



Active Ageing in the European Chemical Industry

A Survey of Age Management Practices
in the European Chemical Industry





The research for this survey was undertaken by TAEN in collaboration with ECEG, EMCEF and FECCIA. Tables, commentary and analysis by Chris Ball, Chief Executive, TAEN – The Age and Employment Network. Design: Nolte | Kommunikation

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Summary

THE SURVEY

The purpose of our survey was to assess the present state of play with regard to the adoption of age management policies in chemicals companies in Europe. It was also hoped that in due course the survey questionnaire itself may be developed to be used as a self assessment questionnaire for employers in the sector. A further aim of the project is that the process of completing the survey questionnaire and reading this report will contribute to raising awareness of demographic change and age management among employers and social partners. It should be stressed that while every effort has been made to adopt a scientific approach to the conduct of the survey, the small sample cannot be assumed to be statistically representative and demands caution in interpreting the findings with regard to the sector as a whole.

THE SAMPLE

There were 276 responses to the survey. There appears to have been a stronger response rate from the larger firms (though we are not able to

check this against a data base of the potential participants.) Such a skew could be expected to come from larger HR departments in the bigger organisations having more resources and time to respond or possibly, higher sensitivity to demographic change and workforce ageing issues.

The most noticeable imbalances in distribution of company sizes were from the Czech Republic, where the medium sized employers were most numerous (16 out of 20 responses were from medium sized companies), and Germany, where 20 out of the 39 respondents were from the largest companies.

VIEWS ON NEED TO MANAGE AGEING WORKFORCE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Overall, employers indicated a fairly high degree of awareness of the potential impact of demographic change. The survey offered participants a choice of four statements showing degrees of strategic recognition of the challenge demographic change is likely to present. The largest number of employers (45 per cent) opted for the statement, "There could be future problems from demographic change but we are clear about our future needs and will manage them." 25 per cent said that, "We have already made changes to protect our business from demographic risks." A minority (17 per cent) said that, "We want to respond to demographic change but are not sure what to do," while 13 per cent took the view that, "Demographic change is not likely to affect our company." It seems that on this evidence, our responding sample was well attuned to the challenges of the ageing workforce and the need to take action to respond to it. However, the sample may have overstated the level of employer awareness compared with the true position.

ADOPTION OF AGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Less than half (45 per cent) of all companies had adopted a strategy to respond to workforce ageing

and demographic change. Larger employers were more likely to have done so – 51 per cent of the largest companies compared with 39 per cent of the smallest. Only 27 per cent of employers reported that there was commitment to an age management strategy at board level (a figure that showed little variation by company size).

In less than a quarter of responding companies there was a named manager responsible for leading the age management strategy. (The likelihood of such an appointment was higher in the largest firms, with 34 reporting positively compared with 14 per cent in medium sized enterprises.) On these measures, it seems that strategically responding to workforce ageing is more likely in the larger companies.

Formal steps to ensure the engagement of senior, middle and line managers appeared less commonplace; 15 per cent of employers had briefed senior and middle managers on managing older workers while 12 per cent had briefed line managers on the same issues.

DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUES OF AGE MANAGEMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE WITH EMPLOYEES

Survey participants were questioned about forms of discussion with employees on age management and demographic change issues. Alternative routes offered included discussion with the works council, discussion under the provisions of a collective agreement dealing with age management and demographic change, and more general discussions with company managers including in briefings and seminars.

In 57 per cent of organisations there had been discussion with the works council or a comparable employee representative body. Discussions with a works council happened twice as commonly in the larger organisations as the smallest (70 per cent of the largest organisations and 34 per cent of the smallest held them.) 37 per cent of organisations had held discussions under the provision of a collective

agreement and whilst this was more commonly the case with the larger organisations (43 per cent), nearly a third of the smallest organisations did so too. 43 per cent of employers also held discussions with their workforces more generally, for example in employee discussions with managers.

It seems therefore that the concerns of employers (and presumably their chosen strategies to address them) were being actively shared with employees, through the mechanisms specified, at the time of the survey. The 37 per cent of employers holding discussions under a collective agreement dealing with age management and demographic change is interesting – the underlying facts might usefully be probed further.

FOCUS OF INTERVENTIONS

One feature in discussion about what constitutes good age management practice is the desired focus of interventions. (Interventions generally take the form of changes in terms and conditions or methods of working.) 45 per cent of employers favoured interventions aimed at all employees whilst 21 per cent preferred them aimed at older workers only and 17 per cent at workers of any age with specific needs relating to disabilities. There therefore seems a bias in outlook among our participants, towards age management as a general approach for all employees while a substantial minority favoured remedial approaches, correcting or compensating for age related needs and/or disabilities which have become apparent. This appears consistent with the broad consensus that in an ideal world interventions should be designed to benefit all workers rather than being aimed solely at a specific age cohort, though in many workplaces there may be a need for a balance of preventative and remedial interventions with the latter most likely to be aimed at older workers specifically.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF WORK AND WORKPLACE DESIGN

Our survey asked several questions to establish the level of priority given to designing work or the working environment so as to minimize the worker's

decline in working capacity through physical impairment arising from wear and tear, injury or the natural changes in the body over time. Most companies took the various physical aspects of work into consideration or went further, giving them high priority. A minority, generally up to 18 per cent (according to the issue) took the view that interventions were impracticable or had not given consideration as to whether they were needed.

