

# Healthy Workplaces for All Ages

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## Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards **2016-2017**

Promoting a sustainable working life





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# Introduction

The Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards are organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) as part of its Europe-wide Healthy Workplaces Campaigns. The 2016-17 campaign topic is Healthy Workplaces for All Ages. The campaign promotes sustainable work and healthy ageing right from the start of working lives. It raises awareness of good occupational safety and health (OSH) management and the importance of risk prevention throughout the working life and of tailoring work to individual needs.

The awards aim to recognise companies and organisations that have demonstrated outstanding and innovative methods to promote sustainable work in the context of an ageing workforce, a holistic approach to OSH management, and a life-course perspective to risk prevention to ensure healthy ageing at work. The award competition also offers an opportunity to share good practices.

EU-OSHA received 42 entries from 23 countries. Among these, five entries were received from official campaign partners. The entries were submitted by a wide variety of organisations, of different sizes and from many sectors. The awards were judged by a European jury, including representatives from EU-OSHA, the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, and the Maltese Occupational Health and Safety Authority. The jury was chaired by Prof. Stephen Bevan from the Institute for Employment Studies (IES). Of the national entries, eight were awarded and eight commended, while one of the official campaign partner entries was awarded and one commended.

## Why do we need to promote sustainable working lives?

The European workforce is ageing. It is predicted that by 2030 workers aged 55-64 will make up 30 % or more of the workforce in many countries <sup>(1)</sup>. As official retirement ages increase across Europe, working lives are becoming longer and workers are therefore exposed to hazards and risks for longer.

The demographic changes present both challenges and opportunities for organisations: as people age, experience, skills and knowledge accumulate, but vulnerability to some work-related hazards and the prevalence of health

problems also increase. With fewer young people entering the workforce and a greater proportion of workers aged 50-64, it has become imperative for companies to attract younger workers and at the same time to retain their older, more experienced employees by increasing their employability and maintaining their work ability.

Health problems are the most common reason for early retirement, and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and mental ill health are the main causes <sup>(2)</sup>. Long-term sick leave increases the chances of never returning to work. However, returning to work can help people to recover from a long-term illness, if it is properly managed and if working conditions are adapted to the workers' needs.

Work can have a positive effect on physical and mental health and well-being for all workers if working conditions are appropriate <sup>(3)</sup>. However, according to the European Working Conditions Survey, 22 % of workers aged 50 or over think that they would not be able to do their current job at 60, and 26 % of all workers believe that work has a negative effect on their health <sup>(4)</sup>.

Companies can meet the challenges posed by an ageing workforce and retain their employees by adopting practices to promote sustainable working lives, such as taking a life-course approach to the management of workplace safety and health, preventing risks, integrating OSH and workplace health promotion, adapting work to the individual, introducing return-to-work measures, and providing structures for lifelong learning.

The summaries of the examples presented in this booklet demonstrate the results and benefits that can be achieved by an organisation when it goes beyond the basic legal requirements for OSH and when it recognises the potential for keeping employees healthy throughout their working careers.

## Recognising good practice — what the jury was looking for

The entries had to demonstrate good practice in OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce, consideration for age diversity, diversity-sensitive risk assessment followed by workplace adaptation, and possibly also measures for return to work and specific measures targeting older workers.

<sup>(1)</sup> Ilmarinen, J., *Promoting active ageing in the workplace*, EU-OSHA (<https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/articles/promoting-active-ageing-in-the-workplace/view>).

<sup>(2)</sup> *Sickness, disability and work: breaking the barriers — a synthesis of findings across OECD countries*, OECD, Paris, 2010 ([http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental\\_health/eu\\_compass/reports\\_studies/disability\\_synthesis\\_2010\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental_health/eu_compass/reports_studies/disability_synthesis_2010_en.pdf)).

<sup>(3)</sup> *Healthy workplaces for all ages: promoting a sustainable working life — campaign guide* (<https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/campaign-materials>).

<sup>(4)</sup> *European Working Conditions Survey 2015*, Eurofound, Dublin (<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys/sixth-european-working-conditions-survey-2015>).

When selecting entries for awards and commendations, the jury used the following criteria:

- a recent intervention that is directly relevant to reducing risks in the workplace in the context of an ageing workforce;
- a holistic approach to workplace safety and health in the context of an ageing workforce, combining risk prevention and workplace health promotion
- a life-course approach to risk prevention;
- prioritising collective measures for interventions focusing on the individual
- a strong commitment from management;
- evidence of consultation between management and workers and their representatives;
- effective participation of workers and their representatives;
- successful implementation of the intervention in practice;
- sustainability of the intervention over time;
- examples that demonstrated a real improvement;
- transferability of the example to other workplaces.

## Awarded and commended entries

This booklet presents brief case studies of the interventions and initiatives that were awarded or commended. Each case study outlines the issues faced by the organisation and the actions taken to tackle them and describes the results that were achieved.

Occupational safety and health solutions need to be carefully designed to take into account the specific problems and circumstances of each workplace. The examples of good practice presented here involve ideas that can be tailored for use by all kinds of organisations, regardless of sector, size or Member State.

## More information

At the EU-OSHA website, you will find a wealth of information on workplace safety and health, available in over 20 European languages.

Details of the Healthy Workplaces For All Ages campaign — as well as resources and information on how to get involved — can be found at [healthy-workplaces.eu](http://healthy-workplaces.eu).

EU-OSHA's interactive data visualisation tool can be used to explore information on the occupational safety and health challenges facing Europe as a result of demographic change — as well as on the policies and strategies that are already in place to tackle them.

## Acknowledgements

EU-OSHA wishes to thank its focal points (the national authorities responsible for occupational safety and health, or the regulatory bodies nominated by them) throughout Europe for their invaluable support and in particular for nominating and assessing entries for the Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards.

EU-OSHA is also grateful to the jury members for their participation: the chair, Stephen Bevan (IES), and the members of the panel, Eckhard Metze (Confederation of Employers' Associations, Germany), Viktor Kempa (ETUI), Melhino Mercieca (Occupational Health and Safety Authority, Malta), Zinta Podniece (European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and Katalin Sas (project manager, EU-OSHA).

Finally, we would like to thank all the organisations that entered the Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards 2016-17, and particularly those that feature in the case studies that follow.

# Participatory measures to minimise physical and psychosocial risks in the social care sector



VitaS

Belgium

[www.vitas.be](http://www.vitas.be)

## The issue

An examination of workforce demographics by the elderly care company VitaS revealed that, in three out of four work sites, over 50 % of the workforce was aged over 45, with this figure set to increase significantly in the next 5 years. Given the nature of the work undertaken by VitaS employees — involving shift work, changing requirements and issues around work–life balance — an ageing workforce could present serious challenges for future scheduling and workflow. It was important for the company to take renewed action to look after the physical and mental health of its employees.

## Action taken

Under the slogan ‘Young and old, together they are strong and gold’, three working groups were created, with specific focuses on raising and lifting, risk prevention, and health policy as a whole; the aim was to develop a sustainable health policy, focusing on physical and psychosocial risks, that would be representative of the interests of all members of staff and supported throughout the organisation.

