

# Safer and healthier work at any age

## Country Inventory: Norway

Authors:

Tore Kofstad (COWI), Elena Fries-Tersch (Milieu Ltd)

Reviewed by Alice Belin and Claire Dupont (Milieu Ltd.)

Project management: Katalin Sas, Boglarka Bola, Sarah Copsey, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, (EU-OSHA).

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## Abbreviations

CSP:	Centre for Senior Policy
ENWHP:	European Network for Workplace Health Promotion
EU:	European Union
Eurofound:	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EU-OSHA:	European Agency for Health and Safety at Work
HR:	Human resources
IA	Agreement: Inclusive Workplace Agreement
ILO:	International Labour Organization
MSD	Musculoskeletal disorder
NAV:	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
OECD:	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
OSH:	Occupational Safety and Health
P.p.:	Percentage point
RTW:	Return to work
Vox:	Norwegian Institute of Adult Education for lifelong learning
WHO:	World Health Organisation

## Introduction

This report is part of the project 'Safer and healthier work at any age', initiated and financed by the European Parliament<sup>12</sup>. The objective of the European Parliament was to further investigate possible ways of improving the health and safety of older people at work.

The project, which started in 2013,

- reviewed state of the art knowledge on ageing and work;
- investigated EU and Member States policies, strategies, and programmes addressing the challenges of an ageing workforce in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH) and policy areas that affect OSH, such as employment and social affairs, public health, and education;
- investigated EU and Member States policies, strategies, and programmes in relation to rehabilitation/return-to-work;
- and collected information on related workplace-level practices.

To review policy developments and initiatives taken in Europe to tackle the demographic change, country reports were prepared, with a specific focus on initiatives to improve the health and safety of an ageing workforce and on those aiming at promoting rehabilitation/return to work.

### *Methodology*

The country reports were prepared in each of the 28 European Member States and EFTA countries (Iceland, Switzerland, Lichtenstein and Norway). In eight countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), the research was carried out at a more in-depth level including additional resources and the consultation of relevant stakeholders via the organisation of expert workshops.

The **information** used to prepare the reports was collected between September 2013 and June 2014 and comes from international, European and national sources, referenced in the report's bibliography.

The **indicators** presented in the first section of the reports have been selected taking into account:

- *Relevance to the topic:* In addition to data on working conditions and health, indicators related to general contextual factors such as the demographic development, labour market and employment have also been included.
- *Availability of data by age groups:* As the focus of this work is to investigate activities in the context of an ageing workforce, it is central to the project to collect data by age groups.
- *Geographical coverage:* In order to be able to compare results across the Member States, it is important to use the same indicators in all country reports. For this reason, European and international sources were favoured.

**National expert workshops** took place in the eight countries subject to in-depth review as well as in two additional countries, Poland and Greece between March and June 2014.

The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Confirm the findings and interpret the results of the desk research;
- Stimulate discussions between intermediaries and experts in the field of occupational health and safety and rehabilitation/return-to-work, in order to collect additional information and examples of good practices;
- Exchange views and ideas on what works well, what could be improved, and what are the drivers, needs and obstacles to address the challenges of an ageing workforce.

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<sup>1</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, '04 04 16 – Pilot project - Health and safety at work of older workers', Chapter 0404— Employment, Social Solidarity and Gender Equality, 29.02.2012, pp. II/230 - II/231. Available at: [http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/officialjournal-of-the-european-union-l-56-29\\_02\\_2012-pbFXAL12056/](http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/officialjournal-of-the-european-union-l-56-29_02_2012-pbFXAL12056/) (Accessed December 2014)

<sup>2</sup> The activities carried out for the European Parliament's pilot project are coordinated by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and implemented by a consortium led by Milieu Ltd (other consortium partners include: COWI, IOM, IDEWE, FORBA, GfK, NIOM).

The present report describes policies and strategies in Norway, addressing the ageing of workforce. Specifically, it focuses on initiatives to improve the health and safety of an ageing workforce and on those aiming at promoting the rehabilitation/return to work of workers following a health problem.

#### *Structure of the report*

The first section of the report provides background information on demographic developments, the labour market, working conditions and the health status of the older working population. The institutional and legal framework for occupational health and safety in Norway, as of June 2014, is also described.

The second section of the report describes strategies, policies, programmes and activities initiated by the government or government-affiliated organisations, social partners and non-governmental organisations to tackle the challenges related to demographic change, and more specifically to the ageing of the workforce. These initiatives were identified primarily in the area of occupational health and safety but also in the areas of employment and public health and any other relevant policy areas.

The third section of the report focuses on the issue of the rehabilitation and return to work of workers following a health problem (accident or disease). The section starts by introducing the national system for the rehabilitation of workers following a long-term sick leave or work incapacity and considers the legal and policy framework, the actors involved and the main steps of the rehabilitation process. The second part of the section describes specific activities, programmes or strategies implemented by the government or government-affiliated organisations, social partners and non-governmental organisations for the rehabilitation of workers.

# 1 General context

Section I of this report starts with an overview of the most relevant facts and figures on the current situation in Norway with regard to demographics, the labour market, working conditions and the health status of the older working population. It then provides background information on the institutional and legal frameworks in Norway that pertain to safe and healthy work in the context of an ageing workforce. Finally, it provides a brief overview of the pension system, looking specifically at legal and actual retirement ages, early retirement opportunities and ongoing or upcoming reforms that would affect older workers.

## 1.1 Facts and figures

In this sub-section on facts and figures, a number of indicators introduce the current situation in Norway with regard to demographic factors, the labour market, working conditions and health status of the older working population.

The following definitions aim to provide clarity on a number of terms used frequently in this section:<sup>3</sup>

- “Median age” is the age that divides a population into two groups that are numerically equivalent.
- The “old age dependency ratio” is the ratio of the number of older people at an age when they are generally economically inactive (i.e. aged 65 and over), compared to the number of people of working age (i.e. 15-64 years old)
- “Old age pension” is payment to maintain the income of a person after retirement from employment at the standard age or payment made to support the income of older persons.<sup>4</sup>
- “Healthy life years”, also called disability-free life expectancy (DFLE), is defined as the number of years that a person is expected to continue to live in a healthy condition.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1 provides a quick snapshot of selected indicators, some of which are further described in the rest of the section.

**Table 1, Overview table of main indicators**

	Norway	EU-28
Median age 2013 (2060)	39 (43)	42 (46)
Share of population aged 55 to 64 years (2013)	15%	13%
Share of population aged 65+ (2013)	16%	18%
Old age dependency ratio (65+/15-64) 2013 (2060)	24% (39%)	28% (50%)
Employment rate of 55 to 64-year-olds (2013) ( $\Delta$ since 2003)	71% (+ 4 p.p.)	50% (+10 p.p.)
Official Retirement age (2012) <sup>6</sup>	62-75	
Effective retirement age (2012) <sup>7</sup>	64.3 (f)/ 64.8 (m)	60.9(f)/ 62.3 (m)* <sup>8</sup>
Share of pensioners (50-69) who quit working for health or disability reason (2012)	43.2%	21%

<sup>3</sup> Definitions extracted from the Eurostat glossary (unless stated otherwise):

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Thematic\\_glossaries](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Thematic_glossaries) (Accessed December 2014)

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, Methodologies and Working Papers, *The European System of integrated Social PROtection Statistics (ESSPROS)*, ESSPROS Manual and user guidelines, 2012, p. 58. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5922833/KS-RA-12-014-EN.PDF/6da3b2bf-85ba-4665-b318-a41d6a2df37f?version=1.0> (Accessed December 2014)

<sup>5</sup> This indicator is compiled separately for men and women, both at birth and at age 65. It is based on age-specific prevalence (proportions) of the population in healthy and unhealthy condition and age-specific mortality information. A healthy condition is defined as one without limitation in functioning and without disability.

