

# **Safer and Healthier Work at Any Age: OSH in the *context* of an aging workforce**

**Supporting the European Parliament's Pilot Project**

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# European Project – older workers and OSH 2013-2015

## Background

- Designated within European Parliament's pilot project - "Health and safety of older workers"
  - to enhance implementation of existing recommendations, exchange best practice, further investigation of the ways to improve OSH of older people at work, further developing work already carried out, assessment of appropriateness of further action ...
- EU-OSHA carries out the work under a delegation agreement with the European Commission
- Official Journal 29.02.2012 - 04 04 16 Pilot project — Health and safety at work of older workers

# Scope of project 2013-2015

- **Practical Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) focus**
- **Building on previous work and existing information**
  - e.g. EUROFOUND, EUROSTAT
- **Analysis of current policies and practices in member states**
  - 1) OSH 2) Rehabilitation
  - incl. case studies
- **Discussion with experts, stakeholders intermediaries, and workplaces**
- **Conference on final draft June 2015**
- **Evidence-based proposals to inform policy**
  - back to Commission for European Parliament


# OSH challenges in the *context* of an aging workforce

- ‘What OSH system is needed for *all* workers knowing that the workforce is aging?’
- Longer working - longer exposure to risks
- OSH of young workers determines health of older workers
- Improve OSH for young and old to reduce chronic work-related diseases & allow everyone to work longer
  - With specific measures for older workers *if* needed
- OSH system: what works, what needs to change?

# What are the pre-requisites of an OSH system?

- Holistic approach:
  - Occupational health services, rehabilitation services and Workplace Health Promotion
- Life-cycle approach
  - Healthy young workers becoming healthy older workers becoming healthy retired workers
- Ageing-appropriate workplaces for any age – how?
- OSH policies and strategies sensitive to diversity – gender, age, disability...what, how?
- Support for SMEs – what, how?
- Integrated policies – what, how?

# Better implementation of OSH Framework directive

 **87**  
EN **FACTS**  
European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

## Workforce diversity and risk assessment: ensuring everyone is covered Summary of an Agency report

**Introduction**

Workers are not all exposed to the same risks and some specific groups of workers are exposed to increased risks (or are subject to particular requirements). When we speak about workers exposed to 'particular' or 'increased' risks, we refer to workers subject to specific risks due to their age, origins, gender, physical condition or status in the enterprise. Such people may be more vulnerable to certain risks and have specific requirements at work.

Health and safety legislation<sup>(1)</sup> requires employers to carry out risk assessments and emphasises the need to 'adapt the work to the individual', the obligation for the employer to 'be in possession of an assessment of the risks to safety and health at work, including those facing groups of workers exposed to particular risks' and that 'sensitive risk groups must be protected against the dangers which specifically affect them'.


Diversity and diversity management in the workplace are important issues in occupational safety and health today. However, diversity has seldom been studied from the perspective of risk assessment. Practical risk assessment tools that take into account the specific risks faced, for instance by people with disabilities, migrant workers, older workers, women and temporary workers, are still rare. It is hoped that further research and development will lead to additional guidance materials in the future.

**Aim of the report**

The report produced by the Agency highlights the need to carry out inclusive risk assessment, to take into account the diversity of the workforce when assessing and managing risks. The main aim of this report is to describe why and how risk assessment can and should cover the whole workforce, and to increase awareness among those responsible for and affected by health and safety at work — employers, employees, safety representatives and occupational safety and health practitioners — about the importance of assessing the risks for all workers.

The first part of the report presents the main issues regarding the occupational safety and health of six categories of workers considered at increased risk: migrant workers, disabled workers, young and older workers, women (gender issues) and temporary workers. At the end of each subsection, links are provided to further information and practical guidance or risk assessment tools.

(1) Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work.



The report then focuses on the prevention of risks faced by the different groups of workers. It provides descriptions of practical actions at workplace or sector level and their background, including groups who are targeted, and ways of identifying and assessing results, side effects, success factors and problems.

**Key issues for 'inclusion-sensitive' risk assessment**

- Taking diversity issues seriously and having a positive commitment.
- Avoiding making prior assumptions about what the hazards are and who is at risk.
- Valuing the diverse workforce as an asset (and not as a problem).
- Considering the entire workforce, including cleaners, receptionists, maintenance workers, temporary agency workers, part-time workers, etc.
- Adapting work and preventive measures to workers. Matching work to workers is a key principle of EU legislation.
- Considering the needs of the diverse workforce at the design and planning stage, rather than waiting for a disabled/older/migrant worker to be employed and then having to make changes.
- Linking occupational safety and health into any workplace equality actions, including equality plans and non-discrimination policies.
- Providing relevant training and information on diversity issues regarding safety and health risks to risk assessors, managers and supervisors, safety representatives, etc.
- Providing adequate occupational safety and health training to each worker; tailoring training material to workers' needs and specificities.