As a result, a company raising and lifting policy was developed and implemented. Among many other

measures, a survey was conducted on the use of lifting aids in nursing departments, with the data being used, for example, to assess training needs. The company also employed certified instructors to train lifting coordinators and coaches to provide training to fellow employees. Furthermore, VitaS employed an external occupational safety and health expert to carry out ergonomic assessments at its various sites to identify areas where physical burdens could be reduced, particularly for older staff. To ensure that the resulting improvements were sustained, the company committed to organising annual visits by the external expert.

To improve work–life balance, an online self-scheduling scheme was introduced, allowing workers greater flexibility. Staff can also request time credit and care leave. Those members of staff who have worked for the organisation for a long time have the potential to reduce their working hours.

Better intergenerational communication and understanding were encouraged through a number of measures, including mentoring and coaching. Mixed-age teams are promoted in the company, and pilot projects are tested by younger and older employees, e.g. testing of a new care app on mobile devices.



Meanwhile, fitness and health at work were actively promoted through a bi-monthly newsletter containing recipes, fitness tips and information on upcoming activities; initiatives to support activity, such as sports afternoons; and a Health Week, during which an opinion poll is carried out to gain an understanding of people's health policy concerns. In addition, regular training programmes cover mental health, and the organisation takes part in the StressBalancer study, through which employees gain access to targeted tips and advice on managing stress.

## Results achieved

- VitaS took a comprehensive approach to dealing with the issue of its ageing workforce, ensuring that all staff were taken into consideration.
- Workers have reported that they felt involved and that they were listened to.
- Ergonomic changes to equipment and training have improved the physical health of employees.
- Health promotion measures, including the health newsletter and stress-management training, were well received by staff.



*VitaS took a comprehensive approach to dealing with the issue of its ageing workforce, ensuring that all staff were taken into consideration.*



# A company-wide ergonomics and demographics programme in a major car manufacturer



Continental AG

Germany

[www.continental-corporation.com](http://www.continental-corporation.com)

## The issue

Continental is a leading German automotive manufacturing company. Because of the nature of the work, employees experience a high level of exposure to occupational risks (physical and psychosocial), which the company aimed to address. The workforce at Continental is ageing, with the proportion of workers aged over 50 projected to increase from 10 % in 2005 to 50 % in 2020; this demographic change will create a shortage of skilled workers. Continental is redesigning its high-risk workplaces in order to improve working conditions for all and to maintain the health of all employees, regardless of age or gender. It also provides training and awareness raising for its employees.

## Action taken

Continental established dedicated ergonomics teams at all sites to identify and assess physical and psychosocial occupational risks. The teams are responsible for assessing and analysing exposure and redesigning workplaces to decrease physical workload and exposure through better ergonomics. This ensures that they are appropriate for male and female workers of all ages wherever

possible, thus improving working conditions for all. The ergonomics teams focus particularly on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders, and on decreasing overall exposure to physical risks and physical overload. The teams have created up-to-date evaluations of current exposure levels at each work site.

A software documentation system was used to gather demographic data for all sites and to create company-wide exposure databases and good practices. The exposure database can be used, for example, for primary prevention by establishing risk scores for various roles. The data can also be used supportively to reallocate people to more suitable jobs if their performance is limited because of a health condition. This can be particularly useful for employees that have undergone a period of rehabilitation and are returning to work.

Continental integrates ergonomics into business planning at every stage — prospective ergonomic assessment is now required during the design and purchasing processes for all new workplaces. This is a more efficient and cost-effective way of managing risks than trying to implement changes when the workplace is operational.





## Results achieved

- A decrease in the rate of reported physical overload from 46 % in 2010 to 25 % in 2016 was achieved.
- Continental reported an increase in the age stability rate from 25 % in 2010 to 44 % in 2016.
- Ergonomic assessment has now been integrated into the procurement process for all Continental sites.
- Analyses of exposure data have been integrated into human resources practice for reallocating people based on altered ability.
- The initiative has been well received by employees.

*Continental integrates ergonomics into business planning at every stage.*

# Promoting health, know-how and flexibility through participatory action



Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG

Germany

[www.heidelberg.com](http://www.heidelberg.com)

## The issue

Heidelberger Druckmaschinen is a manufacturer of sheet-fed offset printing presses, with 7,000 employees in Germany. More than half of the employees are aged over 50. The company projects that, even if it hires predominantly young workers for the next 15 years, this demographic will not change significantly.

## Action taken

The approach taken by Heidelberger Druckmaschinen to address demographic issues is a holistic one, aiming to improve safety and health within the company, but also looking at the individuals and taking into account personal and professional development. The interventions aim to raise awareness and encourage employees to take the initiative by identifying possible adjustments to the workplace that have benefits for their physical and mental health.

Action was taken in three phases: the first involved working closely with management teams, with the aim of stimulating discussion about the issue of the ageing workforce and analysing its impact on the future of the company. Ideas collected during this stage were followed up during the planning and implementation of solutions by the management teams. The commitment of management and team leaders was essential for starting the process of change.

The second phase of the intervention targeted all employees. An interactive Demographic Change Arena was established, and supervisors completed a course with their teams, dealing with topics such as work design, leadership, health education and teamwork in the context of an ageing workforce. Having completed the interactive course, employees were encouraged to create and implement team measures to increase work ability, such as organising knowledge exchange projects or setting up running clubs. The second phase also involved implementing a host of organisational measures to improve occupational safety and health, including systematic workplace inspections, job rotation, ergonomic checks and managerial task forces for specific topics.





Finally, during the third phase, the changes that had been implemented were consolidated and evaluated to ensure that they delivered the maximum benefits for the company and its employees. The changes included reconfiguration of many workplaces, design changes in assembly and maintenance processes, many one-off actions, active lunch areas, health training, development programmes for supportive leadership, peer support for on-the-job training, poster campaigns and opening a health and fitness centre.

## Results achieved

- The interactive Demographic Change Arena gave all the company's employees the opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of changes to the company's safety and health policies and practices. In total, 3,500 employees used the Demographic Change Arena.
- Of the employees who participated in the Arena, 80 % gave positive or very positive feedback and 70 % stated that they left the Arena with ideas and suggestions.
- It is estimated that the sickness rate decreased by 1 % following the interventions. That translates into savings of EUR 7 million a year.
- A total of 250 representatives from external companies and institutions used the Arena, which resulted in coverage in the local press and a Human Resources Excellence Award for Demographic Management, raising the company's visibility.

*The interactive Demographic Change Arena gave all the company's employees the opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of changes to the company's safety and health policies and practices.*

# Tailoring jobs for employees in car manufacturing to increase the employability of all



PSA Group

Spain

[www.groupe-psa.com](http://www.groupe-psa.com)

## The issue

The PSA Group is a European car manufacturer. The ageing of the workforce in Europe poses a number of challenges for the PSA Group: greater numbers of employees are likely to experience limitations on the roles they can undertake as a result of physical or psychosocial conditions; and longer working lives potentially mean longer exposure to risks. What is more, the average age of workers is higher than in the rest of the company for workers in those jobs in the production line where the physical workload is especially high. The ageing of the workforce may create organisational challenges, as jobs will need to be adapted to the workers according to individual needs.