<sup>6</sup> See section 1.4 Pension system. There is no official retirement age in Norway, retirement is possible between 62 and 75.

<sup>7</sup> Source: OECD estimates on the [“average effective age of retirement versus the official age, 2007-2012”](#)

<sup>8</sup> These figures refer to the EU-27

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	Norway	EU-28
Pension expenditures (% of GDP) (2011*)		
All pensions	8.5%	13.0%
Old-age pensions	5.7%	9.5%
Disability	2.3%	0.9%
Life expectancy at 65 years, in years (2011)	19.8	19.7
Women	21.4	21.3
Men	18.2	17.8
Healthy life years <sup>9</sup> at the age of 65 ( and 50) (2011)	15 (26)	8.6 (17.7)
Women	15.9 (26)	8.6 (17.9)
Men	14.7 (25.4)	8.6 (17.5)
Employed persons aged 55 to 64 years reporting one or more work-related health problems in the past 12 months in 2007 (% from all employed aged 55 to 64 years)	14%	11% <sup>10</sup>
Share of employed people aged 55-64 yrs who perceive their health as in being in a bad or very bad status (and 45-54 yrs), 2012	2.7% (3.2%)	5.7% (3.8%)
Share of employed people aged 55-64 yrs who have a long-standing illness or health problem (and 45-54 yrs), 2012	25.2% (24.6)	33.3%** (24.2%**)
Share of people aged 55-64 yrs who report MSDs as their most serious work-related health problem during the past 12 months (2007)	68%	60% <sup>11</sup>
Women	69	64%
Men	67	56%
Share of workers above the age of 50 who think they could do their current job at the age of 60 (2010) <sup>12</sup>	91%	71% <sup>13</sup>
Share of employed people with working experience who report that measures to adapt the workplace for older people have been put in place at their workplace (2013) <sup>14</sup>	NA	31%

Sources: All figures are as published by Eurostat, unless mentioned otherwise. Sources used by Eurostat include: Eurostat population statistics, Eurostat population projections, the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), the European System of Integration Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS). \*figure refers to 2011; \*\* estimated figures only (by Eurostat)

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat 2013 'Healthy Life Years (from 2004 onwards)'. For more detailed information, see [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_SDDS/en/hlth\\_hlye\\_esms.htm](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/en/hlth_hlye_esms.htm).

<sup>10</sup> This figure is for the EU-26 without France. Due to different wording in the French version of the questionnaire, the results were very different in France and Eurostat recommends using the aggregate figures without France.

<sup>11</sup> This figure is for the EU-26 without France. Due to different wording in the French version of the questionnaire, the results were very different in France and Eurostat recommends to use the aggregate figures without France.

<sup>12</sup> Source: European Working Conditions Survey 2010.

<sup>13</sup> This Figure refers to the EU-27

<sup>14</sup> Source: European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer on Working Conditions, 2014. No fact sheet is available on Norway.



**Demographic developments:**

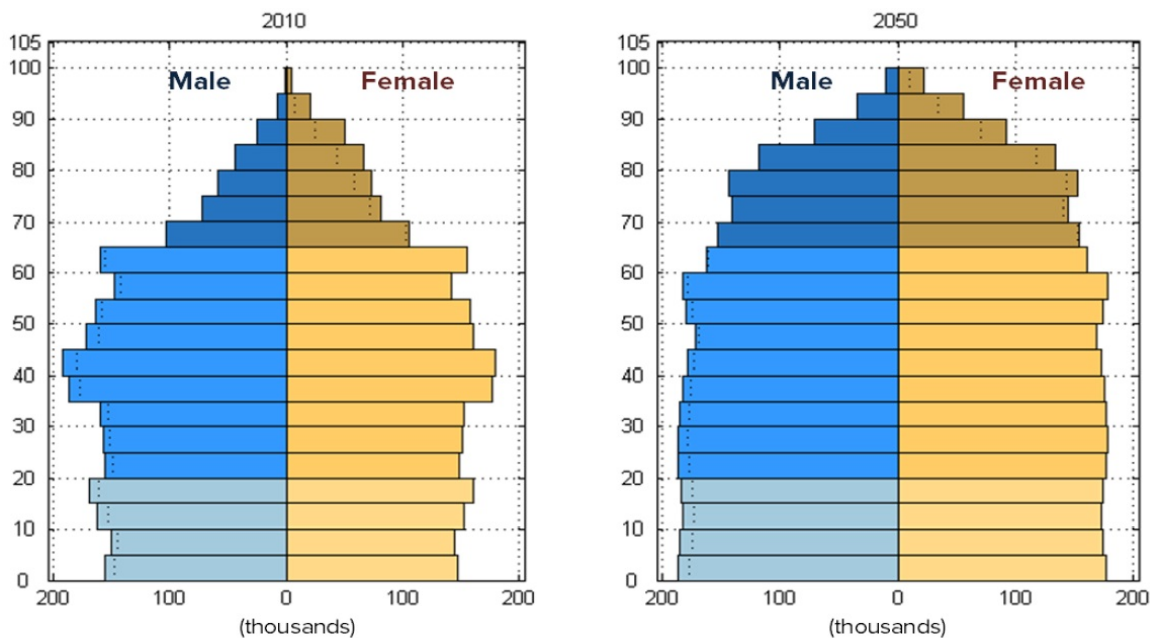
While the median age in Norway was decreasing between 1960 and 1975, Norway's population has been ageing ever since with a median age of 32 years in 1975 to 39 years in 2013. However, this is below the EU-28 average, as the EU population had a median age of 42 years in 2013.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that Norway's population has been ageing – albeit not as strongly as the EU-28 overall population, is also reflected in the distribution of the population across the different age groups and their development between 1990 and 2013.

While the share of the oldest age group (65 years and above) increased in most EU-28 Member States, in Norway a lower share was observed - 16% in 2013 (compared to 18% of the overall EU-28 population in 2013). The share of the group aged 55 to 64 years increased between from 9% to 15% between 1990 and 2013 (EU-28: 13% in 2013).

The population ageing is predicted to continue. As shown in the age pyramid below (Figure 1) which, between 2010 and 2050, the age group of 20 to 65-year-olds is predicted to decrease while the age group of 65+ is predicted to increase.

**Figure 1, Total population by age group and gender, 2010 and projection for 2050**



Source: International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, Norway Country Implementation Profile<sup>16</sup>.

**Labour market participation**

Compared to the employment data of the 27 EU Member States, employment rates have been significantly higher in Norway among all age groups. Employment among the 55 to 64-year-olds was already very high in Norway in 2000 (66%), compared to 39% on EU average and has further increased to 71% in 2013, which is still above the EU average of 50% in 2013. Also the employment rate of the oldest age group (65 years and above) has been increasing since 2000. In 2013, it was at 18%, compared to an EU average of 5%.