1) Better protection for all through application of prevention principles – eliminate risks at source, collective measures over individual...

2) Explicitly include diversity in risk assessment

■ Explore real examples of how

# Adapting working conditions and career progression to combat MSDs

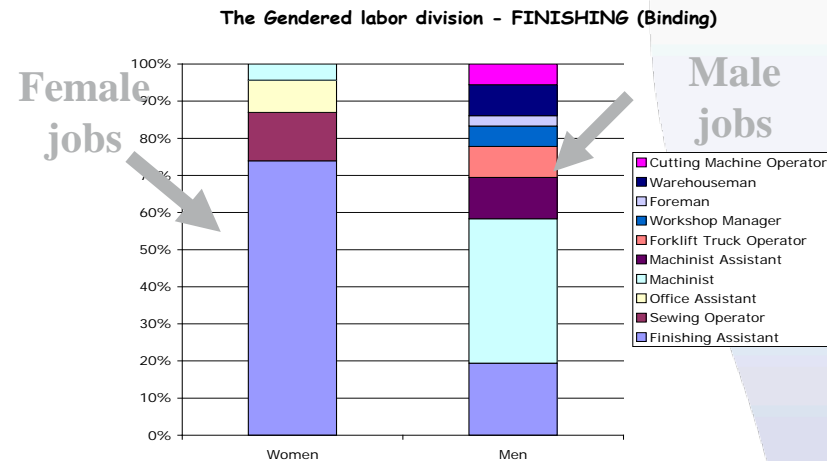
French printing company,

- Older women working in 'finishing' – high absenteeism from musculoskeletal disorders

⇒ 'Standard' ergonomic solutions e.g. alter workstations to avoid poor postures & repetitive tasks

- Women 'trapped' in finishing work, men quickly promoted -> longer exposure to poor conditions

⇒ Recommendations concerning career paths and skills recognition

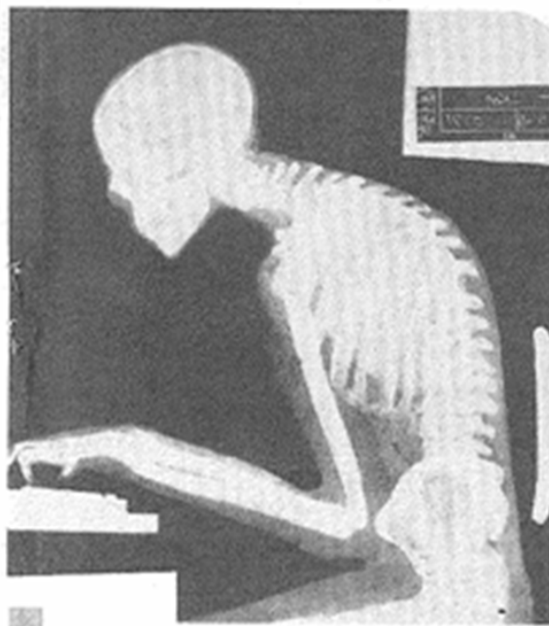




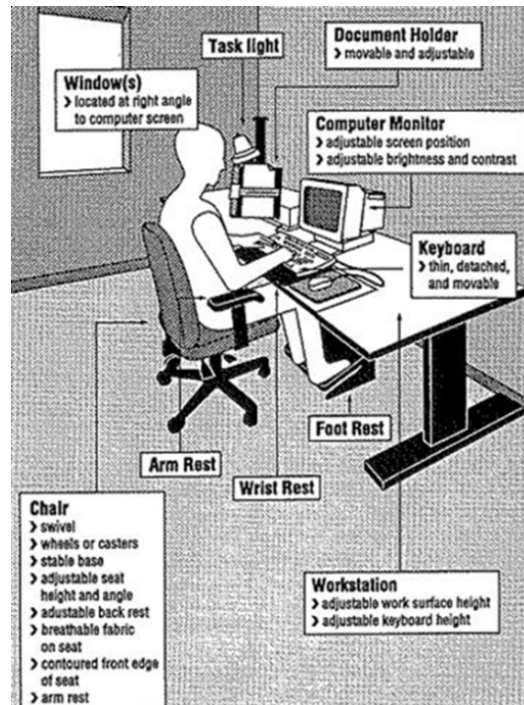
# The chair – increased exposure

- Risks of sitting at an ergonomic workstation all day everyday until 70 years-old?

