

## Older Employees in Sustainable Human Resources Management

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*Abstract: Europe's population is aging and also in Slovakia and is therefore expected that this category of workers will increasingly numerous and labour market measures due to the aging of the workforce must take into account these developments. Generally for older workers considered employees over 50 years. In practice there are several problems in the employment of older people, deficiencies in the management of these human resources, unequal treatment and other risks in connection with work. The corporate governance is necessary to take into account the current problems of older employees, their job qualifications, specific problems of employment and labour risks and a proposal of measures for improving the situation of older workers in terms of the management company and from the perspective of the state. Post aims to identify and analyse some aspects of the protection of older employees in the sustainable management of human resources in the company and propose measures to improve the situation in this area.*

*Keywords: age, employee, risk, work, management, sustainability*

### 1 Introduction

The current civilization transformation is called the third wave (first wave - the agrarian revolution, the second wave - the Industrial Revolution), which proportionally exceeds the maturity of new technologies with high speed national borders and continents. It brings a number of positive as well as negative effects.

Relatively static world of work since the beginning of the 21st century in our country becoming becomes irretrievably past. Labour market changes and changes at work require a highly skilled workforce able to work with new information technology, to master new instruments and tools, workflows, use the new key competence. Professional careers in the contemporary world of work have a different course, direction and momentum. They are associated with the preferences values, the interests, abilities and needs of individuals and internal career development depends on what opportunities exist in reality and how it is able to utilize the possibilities of the world of work, labour market opportunities or create them yourself. In this context has the important role also the age. Work and employment have undergone considerable changes mainly in the past quarter century. The relationship between employers and employees has been weakened considerably, as mass layoffs; job and career switching have all become common occurrences. The implicit psychological contract tying workers to employers has weakened. As a result, workers today face a new and evolving mix of challenges and opportunities in the flexible economy. For some it brings new opportunities, for others it increases risks, unemployment and disrupt career development. Aging could be called as a process of involution changes in physical, psychological, social, labour and health areas. [11] According to the aging of population in Europe and also in Slovakia; labour market measures due to the aging of the workforce must take into account these developments. The Europe 2020 strategy is also aimed at increasing the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 years to 75%. In order to achieve this, European citizens will have to work longer. Development agencies working in the elderly is primarily influenced by changes in the timing of retirement. Strategy for health and safety at work in the Slovak Republic in 2020 also paid attention to the issue of older workers. Generally for older workers considered employees over 50 years 1 (for different purposes is a borderline age older workers otherwise specified, usually over 50 years, egg. In the field of occupational health and safety is considered to be an older employee of a natural person over the age of 45 or 55 years. According Čornavičova is called the natural aging gradually flowing continuous process of change governing body over time. Initially, the change occurs quietly but in old age the signs of aging accelerate. [6] Aging can be associated with a decrease in physical performance, reduced visual, auditory function, more frequent negative emotions and survival of burnout. [10,12,13] In summary one can distinguish biological aging - age-related human organs Mental aging - associated with changes in personality traits and cognitive abilities Social aging - related to the change of social status and life of the program. According to demographic forecasts, the rising proportion of the population aged over 55 in 2020 to 30% in 2050 to extend more than 45%. [15] Our paper is focused on the problems connected with older employees at work, their protection, risks and equal opportunities and draft some of measures for the managerial work.

## **2 Issue of equal treatment**

In the Slovak Republic it is of Equality in the Labour Code and the Anti-Discrimination Act.

### **2.1 Labour Code and the reality**

In Labour Code Article 1 establishes basics and principles in § 13 requires employers to comply with the principle of equal treatment for that specific rules are laid down in the Act. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and on amending and supplementing certain acts (Antidiscrimination Act) as amended. The results of a Eurobarometer survey in 2012 shows that, in general, is the most widespread form of discrimination in Slovakia is discrimination based on ethnic origin (56%), followed by discrimination arising from disability and sexual orientation (46%). In the EU, The most common reason discrimination age greater than 55 years (66%). [14] This survey can be further deduced that age discrimination in the workplace is the most commonly reported forms of age discrimination. The results show that approximately one of 20 people has personally experience with age discrimination in the workplace (6%) and other one of seven employers (15%) have witnessed such discrimination. It considers that older workers, employers do not perceive positive for important reason for leaving work market. It is interesting to note that in the selection of candidates with equal skills and is qualified by Slovaks criterion which penalizes the candidate most over age 55 years (62%). We must accept also the fact that older job seekers often apply for the wrong jobs. [4] Such mismatch may be reduced by job search assistance and intensified counselling. [5] One dimension of improving job search would be to discourage older workers from applying for jobs with deferred compensation and to help older workers find jobs with contemporaneous incentives. From the provisions of the Labour Code it indicates that the employer is in labour relations must treat their employees in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in employment and prohibits discrimination of employees according to the age.