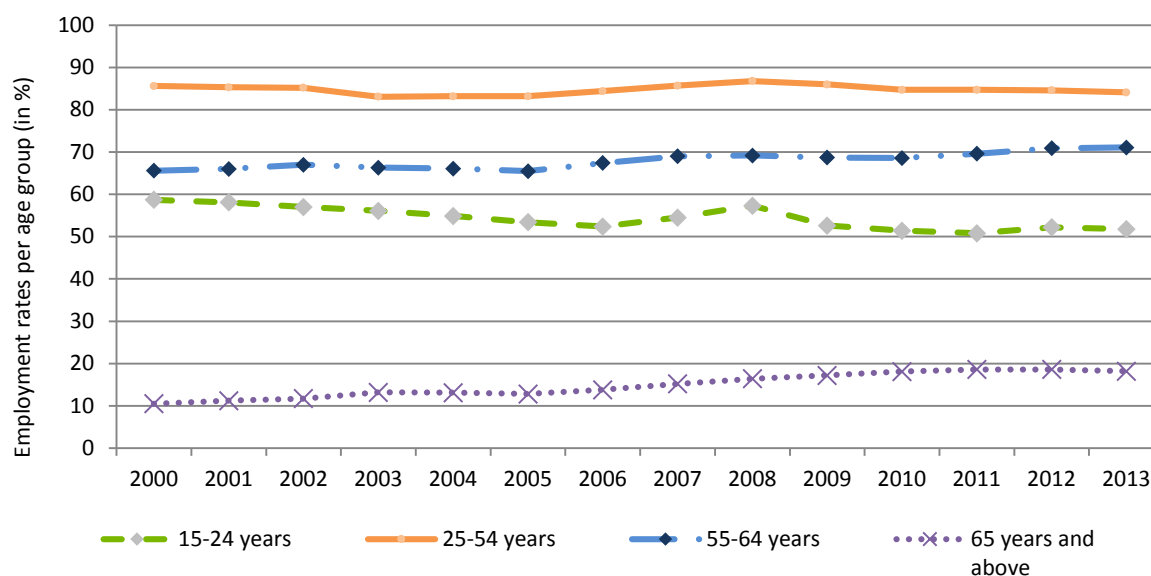
The main employment rate (25 to 54 years) in Norway has continuously been around 5 to 9 percentage points higher than the EU average rate during the past decade. In 2013, it was at 84%, while the EU average rate was at 77%. However, as in many countries, this age group got affected by the economic crisis and did drop after 2008. Also the 15 to 24-year-olds got affected by the crisis; while their

<sup>15</sup> Source: Eurostat population statistics 2013, structure indicators.

<sup>16</sup> International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, Norway Country Implementation Profile. Available at: <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/about/view/19-country-implementation-profiles> (Accessed December 2014)

employment rate was already decreasing between 2000 and 2006, it increased until 2008 again and then dropped strongly until 2011. However, the youth employment rate is still considerably above the EU average (52% in 2013 compared to 32%, respectively).

Figure 2, Employment rates per broad age groups, trend 2000-2013, residents in Norway, all nationalities



Source: Eurostat 2013, EU-LFS, annual detailed survey results, Employment rates by sex, age and nationality (%) [lfsa\_ergan]

### Working conditions

Based on the Fifth European Working Conditions Survey (5th EWCS), carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) in 2010, the following conclusions can be drawn with regard to the working conditions of older workers (aged 50 and above) in Norway<sup>17</sup>:

- The share of older workers<sup>18</sup> having to *carry heavy loads* at least a quarter of their working time decreased in Norway between 2005 (28%) and 2010 (19%, compared to EU average (32%).
- In 2010, 6.3% of older workers reported working in *tiring or painful positions* (almost) all the time (compared to 10,6% of young workers and 6% of 30 to 49-year-olds). This is significantly below the EU average (16%).
- In Norway exposure to *shift work* is lower for older workers (15%) than for younger workers (24% under 30 and 18% between 30 and 49) and close to the EU average (14%). The share of older workers who reported having to *work at night* once or more per month, was higher in Norway than the EU average in 2005 and in 2010 (21% in Norway compared to 16% on EU average in 2010).
- In Norway, satisfaction with *work-life balance* among older workers is higher than on EU average: 94% of Norwegian workers over 50 thought their working hours fit well or very well with their family and social commitments (84.5% at EU level).
- The number of people reporting three or more external *constraints on their work pace* (such as demand from people or production/performance targets) decreases with age in Norway: 36,5%

<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all of the following figures come from the European Working Conditions Survey, <http://eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs> (Accessed December 2014)

<sup>18</sup> The term "older workers" in this section refers to workers aged 50 years and above, the term "young workers" refers to workers below 30 years.

of young workers report this while only 31,4% of older workers do. This is slightly above the EU average for older workers (27%)

- In Norway, a larger share of workers from all age groups receive *on-the-job training* compared to the EU average. For older workers, this is very significant: 43%, compared to 26% on EU average.
- The share of older workers who believed that *their work was affecting their health negatively* was similar in Norway compared to the EU-27 average (28% and 27% respectively).
- In Norway, the share of older workers who were *satisfied with their working conditions* was, both in 2005 and 2010, significantly higher than the EU average (93% in Norway and 84% on EU average were satisfied in 2010). This was also the case for the other two groups of workers.
- The share of older workers who think that they will *be able to do the same job at 60* in Norway (around 91%) is higher than the EU average (around 71%).

### Health

In 2011, estimations showed that in Norway, men of the age of 65 years had a *life expectancy* of around 18 additional years<sup>19</sup>, which is similar to the EU average – 17,8. However, 15 of these years were considered “*healthy life years*”, which is significantly higher than the EU average (8.6).<sup>20</sup> The same observation can be made for women. Women of the age of 65 had a life expectancy of 21 additional years (21 years in the EU) including 16 “*healthy life years*” (compared to the 8,6 at EU level).

The *perceived health status* among employed persons in Norway worsens with age as demonstrated in table 2 below.

**Table 2, Self-perceived health among employed in different age groups, 2012; shares of age group reporting “very bad” or “bad” health status**

	16-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and above
<b>Employed</b>	2,5%	3,2%	2,7%	5% <sup>21</sup>

Source: EU-SILC Self-perceived health by sex, age and labour status (%) [hlth\_silc\_01]

As shown in table 3, the share of Norwegian workers between the age of 55 and 64 years who reported that they suffered from *work-related health problems* was higher than the EU average for the same age group in 2007.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 3, Self-reported work-related health problems by workers in Norway and EU-27, by age group**

NO 25-34 yrs	10,3%
NO 35-44 yrs	12%
<b>NO 45-54 yrs</b>	<b>12,8 %</b>
<b>NO 55-64 yrs</b>	<b>14% (13% for men and 15% for women)</b>
<b>EU-27* 55-64 yrs</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: EU LFS ad-hoc module 2007 on accidents at work and work-related health problems, Persons reporting one or more work-related health problems in the past 12 months, by age - % [hsw\_pb1]; according to Eurostat, ‘minor wording, conceptual, or cultural differences were identified’ for data from this country; therefore, comparability with other countries has to be interpreted with caution<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Eurostat 2013 ‘Life expectancy by age and sex’ [demo\_mlexpec].

<sup>20</sup> Eurostat 2013 ‘Healthy Life Years (from 2004 onwards) (hlth\_hlye).

<sup>21</sup> This is for “bad” health status only, as figure for “very bad” health status is missing.

