreements and plans to promote senior employment) on large firms, critical elements for the success of the experience have emerged:

- the official declaration of commitment on the part of business leaders in protecting workers against discrimination related to their age, while strengthening the collective agreements with trade unions and other labor market intermediaries;
- the consolidation of preventive management of jobs, skills, the final part of his career, the sanctions in case of failure to fulfill commitments;
- the completion of talks on the career, allowing the workers to express their desired;

- the adoption of tools for monitoring results achieved and workers satisfaction (qualitative and quantitative indicators);
- actions to counter resistance from senior towards vocational training.

A second test conducted among SMEs (albeit on a sample of 34 companies) confirmed the trends observed in the large enterprise level. In fact, the management of last part of career and the transition to retirement is the scope with respect to which companies have made more commitments for the future (31 firms). In this regard there is a widespread need for information not yet satisfied. External selection is the area where change seems more daunting. Only three companies have stated recruitment goals and two of them have not reached. The main reason given is the unfavorable economic situation that prevents making hiring commitments. Other justifications relate to the difficulty of reviewing recruitment procedures in view of age management, which can be burdensome for a small business structure, but also the lack of support from the labor market intermediaries in selecting candidates in that light.

Even in the case of SMEs, a weak element of agreements is the shortage of partnerships and cooperation practices among stakeholders involved in the processes of change for the employment of seniors, both inside and outside the enterprise.

### **3. Active ageing and age management in Italy**

Italy registers a low level of older workers participation to the labour force, compared with European average, although it has increased over the time, in 2013 it was 48,4% (56,6% in Europe) (Eurostat, 2015). The rapid increase of ageing is evident looking at the evolution of old-age dependency ratio (33 in 2013, it is projected to grow of 20 points until 2060) and of the economic old-age dependency ratio (57 in 2013, it is projected to grow of 22 points until 2060). The great part of improvements are the result of reforms implemented in the last decade, particularly of pension policy. In fact, the 2004 reform has enabled the introduction of a salary bonus to encourage seniors to continue their activity. While, by 2012, pensions reform provided a shift in retirement age from 65 to 66 years and financial disincentives for early retirement.

However, active ageing policies represent a relative new area of intervention in Italy. The majority of measures for mature workers employment and requalification has been implemented at regional or provincial level within the context of ESF Regional Operational Programs.

As in France, since 2007, a programme is in place to promote solidarity agreements between generations (Law 296 of 27/12/2006), in particular, to foster the hiring of unemployed aged 25 - 29, while maintaining older workers in employment. The solidarity agreement promotes work sharing by facilitating the transformation of full-time contracts of over 55 into part-time, while generating part-time jobs for unemployed under 25, or under 30 if they have a university degree.

Moreover, most policies have been traduced in local projects.

The first initiatives originated from Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Lombardy regions. The former region provided for specific funding devoted to "expansive solidarity contracts," for example, corporate agreements between workers of different age, allowing workers over 50 to enter into part-time employment in return for the recruitment of young people on training contracts.

In 2011, Lombardia Region, *Assolombarda* (the association representing firms) and INPS (National Institute for Social Insurance) launched an experimental version of the "generation contract" in the provinces of Milano, Lodi and Monza-Brianza. The procedure entails transforming (on a voluntary basis) full-time employment contracts of workers who will reach pension in less than 3 years into part-time, with a reduction of as much as 50% in work hours. Employer shall hire the young on an apprenticeship or other permanent contract, so as to produce a positive employment balance. Workers may also take advantage of training entailing professional re-orientation or coaching, as well as a transition path towards new realities. Local governments compensate the reduced social security contributions paid by older workers shifted from full to part-time work. A new experimental version has been realized from 2013 to 2016.

Another project is the AMVA "Apprendistato e Mestieri a Vocazione Artigianale", promoted by the Ministry for Labour and Social Policies, implemented by Italia Lavoro agency and partly funded by the resources from ESF PON 2007-2013, aiming to promote the generational turnover in the sector of handcraft and artistic professions in favor of young unemployed (15-35 years). One of the two measures ("Botteghe di Mestiere") incentives new apprenticeship positions for young workers (18-28 years) by providing monetary benefits for both employer and young

worker. The second measure (“Impresa Continua”) sustains the generational turnover by facilitating the transfer of firm ownership from entrepreneurs older than 55 years to a young.

Furthermore, two similar interventions have been promoted in Sardegna and Veneto Regions.

Italy’s 2016 Stability Law (Act No. 285, 208 and 148//2015) has strengthened the system encouraging intergenerational turnover in companies, by establishing a link between paritarian solidarity funds, paritarian institutions and employers to ensure that workers whose hours have been reduced under the measure, do not lose the social security contributions calculated on the share of their lost wages.

Turning to the implementation level, some Italian good practices have been selected considering different area of interventions.