### **2.2 Age and employees perception**

In relation to the age of Labour code protect young employees - employees under 15 years of age and children; older workers are not special group of employees like the young. For older workers can also in connection with § 8 paragraph. 1 point. b) of the Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services as amended considered an employee who is older than 50 years. Pursuant to that provision for disadvantaged jobseekers considered citizen over 50 years. [3] The age limit of older workers is not clear, however, and should be based upon the employment of personnel. Except of course work capacity is necessary to consider the mental condition of the employee whether they can adapt to change and it is necessary to

take into account the potential health problems. Such a border can be identified physical age; but the moment how long the employee subjectively feels proficient office regardless of his physical age; or objective findings health.

However, while older workers in general may be essentially as productive as younger workers, the variation in productivity levels may be higher for older than for younger workers.[9] Goebel and Zwick (2013) obtain evidence that age-productivity profiles depend on specific human resource measures for older employees. They find that the relative productivity contribution of older workers is higher if firms provide specific equipment, create age-specific jobs or implement mixed-age working teams. Working time reductions and specific training do not appear to be associated with a higher productivity of older workers. [7,8]

### **2.3 Anti - Discrimination Act**

In the Slovak Republic it is of Equality in the Labour Code and the Anti-Discrimination Act. Labour Code, Article 1 of the Basic Principles as well as in § 13 requires employers to comply with the principle of equal treatment. The employer's labour relations must treat their employees in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in employment and prohibits age discrimination against (among other things). Infringement of the principle of equal treatment would not work if the different treatment is justified by the nature of occupational activities or the circumstances under which such activities are carried out, if this ground constitutes a genuine and determining occupational requirement, provided that the objective is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate (Article 1 Basic principles of the Labour Code. [1, 2] Pursuant to the Anti-Discrimination Act respecting the principle of equal treatment consists prohibition of age discrimination. The principle of equal treatment in employment and similar legal relations are regulated in § 6-8 of the Act. The principle of equal treatment is applied under the aforementioned law only in connection with the rights of persons pursuant to special legislation, in particular:

- Access to employment, occupation, other gainful activities or functions, including requirements to recruitment and conditions and method of selection for employment,
- Of employment and conditions of work including remuneration, promotion and dismissal.
- Access to vocational training, advanced vocational training and participation in active labour market measures, including access to vocational guidance services and changing employment
- Membership and activity in an organization of workers, employers' organizations and organizations associating persons of certain professions, including the benefits that these organizations provide to their members.

In terms of occupational health and ensuring its safety is important for the demands of working activities that he carries out are appropriate to its operational

capacity and work capacity so as not to create an undue burden on any part of the human body, which could result in a risk or even injury. It is always necessary to consider specific person individually in the context of the work demands. It means to assess his competence in the relevant age in all the main functions of the human body with respect to the specific work to be performed, the requirements for its performance, the impact on working conditions and working environment.

### **3 Risk assessment of older workers at work**

With age are the differences between individuals deeper. In assessing risks should be considered work claims with respect to the performance capabilities of the individual and his health. As a result of the gap between individuals is necessary to adapt the workplace so as to address the needs arising from changes in functional capabilities based on the needs and status of each employee. Good design work conforms to all age groups with specific reference to older workers. Respect for the diversity of the workforce and its management in the workplace is now an important aspect relating to compliance with health and safety at work.

#### **3.1 Specifics od risks according to the age**

The issue of older workers and specific risk management with regard to the age of an employee is not in Slovakia is still at the required level. It is necessary to pay greater attention to the specific risks to older employees. Risk management of older workers need to be aware that a group of 50+ operate the same dangers and threats may be different but the likelihood of accidents and their consequences. In implementing corrective and preventive actions, it is necessary to identify the factors of working environment, identify potential problems, and identify factors increasing the likelihood of an adverse event. For the greatest risks of working environment for older workers can be considered:

- Unnatural working positions demanding position at work.
- Physical effort and manual handling of heavy loads.
- Time stress / work under pressure.
- Atypical working hours.
- Climatic conditions.
- Sensory stimuli by recognizing the sensory stimuli (light, sound, touch, heat).