<sup>22</sup> EU LFS ad-hoc module 2007 on accidents at work and work-related health problems “Persons reporting one or more work-related health problems in the past 12 months, by sex, age and education - % [hsw\_pb1]”; shares from all employed in the respective age group; a work-related health problem is defined as covering all diseases, disabilities and other physical or mental health problems, apart from accidental injuries, suffered by the person during the last 12 months, and caused or made worse by the work. This is a broad concept that covers much more than the recognised occupational diseases.

<sup>23</sup> See Eurostat Evaluation Report AHM 2007, p. 26, available at:

\*this figure is for EU-27 excluding France, since in France, the question wording was slightly different, causing a bias. Eurostat suggests using the aggregate without France.

The *most serious work-related health problems* reported among the 55 to 64-year-olds were – as in most other countries – musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) The percentage of employees reporting MSD is significantly higher in Norway than the EU average (table 4).<sup>24</sup> All other types of disorders reported are below the EU average. While the prevalence of physical illnesses (cardiovascular and pulmonary disorders) as most serious work-related health problems increases with age, that of stress, depression and anxiety decreases.

**Table 4, Most serious work-related health problem during the past 12 months, % of all employees who reported a work-related health problem during the past 12 months; by gender and by most prevalent types of diseases<sup>25</sup>**

		Cardiovascular disorders	Musculoskeletal disorders	Stress, depression, anxiety	Pulmonary disorders
35-44 yrs.	<b>Total</b>	1.8	67.2	11,2	1.8
	<b>(EU-27*)</b>	(2.9)	(60.9)	(16.4)	(4.9)
	Women	1.2	64	13	0.7
	Men	2.5	71.2	8.8	3.3
45-54 yrs.	<b>Total</b>	2.1	67.7	10,1	0.9
	<b>(EU-27*)</b>	(6.2)	(61.3)	(13.5)	(4.7)
	Women	1.3	71	10.5	0.8
	Men	3.2	63.6	9.6	1
55-64 yrs.	<b>Total</b>	5	68.1	6.9	3.4
	<b>(EU-27*)</b>	(11.3)	(59.9)	(9.2)	(5.8)
	Women	3.5	69	9.5	1.5
	Men	6.6	67.2	3.9	5.5

Source: EU LFS ad-hoc module 2007 on accidents at work and work-related health problems, Persons reporting their most serious work-related health problem work in the past 12 months, by type of problem - % [hsw\_pb5]; according to Eurostat, 'minor wording, conceptual, or cultural differences were identified' for data from this country; therefore, comparability with other countries has to be interpreted with caution<sup>26</sup>.

\*this figure is for EU-27 excluding France, since in France, the question wording was slightly different, causing a bias. Eurostat suggests using the aggregate without France.

### Definition

There is no specific definition of older workers in Norway. However, the Centre for Senior Policy in Norway has carried out an annual questionnaire/ investigation called the **Norwegian Senior Policy Barometer**, which includes a number of questions that are directly and indirectly related to people's opinion about the age of older workers. The first annual investigation was carried out in 2003 and questions are being directed to Managing Directors and employees in several hundred private and governmental owned companies/ workplaces. The barometer gives valuable information about trends

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037334/Evaluation-Report-AHM-2007.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> EU LFS ad-hoc module 2007 on accidents at work and work-related health problems, Persons reporting their most serious work-related health problem work in the past 12 months, by type of problem - % [hsw\_pb5]; the module distinguishes 8 different problems in total.

<sup>25</sup> More recent figures are available (EU-LFS ad-hoc module 2013); however, several countries have not delivered data for 2013, which is why no EU aggregates for this variable could be calculated. Due to these limitations, the 2007 data was used in this report. Data for 2013 can be obtained from Eurostat, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

<sup>26</sup> See Eurostat Evaluation Report AHM 2007, p. 26, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037334/Evaluation-Report-AHM-2007.pdf>

in the labour market for older workers/ seniors.

One of the questions included in the Barometer is: “At what age do you think that people in the labour market are regarded as ‘older?’” The answers can be found in the following table:

Interviewees	2003 (age ‘older worker’)	2007 (age ‘older worker’)	2012 (age ‘older worker’)
Managing Directors	52	53,8	55,8
Employees	55	56,6	57,9

It is thus interesting to see that the opinion has changed from 2003 to 2012 and that the age of an ‘older worker’ is increasing over time. Additionally, the barometer shows that employers have, in general, increasingly a more positive attitude towards and vision about older workers. However, an issue of concern is the high number of employers who rarely or never recruit older applicants.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.2 Institutional structure for health and safety at work

The following section presents the overall institutional structure related to occupational health and safety in Norway.

### Overall structure

Below follows an explanation of the main national stakeholders for health and safety at work in Norway. The laws are covered in Section 1.3.

- The **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** (*Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet*)<sup>28</sup> is responsible for labour market policy, the working environment, pensions and welfare policy.
  - The **Working Environment and Safety Department** of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for labour legislation and safety in the working environment in workplaces both on the continental shelf and onshore. The Department coordinates its activities mostly in negotiations with the other ministries and social partners.
  - The **Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority** (*Arbeidstilsynet*)<sup>29</sup> is a governmental agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which focuses on occupational safety and health. The agency's overall objective is a healthy working environment for all, safe and secure employment conditions and meaningful work for the individual. The Labour Inspection Authority encourages enterprises to work systematically towards compliance with the working environment laws and regulations.
  - The **Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration** (NLWA/NAV)<sup>30</sup> administers a third of the national budget through schemes such as unemployment benefit, work assessment allowance, sickness benefit, pensions, child benefit and cash-for-care benefit.
- The **Ministry of education & research** (*Kunnskapsdepartementet*)<sup>31</sup> is responsible for kindergarten, education and research.
- The **Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion** (*Barne-, likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet*) seeks to strengthen the rights of consumers, families, children and

<sup>27</sup> For more information about the Senior policy Barometer, contact the Centre for senior policy, <http://seniorpolitikk.no/>

<sup>28</sup> The Norwegian ministry of Labour website: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ad.html?id=165> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>29</sup> The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority website: <http://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/working-conditions-in-norway.html> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>30</sup> The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration website: <https://www.nav.no/Forsiden> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of children, equality and social inclusion website: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld.html?id=298> (Accessed October 2014)

young people, anti-discrimination and full equality between men and women.

- The **Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud** (*Likestillings og diskrimineringsombudet*) has a law enforcement role, which includes making statements in connection with complaints regarding violations of laws and regulations that are within the working scope of the Ombud, and providing advice and guidance concerning this legislation. The Ombud shall enforce a number of acts, including the Anti-Discrimination Act. In the period 2007-12, the Ombud handled 529 complaints regarding age discrimination.
- The **Equality and Anti-discrimination Tribunal** (*Likestillings- og diskrimineringsnemda*) handle complaints concerning the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's decisions.

### **Social dialogue**

There is a strong tradition for social dialogue on issues concerning working conditions in Norway, based on legislation and collective agreements. In particular the implementation of the tripartite Agreement for an Inclusive Working Life (see Section 2.1) is an important agenda item for the social partners, both at national and company level.

The social partners give their opinions on the development of new and existing legislation and provide advice on OSH priorities. Cooperation between the government, employer organisations and trade unions takes place at many levels, e.g. in the Advisory Committee of the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority.<sup>32</sup>

The main social partners in Norway include:

#### *Trade unions:*

- The **Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions** (LO, *Landsorganisasjonen i Norge*), the largest and most influential workers' organisation in Norway.
- **Unio**, whose members are university or college educated, and most work in the public sector. Unio's main objectives are to improve members' wages and working conditions, secure employment, and ensure economic and social security.
- The **Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations** (*Akademikerne*), the primary Norwegian organisation dedicated to improving salary and working conditions for professionals with a higher education.
- The **Confederation of Vocational Unions** (YS, *Yrkesorganisasjonenes Sentralforbund*), a politically independent umbrella organisation for employees.