■ Ergonomic issues

60 per cent of firms take ergonomic issues into consideration with nearly a quarter (23 per cent) giving them high priority.

■ Atmospheric control (heat, cold, damp, dust)

Most firms take atmospheric issues into consideration (55 per cent) with a further quarter giving them high priority. About 12 per cent believe it is not practicable to adjust the design of work or the workplace to account for the impact of atmospheric factors while approaching ten per cent report that the possibility is generally not considered.

■ Noise intensity

Most firms report taking noise intensity into consideration in relation to the design of work and the working environment, with a third of employers giving it high priority. Fewer firms – just over 5 per cent – take the view that it is not practicable to change work design or working conditions to take account of noise intensity issues.

■ Heavy lifting/ use of lifting gear

Over half of the employers state that they take heavy lifting issues into consideration while as few as 7 per cent believe that changes are not practicable and 4 per cent state that such issues are generally not considered.

■ Avoiding awkward postures

More than 20 per cent of respondents gave a high priority to the objective of designing jobs avoiding awkward postures. Close to 61 per cent stated that they took the need to avoid them into consideration.

■ Adequate lighting

Nearly a quarter of employers claimed to give the provision of adequate lighting a high priority whilst 58 per cent claimed to take such issues into consideration in job design.

■ Repetitive movements, rest breaks and access to mechanical aids

When considering roles involving repetitive movements, 20 per cent of employers saw the provision of rest breaks and access to mechanical aids as high priorities in their approaches to job and work design, while 60 per cent took such things into consideration. 11 per cent stated that the need for such measures was generally not considered however.

■ Avoidance of prolonged standing in jobs

20 per cent of employers stated that they attached a high priority to avoiding employees standing up in their jobs all day long whilst 61 per cent (rising to 72 per cent of the largest employers) said that they took the issue into consideration. 17 per cent of small employers stated that it was not practicable to change working conditions in response to concerns about this factor.

■ Consulting on design of workplaces and work tasks

28 per cent of employers said that they attached a high priority to consulting with employees on the design of workplaces and modified them when necessary. 55 per cent took this approach into consideration. Somewhat fewer companies gave a high priority to consulting on the design of work tasks though a slightly higher proportion (61 per cent) took this into consideration.

ARE ADJUSTMENTS IN WORK DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT MORE FAVOURED FOR OLDER WORKERS ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH LIMITING CONDITIONS?

Our survey asked if the sorts of adjustments covered in the physical conditions questions were more likely to be applied in the case of older employees,

particularly those with age related conditions. 56 per cent of employers said that this was sometimes the case and that decisions depended on the issue or individual concerned, while 23 per cent said simply that such factors did indeed influence them more when planning work for older employees. On the other hand, 21 per cent said that their general responses applied equally, irrespective of the ages of the workers concerned.

SUPPORTING OLDER WORKERS IN THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPLEX TASKS

The survey asked whether older workers might be in particular need of support in assimilating new and complex tasks, offering three kinds of measures that might be considered. (The first two were not specifically reserved for older employees.) 61 per cent of employers said they mostly supported the introduction of complex tasks by giving employees written instructions; 56 per cent mostly supported change by the use of authorised experts in training. The third measure referred to specifically allowing older workers more time to become familiar with new and complex tasks. Only 17 per cent of employers mostly did this with 36 per cent saying they did so sometimes and 47 per cent said they did not usually do so.

WORKING TIME

Participants were asked what arrangements were in place regarding flexible working hours. Whilst high proportions of employers (73 per cent) provided working time accounts, annualised hours or other forms of flexibility for employees generally, less than 5 per cent had any specific provision for older employees.

A similar pattern applied regarding special leave – in 56 per cent of organisations special arrangements covering caring responsibilities, career breaks or other ways of taking time out of the job, were available for workers generally. However, in less than 5 per

cent of organisations were older workers identified as a separate category needing such support.

Slightly more commonplace were special arrangements giving employees rights to opt out of shift work. 24 per cent of employers had such arrangements for employees generally, while ten per cent had them specifically for older workers.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Bearing in mind how important health is for employability and work capacity in later life, survey participants were asked what forms of support they offered to workers to help them maintain a good state of health.

■ Occupational Health support

83 per cent of employers had occupational health services that dealt with individual health concerns and counseled individuals on their specific health problems. 93 per cent of employers were monitoring health risks to employees (including their exposure to hazardous substances) and giving them health checks.

■ Healthier life styles and kicking bad habits

74 per cent had health promotion measures in place to encourage employees to adopt healthier lifestyles, such as quitting smoking, modifying diets or reducing alcohol consumption. Smaller and medium sized employers performed less well than the larger employers in this area, with fewer than sixty per cent of the medium sized employers actively promoting good health compared with over ninety per cent of the largest employers doing so.

■ Physical exercise

Some 44 per cent of all employers supported employees' participation in physical exercise in their companies while a further 17 per cent stated that active support was "under consideration." Smaller employers appeared significantly less likely to provide such arrangements, only 20 per cent of the smallest doing so.

■ Stress prevention

Only 17 per cent of employers reported that they had robust policies on stress prevention "in place," though 35 per cent had them "under consideration." Smaller and medium sized employers were less likely than large employers to have adopted stress prevention policies (23 per cent of larger employers compared with 11 per cent of the smallest doing so).

