

## OSLO AIRPORT'S LIFE PHASE POLICY: NORWAY

### 1. Organisations involved

- Oslo Airport (OSL)
- OSL's employee health service company
- Norwegian company sports federation
- Norwegian Trekking Association
- Landsforeningen for hjerte og lungesyke (association for lung and heart diseases).

### 2. Description of the case

#### 2.1. Introduction

Oslo Airport (OSL) owns and operates Norway's main airport at Gardermoen. OSL provides infrastructure, buildings and service facilities to the companies that do business at the airport.

Operational responsibilities include snow removal and maintenance of runways, maintenance of technical facilities (luggage handling, lighting and navigation systems and security checks of passengers, employees and facilities). The company has close to 500 employees, who, together with approximately 13,000 other workers at the airport, ensure safe and punctual traffic management.

Of the 500 employees, approximately 25% are women and more than 50% are shift workers with physically demanding jobs. The average age of the workers is 46 years. OSL therefore has many challenging occupational safety and health (OSH) issues to consider.

In 2007, OSL developed a senior policy <sup>(1)</sup> as part of its existing OSH policy. The company identified the need to reduce both sick leave and the number of employees defined as medically disabled because of a combination of physical constraints and limitations due to their age. Reducing the number of employees on disability pension and those taking early retirement was also important to reduce costs for the company.

#### 2.2. Aims

Retaining the valuable skills of older workers for a longer period was a key driver in designing the senior policy. The aim was to do this by implementing the senior OSH programme based on health promotion activities, development of skills/competence, flexible working hours and the development of a human resource management programme focusing on ageing and life-course issues.

OSL took a comprehensive approach when creating the following objectives for its senior policy:

- Establish a culture in the company of promoting good health and physical activity.
- Enable employees to better cope with challenges in their jobs.
- Enable seniors to work for as long as possible.

A specific initial target was set to increase the current retirement age by 6 months.

Even though some of the initiatives were not limited to older workers, they were expected to provide a strong motivation for these workers to work longer.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 'Senior policies' are a workplace instrument promoted by the Norwegian government and the social partners to retain older workers at work through a number of actions, including mapping the age structure of the company and implementing measures specifically for older workers (senior benefits). The age at which older workers can start receiving senior benefit is defined in consultation with the social partners at workplace level.

## 2.3. What was done, and how?

### 2.3.1. Making the case and initiation

The new occupational health manager and his team identified the need for a senior policy. Clear objectives and associated measures of success were researched, in cooperation with employee representatives, and these were presented to the OSL board and top management. The occupational health team argued that such a policy not only was a good personnel policy but would save the company substantial costs. While, on the one hand, OSL would need to grant approximately NOK 15 million to carry out the programme, on the other hand, the company would gain a return of NOK 25 million in terms of reduced costs.

OSL called its initiative 'Human Resources Policy' with a life phase perspective or simply 'Life Phase Policy'. The various parts of the programme were carried out after the programme was approved by OSL's top management.

### 2.3.2. Health promotion activities

Different types of health promotion activities/courses were introduced. These included facilitation of numerous types of physical activities, energy breaks (breaks from work when employees can exercise) and greater knowledge about nutrition. In addition to OSL staff, the activities are carried out in cooperation with:

- the Norwegian company sports federation;
- the Norwegian Trekking Association;
- OSL's own employee health service company (a subcompany created within OSL but financially and administratively independent);
- Landsforeningen for hjerte og lungesyke (the association for lung and heart diseases).

OSL has concentrated on measures providing better control of factors influencing employees' health: (1) encouraging healthier nutrition and more regular physical activity, (2) 'stop smoking' courses and (3) sound theoretical and practical alcohol policy.