Trade union density<sup>33</sup> has only slightly decreased in Norway – from 58% of all employees in 1993 to 53.5% in 2013, and remains largely above OECD average (16,9% in 2013).<sup>34</sup>

#### *Employers:*

- The **Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry** (NHO, *Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon*), Norway's major organisation for employers and the leading business lobby.
- The **Confederation of Norwegian Commercial and Service Enterprises** (VIRKE), the most rapidly growing federation of enterprises in Norway.
- The **Employers' Association Spekter**, which represents a diversity of large, important companies of public interest, primarily within the health sector, culture and transport/infrastructure.
- The **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities** (KS, *Kommunesektorens organisasjon*), the only employers' association and interest organisation for municipalities, counties and local public enterprises in Norway.

<sup>32</sup> EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, OSHWIKI, "OSH system at national level – Norway". Available at: [http://oshwiki.eu/wiki/OSH\\_system\\_at\\_national\\_level\\_%E2%80%9393\\_Norway](http://oshwiki.eu/wiki/OSH_system_at_national_level_%E2%80%9393_Norway) (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>33</sup> Trade union density corresponds to the ratio of wage and salary earners that are trade union members, divided by the total number of wage and salary earners (OECD *Labour Force Statistics*). Density is calculated using survey data, wherever possible, and administrative data adjusted for non-active and self-employed members otherwise (OECD)

<sup>34</sup> OECD (Online OECD Employment database: <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm#union> (Accessed December 2014)

### 1.3 Labour, OSH and antidiscrimination legislation

The following section provides a brief overview of the main pieces of legislation in the fields of occupational health and safety, labour and employment and antidiscrimination and whether they contain any provisions in relation to older workers.

#### **Occupational health and safety**

The main law in Norway covering occupational safety and health (OSH) relating to the working environment, working hours and employment protection, is the **Working Environment Act** (*Arbeidsmiljøloven*), as subsequently amended, latest by the Act of 14. December 2012 No. 80. The WEA will be further amended in 2015.

The **Working Environmental Act** and the **Holidays Act** (also under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) cover a number of legal rights for older workers over the age of 60. Key areas in this respect are:

- Employer's prohibition of discrimination because of age. The prohibition is valid in all aspects of the employment, from job announcements to termination of employment contracts (Chapter 13, Working Environment Act);
- The employer is obliged to consider age in their planning of work for their employees (§ 4-2 and §4-6, Working Environment Act);
- Employees over 62 have the right to reduced working time (§10-2, Working Environment Act);
- Employees over 60 have the right to take an extra week paid holiday pr. year (§5 and §10, Holidays Act);
- An employee, who has close relatives needing caretaking at the end of their life, has additional rights for leave of absence with pay (§12-19, Working Environment Act);
- Employers are prohibited to dismiss employees solely on the grounds of age, up to the employee's age of 72. A lower retirement age can be decided under certain conditions (Working Environment Act);
- In case of mass dismissals, employers are encouraged to consider seniority as a criteria not to dismiss. The principle of seniority is however, not legally bound (Working Environment Act);
- For employees above 50, the notice time for dismissal can increase (Working Environment Act).

The **National Insurance Act** (*Folketrygdloven*) provides the central national insurance and welfare schemes in Norway. The National Insurance Act, introduced in 2011 following a major pension reform (see next section), stipulates provisions for unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, and benefits related to the course of life and family situations, retirement pension and rules for processing cases. It also introduced a number of changes in the sickness leave scheme, such as moving checkpoints, discontinuing the active sick leave scheme, physician participation in dialogue meetings and mandatory training for persons granting sick leave (more details in Section 3).

#### **Antidiscrimination**

An important law in this respect is Chapter 13 of the Working environment Act called "Protection against discrimination" and more particularly **Section 13-1 Prohibition against discrimination**, which covers direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of political views, membership of a trade union or age. Protection against discrimination based on disability or sexual orientation is regulated in the WEA (§13-1 (6) and §13-1 (7)), which refers to the Anti-discrimination and Accessibility Act and the Sexual Orientation Anti-Discrimination Act respectively.

### 1.4 Pension system

#### **Retirement age (official and actual)**

Prior to 2011, the pensionable age in Norway was 67 – yet a large share of employees left the labour force before that age, mainly via disability benefits or the Contractual Early Retirement schemes (AFP) implemented in the late 1980s. While the **average effective labour force exit ages** was 63.1 years for both men and women in 2005, these number had risen to 64.2 years for men and 64.3 years for women by 2011.

In 2011 the **old age pension reform** was introduced, which introduced flexibility into the pension system<sup>35</sup>. The statutory age of 67 was abolished, and the new actuarially methods for calculating pension benefits began to be applied, with life expectancy adjustment as an explicit element. This means that take-up of pension benefits is now possible at any age between 62 and 75.

A demographic component is factored into the pension calculations to take into account the effect of increased life expectancy at retirement age.

Work income can be combined with benefits from public pension system without an earnings limit, and generates additional pension rights even after take-up of the pension.

The main objectives of the pension reform were to increase the incentives to work and facilitate work opportunities for retirees, e.g. maintain a sustainable pension system which would be capable of handling an increase in the number of retired Norwegians/higher life expectancy, while at the same time less children are born. The pension reform is therefore intended to encourage more people to stay for a longer period in the workforce after retirement age. The reform is scheduled for completion and would be fully implemented in 2025. Through amendments in 2010, the Working Environment Act now states that employment in Norway can be terminated by employees at the age of 70. However, having a lower retirement age than 70 is also possible in occupational pension schemes, which often have 67 as the pension age. The Supreme Court has confirmed this practice as legal, based on the conditions that the scheme is well known among and applies to all employees. The general mandatory retirement age in the public sector is 70, and there are lower age limits for certain occupations (policemen, firemen, ballet dancers etc.)

The employment rate of people above the age of 60, and particularly in the age group 62-66, has increased after the implementation of the 2011 old age pension reform, while the total employment rate of the age group 18 till 66 has been stable over the same period. A shortcoming, however, is that only about 40% of the new pensioners, mainly those who used to work in the private sector, are affected substantially by the rules so far. A challenge that lies ahead is to ensure broader coverage and application of the new system's principles for employees in the public sector.

### **Present debate**

The present debate in Norway is to a large degree related to the consequences of an ageing population. What can be done to mobilise inactive older people and to encourage more of them to stay longer in work? Examples of topics being debated/ discussed with regards to older workers:

- Employment in Norway can be terminated by employers at the age of 70. A debated question has been whether the statutory retirement age of 70 should be removed or increased. The government has concluded that, from 1 July 2015, the statutory retirement age will be 72. The debate will nevertheless probably continue.
- There is also a discussion regarding the early retirement age in the public sector for certain occupations like policemen.
- What is the actual effect of the AFP (collective agreement) in the public sector? In parallel there is a debate with respect to aligning it with the principles of the reformed private sector system. This would support higher job mobility in society by facilitating job changes across sectors without loss of AFP rights, which is a problem today – as workers may lose pension entitlements by moving from one sector to the other.
- In Norway's labour market a large share of older people are on disability benefit, 19.6% of those aged 55-59 and 30.5% of those aged 60-64 (2012). There is a debate concerning stronger gatekeeping to the disability benefit scheme in order to reduce inflows. One suggested measure is to encourage outflows by increasing the use of partial benefits and allowing these to be combined with part time work – in order increase the employment rates in the older age groups.