SUPPORT FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Employers were asked what arrangements they made to ensure employees developed their careers and remained employable throughout their working lives. To this end, 60 per cent of employers offered career development interviews to employees regardless of age whilst a further 26 per cent did so sometimes. 35 per cent of employers stated that that employees had personal development plans and that regard was paid to maintaining interest in job and career performance with ageing.

A fifth of employers reported that employees were encouraged to change work roles periodically (42 per cent of employees reported that they did so sometimes). 23 per cent of employers claimed to make employees aware of their continued value up to and beyond retirement (and 42 per cent did so sometimes). These data could be read as suggesting weak support among employers for the idea that employees are of continued value to the organisation up to and beyond retirement. Alternatively, if employees are in fact so valued, they may not be being informed of this, for example by suggestions and support for later life changes to remain working longer.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TRAINING

The extent to which employees continue to learn throughout their careers may have a significant impact on their employability and work capacity (or work ability) in later life. This section of the survey asked employers how far they had adopted training

and learning practices which reflect this fact as well as being based on knowledge and research on learning and older workers.

■ **Individual career plans and personal interests**

Nearly 60 per cent of employers believed that training should support individual career plans and personal interests as well as company needs. A further 36 per cent applied this principle sometimes. The largest organisations appeared to be strongest supporters of wider dimensions in training arrangements and career plans.

■ **Training and life long learning as aspects of company culture**

Companies which claim to have embedded training within the culture of the organisation typically say they have created a 'thirst for learning.' 59 per cent of respondents agreed that their company had an embedded training culture which encouraged a desire to learn and be mentally agile. 27 per cent stated that their company took this approach sometimes.

■ **Training to support role and task changes**

47 per cent of employers indicated that they offered training to support changes of roles including horizontal changes which may help older workers, with a further 30 per cent doing so sometimes. Larger employers may be readier to provide such training (54 per cent, compared with 42 per cent for the medium and small employer categories).

■ **Age conscious learning methods**

Research shows that older workers sometimes resist learning if it appears repetitive or takes place in a formal context. Some employers have therefore devised approaches that optimize the effectiveness of learning activities for older employees. However, our survey revealed that in fact, only 8 per cent of employers in our sample designed learning methods and delivery of training specifically to suit older employees. 26 per cent said that they did so sometimes. The majority of employers, 65 per cent, indicated that they did not follow such approaches.

■ **Using older workers to deliver training**

Some employers use older workers to deliver training or to mentor younger employees as an effective way of transferring knowledge. In the survey, 16 per cent of organisations reported that they actively used older workers in delivering training with a further 48 per cent saying that they did so sometimes.

■ **Awareness of intergenerational differences and potential**

Knowledge of intergenerational differences and awareness of the positive attributes which each generation can bring can be helpful in managing a multi-generational workforce. 15 per cent of responding employers stated that managers were aware of (and made use of) intergenerational differences in the potential of employees both as learners and teachers. 49 per cent said that this was sometimes the case.

STRUCTURING WORKING CONDITIONS TO INCENTIVISE WORKING LATER

Examples exist of working conditions being structured to induce older workers to work longer. (Opinions differ on whether this is good practice.) Our survey sought information on how widespread this approach is among chemicals employers.

13 per cent of employers reported that they did incentivise working conditions towards longer working in this way. A further 49 per cent answered that they would consider doing so in selected cases. 31 per cent of employers had not considered taking such action whilst 12 per cent would be opposed in principle. (None of the responding companies rejected this course on grounds that they were concerned at the risk of legal action.)

CHOICE OF CONDITIONS TO INCENTIVISE DELAYED RETIREMENT

A small minority of organisations in fact incentivised working later by structuring working arrangements

in this way. Those employers opting to incentivise later retirement used a wide range of approaches. Thirteen organisations (56 per cent) structured pay to provide incentives to work longer and the same number structured flexible working and health checks with similar underlying intentions. None offered time out of the job as a regular condition to incentivise later retirement though 12 organisations (52 per cent) offered this sometimes in given cases.

Twelve organisations allowed for changed working hours, provided partial retirement arrangements or changed their shift patterns in some way. Seven changed jobs to remove burdensome elements. Five downsized the job (or did something similar) and a similar number introduced incentives via the pension scheme. Numerous organisations did some of these sometimes in specific cases.

72 per cent of employers claimed that age diversity and equality were fundamental values which had permeated their entire organisation. In contrast, only 27 per cent of firms had such policies favouring the active recruitment of older workers.

PERSONNEL PLANNING

The adoption of suitable policies, whilst not sufficient to establish an enterprise with a pro-active age management approach, is a necessary element in a strategic approach to age management. Age distribution analysis was undertaken by 67 per cent of organisations in our survey.

66 per cent of organisations undertook retirement planning and discussed plans with older workers.

71 per cent of firms engaged in succession planning to secure replacements for retiring employees.

Only 42 per cent of employers had arrangements in place to analyse the main reasons for employees retiring early and less than half of employers had policies to address the loss of employees through early retirement.

53 per cent of organisations had policies in place to ensure knowledge transfer, particularly focusing on intergenerational knowledge transfer including unwritten 'tacit' knowledge.