It should be noted that even older employees are able to learn and acquire new job skills, unless we are given the opportunity and if you choose the appropriate methods of education. In terms of occupational health and safety it should be noted that although the older employee is meeting the demands of work, it may be the burden of the work at it subjectively higher than that of younger workers. Subjective response to the load in this case manifested in the form of greater stress

the body and especially on the longer-term exposure can have negative effects on health. [14,15]

### **3.2 Special rules for risk assessment**

According to the Act no. 124/2006 Coll. on health and safety at work, as amended, the employer is obliged to carry out the risk assessment of all work activities and an assessment of resources to eliminate the risk or reduce it to an acceptable level value. In the employment of older workers must be considered when assessing the risk into account in addition to potential resources generated by the equipment or the environment, and the possible reduction of work capacity due to decreased functional capacity. This can be a source of undue increased burden of the body, which can lead to health hazards, respectively it may threaten the safety and security of the technological process.

Some current legal standards directly take into account the age factor in health protection, for example. Government Regulation Nr. 281/2006 Coll. on the minimum safety and health requirements for the manual handling of loads, which sets out indicative weight values of loads depending on age and gender into account, moreover, the conditions of work; provides data for decision on tolerable burden on staff for the manual handling of loads. Annex 2 of the Government set out an indicative weight values both hands lifting and carrying of loads, the maximum weight of the load and the maximum daily mass for change for the men and women of different ages in the position of standing and with the favourable and unfavourable conditions lasting more than one hour per shift. Health Ministry Decree C.542 / 2007 Coll. on details of health protection against physical stress at work, mental workload and sensorial stress at work, which provides values of total physical activity with respect to gender and age range of 18-65 years. [3] The age range is divided into multiple groups, which take account of the effect of age on the physical function of the human capacity established permitted level of energy expenditure. Mental workload is assessed indirectly through the characteristics and working environment in terms of mental workload characteristics and subjective responses to employee workload.

### **3.3. Main psychosocial problems associated with the aging**

Functional capacity evaluation and assessment of work capacity / ability of the body due to age is the responsibility of occupational medicine in the field of physiology and psychology of work. Particularly serious and increasingly discussed becomes legally psychosocial risks. These are especially:

- Insecure employment contracts in relation to the instability of the labour market,
- Increased vulnerability of workers in the context of globalization (migration, relocation of production, broadcasting to work abroad),
- New forms of employment and new types of employment and contracts,
- Feelings of job insecurity and uncertainty about the failure of the employer,

- Long working hours,
- work intensification,
- slimming manufacturing and outsourcing,
- High emotional demands at work,
- Imbalance in work and personal life.

The risk assessment is necessary to take into account individual differences in functional ability, health and other aspects of diversity among employees, such as disability, gender, age, immigration status etc. Adaptation of the work of individual needs, skills and state of health should constitute a continuous and dynamic process over the life of man on the basis of appropriate risk assessment. This also includes the adaptation of work health status and needs of older workers. Age is one of the aspects of workforce diversity.

#### **4 Chosen research results**

In relatively well developed Žilina region took place in 2016 a survey questionnaire regarding equal treatment of employees by 236 respondents older than 55 years ( 109 workers mentally and physically 127). 15 % of them are met after 50 years with discrimination when looking for work. 17% of respondents met at work with discrimination in the scheduling of the training programs, 15% were directly designated for the enterprise as unpromising. The pay gap is 21% of the respondents encountered discrimination when extra rewards. 29% reported as impossible promotion. 37% of physically working didn't met with a tailored elimination of specific occupational risk in relation to age.