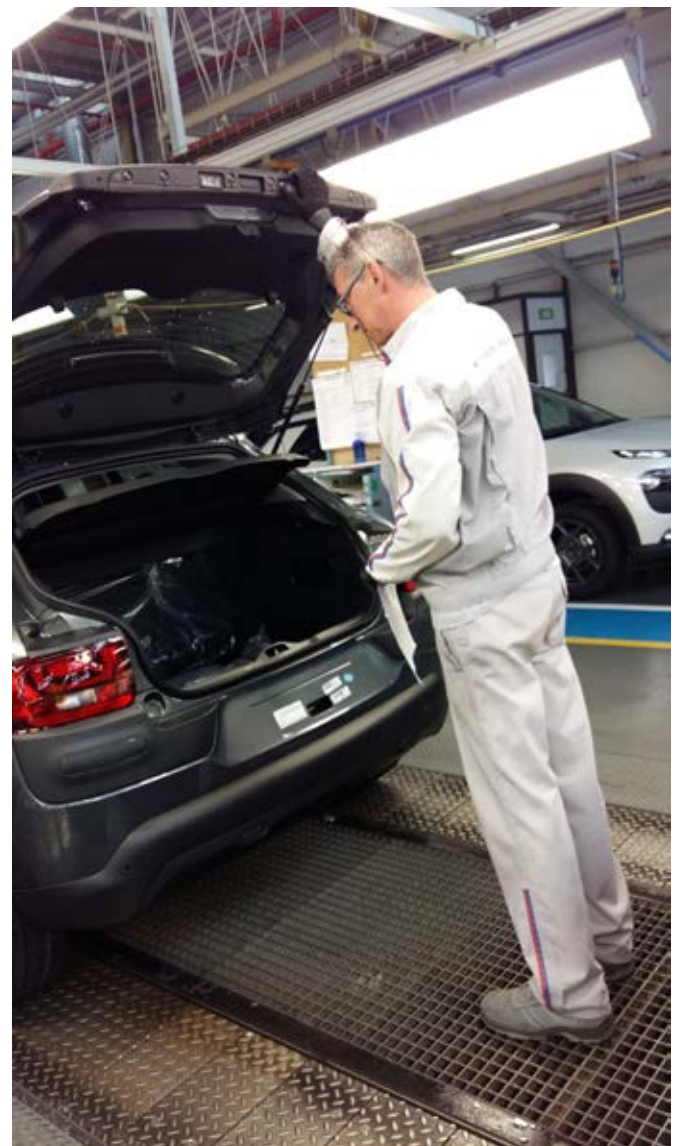
## Action taken

In planning to address this issue, the PSA Group took a collaborative approach, consulting design, medical services and human resources departments, ergonomics teams and production managers. The company decided that there was a need to tailor work to individuals and assess risks on a person-by-person basis, taking into account the physical abilities of each worker.

Age-sensitive risk assessment — which considers any physical or psychosocial limitations that the employee has, as well as their age, the nature of the position and the ergonomic changes that can be made to improve the working environment — promotes diversity in the company and makes a wider range of roles more accessible to all.

A job rotation system was introduced, with the aims of minimising the stress, both physical and mental, associated with each job; improving the employability of people with physical limitations; and maintaining and improving the ability of workers to adapt to change — which is particularly relevant for many older workers.

The company worked to improve and expand its existing culture of risk prevention and took action to promote the physical and mental well-being of its employees. New preventive measures — such as analysis of accidents to determine causes that could be mitigated, health surveillance services, and a stress assessment and monitoring system — were introduced, with great success. Together, these measures allow the identification of areas that require priority action.



The basic principle of the changes made to the work structure was to ensure that each task could be completed by as many workers as possible, regardless of physical limitations. Work towards this goal will also help employees to become more versatile — vital to maintaining skills and increasing employability — as will the job rotation strategy that has been implemented.



## Results achieved

- The PSA Group put respect for workers at the heart of its approach.
- Management was fully committed and workers' representatives were involved from the start.
- Individuals with restricted abilities were offered personalised solutions that took into account their physical and psychosocial characteristics.
- An evaluation of workers' abilities and the physical requirements of particular jobs was carried out.

- This mapping allowed human resources to examine all jobs within the company to find suitable positions for workers whose work ability was limited by a physical or psychosocial factor.
- Continual improvements to ergonomic design and safety and health practices are being made.

*Age-sensitive risk assessment promotes diversity and makes a wider range of roles accessible.*

# Improving the work ability of older workers in the energy sector



MAVIR ZRt

Hungary

[www.mavir.hu](http://www.mavir.hu)

## The issue

MAVIR ZRt is Hungary's publicly owned electricity supplier, responsible for the secure and sustainable supply of electricity across the country. In total, 60 % of MAVIR's employees working in substations and 39 % working on transmission lines are aged over 50. Due to the nature of the work, employees regularly experience high-risk occupational exposures, including exposure to high-voltage equipment, heat, hot surfaces and noise. Workers are also exposed to mental stress, injuries and musculoskeletal disorders. Managing these risks in the context of an ageing workforce can be challenging.

## Action taken

Rather than consider the older generation of workers a source of risk, the company aims to acknowledge their expertise and benefit from their experience. In 2006, MAVIR introduced company-wide measures to improve the long-term health and well-being of all employees. The measures are intended to maintain the employability of MAVIR's older workers while protecting the health of its younger workers.



The company continuously improves working conditions, including investing in mobile balloon lamps or improving communication between employees by using microphones built into helmets, with ultrahigh frequency radios placed in the armpit. Automatic defibrillators have also been fitted in all vehicles used in transmission line servicing, with all staff fully trained in their use. GPS-based personal emergency response systems have also been rolled out; these devices include a panic button, they detect falls through an acceleration sensor, and they will detect and alert dispatchers if the wearer remains motionless for a certain period of time.

The company has a contract with a medical centre allowing its employees free access to a wide range of medical treatments 24 hours a day. MAVIR employees are given access to voluntary tests, and they must also undergo routine medical checks. MAVIR also contributes monthly subsidies to a voluntary pension scheme, a mutual savings bank and a voluntary health insurance programme, which all directly benefit employees. The company also provides the potential for redeployment to substations for employees with health problems.

Furthermore, MAVIR advocates a healthy lifestyle and promotes employee recreation. Through the provision of holiday subsidies, the company encourages its employees to take regular holidays; it also runs a Health Day, which promotes participation in sports, and medical screening.

MAVIR has also established the Crisis Academy, a training programme for management, group leaders, shift leaders and operations leaders. The topics covered include stress management, conflict and crises, raising awareness of the importance of occupational safety and health, and both everyday and crisis communications.

These measures reflect the emphasis placed on worker safety by the company and are intended to reduce stress for its employees, who can be reassured that their safety is a top priority for the company.

## Results achieved

The results below are approximations extrapolated from the submitted example.

- Sick leave has been reduced from around 2,000 days in 2006 to around 500 in 2015.
- The number of days of sick leave caused by accidents was almost zero in 2015.
- Employee uptake of medical screening has increased: on the company's Health Day in 2016, around 225 employees used the free medical screening provided by the company, compared with only around 100 employees in 2010.
- The number of days of holiday subsidy used by employees has almost doubled over the past decade, from around 600 in 2006 to around 1,200 in 2016.