Introduction

The European Chemicals Industry Social Dialogue Platform has for some time been concerned about the impact that demographic change could have on the industry.

In 2010, with the support of the European Commission, the social partners examined the impact of demographic change on chemicals employers in seven European countries. This revealed a worrying picture, with countries and regions of Europe facing acute changes including population decline and population ageing.

Managing the ageing workforce raises numerous challenges. Increasingly, it has become understood that if a systematic and well thought out approach is adopted in organisations then, over time, both the potential and desire of workers to work longer may be changed.

Achieving such changes is one of the key aims of what have become known as “age management” approaches. Age management is about achieving the full potential of employees by adopting strategies that make reality of the phrase active ageing.

The idea of the survey is firstly to gain knowledge of the present state of play among chemicals employers with regard to their employment practices. (How far are they consistent with strategic responses to demographic change?)

But it is also hoped that the survey itself will encourage some awareness raising and self analysis and a greater appreciation of the possibilities of age management.

If participants in the survey and those reading this report are clearer on a coherent approach to managing the ageing workforce, that will be a positive outcome.

While the survey has been undertaken by TAEN – The Age and Employment Network, it remains for the Chemicals Social Dialogue Platform to make best use of it in driving forward its broader project with funding the European Commission

It is hoped that the survey will encourage understanding of what age management good practices comprise more broadly, so that the effects are felt outside the chemicals industry itself – an outcome appropriate to the project's occurrence in EY 2012 – the European Year of Active Ageing.

LOCATION AND FIELD OF OPERATION OF RESPONDENT COMPANIES

Participants were asked to specify the country or countries in which their company operates. Table 1 summarises the responses.

TABLE 1 | Distribution of respondents by country or field of operation

COUNTRY OR FIELD OF OPERATION	N	%
Worldwide	98	35.51
Europe-wide	12	4.35
Belgium	2	0.72
Germany	40	14.49
Finland	6	2.17
France	34	12.32
United Kingdom	1	0.36
Italy	9	3.26
Malta	1	0.36
Poland	13	4.71
Slovenia	1	0.36
Spain	22	7.97
Czech Republic	20	7.25
Not specified	17	6.16
Total	276	100.00

COMPANY SIZE

Participants were asked to indicate the size of their company's workforce including part time and temporary staff. Table 2 displays the responses.

It might be inferred that the high proportion of responses (20 per cent) from companies over 10,000 employees arises from better staffed HR departments

TABLE 2 | Workforce size of participating companies

WORKFORCE SIZE RANGE (including temp and part time)	N	%
< 10	20	7.25
11 - 50	20	7.25
51 - 250	32	11.59
251 - 500	40	14.49
501 - 1,000	43	15.58
1,001 - 5,000	39	14.13
5,001 - 10,000	18	6.52
> 10,001	55	19.93
Total responding	267	96.74
Missing	9	3.26
Adjusted total	276	100.00

in these organisations finding the time to respond to our survey questionnaire. Other factors may have contributed, however, including possibly higher levels of awareness of the need to respond to demographic change and workforce ageing in the larger companies.

COMPANY SIZE AND LOCATION OR FIELD OF OPERATION

Responding companies were sorted by size and countries or fields of operation. This was made easier by compressing workforce size categories into small (1 to 250 employees), medium (251 to 1,000 employees) and large (1,001 and more employees). Table 3 displays these data.

In general terms, countries with response rates of anything more than a handful of companies displayed a reasonably balanced mix of company sizes. The most noticeable exceptions were the Czech Republic, where 16 out of 20 responses were from medium sized companies, and Germany, where 20 out of the 39 respondents were from the largest companies.

VIEWS ON THE NEED TO MANAGE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

The purpose of our survey was to assess the present state of play with regard to the adoption of age management policies in companies. While it is possible that companies may institute such changes (i.e. to working conditions, etc) on a piece meal basis without them being strategically driven, it seems likely that the most effective responses will be found where there is awareness of the likely impact of demographic change and consciousness of the need to act in the company's interests.

TABLE 3 | Size and Country of Operation of Responding Companies (N = 259)

	SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Worldwide	26	37.68	11	14.10	59	54.63
Europe-wide	2	2.90	5	6.41	5	4.63
Belgium	1	1.45	0	0	0	0
Germany	7	10.14	12	15.38	20	18.52
Finland	1	1.45	4	5.13	1	0.93
France	8	11.59	14	17.95	12	11.11
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	1	0.93
Italy	3	4.35	4	5.13	2	1.85
Malta	0	0	0	0	1	0.93
Poland	4	5.80	7	8.97	2	1.85
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	1	0.93
Spain	15	21.74	5	6.41	2	1.85
Czech Republic	2	2.90	16	20.51	2	1.85
Total	69	100.00	78	100.00	108	100.00

Our first substantive question offered statements to test respondents' views on the need to respond to demographic changes and the risks they might entail. Table 4 summarises the responses.

As may be seen, smaller employers more commonly indicated agreement with the view that Demographic change is not likely to affect our company, whilst medium sized employers were twice as likely as small employers to state that they Want to respond to demographic change but are not clear how to do so. Large and medium sized employers seemed more conscious of the need for pro-active measures than the smallest employers.