In the simulated selection of the staff students of management would preferred by the same conditions and qualification of applicants younger workers under the age of 40 years; among older workers (over 50 years) they appreciated the social and communication skills, experience and expertise. The flexibility of younger employees they considered to be the best advantage. Due to the robotics and automation industry in Slovakia in the next ten years we can expect that this will have an impact on employment, which may be more relevant to older employees in production. The administration in turn will affect the employment of older workers progressing digitization. It is necessary to consider by the creation of work teams and for the eventual redundant of employees benefits of older employees: a long-term experience, loyalty, less critical attitude, extensive personal and professional contacts, good knowledge of market competition, psychological maturity and reliability, responsibility, low turnover, favouring stable employment before building a career and a greater willingness to tolerate a certain restrictions on working conditions.

## **5 Measures to promoting active aging in the sustainable workplace**

Specific working conditions are determined at the enterprise level, so just steps from management can be considered as very important and directly affect work ability, functional capacity and culture of work. Improving of the aging problems at work is necessary according to the necessity to implement principles of sustainability in human resources management.

### **5.1 Daily management measures**

The daily management of the enterprise should take into account factors related to age, including working conditions and individual work tasks to all employees regardless of age could apply in the company in achieving its own objectives and goals of the enterprise. It is necessary to apply certain measures to support the working capacity of older employees; for example tools, equipment, technical and organizational conditions and the actual level of health and safety, improving working conditions and working environment (air quality and microclimate in the workplace etc.) Of course, employer has to reduce the risk of injury, to limit the manual transfer of loads and protect from harmful and stay updated by adverse factors at the workplace. Another measures are limitation of time pressure and implementation flexibility in working hours, improving the planning and the quality of work.

### **5.2 Measures in education**

In education, the need to focus particular attention on training in team skills, training quality and training to improve professional knowledge and skills. To maintain competence is constantly upgrading the skills and abilities. Training to work with different types of special training for employees give older workers the opportunity to strengthen their skills. They should take into account the changes in of the learning process according to the age. Learning strategies, educational conditions, the use of video material, rest and timetables for the acquisition of knowledge is between younger and older employees different. The most important platform for learning is also self - learning. Important is the access of managers: if they engage in lifelong learning and support it by providing training opportunities, one major obstacle to educate senior employees removed. Education is an important success factor of the active aging.

### **5.3 Motivation and communication**

Other measure is area of motivation, dialogue, values, attitudes and motivation. Some improvements are possible also in management and leadership skills. People



should feel that they can trust their employer; they expect support in challenging and difficult working situations. The dialogue between managers and employees should be a continuous process, not a one-off annual assessment interview. Employees will notice and appreciate fair treatment and zero tolerance of age discrimination. It is necessary to develop management and labour leaders, especially to improve communication, cooperation and participation, planning and the provision of feedback.

#### **5.4 Harmonization of work and private life**

We think that very important are also measures in the field of harmonization of work and private life. It should also be borne in mind that is ultimately responsible for their employee's values, attitudes and other personal factors. To focus their minds on the job, their internal opportunities and family matters, it is necessary to create a better, more sustainable balance of work and private life. We see great potential in using of flexible forms of employment.

### **Conclusions**

Aging is natural process in human life, but brings some problems into work career. Working conditions consist of work environment (physical, mental, social), work organization and working conditions, working time, work and community work tasks, as well as management. Research points to several shortcomings in the management of older workers; some of them could be eliminated by legislation more carefully, but the focus problem solving is based on enterprise management. Managers and supervisors play an important role because they have the power to organize and work practices individual workloads. All decisions and changes in work pass through their hands. They are also responsible for safety and health at work, including the assessment risks. In the risk assessment should be considered a functional individual differences skills and health personnel, inability to work, gender issues etc. workers and employees in all age groups are vulnerable to exposure to harmful work. Whereas the adaptation of work skills, abilities and health status individuals should be a continuous and dynamic process based on reasonable risk assessment, work adjustment health status and needs of older workers by not impose an unnecessary burden. Important are also measures that promote the health of employees, for example opportunities for recreation, reconditioning stays, rehabilitation and so on. It is possible to promote a healthy lifestyle in different ways e.g. promoting of healthy eating at the workplace and so on. Undertaking should be in the business the role and importance of active aging and to integrate it into the main objectives of enterprise policy and safety equipment; incorporate a program to promote active aging and working conditions of workers over 50. All internal corporate documents (work

rules, organizational regulations, collective agreement, etc.) need to be handled with regard to gender equality and active aging and the needs of older workers. Proper business policy in this area and conscious approach all subjects of human resource management can bring positive effects for employees, for the enterprise and also for the whole society.

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