

SYNTHESIS OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR

The national seminar was held on the 6th of October 2010 at ESADE premises in Barcelona. 8 out of 11 persons who confirmed their participation attended the seminar. Considering the special interest of social partners (mainly trade unions) in knowing the results of the pilot study, to which they contributed in the form of contacting companies for gathering data, these results remained in the focus of the seminar. The following topics were presented by Rebekka Vedina:

- Presentation of the project and taken actions;
- Presentation of the results of the national survey ELDERS (see Chapter 4), followed by a debate;
- Presentation of some results from Finland and UK;
- Presentation of the relevant results of the study among nurses conducted by IEL and those of the National Survey on Work Conditions conducted by The Spanish Institute of Health and Safety at Work (INSHT) (the latter part presented by Xavier Suriol).

Analysis of the latter large dataset, which is representative for Spain has shown the similar distribution of the data in focus, in particular, the level of burnout, stress and physical health state of the respondents. This allows us to conclude that the findings of the pilot study that in general, elder employees don't have a higher level of burnout and depression follow the general trends in the society. However, the specific connections of these states with certain change- and restructuring-related perceptions found in the pilot study and reported in the previous chapter, such as co-workers assistance and support and being well-informed, allow us to suggest that these factors will have an effect on the physical and mental state and perceptions of elder employees in the context of company restructuring on a larger scale.

The presentations were followed by debates, in which seminar participants raised following issues:

- Legal framework drawbacks – the obligatory retirement age. Yet, there are many well-educated persons, who continue working in consultancies or as volunteers.
- Low level of vocational training of most elder employees.
- The passive general attitude of elder workers towards life-long learning.
- The policies of training of elder employees that some companies had haven't been valued enough.
- Perception of work as a punishment, a load, something to escape from by many people. This may be changed by giving people a material and incentives for deep consideration, motivation to continue working.
- Yet, there are professions, where it is not possible to continue working after certain age. This bring us back to the question of (re)training.
- It should be considered that not all the results of the studies conducted before and during the economic crisis in Spain cannot be compared. The current situation on the labour market, when most people, including elder employees have a fear of losing jobs changes their perceptions and ways of dealing with the issues.
- It has also been agreed upon that notwithstanding many crises that Spain in general and companies in particular have had, there used to be present a respect for elder workers. Many companies had successful strategies in this respect.
- Yet, the change from industrial sector to service sector is especially difficult for elder employees who are used to work in industries.

Overall, it has been agreed upon that the issue is very topical and deserves to be examined further.