*Rather than consider the older generation of workers a source of risk, the company aims to acknowledge their expertise and benefit from their experience.*





# Maintaining and improving work ability and retaining workers in manufacturing



Zumtobel Group AG

Austria

[www.zumtobelgroup.com](http://www.zumtobelgroup.com)

## The issue

The Zumtobel Group is a manufacturer of lighting and lighting management systems. Like many companies, Zumtobel recognises that it needs to consider the issues arising from the ageing of its workforce. Following an analysis of the age structure of its workforce, the 'Health and Age Department' developed a comprehensive concept for health management targeting work ability and retention of younger and older age groups.

## Action taken

Zumtobel established a new Health and Age Department specifically to investigate and manage challenges associated with the ageing of its workforce through comprehensive analyses and solutions to improve company policies and practice.

An initial evaluation found that the largest group of employees in the company was in the 40-49 age range. The work ability assessment found that the work ability of 25 % of employees was either critical or only modest. In addition, Zumtobel had very few employees aged over 62.



The new department sought solutions for the following issues:

- How can the work ability of the largest group of employees (40-49 years) be maintained and improved?
- How can the company keep young workers?
- How can the company retain older employees (50-59 years) for longer?

To address these issues, the department planned and implemented changes to its policies and practices aimed at ensuring that employees were both physically able to continue working and willing to remain in the workforce for longer. It required management commitment, with the main goal being maintaining work ability, improving well-being for everyone through work organisation that enables healthy and active ageing, including skills management, training and coaching. The six areas requiring action identified by the department included:

- statutory workplace safety — ergonomic changes were made to workstations to ensure that workspaces were age appropriate;
- presence management — preventive and corrective support was introduced;
- workplace health promotion — employees were encouraged to exercise and this was supported by investing in electric bicycles to lease to employees, providing yoga classes and running a series of talks on fitness for work;
- leadership style and behaviour — training was introduced for team leaders that emphasised employee well-being, appreciation and recognition;
- occupational reintegration management — a procedure for the return to work of staff after long periods of absence was established, supporting staff through the transition back to work; and
- generation management — measures were taken to remove any stigma from the term 'ageing' within the company, and the benefits of cooperation between young and old were emphasised.



## Results achieved

- All changes made to company practice were based on a comprehensive analysis by the Health and Age Department, ensuring that they were efficient and based on the company's real needs.
- Eight employees have been successfully reintegrated to the company since 2015 following extended periods of absence, in most cases following treatment for mental illness or cancer.
- Return-to-work meetings were introduced after periods of sickness to identify measures that the company could take to prevent further absences.
- Goals for optimum company-wide demographic development were defined for the business year 2016/17 and are currently being implemented.

*The measures aimed to ensure that employees were both physically able to continue working and willing to remain in the workforce for longer.*

# Management and miners working together to reduce early retirement



Rudnik

Serbia

[www.contangorudnik.co.rs](http://www.contangorudnik.co.rs)

## The issue

Rudnik is a privately owned mining company that specialises in the production and processing of lead, zinc and copper ores. Upon privatisation in 2004, the company recognised that its safety and health management systems were inadequate, there was a lack of procedures for occupational safety and health, a lack of safety and health management, equipment was outdated and staff were insufficiently trained and lacked motivation, resulting in sickness, injuries and early retirement. The early retirement of highly skilled workers aged 45-50 was resulting in a further decrease in the level of skills and experience of the workforce. There were also concerns about the work ability of some older staff in their current roles. The company recognised the need to retain workers.

## Action taken

Rudnik completely overhauled safety and health practices in the mine. To tackle the loss of skills resulting from early retirement, Rudnik employed 30 experienced professional miners from a neighbouring mine to train new employees and pass on their knowledge and experience of good safety and health practice in a mining setting. In addition, the company established an informal knowledge-sharing agreement with another mine operating in the region, widening the breadth of experience their employees could benefit from.

A modern occupational safety and health system that complied with national guidelines was introduced, along with the provision of appropriate personal protective equipment. Occupational safety and health measures were introduced for all, with procedures and permanent improvements, including continuous training and regular risk assessment. A strong link between the company and the competent state authorities was established, ensuring

that Rudnik receives ongoing suggestions for improving its safety and health practices. A trade union and an occupational safety and health committee were also established to ensure that employees' opinions on safety and health matters would be heard.

In addition to bringing conditions in the mine into line with best practice guidelines, Rudnik also wanted to invest in its employees to ensure their continued safety and health and, where possible, to reduce early retirement. Rudnik has implemented a voluntary insurance policy to cover occupational injuries and illnesses. The company created a health-monitoring programme and performs regular medical screening for all workers. In addition, Rudnik has an agreement with a designated medical provider to manage occupational injuries and illnesses.

Finally, Rudnik also marks Serbian Miners' Day and, with the participation of the local authorities and the media, uses it to raise awareness of the importance of occupational safety and health in the mining sector.





## Results achieved

- A training system for miners was developed.
- Occupational injuries have decreased significantly and no instances of occupational illness have been reported since privatisation.
- Since implementation of the interventions, age at retirement has increased.
- Implementation of safety and health practices has increased the attractiveness of the company as a workplace, with the rate of staff turnover decreasing as a result.

*A strong link between the company and the competent state authorities was established, ensuring that Rudnik receives ongoing suggestions for improving its safety and health practice.*

# Helping to ensure that construction workers reach retirement in good health



Lujatalo Oy

Finland

[www.lujatalo.fi](http://www.lujatalo.fi)

## The issue

Lujatalo is a family-owned construction company, specialising in renovation work and energy-efficient construction. About half of Lujatalo's workers are aged over 45. Because of the physically demanding nature of construction work, continuing careers until the official retirement age is often challenging. Construction workers typically suffer from musculoskeletal problems, but supervisory work is also associated with an increased mental workload and higher stress levels.

## Action taken

The company decided that measures to improve the sustainability of working life for all workers were needed. An early-intervention model with follow-up actions for those with reduced work ability was adopted. The interventions are carried out in cooperation with foremen, occupational health services and insurance companies, under the lead of the company's head of health and well-being.

Vocational rehabilitation is provided by Lujatalo, including work trials and retraining, e.g. retraining carpenters with long experience to become foremen. Changing tasks or work content enables workers to continue their careers until they receive their old-age pension. Of those workers facing early retirement from a physically demanding role, it is estimated that up to two thirds could be retained in the workplace through vocational rehabilitation.

Ideas for easing the burden of construction work and improving safety are gathered in the Lujavire databank. This electronic ergonomics databank will be made accessible to all employees via a smartphone app.

Safety observations are collected with the Safety-App, which enables photos to be taken of observations to illustrate any shortcomings and is also particularly useful for foreign workers who may not speak Finnish. In addition, reporting has been incentivised by the company, with monthly rewards for reporters in the form of cinema tickets.



Lujatalo also promotes safety during the commute to work by subsidising the cost of studded bicycle tyres for employees who cycle to work, an initiative that simultaneously encourages physical activity.

Workers whose jobs put them under mental strain are supported and monitored, e.g. with Firstbeat Lifestyle Assessment measurements, which help employees to recognise stress and identify areas for improvement (physical activity, nutrition, sleep).