On this evidence, small employers appear less concerned about demographic threats than medium and larger employers in the industry. Overall, responses indicate a fairly high degree of awareness of the potential impact of demographic change.

TABLE 4 | Respondents' views on the need to manage ageing workforce and demographic change (by company size, N = 256)

STATEMENT	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Demographic change is not likely to affect our company.	34	13.28	18	27.27	7	8.86	8	7.34
There could be future problems from demographic change but we are clear about our future needs and will manage them.	116	45.31	25	37.88	41	51.90	50	45.87
We have already made changes to protect our business from demographic risks.	63	24.61	16	24.24	14	17.72	33	30.28
We want to respond to demographic change but are not sure what to do.	43	16.80	7	10.61	17	21.52	18	16.51
Total	256	100.00	66	100.00	79	100.00	109	100.00

TABLE 5 | Responses to statements, concerning company's adoption of age management strategies at the present time, particularly with reference to older workers. (by company size, N = 232)

STATEMENT		ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The company has adopted a strategy to respond to workforce ageing and demographic change.	Yes	107	45.92	23	39.66	33	44.59	51	51.52
	No	126	54.08	35	60.34	41	55.41	48	48.48
There is commitment to an age management strategy at board level.	Yes	63	27.51	15	26.32	22	29.73	26	27.08
	No	166	72.49	42	73.68	52	70.27	70	72.92
There is a named manager responsible for leading our response to demographic change.	Yes	56	24.24	12	20.69	11	14.86	33	34.02
	No	175	75.76	46	79.31	63	85.14	64	65.98
Senior and middle managers have been briefed on managing older workers.	Yes	35	15.09	10	17.24	15	20.27	10	10.20
	No	197	84.91	48	82.76	59	79.73	88	89.80
Line managers have been briefed on managing older workers.	Yes	29	12.5	7	12.07	14	18.92	8	8.16
	No	203	87.5	51	87.93	60	81.08	90	91.84

The questions were posed to preclude respondents agreeing with more than one of the statements, though in reality some may well have been happy to accept multiple statements had we allowed them the freedom to do so. Twenty respondents failed to respond to this question, a pattern repeated through the survey, reducing the useful size of our sample.

ADOPTION OF AGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The next survey question, asks respondents to: "... indicate how far your company has adopted an management strategy at the present time, particularly with reference to older workers". Table 5 displays the responses.

Less than half (45 per cent) of all companies had adopted a strategy to respond to workforce ageing and demographic change. Larger employers were more likely to have done so (51 per cent of the largest companies compared with 39 per cent of the smallest.) Only 27 per cent of employers reported that there was commitment to an age management strategy at

board level (a figure that showed little variation by company size).

In less than a quarter of responding companies was there a named manager responsible for leading the age management strategy. (The likelihood of such an appointment was higher in the largest companies, with 34 reporting positively against 14 per cent in medium sized enterprises.)

Fifteen per cent of employers had briefed senior and middle managers on managing older workers while 12 per cent had briefed line managers on the same issues. Employers in the size range 251 to 1,000 employers were more likely to have briefed senior, middle and line managers on issues concerning the management of older employees than in the largest enterprises, where only 10 per cent reported briefing middle managers and 8 per cent had briefed line managers.

SHARING ISSUES WITH EMPLOYEES

Age management approaches imply changes in behaviour and culture in organisations. It is widely

TABLE 6 | Responses to question, "How far have issues concerning demographic change and the need for age management had been discussed between management and employees?" ("Yes" responses, by company size, N = 216)

STATEMENT	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
With the works council or other employee body	122	56.74	18	33.96	42	59.15	62	69.66
Under provisions of a collective agreement dealing with age management and demographic change	80	37.21	17	32.08	24	33.80	39	43.82
Shared with the workforce more generally – e.g. in employee discussions with managers, company briefings or seminars.	93	43.06	23	43.40	29	40.85	41	45.56

accepted that a key element in bringing about such changes entails gaining the support and involvement of staff. Our next section attempts to assess the commitment of organisations to employees' engagement with issues of demographic change and age management.

Three statements were offered concerning a form of consultation which employers might be using to share concerns and issues. Table 6 summarises the responses.

Issues concerning demographic change and age management were more than twice as likely to have been discussed between management and the works council (or similar body) in the largest organisations compared with the smallest (70 per cent of the largest organisations compared with 34 per cent of the smallest). This may arise from the greater likelihood of formal consultative arrangements being established in the largest organisations compared with the smallest.

A similar pattern is seen in responses to the statement about discussions under the provisions of a collective agreement – such discussions being least common in the smallest organisations and most common in the largest. It is however striking that even among the smallest organisations (1 to 250 employees) nearly a

third of employers reported that such discussions had been held under the terms of a collective agreement dealing with age management and demographic change.

Forty-three per cent of organisations reported that issues relating to demographic change and the need for age management practices had been shared with the workforce more generally, with this figure showing only small variation according to size of organisation (43 per cent of the smallest and 46 per cent of the largest organisations claiming such exchanges with employees.)

FOCUS OF INTERVENTIONS

One feature in discussion about what constitutes good practice age management practice is the desired focus of interventions. (Interventions generally take the form of changes in terms and conditions or methods of working.) There is a broad consensus that in an ideal world they should be designed to benefit all workers rather than being aimed solely at a specific age cohort.