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<sup>35</sup> OECD, Ageing and employment Policies, Norway 2013, Working better with age. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201484-en> (Accessed October 2014)



## 2 Overview of policy, strategy and programmes in relation to the occupational health and safety of older workers

As life expectancy rises, it is important to create working conditions that enable healthy and active ageing and ensure that workers reach pension age in good health.

The following chapter provides an overview of the various policies, programmes and initiatives put in place by governmental and non-governmental organisations in Norway to address the issue of work sustainability and healthier working lives. The initiatives presented below are not directly related to health and safety. They have a broader scope, which includes the occupational health and safety of older workers.

The key affiliated partner in Norway working for and stimulating to and develop good senior policy, the Centre for Senior Policy (CSP), plays an important role with respect to the continuous development of senior policy in Norway. It is therefore, in this respect, worthwhile mentioning CSP as an important national initiative to give focus on senior policy in Norway on a national level.

### 2.1 Initiatives from government/government-affiliated organisations

#### *Health and safety policy*

On 26 August 2011, the government submitted to the Norwegian Parliament its **White Paper on Joint Responsibility for a Good and Decent Working Life – Working conditions, working environment and safety**.<sup>36</sup>

The White Paper promotes the following policy guidelines:

- Reinforced participation and collaboration;
- Active implementation of the **Inclusive Workplace Agreement** (IA Agreement – see below);
- Making large and medium-large employers more responsible for creating a sound working life;
- Targeting efforts at different sectors;
- Reinforcing public supervisory agencies;
- Improving knowledge about working-life issues;
- Working on specific health and safety environment challenges, such as night work and chemicals;
- Continuing to direct close attention to social dumping.

The age dimension is taken into account in the White paper only when addressing the issue of working time and the need to develop more flexible working time schemes that allow workers to work until retirement age. Rehabilitation/return-to-work is not addressed and neither are themes such as workplace health promotion, well-being at work or age management.

#### *Preventing early retirement*

In 2001 the **Inclusive Workplace Agreement** (IA Agreement)<sup>37</sup> concluded by employers, employees and the government, was launched. After the two implementation periods 2001-2005 and 2006-2010, it was renegotiated in 2010 for the period 2010-2013 and the latest revised agreement was implemented on 4 March 2014, valid for the period 2014-2018. The multipartite Council for Working Life and Pension Policy, under the leadership of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, is responsible for following up on the IA Agreement at national level.

The initiative was taken based on the need to reduce sick leave and to increase the employment of

<sup>36</sup> White Paper on Joint responsibility for a good and decent working life – Working conditions, working environment and safety. English translation available at:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/AD/publikasjoner/prop\\_meld/2011/MeldSt29\\_2011\\_Engelsk\\_Web.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/AD/publikasjoner/prop_meld/2011/MeldSt29_2011_Engelsk_Web.pdf).

Full version in Norwegian: <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/17352261/PDFS/STM201020110029000DDDPDFS.pdf> (both accessed October 2014)

<sup>37</sup> OECD, Ageing and employment Policies, Norway 2013, Working better with age, as above.

people with reduced functional ability and older workers. The three goals of the Agreement for 2010 – 13 are:

1. A 20% reduction in sick leave compared with the second quarter of 2001. At the national level, this means that the total share of workers on sick leave should not exceed 5,6%
2. Increased employment of people with reduced functional ability
3. The effective labour force exit age for an employee aged 50 is to be extended by six months compared with 2009.

The basis for the adoption of the Agreement is that early retirement is related to working conditions. The Agreement therefore encourages social partners to put safeguards in place to prevent early retirement, in particular age management policies (or senior policies) in companies.

The evaluation of the IA Agreement for the period 2001-09 concluded that the target for Sub-goal 3 (see list above) was achieved in the period review, but the overall effect of the Agreement could not be concluded.

### **Senior policies in companies**

The **Centre for Senior Policy (CSP)** is the key affiliated partner in Norway working for and stimulating to develop good senior policy in private and public enterprises/ companies. The centre is sorted under and financed by the Ministry of Labour. CSP's main actions include raising awareness among employers and employees of older workers' resources; advocating what is needed to motivate workers to stay longer at work; and stimulating age diversity at the workplace. Through co-ordination with authorities, firms, the social partners and professional organisations, the Centre – whose board is made of representatives from social partners – works to encourage and develop appropriate policies for older workers in the labour market.

In particular, the Centre has developed a website entitled “**Win-win**” (*VinnVinn*)<sup>38</sup> offering guidance to senior workers, union representatives and employers. The site has been divided in such a way that employers, workers and union representatives can find relevant tools and guidance:

- For employers, the site includes information about the benefits of employing senior workers and a five-phase project guide for the development of a good senior policy in companies. The five phases include:
  - Preparation, including thinking of who should take part (employers, employees, HR managers, union representatives, etc.)
  - Mapping the age and skills composition of the workforce, the current practice in relation to senior workers and the wishes and needs of employees.
  - Analysis to determine how to use the information for the development of a senior policy
  - Developing the senior policy and the measures to implement it and documenting it
  - Executing the senior policy and evaluating its results.
- For workers, it offers testimonials of how senior workers have proved to be a valuable asset to their employers
- For union representatives it provides tips on how they can influence the development of a senior policy in their company.

On 26 September 2012, the Centre organised in Oslo, within the framework of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, a conference analysing the **participation of senior citizens in the labour market in the Nordic countries**. The Conference brought together policy makers, social partners, institutions and researchers from the Nordic countries to exchange experiences and practices. The themes tackled during the Conference included the development of senior policies and motivation and acceptable alternatives for later retirement in a comparative perspective.<sup>39</sup>

Still in the framework of the European Year for Active Ageing, the Centre launched in 2012 the project “**Ask the scientists**” in cooperation with the Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research.<sup>40</sup> The aim

<sup>38</sup> Vinn Vinn website: <http://www.vinnvinn.org/> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>39</sup> More information on the Centre for Senior Policy website: <http://seniorpolitikk.no/informasjon/kalender/?date=2012-09-26&month=9> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>40</sup> More information on the Centre for Senior Policy website: <http://seniorpolitikk.no/fakta/spor-forskerne> (Accessed October 2014)

of the initiative was to make the knowledge and experiences of the Fafo Institute researchers available to whoever has a question. The Centre organised four online meetings for employers, HR managers and social partners on the following themes:

1. March - "Initiatives and measures in the workplace to prolong work careers and increase labour participation for the 55+ population".
2. June - "Adaptive measures in the workplace and health of older workers".
3. September - "Older workers and lifelong learning".
4. December - "Effects of the Norwegian pension reform on active ageing policies at enterprise level".

### ***Lifelong learning***

With respect to the education of older workers, Vox, **the Norwegian Institute of Adult Education – for lifelong learning**, is an important agency that supports measures for employability and increasing participation in education. It is an agency under the Ministry of Education and Research that works to promote participation in community and working life by improving the competence level of adults. Its main goal is to promote active citizenship, improve employability, and increase participation in learning. Vox manages government subsidies for the operational costs of study associations, distance-learning institutions and study centres, as well as providing financial support for the pedagogical development of lifelong learning.