Coop Adriatica, one of the largest Italian cooperatives in the retail trade, has experienced some difficulties in recruiting staff for specialized tasks, especially butchers. Its initiative, agreed with trade unions, involved the recruitment of employees, particularly women, over 45. It began in 1995 with a training initiative called ‘*retravailler*’, funded by European Social Fund (ESF), involving women redundant from the job market before retirement age. Fifteen women took part in the programme and at the end of the course eight of them would be hired. The initiative was so successful that it completely changed the company’s attitude towards hiring mature workers. From 1996 to 2005, Coop Adriatica hired 124 over 45 on permanent or short-term contracts.

Another initiative, today still in place, voluntary and agreed upon with the labour unions, concerns job flexibility. It was open to cashiers of all ages, of whom approximately 20% are over 45 years. It began as a pilot project in 2001 in Bologna and aims to reconcile employees’ personal time demands with the organizational ones. Under this initiative (‘Island timetable’) the cashier was allowed to manage their own schedules (around 600 employees in nine hypermarkets, since 2002). This initiative has proven very successful and workers report that it has improved their lives. Older workers, in particular, appreciated the flexibility it offered. Benefits to the company include a decline in the rate of absenteeism and a decrease in overtime work which, in turn, allowed it to employ more workers on a long-term basis.

Another initiative, which specifically focuses on older employees, allows grandparents to take unpaid sabbaticals of up to six months during a grandchild's first year, in order to help the parents with childrearing.

Looking to the future, the company is trying to find ways to deal with decreased motivation among some employees over 45, identified in a recent firm report. It is considering a training programme aimed at motivating older workers and increasing their job satisfaction.

Despite the success of these initiatives, labour unions have been somewhat critical. Although they appreciate the value of the company's business measures, they argue that it has a sort of dual effect: on the one hand, the company pursues positive or progressive initiatives, on the other, it has trouble putting them into practice, in particular, it emerges a need for greater involvement by workers in these initiatives.

L'Incontro Coop. is a non-profit, social cooperative based in Castelfranco Veneto, in the North-eastern Italy. It manages residences and job centres aimed at rehabilitating people with psychological problems, or individuals socio-economically marginalised. During the time, it has diversified its activity (home care for the elderly and people with mental problems, assembly of electronic products, production and sale of local agricultural products) heading a consortium of 11 linked productive units. L'Incontro initiative began in 1992 and was first prompted by problems encountered in recruiting qualified health care staff. As a result, management began to recruit workers who have taken early retirement and recently retired workers. It also introduced flexible work schedules, i.e. part-time contracts and daily/weekly work schedules that matched workers' needs. The project started off by recruiting 20 professional nurses retired early from public institutes. In 1993, it extended its recruitment of those outside the health care system. It hired specialized, mostly male, workers from local institutes in the area, to act as art teachers and help rehabilitate people with psycho-social problems, in conjunction with the job centers.

Today, many years later, this recruitment initiative and the involvement of art teachers continues. The effects remain positive for both the cooperative (availability of experienced staff) and for older workers (by extending their economically active lives). Within 10 years, L'Incontro has increased its number of art teachers from less than 20 teachers to the current 130.

Manital Spa operates in two main sectors: general services, mainly in cleaning and surveillance, and internal and external maintenance of buildings, green areas, heating, telematics systems, mechanical and electronic equipment, etc. Manital was established in Ivrea in the 1990s after the Olivetti Group demerged its plants maintenance department. It employs a total of 3,900 direct and indirect workers. Approximately 40% of staff are aged over 45 years. The presence of older workers is noticeable in the more hands-on sectors (especially cleaning), where a large number of workers suffer from disabilities or social segregation problems.

Since its establishment, Manital has always focused on initiatives aimed at recruiting personnel mainly over 45 and employees from companies who were operating outsourcing policies for their staff. The initiative that involved Manital (suggested by Confindustria<sup>5</sup> following a request by Labour Ministry), targetted 14,000 workers, based on a series of reciprocal agreements with service providers and trade unions involvement. These initiatives aimed to use these workers for specific service contracts, partially funded by government authorities, with the objective of gradually transforming their precarious status of socially useful workers into fully employed staff, who could interact independently with the labour market. Manital took on 2,913 of the 14,000 workers and deployed them to work in schools and service provision (surveillance, small-scale maintenance, cleaning, etc). These workers were given permanent employment contracts; shortly afterwards 134 decided to resign, while the remaining 2,779 workers are still employed, with positive results. Of these 2,779 workers, approximately 50% are aged 45 or over. Altogether, Manital initiative was applied in other eight Italian regions, in the North (Piedmont and Lombardy) and in the South-Centre (Marches, Lazio, Campania, Puglia, Calabria and Sicily) through 14 syndicated companies. So far, the results seem to have been positive, both for the company and for the workers involved. Company turnover has risen and there has been a clear improvement in worker motivation, autonomy and professional expertise. Key instruments used have included: re-motivation of workers, ensuring continuity of salaries, greater focus on worker's specific area of expertise and their inclusion in a development and training programme.