On the other hand, there are preventative interventions which are designed to help people retain work capacity over the course of their working

TABLE 7 | Responses to question on which approach is favoured in focus of responses to demographic change which involve forms of change to working conditions (by company size, N = 211)

	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Older workers only	44	20.85	14	26.92	14	20.00	15	17.24
Workers of any age with specific needs relating to disabilities	35	16.59	6	11.54	18	25.71	11	12.64
All workers	94	44.55	20	38.46	23	32.86	50	57.47
None of these	38	18.01	12	23.08	15	21.43	11	12.64
Total	211	100.00	52	100.00	70	100.00	87	100.00

lives, and compensatory interventions which are mostly directed towards people who have already lost a degree of work capacity in some way. Compensatory interventions are most likely to be aimed at a particular age group, for obvious reasons.

Clearly, whilst it is preferable to imagine we can prevent loss of working capacity, in practice there is often a need to compensate or correct for decline which has already occurred. Whether this is so will depend in large measure on the nature of the work in question as well as the degree to which effective preventative interventions have been applied historically. (Specifically, there are numerous ways of supporting workers with work limiting conditions or disabilities by making adjustments to the work tasks or the working environment for these particular workers.)

Against this background, our next question therefore sought to establish which approaches are favoured by employers in the European chemicals sector at the present time.

The pattern of responses may be summarised quite simply. Companies of all sizes are included among those favouring each of the three strategies listed. That said, all groups (small, medium and large employers) express a preference for interventions aimed at all workers irrespective of age, though this preference appears most pronounced among the largest employers.

The reality is that any age management approach is likely to include a mixture of age specific and all-age interventions. The mix of responses given by our survey participants seems consistent with this.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF WORK AND WORKPLACE DESIGN

Avoiding unnecessary loss of working capacity is one of the goals age management interventions. In this section we focused on the physical aspects of work. We asked questions to establish the level of priority given to designing work or the working environment

so as to minimise the worker's decline in working capacity through physical impairment arising from wear and tear, injury or the natural changes in the body over time. (For example, there are many cases where some change to the work content, including the use of appropriate plant or machinery, can make a difference.)

In the first instance, ten broad factors (descriptions of physical issues or adjustments) were given and respondents invited to comment on the level of priority they are accorded in their company. A simple numerical scale was used to register responses.

The following tables summarise responses by company size to each of these ten factors

8 | "How far does your company try to design work (i.e. work tasks and equipment used) and the workplace (the physical environment) with the following factors in mind?"

The main question above sets the context for each of the specific statements shown in tables 8.1 to 8.10 which constitute subsidiary parts of this question. (Responses to subsidiary questions are now given with short comments on each table.)

Ergonomic issues

Musculo-skeletal disorders of various kinds are a very common form of work related ill health. Such problems as lower back or upper limb disorders may lead to early retirement from of the workforce. Our question seeks to establish how far employers design work with the aim of helping workers avoiding such difficulties. Responses are displayed in table 8.1

As will be seen, 60 per cent of companies take ergonomic issues into consideration with nearly a quarter (23 per cent) giving them high priority. Around 8 per cent of companies believe it is not practicable to change work design and the physical environment to allow for such issues and a similar number generally do not consider them.

Atmospheric conditions

Apart from poor atmospheric conditions leading to

discomfort, they can lead on to more serious problems including breathing problems, occupational asthma and allergies of various kinds. Table 8.2 displays responses to the main question above with particular reference to the statement shown.

Again, most companies take atmospheric issues into consideration (55 per cent) with a further quarter giving them high priority. About 12 per cent believe it is not practicable to adjust the design of work or the workplace to account for the impact of atmospheric factors while approaching 10 per cent report that the possibility is generally not considered. Medium sized companies seem more polarised than the others – more give these issues high priority and also not considering it.

Noise intensity

Intense noise (and some vibrations beyond the audible frequencies) can have a detrimental impact on health, damage hearing and create a stressful and wearing working environment. Hearing loss is not only a physical condition, it can affect an individual's persona, ability to communicate, take an active part in a work team, follow instructions and learn new things.

Protection from excessive noise is therefore an important part of creating a working environment in which individuals can retain their working capacity throughout their careers. Table 8.3 sets out responses to our question on this point.

As can be seen, responses on employers' control of noise intensity follow a similar pattern to that

TABLE 8.1 | Responses to "Ergonomic issues (affecting movements, posture etc) are considered." (by employer size, N = 197)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	46	23.35	11	23.40	16	24.24	19	23.17
Taken into consideration	118	59.90	31	65.96	32	48.48	53	64.63
Not practicable to change	16	8.12	3	6.38	7	10.61	6	7.32
Generally not considered	17	8.63	2	4.26	11	16.67	4	4.88

TABLE 8.2 | Responses to: "Atmospheric conditions including heat, cold, damp, dust are controlled in the interests of workers." (by employer size, N = 196)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	49	25.00	12	25.53	20	30.30	16	19.75
Taken into consideration	105	53.57	26	55.32	29	43.94	49	60.49
Not practicable to change	24	12.24	6	12.77	8	12.12	10	12.35
Generally not considered	18	9.18	3	6.38	9	13.64	6	7.41

observed on the control of atmospheric conditions. Most companies report taking noise intensity into consideration in relation to the design of work and the working environment, with a third of employers giving it high priority. Fewer companies – just over 5 per cent – take the view that it is not practicable to change work design or working conditions to take account of noise intensity issues. Twelve per cent of medium sized companies claimed that noise issues were generally not considered in the terms stated, even though 44 per cent gave the imperative to do so high priority. Again, however, the sub-set size makes it not completely trustworthy.