## Results achieved

- Lost-time injuries fell from 116 to 13.9 (per million working hours) between 2005 and 2015.
- The number of serious accidents that result in more than 30 days' absence has dropped to one or two per year, with the company aiming to reduce this to zero by 2020.
- Vocational rehabilitation, typically through retraining, has greatly reduced the costs associated with early retirement.
- A culture of prevention has developed, one sign of which is that the number of safety observations grew from 18 in 2010 to 1,425 in 2015, partly thanks to the development of the Safety-App.

*Vocational rehabilitation can help employees in demanding jobs to avoid early retirement.*

# Run Your Health — empowering employees of all ages to take action for their health



SAP SE

(Local example SAP Netherlands)

[www.sap.com](http://www.sap.com)



## The issue

SAP SE is a leading global independent software manufacturer. As in the software sector in general, SAP employees face a number of risks to a sustainable working life, such as stress, due to the fast-paced changes in the technology industry, and physical health issues arising from sedentary desk-based work. These can result in musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and other health problems, in addition to reduced job satisfaction and poor work-life balance.

## Action taken

SAP takes a holistic and proactive approach in addressing these issues. A good example comes from SAP Netherlands: a year-long programme called Run Your Health was introduced to raise awareness of the risks of occupational inactivity, encourage behavioural changes to improve long-term health and foster a healthy workplace culture through strong leadership.

At the launch of the programme, tools and equipment were introduced into offices to encourage employees to move more frequently throughout the day, and bio-feedback trackers were provided to participants. In addition, with the aim of reducing the risks of MSDs, ergonomic improvements were made to workspaces, e.g. height-adjustable desks, tall desks for 'standing meetings' and other exercise equipment.

Poster campaigns were used to remind employees to move regularly and exercise throughout the working day to combat inactivity and promote simple behavioural changes, such as taking the stairs instead of the lift. Workshops on a variety of topics — including nutrition, stress and sleep — were provided to explain the impact of overall health. Fun health challenges, with small incentives, took place throughout the year to keep employees engaged in the campaign.



To complement the location-wide Run Your Health programme, SAP also took an individual approach, offering employees personal health counselling services to support them in making changes for a healthier lifestyle. The company also improved its return-to-work programme so that it specifically addresses the risks of sedentary work habits on long-term health.



## Results achieved

- Over 250 employees voluntarily participated in the programme, representing 50 % of the workforce.
- All participants reported a positive change in behaviour and mind-set.
- All participants reported improved understanding of the long-term health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle.
- All participants reported improved understanding of the connection between good health and a sustainable working life.
- Participants reported:
  - a 100 % increase in regular exercise
  - a 30 % increase in the number of steps recorded per month
  - a 56 % reduction in sedentary time.
- A follow-on programme for 2017, Run Your Balance, is planned, which will focus on work-life balance and happiness.

*Tools and equipment such as bio-feedback trackers were introduced into offices to encourage workers to become less sedentary.*



# Optima project — training in health, fitness and mental resilience for public safety workers

COMMENDED

Service Facility for the Ministry of the Interior

Czech Republic

[www.zsmv.cz/optima](http://www.zsmv.cz/optima)

## The issue

The work of police officers, fire fighters and other members of public safety organisations is physically and mentally demanding. The Optima project, implemented by the service facility for the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, raises awareness of the importance of caring for one's health. It offers training on stress management techniques and other means of increasing physical and mental resilience. The project targets the 70,000 members and employees, of all ages, of the Czech Republic's public safety organisations.



## Action taken

The Optima project began to operate roughly 3 years ago. Its methodical implementation is ongoing, in the form of practical training programmes, 2-week residential rehabilitation courses and support for lifelong education.

In addition to increasing members' interest in improving their health, fitness and mental stability, the educational activities focus on effective training procedures in the areas of:

- correct movement habits to reduce the risk of injury and stress and increase performance;
- relaxation;
- comprehensive fitness training;
- stress management;
- physical exercise to prevent back, shoulder, neck, knee and hip pain;
- prevention of injuries and support for the immune system;
- functional performance and resilience in real-world situations;
- better quality sleep;
- improved ability to concentrate;
- nutrition; and
- stress management in extreme situations.

In cooperation with the health insurance company of the Ministry of the Interior and the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Charles University, an educational DVD was produced, entitled *Recovery and Compensatory Exercises for Members of Public Safety Organisations*. At present, other videos and methodological materials are being prepared.

A key tool is the Optima test, which assesses physical condition, stress levels and motor skills by measuring heart rate variability and the electrical activity of the brain using the latest technology. This adds value to the training process using bio-feedback.

The success of the project has led to the decision to include the methodology in the basic training of all security forces of the Ministry of the Interior.



## Results achieved

- A change in strategy with regard to the issue of health, fitness and mental resilience in a department of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Implementation of more than 100 educational programmes with more than 1,500 trained participants; excellent feedback has been received from members.
- A demonstrable increase in members' interest in the issue of caring for their own health, fitness and mental resilience.
- The pilot Optima test has shown very positive preliminary results.
- An instructional DVD, entitled *Recovery and Compensatory Exercises for Members of Public Safety Organisations*, has been distributed.

*The project treats the individual holistically, emphasising the connection between body and mind.*

# Encouraging the use of assistive devices in healthcare

COMMENDED

Region Midtjylland (Central Denmark Region)

Denmark

[www.rm.dk/om-os/english/](http://www.rm.dk/om-os/english/)

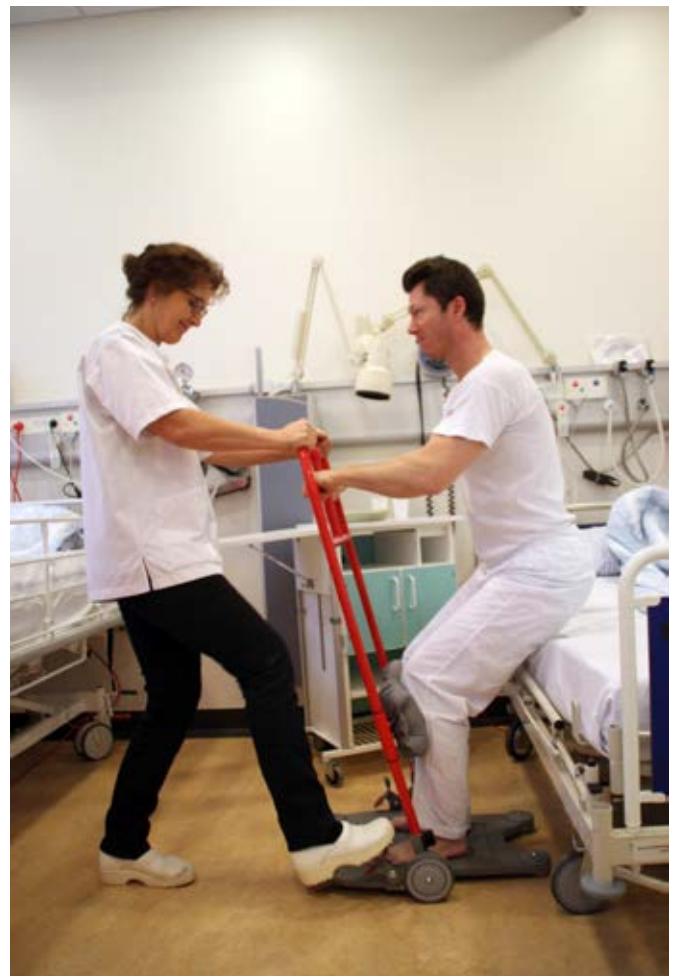
## The issue

The Central Denmark Region is an administrative unit in Denmark with responsibility in the first place for healthcare, including responsibility for hospital services. Transfer and care tasks performed by nurses and care assistants are a source of injury risk and can often result in early exit from the labour market. The use of assistive devices can reduce the risk of injury by up to 40 %; however, a survey by the Danish National Research Centre for the Working Environment found that only 30 % of care givers surveyed used transfer aids. These figures made clear the need to encourage the use of transfer aids to protect workers' safety and health.

