

# **Safer and Healthier Work at Any Age**

## **Presentation of the main findings**

**Christa Sedlatschek**

**Director, EU-OSHA**

**22 September 2015**



# Background to the project 2013-2015

- 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...”  
Official Journal 29.02.2012 - 04 04 16 Pilot project — Health and safety at work of older workers
- EU-OSHA carries out the work under a delegation agreement with the European Commission

# Objectives and methodology

- **Review of the current state of knowledge on:**
  - OSH and older workers, with a gender perspective
  - Rehabilitation and return-to-work
  
- **Analysis of current policies to address the challenges of the ageing workforce in 32 European countries:**
  - Focus on OSH policies
  - Focus on rehabilitation/return-to-work systems
  
- **Analysis of selected workplace practices related to the OSH of older workers and to the challenges of an ageing workforce**

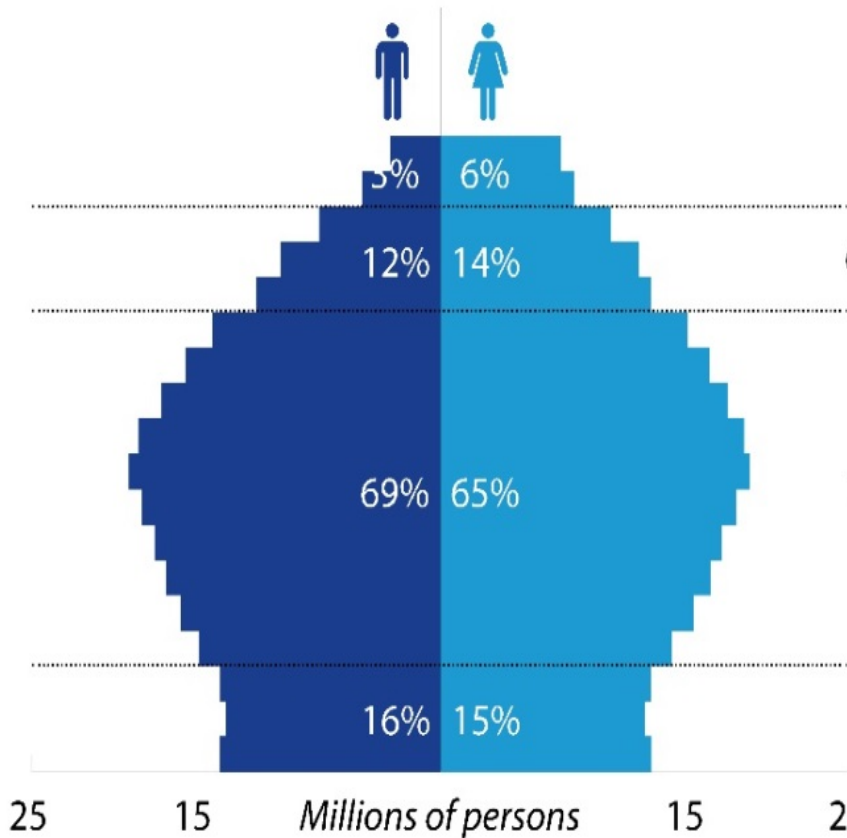
# Structure of presentation

- **Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge**
- **National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce**
  - What are countries doing and what drives them to do it
  - Elements of a successful policy framework
- **National systems for rehabilitation and return-to-work**
  - Problem statement and state-of-play
  - Elements of a successful system
- **Workplace practices to address the challenges of an ageing workforce**
  - Internal and external drivers to take action
  - Elements of a successful workplace policy

# Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge

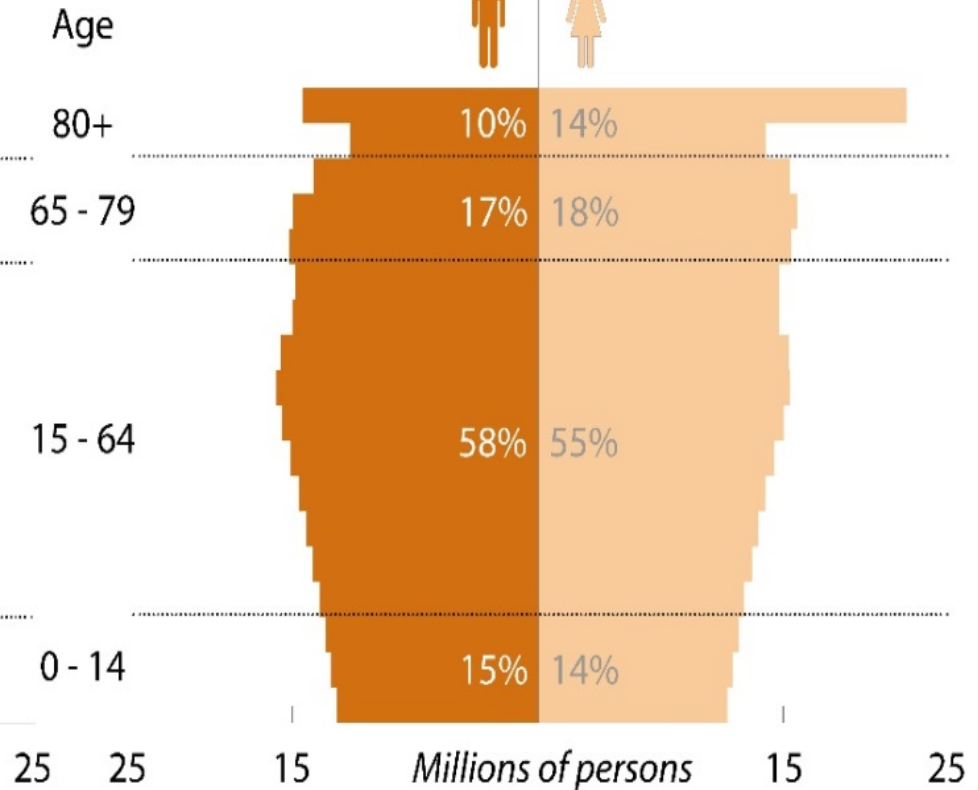
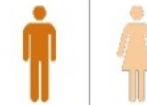
Total: 500 million