The following activities are for all workers:

- *Physical activities and nutrition:* A range of such activities have been offered to employees, many of which combine low-level physical and social activities. The activities are popular and have contributed to improved cooperation across divisions and departments in OSL. The company's specific-purpose website Aktiv Helse (Active Health) provides information for employees on all of the physical activities. OSL also introduced a 'green' canteen, subsidising healthy products.
- *Health monitoring:* All employees have their physical condition tested annually by the employee health service company. Health examinations and dietary and training advice are also available, with some employee groups, such as shift workers and workers above 50 years of age, followed up more closely than others.

In addition to these general activities, a number of initiatives specifically target senior workers:

- *Ageing and life-phase human resource (HR) training programme:* An HR management programme focusing on ageing and life-phase issues was introduced. The programme focuses on training managers to cope with challenges related to older workers. OSL developed a 2-day course in conjunction with the University of Stavanger. The course focuses on managing employees at different age levels, including seniors. Professionals from the university run the courses in cooperation with OSL.
- *Workplace health promotion:* OSL claims that the best results are obtained from a combination of its 'comprehensive health programme' with numerous physical activities. Senior employees are offered individual health checks and evaluation, including advice and follow-up on recommended lifestyle changes. This is carried out annually by OSL's employee health service company and covers all employees aged 50 years and over.

- *Awareness-raising events for seniors:* Senior gatherings and seminars raise awareness of the responsibility that employees have for developing their own skills and getting the most out of the second half of their career. Workers over the age of 50 are invited to these seminars.
- *Changes to working hours:* Employees over 62 years of age have the option to work flexible hours and take additional time off, in order to postpone retirement. This measure acknowledges that older workers need more time to rest than younger employees. At the same time it was stated that, while the work capability of older workers may decrease, their performance may actually increase.
- *Job relocation and retraining:* Previously, OSL had a lot of workers categorised as having a medical disability, especially due to ageing and physical constraints in certain types of jobs. The new policy addressed this issue by giving the option of replacement and retraining to be relocated to less demanding jobs. Employees working in the fire department, for example, have to meet special physical job demands. If, for some reason, they can no longer meet these demands, they cannot keep their job. These employees can be relocated to other, less physically demanding jobs, for example in fire prevention services and various airport service jobs. According to the occupational health services, as a result of this policy OSL has very few workers left who are declared medically disabled.

## 2.4. What was achieved?

OSL increased the actual retirement age from 63 to 66 over 3 years (2009–2012), enabling the company to retain the valuable skills of its older workers for a longer period <sup>(2)</sup>. In addition, the company has reduced sick leave and very few employees have been declared medically disabled. Annual OSH measurements show a generally high degree of job satisfaction (90%).

In 2012, Oslo Airport (OSL) was awarded the Senior Initiative of the Year award by the Centre for Senior Policy in Norway.

## 2.5. Success factors

The following success factors have been identified:

- *Involvement of top management:* The top management has approved and taken ownership of the programme.
- *Coordination of various actors:* OSH and HR are involved, and the programme is integrated into general OSH management and HR management. The occupational health manager and the leader of the company physical exercise team cooperate well.
- *Diversity of measures:* A variety of measures cover both OSH and HR areas, including health promotion (including physical exercises) and adaptation of working hours and work stations.
- *Life course perspective:* The policy voluntarily takes a life course approach, recognising that health problems can develop over the life course and prevention should start as early as possible to maintain work ability throughout the working life.
- *Dedicated staff:* The occupational health manager and his team ensured that enough dedicated personnel and resources were in place to execute the programme as planned.
- *External support:* OSL cooperated with external parties: the Norwegian company sports federation, the Norwegian Trekking Association and OSL's own employee health service company.

## 2.6. Transferability

Many of the key principles of OSL's life-phase policy will apply to companies of any size. The range of activities, and particularly the scale of personnel resources available, would be most suitable for transfer to larger, more complex companies.

<sup>(2)</sup> There is no official retirement age in Norway. People can start receiving their pension from the age of 62 but may also keep working until the age of 75 if they wish and are able to.

## 2.7. Further information

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## 3. References and resources

- Interview with Vidar Howlid Wærp, occupational health manager
- Website of OSL: <http://www.osl.no/>