## Action taken

As part of the initiative in the area of patient transfer, the Central Denmark Region developed a website called Transfer Portal, which is updated continuously. The website contains more than 30 educational videos on the most common types of patient transfer for patients with varying degrees of self-reliance. The videos focus on the transfer aids identified by workers as most useful. An e-learning course was also created and tested by employees. It has been important to adapt the course to the specific needs of each department and individual. This has been achieved through focusing on the types of transfers most often performed by the employee.

The region recognised that the ready availability of transfer aids would be critical to their successful use in everyday practice. The regional budget for assistive devices has been increased accordingly and assistive device technology has been reorganised to optimise procurement, logistics and operations. Regional projects have addressed the specific transfer needs of a variety of hospitals, involving patient transfer supervisors and employees in the development and implementation of department-specific action plans. In addition, design guides are now published regularly in the region, specifying building requirements for construction and conversion projects, such as for bathrooms, scanner rooms, bedrooms and operating rooms, so that there is room for storing assistive devices and space to perform patient transfers.



A holistic approach was taken: efforts were coordinated across the region and a regional knowledge transfer network was established between hospitals. Cooperation between regional managers and regular network meetings allows the development of strategic and practical interventions and ensures continuous improvement.



Photographer: Helle Brandstrup Larsen

## Results achieved

- The number of accidents decreased by 31 % between 2011 and 2015.
- The cost associated with transfer-related accidents decreased by 52 %, from DKK 4.8 million to DKK 2.3 million during the same period.
- Sickness absence as a result of transfer-related accidents decreased by 56 % between 2013 and 2015.
- Absence due to transfer-related accidents as a proportion of overall sickness absence decreased from 20 % to 10 % during the same period.

*The Central Denmark Region has implemented targeted efforts to promote the use of assistive devices for patient transfer.*

# Reducing workplace risks to employees aged over 50

COMMENDED

Tarkett S.p.A.

Italy

[www.tarkett.com](http://www.tarkett.com)

## The issue

Tarkett is an Italian producer of natural linoleum flooring. Tarkett reports that 34 % of the company's employees working in machine operation roles and offices are aged over 50. The majority of illnesses are suffered by this age group. The company has concerns about cardiovascular health problems in employees due to overexertion, surges in temperature, musculoskeletal disorders, loss of strength, reduced eyesight and sharpness of vision and falls.

## Action taken

The actions taken by Tarkett were comprehensive and inclusive and started with risk assessment with the aim of reducing workplace risks. The management team, the company doctor and staff safety representatives were all included in the planning and implementation of new safety measures. When undertaking general risk assessment, Tarkett noted that additional preventive measures were required for staff aged over 50.

Information sessions on specific risk factors, organised by the Prevention and Protection Department, are held every 4 years for all employees. It was decided to increase the frequency of these sessions to every 2 years for employees aged over 50.

Furthermore, more robust operational safety checks were instituted by Tarkett. The company increased the frequency of on-site checks to weekly for older employees' workstations and fortnightly for those of younger employees. Changes made as a result of these checks include reducing physical workload by purchasing a portable electric hoist, and the purchase of more ergonomic equipment, e.g. standard toolboxes have been replaced by tool trolleys and a hydraulic platform for lifting material has been installed, thus reducing strain on all employees.

Other steps to reduce strain and improve comfort include the upgrading of items of personal protective equipment (PPE), as more comfortable PPE can make work less strenuous. The PPE was upgraded and the old equipment replaced with items that provide the same or greater protection but are considered more comfortable by employees.



As for the health protocol, standard health checks are carried out regularly for all employees by the company doctor. To take into account the specific needs of older employees, the company doctor, working with the Prevention and Protection Department, added extra items to the health checks for workers aged over 50. These extra checks include an annual assessment of motor skills, muscle elasticity and prostate-specific antigen — a biomarker that is often elevated in prostate cancer — in addition to routine blood tests. Cardiological assessments, eye examinations and psychometric tests are carried out biannually.



Older employees' potential need for more rest than younger employees has been recognised by the company; employees aged over 50 years are allowed to take longer and more frequent rest breaks when necessary. Employees can also request a change of workstation, temporarily or on an open-ended basis, to allow physical or mental recovery.

*The management team, the company doctor and staff safety representatives were all included in the planning and implementation of new safety measures.*

## Results achieved

- There has been an 80 % reduction in the risk index relating to tasks carried out by workers aged over 50.
- There has not been a single accident involving an employee aged over 50 since 2010.
- In 2016, 80 measures for improving the workplace were identified.
- All employees aged over 50 received the new, more extensive, medical examination in 2016.

# An integrated management system for an ageing workforce in heavy industry

COMMENDED

Vassiliko Cement Works PLC

Cyprus

[vassiliko.com](http://vassiliko.com)

## The issue

Vassiliko Cement Works produces clinker and cement and operates several quarries. As is common in physically demanding industries, the ageing of the workforce at Vassiliko presents a significant challenge to the company. Employees aged 50-64 constitute 34 % of Vassiliko's workforce. Older workers in heavy industry are at risk of early retirement and disability if the work environment and work demands are not adapted to their changing capacities.

## Action taken

The company carried out a risk assessment process specifically considering the risks faced by older employees. Vassiliko recognised that older workers are particularly vulnerable to the risks posed by shift work and heavy workloads. To reduce the risks, the company increased the number of shifts from four to five by employing 15 new workers, allowing employees longer rest periods between shifts. Ergonomic improvements to the work environment were made, including the installation of two new lifts to reduce physical strain and the risks of musculoskeletal disorders. The company also carried out a full renovation of its offices, applying ergonomic principles to improve the work environment.