■ **DANGER!**



**DANGER!**



**BETTER!**

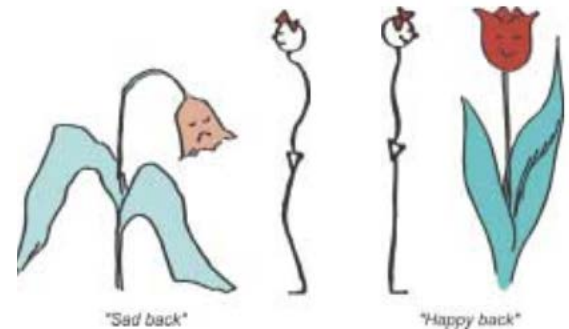
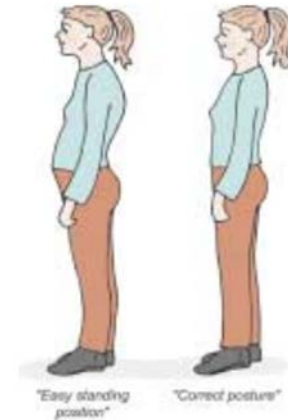




# Too late to start at work...

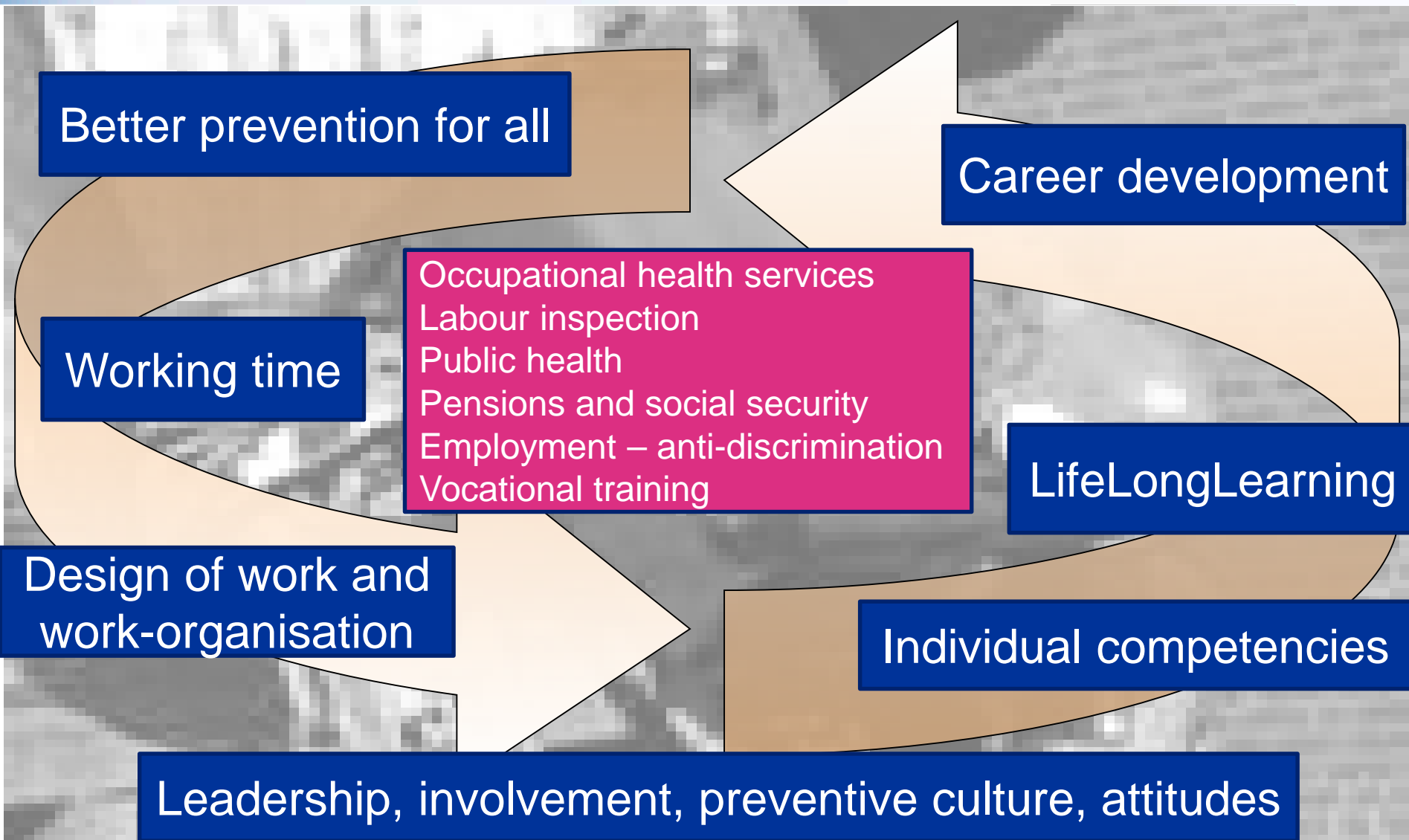


Neck pain and back pain associated  
with school furniture and bag weight  
Buckle et al Surrey University 2007



Swedish physiotherapists promote  
ergonomics knowledge and  
application in primary schools

# Integrated policies in & outside workplace



# Thank you