## **2.2 Initiatives from the social partners**

Because Norway has a very strong tradition of social dialogue, the social partners are very active in all aspects of the development of senior policies through most of the initiatives mentioned above. No initiatives by individual social partners have been identified.

## **2.3 Initiatives from non-governmental organisations**

No examples of initiatives from non-governmental organisations have been identified related to the health and safety of older workers. There are many local senior centres in Norway that are working for senior interests, but the main initiatives are governmental driven.

### 3 Overview of policy, strategy and programmes in relation to the rehabilitation/return to work of workers

Extending working lives in healthy, safe and sustainable working conditions also means ensuring that people who suffer from an illness or an accident that leads to prolonged sick leave have the necessary support to return to work in safe and adapted conditions. By promoting the return to work of those who are suffering from a health problem, and specifically in the older age group, a number of people who may otherwise have chosen early retirement or needed a disability pension will remain employed.

The effectiveness of the rehabilitation process is therefore another important factor related to prolonging healthy working lives. Although the issue of rehabilitation and return-to-work is particularly relevant for older workers, as they are more likely to suffer from work-related health problems than younger age groups, the chapter looks at rehabilitation for all workers.

In Norway, occupational rehabilitation can be provided to all workers by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) at the request from the employer or from the treating physician.

The following chapter first describes the institutional system in Norway for the rehabilitation/return to work of workers suffering from a health problem and then looks at specific initiatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations to promote rehabilitation and return-to-work.

#### 3.1 The national system for the rehabilitation/return to work of sick/injured workers

##### **Legal and policy framework**

In Norway, occupational rehabilitation is regulated through the Working Environmental Act and the National Insurance Act (see Section 1.3).

- According to the **Working Environment Act** every occupational physician is obliged to report work-related disorders to the Labour Inspection and the other inspection Authorities. These sentinel event notifications are used by the Labour Inspection Authority as information for follow-up in the enterprises to prevent further exposures to the noxious agent.
- The **National Insurance Act** set rules for how the recording should be done and stipulates the provisions for benefits related to rehabilitation.
- As mentioned in Section 2.1, the second objective of the **Inclusive Workplace Agreement** is to increase the employment of people with reduced functional ability. To achieve this, the Agreement encourages companies to set goals to prevent workers with reduced work ability to transit to unemployment or disability benefits. It also encourages employers to integrate in their workforce people who, on the advice of the NAV want to test their work ability.

##### **Main actors and steps in the rehabilitation process**

*Medical rehabilitation* of patients is generally the responsibility of the individual municipality and local community – being the prolonged regional/local arm of health and care services – under the Ministry of health and care services. In addition there are a number of private/ half private institutions and companies who offer the same type of service.

Medical rehabilitation can also be a daytime or 24 hour service. The 24 hour service can typically be delegated to a doctor at a public hospital, and may be necessary when:

- the worker has complicated or severe health problems;
- the daytime service is too far away;
- the overall situation is such that the worker also needs a change of location.

This measure may be applicable to those who are on sick leave and/or whose work capability has been impaired in ways that prevent them from returning to their job. The 24 hour service lasts for up to four weeks. The duration of the daytime service must be tailored to individual needs, up to a maximum of 12 weeks.

*Occupational rehabilitation* in Norway is dealt with by the **Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)**.

The suggestion to receive occupational rehabilitation can come from the employer or from the medical professional who issued the medical certificate for the worker's sick leave but ultimately, it is the NAV that makes the final decision and refers the worker to rehabilitation measures. If the worker is on sick leave, the medical professional who issued the medical certificate must be notified of the referral. The same procedure applies for occupational as well as non-occupational injuries or diseases.

Occupational rehabilitation services aim to improve the work capabilities of the worker and to provide a more extensive placement assistance and guidance than what the NAV typically offers. The NAV has agreements with a number of guidance counsellors who can provide the support needed by the worker in a transitional period.

The measures are tailored to the needs of the worker and are based on his/her options about the labour market (i.e. returning to an existing job or finding a new job), and may include:

- Activities to improve motivation and ability to tackle problems
- Individualised training programme and guidance
- Work testing in safe surroundings
- Involvement in the labour market
- Lifestyle guidance

For workers on sick leave, the occupational rehabilitation must be related to their job. If it is impossible for them to return to their current job, the occupational rehabilitation must allow them to transit to another type of job. Before starting the occupational rehabilitation measures, the NAV must have received a follow-up plan explaining the steps undertaken by the employer to implement measures that enables the worker to return to work, and that they have found that these cannot be implemented.

The **employer** has the obligation to develop the follow up plan for workers who are on sick leave (wholly or partly), within the first four weeks from the initial date of the employees sickness period. The follow-up plan will include: 1) an evaluation of the employee's job-tasks and working capacity, 2) a description of how the employer can make adjustments/ measures for the employee and, 3) objectives for the employee to facilitate the return to work and a date for the next follow-up meeting. After seven weeks of sick leave the employer shall arrange a dialogue meeting with the employee. After 9 weeks of sick leave, the employer must report the activities undertaken including the follow-up plan to the NAV. After 26 weeks a 2<sup>nd</sup> dialogue meeting should take place. After 12 months, the employee's right to receive sickness benefit from NAV and the employer expires.

In practice the employer often fails to report to the NAV. The NAV will normally send the employer a reminder giving the employer a second chance to fulfil his obligations. The NAV can give a penalty charge to the employer if he, after notice, still does not follow up.

### **Compensation system**

#### *Compensation system for sickness absence*

The employer is responsible for paying **sickness benefit** for the first 16 calendar days of the sick leave. When this period has expired, sickness benefit is paid by the NAV for up to one year. The maximum compensation level from the NAV per year is currently (2014) approx. NOK 530,000.

If the employee is still injured, sick or has reduced ability to work after 12 months he/she may receive another type of financial support from the NAV, called the **work assessment allowance**, which is meant to cover costs related to medical treatment, 'back to work related measures' or other types of activities/ treatments.

Workers who receive sickness benefits will continue to receive these benefits while participating in occupational rehabilitation measures.

#### *Compensation system for disability or reduced capacity to work*

In addition to what the employee receives from the NAV, he/she may also receive **disability benefits** from the employer's Work Accident Insurance if the health problem is occupational. All enterprises are legally obligated to have a private insurance for all its workers. The insurance must cover compensations for work accidents and occupational diseases.

In 2011, Norway's Parliament passed a reform of the **disability scheme** in order to strengthen the distinction between disability benefits and early retirement benefits. In particular, one element of the reform is to make it easier to combine work income and disability benefits. This will be encouraged through better prevention measures and encouraging the use of partial benefits (rather than full benefits) in order to encourage staying at work even with reduced work ability. The new legislation should come into force in 2015.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2 Specific initiatives or programmes

As explained in the previous section, return-to-work programmes are commonly covered by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, through one of their regional/local working life centres. Several programmes are offered by the **Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration** (NAV), for instance for occupational rehabilitation, job clubs and various types of training.

Access to **part-time jobs for workers with reduced work ability** has been developing in Norway, similarly to many other European countries. In particular the use of partial sickness absence certificates has proven successful in aiding recovery, by ensuring that workers do not stop working altogether for a long time.