Vassiliko provides medical examinations for its personnel. In cooperation with occupational healthcare, electronic medical records were created for all personnel. This allowed certificates of work sustainability to be created for each employee, enabling the organisation to determine the tasks a worker is able to perform and the measures that would further improve working conditions. In cases in which a worker is not able to carry out the same job because of health problems, the company supports

redeployment. The decision to move a worker to a different job is agreed between the worker, the occupational doctor and the management. The company also installed an on-site first aid facility and employed a nurse to staff it during core working hours. Two defibrillators were purchased and 42 employees were trained to use them and to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

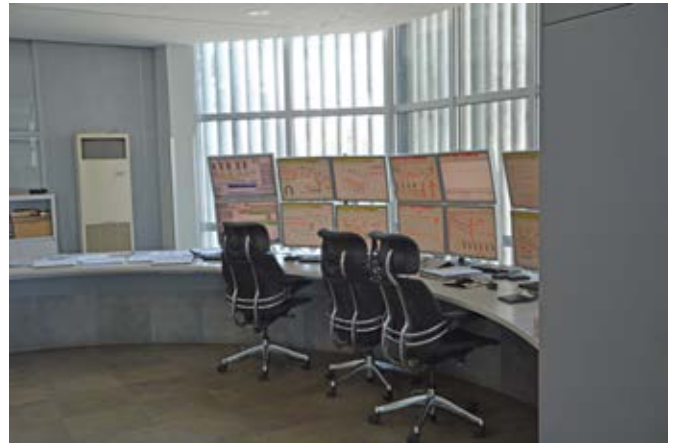
Furthermore, Vassiliko ran a culture change programme, creating teams made up of employees of varying ages and backgrounds and at different levels in the company; the aim was to promote team spirit and integration, as well as cooperation between older and younger employees. The company also started training programmes aimed at older employees, covering accident prevention and stress management, as well as new technology. To protect employees' mental health, sessions with a psychiatrist on the topic of stress and how to deal with it were held.



## Results achieved

- Work performance increased across all age groups.
- Measures to improve the work environment resulted in better job satisfaction for employees.
- A better work-life balance was achieved by creating a fifth shift.
- Over 90 employees took part in the sessions with the psychiatrist, receiving advice on managing stress.

*Vassiliko carried out a risk assessment process specifically considering the risks faced by older employees.*





# Reducing the risks posed by shift work for more sustainable working lives

COMMENDED

Loders Croklaan

Netherlands

[ioiloders.com](http://ioiloders.com)

## The issue

Loders Croklaan, a supplier of edible oils, with 450 employees, is a company with an ageing workforce. The nature of the work is physically demanding. The company operates 24 hours a day, and so shift work is required. These factors, together with an ageing workforce, present challenges for the company in terms of ensuring sustainable working lives.

## Action taken

Loders Croklaan felt that the most important change that needed to be made was to increase employees' engagement in managing safety and health. A bottom-up approach was taken: a steering group was set up comprising employees from all sections of the organisation, management representatives, human resources and the works council and labour union representatives in order to compile a project plan that would be supported, and engaged with, by everyone in the organisation.

Workshops held and questionnaire completed by employees showed that the three main areas in need of improvement were shift work, healthy lifestyle and sustainable employability. Three teams were created to each work on one topic.

As a result of the recommendations made by the improvement team on shift work, part-time work was identified as a need and job sharing was introduced. This allows employees to work part-time, giving them longer recovery periods between shifts. Awareness was raised and information provided to employees on the opportunities for part-time retirement.

Internal traineeship was introduced, and a series of short films was made about each department to demonstrate the types of tasks performed there. Employees can apply for internal traineeships to acquire knowledge in other areas and to gain the necessary skills to change jobs within the company.

To encourage employees to make positive changes to their lifestyles, a calendar of events was developed, featuring activities related to nutrition, relaxation and exercise. The company now provides access to a diverse range of activities, including cycling tours, running training, swimming and t'ai chi. A workshop on nutrition was held, free fruit was provided and information leaflets were distributed to raise awareness of the importance of a healthy diet.





## Results achieved

- The improvement teams established at the beginning of the project continued their work independently after the end of the trial period.
- The implementation of a job-sharing system to mitigate the risks involved in shift work was positively received by employees.
- Opportunities were provided for internal training to gain knowledge of other areas of work and for moving to other departments.
- There was a high level of employee involvement in and awareness of the process, and employees have taken ownership, while the company has an encouraging/facilitating role.
- Various communication channels were used: workshops, meetings, leaflets.
- Sustainable employment has become integrated into everyday practice at Loders Croklaan and features on the agenda of management meetings.

*Employee engagement: employees are the source of inspiration for the approach and the company gives them the opportunity to put their ideas about sustainable employability into practice.*

# Workplace mental and physical health promotion in a police force

COMMENDED

Police Directorate Murska Sobota

Slovenia

[www.policija.si](http://www.policija.si)

## The issue

The Police Directorate Murska Sobota is one of eight autonomous regional police directorates in Slovenia. The nature of the work undertaken by police officers is physically and emotionally demanding; therefore, it is important to ensure that the physical and mental well-being of employees is maintained, thus making officers' working lives more sustainable. The age structure analysis of the Police Directorate revealed that 60 % of employees were aged over 40, with the average age in 2015 being 44.

## Action taken

The directorate established a working group made up of representatives in various positions within the organisation focusing on the development of measures for the promotion and improvement of mental and physical health in the workplace. The working group also included a member of the National Institute of Public Health and the workers' representative for occupational safety and health, and it also kept the two major police trade unions up to date on the progress of the project.

The project aimed to make changes at the organisation's policy level and also at the workplace level to create a supportive environment and ensure proper working conditions, and it introduced a number of workplace health promotion measures. The project encouraged the participation of employees of all ages in the initiatives. The working group focused on risk assessment, identifying hazards and establishing measures that could be taken to reduce the risks. Preventive medical screening, health assessment and a stress questionnaire were used in this analysis. The working group aimed to ensure that appropriate jobs were available for employees with specific needs, e.g. pregnant women, older officers, workers with chronic illnesses and employees with disabilities.



As part of the projects, workshops were held on a number of subjects, including promoting healthy lifestyle choices, stress management, strengthening relationships in the workplace, increasing physical activity levels, raising awareness of alcohol and tobacco misuse, recognition of workplace bullying, and occupational exposure to infectious diseases.

## Results achieved

- The active and holistic approach taken by the directorate has created employee satisfaction.
- Sickness absence decreased following the intervention.
- Information points raising awareness of healthy eating and exercise were established in the workplace, and material on lifestyle choices was added to the organisation's intranet page.
- The workshops were well received by employees.
- The interventions to promote physical fitness, including strength training, recreational hiking, a celebration of World Health Day and cooking competitions, have proved successful.

*The project aimed to make changes at policy level and encourage the participation of employees of all ages.*



# Moving towards a better work–life balance in the chemical manufacturing sector

COMMENDED

Duslo, a.s.

Slovakia

[www.duslo.sk](http://www.duslo.sk)

## The issue

Duslo is a chemical company that manufactures organic and inorganic chemical compounds. In a working environment where hazardous chemicals and high temperatures are common, human error can have serious consequences, so safety and health in the workplace are a primary concern for the company. The average Duslo employee is aged over 45 years. The company recognises the wealth of experience these older employees possess, but also acknowledges the increased risks associated with older workers, including the higher occurrence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and greater predisposition to occupational injury.

## Action taken

Duslo undertook extensive research to identify the areas that employees were concerned about and used the information gathered to develop an employee care programme and implement appropriate measures to reduce occupational risks and improve work performance.

Awareness of the programme was raised using meetings, the company intranet, notice boards and the company magazine.

To prevent MSDs, annual ergonomic evaluations are carried out, and ergonomic equipment is provided to the employees. 'Spine seminars' were organised, focusing on correct sitting posture, and individual and group exercise led by a therapist was offered to the staff, including rehabilitation sessions in the swimming pool, sauna and whirlpool.