2010



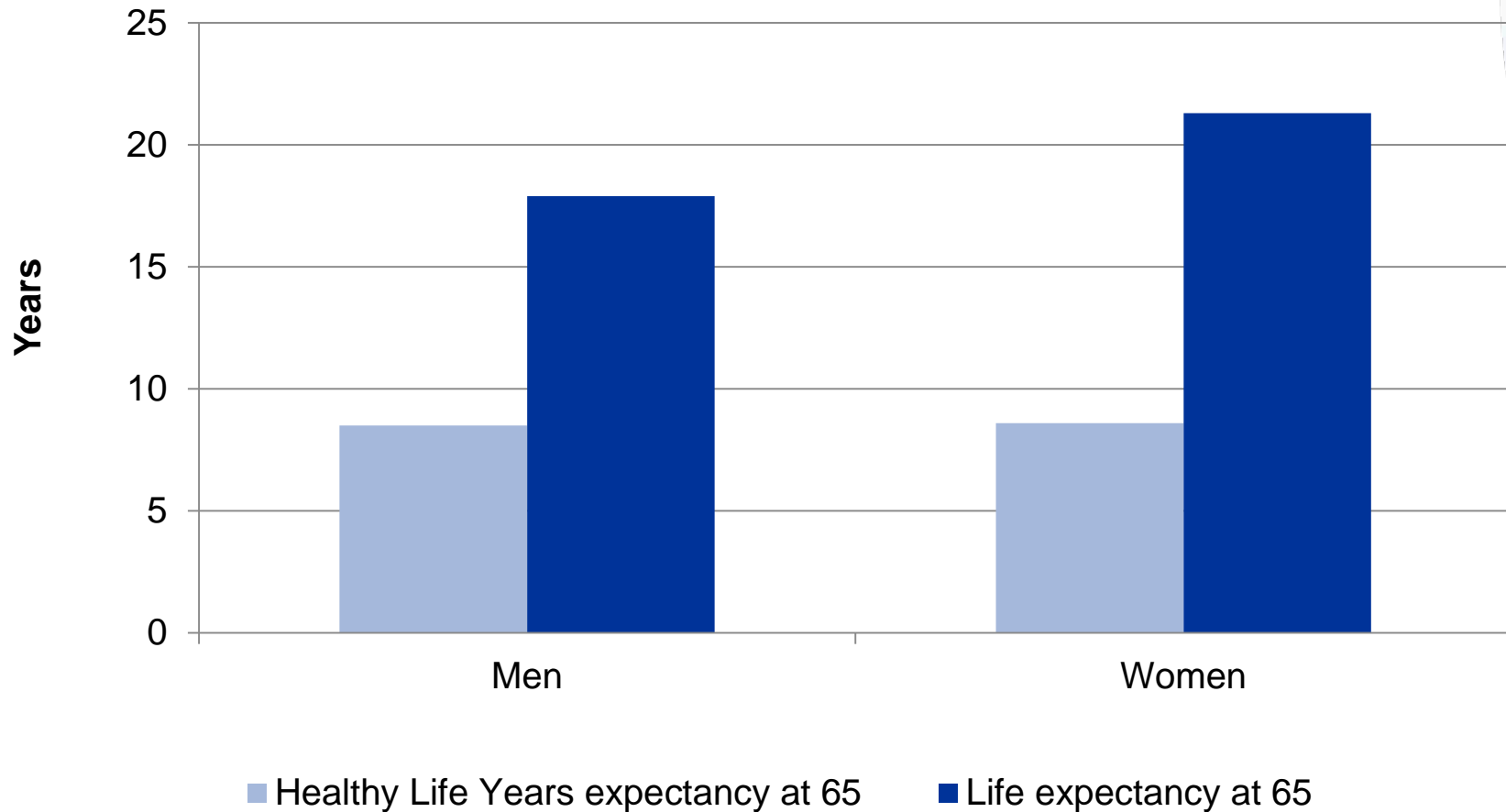
2060

Total: 517 million

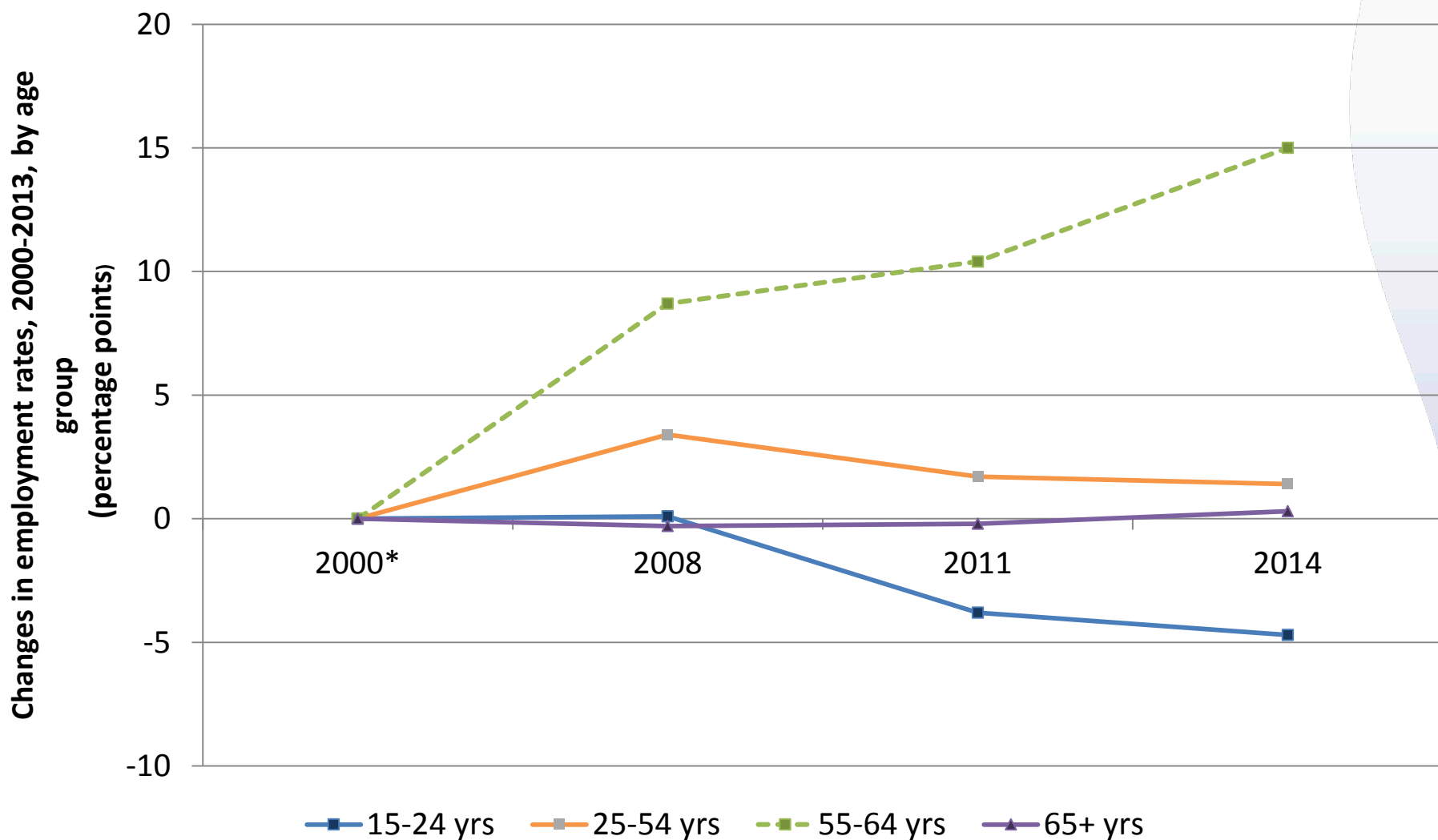


# Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge

## Life expectancy and HLY expectancy at 65, 2013



# Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge



# Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge

## ■ Opportunities:

- Benefits for workplaces: retaining skills, competences and experience; intergenerational exchanges and mentoring.
- Benefits for society: more active and healthy old-age population

## ■ Challenges:

- Increasing risk of health problems: 33% of the employed 55-64 year olds suffered from a long-standing illness or health problem in 2013.
- Discrimination: 26% of workers over 50 underwent on-the-job training in 2010 (vs. 32% of 30-49 year olds).
- Working conditions and work organisation: 27% of older workers thought that work negatively affects their health in 2010.