Heavy lifting

Injuries caused by lifting heavy objects are best avoided by eliminating the need to lift the objects as

far as practicable. Provision of lifting gear and similar equipment can help individual workers to avoid injuries which may cause prolonged absenteeism, permanent physical harm and early quitting of the workforce. For all these reasons the provision of heavy lifting gear is an important part of the design of work and creation of a working environment which preserves work capacity and helps in managing an ageing workforce.

Table 8.4 below displays responses to our question incorporating the statement shown.

A slightly higher proportion of employers (than in the previous tables) responded by stating that they give high priority to the goals explained in the statement. Over half of the employers state that they

TABLE 8.3 | Responses to: “Noise intensity is maintained well below acceptable threshold values to avoid hearing damage.” (by employer size, N = 195)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	65	33.33	16	34.04	29	43.94	19	23.75
Taken into consideration	101	51.79	24	51.06	23	34.85	53	66.25
Not practicable to change	18	9.23	7	14.89	6	9.09	5	6.25
Generally not considered	11	5.64	0	0	8	12.12	3	3.75

TABLE 8.4 | Responses to: “Heavy lifting is eliminated by the use of appropriate lifting gear and similar equipment.” (by employer size, N = 193)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	70	36.27	18	38.30	28	42.42	22	28.21
Taken into consideration	101	52.33	25	53.19	26	39.39	50	64.10
Not practicable to change	14	7.25	4	8.51	7	10.61	3	3.85
Generally not considered	8	4.15	0	0	5	7.58	3	3.85

take such issues into consideration while as few as 7 per cent believe that changes are not practicable and 4 per cent state that such issues are generally not considered. Again, the responses of medium sized employers appear more polarised than the others.

Eliminating kneeling or other awkward positions

Working for prolonged periods in awkward postures is a cause of many musculo-skeletal disorders and lower back problems. When workers are obliged to work in kneeling, stooped squatting or other unnatural positions over long periods of time, the likelihood of damage to the spine and muscles of the lower back can become high. This may lead to absence and over a period may contribute to leaving the work role or early retirement on ill health grounds. Table 8.5 shows responses to our next statement based

on the desirability of designing jobs which avoid kneeling or other awkward positions.

As may be seen, responses follow a similar pattern to that already established in responses to our other statements on "question eight factors". More than 20 per cent of respondents gave a high priority to the objective of designing jobs avoiding awkward postures. Close to 61 per cent stated that they took the need to avoid them into consideration. Few (10 per cent) doubted the practicability of making changes to work design to satisfy this point whilst only 7 per cent of employers failed to consider such issues in their approaches to work design.

Ensuring adequate lighting

The quality of lighting in a workplace can have

TABLE 8.5 | Responses to: "Tasks including kneeling or other awkward positions are as far as possible eliminated." (by employer size, N = 193)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	42	21.76	15	31.91	14	21.21	12	15.38
Taken into consideration	117	60.62	24	51.06	37	56.06	55	70.51
Not practicable to change	20	10.36	4	8.51	9	13.64	7	8.97
Generally not considered	14	7.25	4	8.51	6	9.09	4	5.13

TABLE 8.6 | Responses to: "Adequate lighting for those with some visual impairment." (by employer size, N = 195)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	47	24.10	11	23.40	21	31.82	14	17.50
Taken into consideration	114	58.46	26	55.32	28	42.42	59	73.75
Not practicable to change	11	5.64	3	6.38	6	9.09	2	2.50
Generally not considered	23	11.79	7	14.89	11	16.67	5	6.25

important implications for those who work in it. Most simply, the lighting will determine what can be seen and, hence, how quickly and easily visual work can be done. Older workers, whose eyes tend to suffer some degeneration naturally over the years, are more vulnerable and more likely to struggle at work if the lighting is poor. This is particularly so where a worker has some degree of visual impairment. Table 8.6 sets out the responses to the statement offered on this point.

As may be seen, nearly a quarter of employers claimed to give the provision of adequate lighting a high priority whilst 58 per cent claimed to take such issues into consideration in job design. Eleven employers (5.6 per cent of those responding) felt it was impracticable to make changes to recognise

lighting issues in job design though the figure of 11.8 per cent of employers who said they generally did not consider them (15 per cent for the smallest and nearly 17 per cent of the medium sized employers) identifies this as a possible area of weakness.

Repetitive and rapid movements

Repetitive and rapid movements, if present as regular features of jobs frequently trigger repetitive strain injuries. Table 8.7 displays responses to a statement outlining the desirability of providing employees with rest breaks and access to mechanical aids.