Professional lectures have been organised on healthy eating, and free dietary supplements have been provided to employees. Intergenerational contact was promoted through knowledge-sharing initiatives. Older employees shared their experiences of production technology and specific problems and solutions with younger employees; younger employees then shared their expertise with newer technology such as IT programs with older employees, making these meetings mutually beneficial exchanges.





To encourage mixing among employees of all ages and to promote physical and mental health, Duslo also encouraged employees to participate in sporting activities. Several activities were organised, including a football tournament, a bowling league and a running club. In addition, an employee day and a sports day were established as annual events for workers and their families, to create a better atmosphere by enabling employees to build relationships with colleagues throughout the company and to improve work-life balance.

Several measures to reduce psychosocial risks were also introduced. Seminars on stress and how to deal with it were held, and free, discreet consultations with a psychologist were offered to all employees. A particularly innovative action on Duslo's part was the establishment of a care centre for workers' elderly relatives. Employees with caring responsibilities could bring relatives to the centre while they were at work, safe in the knowledge that their relatives were receiving professional care with medical supervision.

## Results achieved

- A reduction in sick leave as a result of stress, depression and other mental health issues has been reported.
- Since beginning the project, productivity and customer satisfaction levels have both increased.
- Activities to build interpersonal relationships in the workplace have improved the working environment and increased the frequency of social events.
- Since the beginning of the project, employees have shown greater interest in physical activity and healthier lifestyle choices.

*A particularly innovative action on Duslo's part was the establishment of a care centre for workers' elderly relatives.*

# Lengthening careers through well-being at work

COMMENDED

## The Federation of Finnish Technology Industries

### Finland

[teknologiateollisuus.fi](http://teknologiateollisuus.fi)

#### The issue

The Federation of Finnish Technology Industries is an expert organisation of 100 people, representing the interests of Finnish technology companies. The organisation is facing the challenge of an ageing workforce, with the average employee aged 49. There is a need to maintain the current workforce, minimising early retirement where possible, and to promote knowledge transfer between older and younger employees. The organisation's occupational safety and health plan identified a number of factors contributing to mental strain, such as demanding tasks, high workload and lack of a work-life balance.



#### Action taken

A well-being at work group was established to tackle the issues identified as leading to mental or physical stress. The group, which comprises members of different personnel groups and the management team, leads the organisational development process. The work well-being index (scaled from 0 to 10) measured by personal radar survey is used to identify areas that require improvement. The dimensions of the survey are: health and functional capacity, competence, motivation, working conditions and management, work-life balance, and work ability.

All the survey results are shared within the organisation, and the process of brainstorming to improve the working environment includes all personnel. Key measures to improve well-being are recorded in an action plan, the progress of which is monitored by the management group, which reports on it monthly to the board of directors.

An area that was identified by the survey as requiring action was the working time arrangements of employees aged 35-44. Based on the results of the survey, for this group, working time arrangements were a key factor affecting work ability. In response to this, the organisation implemented a flexible working system that allows employees to work from home in certain situations. Overall, employees' work-life balance and well-being at work scores increased after the flexible working arrangements were introduced.

Inconsistent leadership was identified as an issue that could negatively impact on well-being at work, and consequently a programme for the systematic development of leaders was introduced. A supervisor forum, which meets six times a year to engage in development activities, was established. The process is based on the development cycle of leadership: definition of good leadership, feedback, and development follow-up. 360-degree feedback, which is repeated twice a year, is used to identify strengths and areas for development.



## Results achieved

- All aspects of the organisation have been changed to improve employee well-being, including alterations to occupational safety and health policies and activities, personnel development processes and organisational leadership.
- The work well-being index score increased from 7.74 in 2013 to 8.51 in 2016.
- Survey scores on employees' ability to continue working until retirement have also increased, from 8.01 in 2013 to 9.04 in 2016.
- Employees aged 35-44 scored their satisfaction with their ability to balance their work and home lives at 5.83 in 2013; this increased substantially, to 8.35, in 2016, following the introduction and expansion of flexible working arrangements that allow employees to work from home.
- Overall satisfaction with management increased from 7.81 in 2015 to 8.25 only 6 months later in 2016.

*Employees have reported that they have a better work-life balance since the introduction of flexible working arrangements.*



# Physiotherapy programme to prevent strain injuries at work and to deliver measurable change across partner companies

COMMENDED

Toyota Material Handling

Belgium

[www.toyota-forklifts.eu](http://www.toyota-forklifts.eu)



## The issue

Across Europe, Toyota Material Handling employs over 4,500 mobile technicians — approximately 50% of the workforce – to service its customers' material handling equipment. Engaging with the Healthy Workplaces for All Ages Campaign, and consulting stakeholders, the company identified an ageing workforce as a material issue on which stakeholders expect transparency.

Following a recent survey, Toyota Material Handling recognised that 15 % of its workforce in Europe is over 50 years old. In the company' factories, automation has eliminated heavy lifting. However, for mobile technicians working on trucks at customers' sites, it is not possible to automate manual handling operations to the same extent. Toyota Material Handling recognised that overstrain is the main cause of injuries among service technicians.

## Action taken

With increasing retirement ages, the company understood that it needs to reinforce measures to help all employees adopt healthy working practices in order to retain its highly skilled and experienced workforce. Toyota Material Handling took action to prevent strain injuries at work: following an in-depth analysis of accident data, as well as consultations with service technicians, poor manual handling practices were identified as the primary cause of injuries; therefore, the company developed a physiotherapy programme.

The first stage focused only on service technicians who had suffered an injury through overstrain. The external physiotherapist delivered an introductory training session combining theory and practical exercises. This was recorded and shared on the internal e-learning tool, where





it was accessible to everyone in the company. Following its success with workers who had been injured, the programme was then rolled out to all employees, with a refresher course delivered to recipients 3 years after their initial training.

With the support of this business case, other Toyota entities, in the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Sweden, have since renewed or initiated similar physiotherapy programmes. This business case was also shared externally through EU-OSHA's good practice exchange events, organised by Toyota Material Handling and fellow official campaign partners Seat, Siemens and Lego across the EU.

## Results achieved

- In the last 2 years, accidents through overstrain have more than halved.
- The proportion of employees who took leave of absence as a result of an accident decreased from 20 % in 2006 to 5 % in 2014.
- Since undergoing treatment with the physiotherapist, none of the employees who experienced overstrain injuries has experienced a similar injury.
- The absenteeism costs avoided are equal to four times the investment cost of 337 physiotherapy sessions. This has also led to a reduction in the company's insurance premiums.
- Savings are reinvested in health and safety measures for employees in Spain. Being struck by an object was identified as the second most significant cause of accidents; the company is now analysing and improving the tools and equipment handled by its mobile service technicians.

*Conversations with service technicians helped to identify poor manual handling practices as the primary cause of injuries.*

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*EU-OSHA also runs the 2-year-long Healthy Workplaces Campaigns, backed by the EU institutions and the European social partners, and coordinated at the national level by the Agency's network of focal points. The 2016-17 campaign, Healthy Workplaces for All Ages, aims to help employers to address the challenges of an ageing workforce and raise awareness of the importance of sustainable work throughout employees' working lives.*

The **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)** contributes to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work. Set up by the European Union in 1994 and based in Bilbao, Spain, the Agency researches, develops and distributes reliable, balanced and impartial safety and health information, networking with organisations across Europe to improve working conditions.

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