# Setting the scene: the European demographic challenge

- **Gender-specific issues**
  - Horizontal and vertical segregation
- **Sector-specific issues**
- **Challenges for small and micro enterprises**

# National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce

# National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce

## *Drivers and determinants*

- Related to different stages of demographic development
- Depending on traditions in OSH, employment and social security matters
- EU drivers: European legal frameworks, EU2020, European OSH strategies, EU health programmes

# National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce

## *State-of-play*

- *Socio-economic affairs*: raising retirement age, limiting early retirement
- *Employment*: maintaining employability
- *OSH*: supporting work ability
- *Social justice and equality*: antidiscrimination measures, diversity management
- *Public health*: healthy- and active-ageing policies, Workplace Health Promotion

# National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce

## *Elements of a successful policy (1/2)*

### Integrated policy frameworks

#### Socio-economic measures

- Raising retirement age
- Limiting access to early retirement and disability pensions
- Economic incentives

#### Employment measures

- Career management
- Training and lifelong learning
- Targeted support to older workers
- Vocational rehabilitation

#### OSH and working conditions measures

- Promotion of adapted workplaces
- Work-life balance
- Management of sickness absence
- Return-to-work

#### Public health measures

- Workplace Health Promotion
- Work-oriented medical rehabilitation
- Active and healthy ageing

#### Social justice and equality measures

- Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of age and disability
- Diversity management
- Social rehabilitation

**Maintaining employability & fostering work ability of all workers**

# National policies to address the challenges of an ageing workforce

## *Elements of a successful policy (2/2)*

- **Adopting a life course approach to OSH and/or ageing:**
  - Recognition of the needs of all age groups
  
- **Implementing the policy:**
  - Different types of measures (legal, political, financial, technical)
  - Systematic approach: establishment of objectives and targets, establishment of action plans, monitoring and evaluation.
  
- **Engaging stakeholders and raising awareness:**
  - Developing a common understanding and a common language (e.g. 'Sustainable employability')
  - Putting in place platforms for coordination of action and exchange of experience

# Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

# Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

## *Problem statement*

- 21% of the working population suffer from a long-standing illness or health problem
- Total average time spent on sick leave increases with age.
- Consequences of long-term sickness absence on workers, employers and society.
- Measures to facilitate rehabilitation and return-to-work to avoid long-term sickness absence, work disability or early retirement.



# Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

## *State-of-play*

- Insufficient consideration for rehabilitation / return-to-work
- Vocational rehabilitation only available to people with disabilities in many countries
- Few countries have established integrated rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

# Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

## *Elements of a successful system*

### Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems integrated into broader policy frameworks for sustainable working lives

<b>Integrated legal and policy framework</b>	<b>Inclusive systems</b>	<b>Early intervention</b>	<b>Tailored approach</b>	<b>Coordination mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Return to work system inscribed in legislation and based on coordination across relevant policy areas.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rehabilitation services and return-to-work programmes target all employees.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding sickness absence. Early workability assessment. Maintaining a link with the workplace during the sickness absence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual support plan. Workplace adaptations. Vocational and social rehabilitation. Reintegration into the workplace.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhanced role of employer. Case management. Coordination at all stages. Interdisciplinary teams.</li></ul>

# Rehabilitation and return-to-work systems

## *Elements of a successful system*

- Raising awareness of all stakeholders involved in the return-to-work process
- Enhancing the role of GPs and intermediaries
- Technical and financial support to workplaces
- Addressing research gaps and lack of data

# Workplace practices for safer and healthier work at any age

# Safe and healthy work at any age: workplace practices

## Drivers for taking action at workplace level:

- Internal: skill shortage, avoiding sickness-related costs, improving corporate image
- External: national legal or policy framework, funding, technical support
- Level of awareness

# Safe and healthy work at any age: workplace practices

## *Successful elements of workplace interventions*

- **Combination of the OSH and HR perspectives**
  - Work-station adaptation, workplace health promotion, age management and transition to retirement
  - Integration in wider policy
  
- **Adopting a life course approach to OSH and/or ageing**
  - Addressing all age groups; flexible, individualised interventions
  - Communicating on benefits of measures for the whole workforce

# Thank you to:

- **Speakers and contributors**
- **All of you for your interest**