Examples of regional centres who work with rehabilitation/ return to work of all people/ workers include the **Vikersund spa**, which helps people of all ages, who have struggled with illness or accident, to recover and to return to work, through a number of activities, based on physical as well as mental training, courses, seminars, etc.<sup>42</sup>

The **Health Protection Clinic** (*Friskvernklubben*), part of the Unicare occupational health service, provides OSH services for all types of businesses, and carries out rehabilitation of people/ workers of all ages on a much larger scale than typical company health services. Rehabilitation takes place through multidisciplinary courses and training addressing both physical and mental health. The programmes are financed/supported by the Norwegian health care system. It promotes a work-oriented rehabilitation and has a special programme focused on long-term musculoskeletal disorders.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> OECD, Ageing and employment Policies, Norway 2013, Working better with age, as above.

<sup>42</sup> Vikersund spa website: <http://www.vikersund-kurbad.no/rehabilitering-med-arbeid-som-maal> (Accessed October 2014)

<sup>43</sup> Health Protection Clinic website: <http://unicare.no/friskvernklubben> (Accessed October 2014)

## 4 Conclusions

### General context

#### Facts and figures

- The *median age* in Norway has increased from 32 years in 1975 to 39 years in 2012, which is still lower than the EU-27 medium age of 42 years (2012). However, the proportion of the population aged 65 and above is projected to increase from around 30% of the population aged 20–64 in 2011 to 60% by 2050<sup>22</sup>. This explains the need to boost the future employability of older workers in order to sustain economic growth.
- In Norway, although *life expectancy* is similar to the EU average, the number of *healthy life years* (16 for women and 15 for men) is significantly higher than the EU average (8.6).
- The *employment rate* in Norway has been higher than the average EU-27 rates for all age groups during the past decade. Employment among 55 to 64 years olds has increased from 66% in 2000 to 71% in 2012 compared to EU share of 39% and 49% respectively. The employment rate of the oldest group (65 years +) has been increasing since 2000, and was 19% in 2012, compared to the EU average of 5%. Norway's labour market has a large share of older people on disability benefit: 19.6% of those aged 55–59 in the first quarter of 2012, and 30.5% of those aged 60–64.
- Working conditions surveys show that older workers in Norway are less exposed to *heavy physical loads and tiring and painful positions* than workers across the EU-27. Older workers in Norway have a higher score with regards to *satisfaction with their working conditions* and working hours fitted with their private lives. However, the share of older workers who think that they will not be able to do the same job at 60 in Norway (around 29%) is similar to the EU average.
- Since 2011, there is no official *retirement age* in Norway. Take-up of pension benefits is possible at any age between 62 and 75. On average, the effective labour force exit ages has increased from 63.1 in 2005 (both men and women) to 64.2 years (men) and 64.3 years (women) in 2011.

#### Legal and institutional framework

The Working Environment Act covers a number of legal rights for older workers over age 60. The areas covering the physical health and safety of older workers is generally well implemented in practice. Other areas, such as discrimination and seniority, are often less well implemented, e.g. not according to or in 'borderland' of the law. Even if age discrimination is prohibited by Norwegian Law, practice shows that individuals already in their early 50s may meet barriers in the labour market, mainly because of age.

For anti-discrimination legislation and other parts of the Working Environment Act, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority and the Equality and Ant-Discrimination Ombud are the operative units with a law enforcement role. There is also a strong tradition for social dialogue in issues concerning working conditions in Norway, based on legislation and collective agreements. This also applies to senior policy.

#### OSH and older workers

The 2011 pension reform and the tripartite Inclusive Workplace Agreement (IA agreement) are key existing regulatory initiatives that give flexibility with regards to pension age and the possibility of combining income and pension, improving the incentives to stay in work.

The Centre for Senior Policy (CSP) is a tripartite organisation in Norway working for and stimulating to develop good senior policy in private and public enterprises/ companies. The CSP's main actions include raising awareness among employers and employees of older workers' resources; advocating what is needed to motivate workers to stay longer at work; and stimulating age diversity at the workplace. Through co-ordination with authorities, firms, the social partners and professional organisations, the Centre works to encourage and develop appropriate policies for older workers in the labour market. The "Win-win" website for instance offers guidance to senior workers, union representatives and employers.

There are presently various debates with regards to improving incentives to carry on working. Key issues are: 1) Greater consistency in the setting of age limits. There is no co-ordination between rules regarding age limits for accrual of additional pension rights, employment protection legislation, and other rules and regulations concerning mandatory retirement. 2) Align the pension/ retirement schemes for the private and public sector. 3) Strengthen gatekeeping of the disability scheme to reduce inflows to the disability benefit and to encourage outflows by increasing the use of partial benefits and allowing these to be combined with part-time work.

Negative stereotypes concerning older workers still need to be combated actively. The Working Environment Act includes several legal rights targeted on older workers over age 60, as mentioned in chapter 1.3. Some of these rights, with the likes of prohibition of discrimination because of age and considering of age in adjusting/ planning of work are in practise not followed up by employers.

Some good/ innovative senior practices undertaken by companies have been identified. Most of them, however, tend to include tools like reduced working hours, awareness and vocational job training measures rather than measures improving health and safety at work and/or working conditions.

In the Norwegian White paper submitted on the 26 August 2011, the age dimension was taken into account only when addressing the issue of working time and the need to develop more flexible working time schemes that allow workers to work until retirement age. Themes such as workplace health promotion, well-being at work or age management are not addressed.

### ***Rehabilitation/ return-to-work***

Occupational rehabilitation in Norway is dealt with by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare administration (NAV) and regulated through the Working Environment Act and the National Insurance Act.

In Norway, occupational rehabilitation can be provided to all workers by the NAV at the request from the employer or from the treating physician. The rehabilitation provided by NAV is work-oriented. The NAV builds an individual plan for each worker which includes clear link to the job previously held and to which the worker aspires to go back.

Before the NAV takes on the rehabilitation of a sick worker, the employer must demonstrate that they have done everything they could to reintegrate the work (through work adaptations). In particular, employers must develop a follow up plan for workers who are on sick leave (wholly or partly), within the first four weeks from the initial date of the employees sickness period. The role of the employer in the RTW process is therefore quite central in Norway.

The NAV has developed a number of measures to actively support the return to work of workers on sickness absence, such as the possibility for workers with reduced work ability to take on part-time jobs, while still receiving part of their sickness benefits

Apart from the special considerations related to the 'senior' legal rights in the Working Environmental Act, the rehabilitation of older workers is dealt with in the same way as for any worker.

### ***General conclusion***

There is presently a strong common interest among the social partners in terms of increasing the employability of older workers. A proposal of increasing the mandatory retirement age from 70 to 72 years is presently on hearing. The political focus on older workers as an increasingly larger and more important group of employees will continue.

In addition to several well established and 'generous' Norwegian regulatory initiatives, the employers are key in terms of making successful policies/ measures for improving OHS and motivating older workers to stay longer in the workforce, as well as in the rehabilitation/return-to-work process. The measures will be different depending on factors like type and size of company, and therefore they have to be adjusted accordingly. A key political challenge is therefore how to encourage employers to take on more senior initiatives in their companies and, to a larger extent, follow up to the legal 'senior' rights in the Working Environment Act. Another challenge will be to ensure that employers are active in the return-to-work process of workers on sickness absence and that coordination between the employer and the NAV is efficient to start necessary rehabilitation measures as early as possible in the process.



## 5 References and further information

### **European and international sources**

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**European Agency for Safety and Health at Work**

Santiago de Compostela, 12 – 5th floor

48003 Bilbao - Spain

E-mail: [information@osha.europa.eu](mailto:information@osha.europa.eu)

<http://osha.europa.eu>



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