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<sup>5</sup> Italy's largest employer Confederation.

A survey realized in 2016 by a research team of the Catholic University of Piacenza<sup>6</sup> on 49 medium-size enterprises located in the North of Italy and aiming to investigate actions and motivations of measures involving mature workers, shows that age management is a very recent trend in this firms. As in France, only a limited number of firms hire senior workers without a specific incentive, such as tax credit or public funds favoring the hiring of older workforce. The measures more frequently implemented are: flexible working time practices; transition to retirement pathways; health protection and workplace design projects; skill transfer from senior to junior worker. Although, the lack of comprehensive strategy is evident.

#### **4. Conclusion. Ageing issue between policy and practice**

Population ageing is one of the most important phenomena influencing policy directions in the multidimensional context of social, labour market and economic transformations. As in many other policy areas in the European Union, there is no 'one size fits all' model for a policy response in relation to the ageing of the workforce. European countries have demographics that are changing in different ways and they are at different points in the policy development process. Therefore, their actual needs differ (EU-OSHA, 2016). The transfer from one country to another of broad policy initiatives related to the ageing of the workforce and the extension of working life is likely to be difficult, given the complexity and specificity of these policies. However, many of the policies identified by international agencies have in common a number of core characteristics that lend themselves to adaptation to each country's unique needs (EU-OSHA, 2016). European Union can play an important role by supporting national labour market reforms to create the necessary policy frameworks for enterprises to put in place effective age management policies. Also national governments have a key role in creating an environment supportive to age management and active and healthy ageing. by integrating the concept of active ageing into all relevant policy areas, such as pension, labour, vocational training, social affairs and making efforts (mainly through information campaigns) to change attitudes towards older workers, since a number of myths and stereotypes still exist about them.

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<sup>6</sup> Barabaschi B., Galli D. (2016), *Pratiche di age management e responsabilità d'impresa*, Research report.

Evidence shows that many employers are already taking or developing positive approaches to active age management (Taylor, 2006). A holistic approach covering age positive recruitment measures, workforce mapping and planning, maintaining work ability, supporting flexible working, intergenerational learning and succession planning can contribute to achieving the best outcomes. Since workplaces represent crucial sites for the play of intergenerational relations, as shown in country cases, labour policies and age management may represent a vehicle of values such as intergenerational solidarity. They can favor innovative and age-targeted policies founded on the idea that each generation has skills and talents that may complement one another and leverage an engaged workforce leading to higher productivity.

However, more remains to be done to raise awareness and to prevent employers from having to re-invent the wheel by providing information on successful practices, which can act as inspiration when developing or expanding their measures.

Although transition from political to business practice can take place in different ways and it is not obvious. The cases rapidly presented in this paper, along with assessment from experts or university research confirm some assumptions of literature on diversity management showing advantages that may derive from age management practices. In particular, flexible working initiatives, included those provided by generational contracts, have a role to play to facilitate active ageing. They can create “win-win” situations for both employers and employees, along with a regular review process to assess the age composition of the current workforce and future skill needs. Relevant training can support employers to remain competitive and employees to stay adaptable to changing market needs. Tools and processes of vocational training, such as joint learning, mentoring and coaching, are particularly useful to SMEs to assess their future skill requirements and to allow skills transmission from experienced to younger workers. Labour legislation could enhance age management, especially when foresees assessment tools and sanctions, as well described by the French case. Finally, another success factor is that all relevant stakeholders should be involved in the development and implementation of integrated policy frameworks. Both country cases highlight that social partners and policy makers need to work together to overcome age barriers in employment and career processes. These aspects reflect the most significant interventions as identified in the case studies of organisational initiatives. Measures can be classified as both preventive and remedial, having a twin-track approach that

has two aims. The first is the promotion of workers' employability over their working life, which can help prevent problems; the second is the reduction and elimination of acute employment problems in later phases of the working life course. Good practices synthesized describe minor and major measures following both approaches.

However, good practice in one aspect of work organisation may coexist with neglect or bad practice elsewhere. Indeed, only rarely is it part of a comprehensive human resources policy of age management and the cases presented confirm some critical aspects. These last concern especially recruitment processes founded (at least partially) by public authorities, a lack of communication and coordination among firm units, evaluation tools only recently developed and used, values such as equity and solidarity are sacrificed for economic reasons.

Finally, the main lesson learned from this research is the crucial role of an integrated and coherent framework concerning the activation of older people into the labour market, defined by national government. A framework composed by norms, tools, best practices and assessment processes aiming to build inclusive workplaces, also in respect of age diversity. This may avoid the risk of isolated experiences and consequent depression of local competitiveness and national economy. In this regard, the contract between generations is considered as complementary to policies for sustaining economy growth and an enlarged labour market.

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