Overall, 20 per cent of employers see the provision of rest breaks and access to mechanical aids as high priorities in their approaches to job and work design, while 60 per cent took the preventative strategies

TABLE 8.7 | Responses to: "In jobs involving repetitive or rapid movements, employees are given regular breaks and access to mechanical aids." (by employer size, N = 192)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	39	20.31	13	27.66	14	21.21	10	12.99
Taken into consideration	116	60.42	23	48.94	34	51.52	59	76.62
Not practicable to change	16	8.33	6	12.77	6	9.09	4	5.19
Generally not considered	21	10.94	5	10.64	12	18.18	4	5.19

TABLE 8.8 | Responses to: "You try to avoid people 'being on their feet' all day and provide seating where possible." (by employer size, N = 193)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	40	20.73	11	23.40	16	24.24	13	16.67
Taken into consideration	118	61.14	24	51.06	36	54.55	56	71.79
Not practicable to change	20	10.36	8	17.02	6	9.09	6	7.69
Generally not considered	15	7.77	4	8.51	8	12.12	3	3.85

mentioned into consideration. On the other hand, 11 per cent of all respondents (18 per cent of the medium sized employers) stated that the need for such measures was generally not considered.

Avoidance of prolonged standing

For workers at any age it is desirable to avoid jobs where sitting down and changes of posture are not possible. This is particularly so for older workers. Being 'on one's feet' all day long is often a tiring experience and gives rise to negative feelings about work by those concerned. Prolonged standing has been linked to health problems including foot, leg and back pain, varicose veins, circulatory problems. There is also a possible increased stroke risk, and (of interest to women of childbearing age) birth defects and difficulties in pregnancy.

Table 8.8 shows how far employers recognised this issue in considering work design.

Twenty per cent of employers stated that they attached a high priority to avoiding the necessity for such arduous working arrangements whilst 61 per cent (rising to 72 per cent of the largest employers) said that they took the issue into consideration in the design of work or the working environment. Seventeen per cent of the sub-set of small employers stated that it was not practicable to change working conditions in response to concerns about this factor. Twelve per cent of the medium sized employers said that the issue was generally not considered, though as with all of the disaggregated scores, the small numbers involved demand that the figure should be treated with caution.

TABLE 8.9 | Responses to: "You consult on the design of workplaces and modify where necessary." (by employer size, N = 194)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	54	27.84	13	27.66	16	24.24	25	31.65
Taken into consideration	107	55.15	26	55.32	33	50.00	46	58.23
Not practicable to change	13	6.70	4	8.51	5	7.58	4	5.06
Generally not considered	20	10.31	4	8.51	12	18.18	4	5.06

TABLE 8.10 | Responses to: "You consult on the design of work tasks and modify where necessary." (by employer size, N = 193)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Priority	40	20.73	8	17.02	12	18.18	20	25.64
Taken into consideration	117	60.62	30	63.83	41	62.12	44	56.41
Not practicable to change	17	8.81	5	10.64	5	7.58	7	8.97
Generally not considered	19	9.84	4	8.51	8	12.12	7	8.97

TABLE 9 | Do you place a greater emphasis on the previously mentioned issues for older workers, particularly those with age related condition and disabilities? (by employer size, N = 189)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes – these issues are more important when planning work for older employees.	43	22.75	12	25.53	17	26.56	13	17.11
Sometimes – it depends on the issue or on the individual concerned.	106	56.08	24	51.06	36	56.25	46	60.53
No – the same responses apply as stated	40	21.16	11	23.40	11	17.19	17	22.37

Consulting employees on design of workplaces

One of the principles of age management is that work should be designed to fit the abilities and capacities of the worker whilst the worker should be supported in being fit and capable to do the job. Engagement and involvement of employees in this two-way process is important. The responses of employers in our survey to the question of consultation on design of workplaces is shown in table 8.9 while 8.10 deals with responses to the similar, though more specific issue of consultation on work tasks.

Twenty-eight per cent of employers said that they attach a high priority to consulting with employees on the design of workplaces and modify when necessary. Fifty-five per cent took this approach into consideration. Somewhat fewer companies gave a high priority to consulting on the design of work tasks though a slightly higher proportion (61 per cent) took this into consideration.

Consulting employees on design of work tasks
Responses to the corresponding question on consultation over the design of work tasks are shown in table 8.10.

Interestingly, while 28 per cent of employers placed a high priority on consultation with employees over the design of the workplace, fewer (21 per cent) deemed consultation over work tasks to be as

important. This difference may reflect the fact that the individual worker often has an element of freedom to decide his or her precise mode of work and in consequence, formal consultation is less necessary. This point however, is only one of a number of possible explanations and in any event may not be valid in the case of routine and production roles where precise work tasks are more likely to be analysed and prescribed with a degree of precision.

Adjustments for those with age related conditions or disabilities

The next question addresses the issue of whether the elements of our question 8 series (above) were given greater emphasis in relation to older workers, particularly those with age related conditions or disabilities. Table 9 summarises the responses.

Views differ on the need to place greater stress on the importance of the issues covered in question 8 when the work being planned is going to be performed by older employees. As can be seen, 56 per cent of employers claimed to take pragmatic decisions depending upon the individual or the issue concerned. Whilst 23 per cent said that the question 8 factors would be more important when planning work for older employees, 21 per cent – a surprisingly high proportion – said that their responses would not be influenced by knowledge of the age of the individuals concerned or any age related condition or disability they might have.

COMPLEX TASKS

Many job roles in the chemicals sector involve complex procedures. Jobs entailing sequences of complex tasks and operations are likely to prove challenging when being undertaken for the first time and might prove problematic even after being performed many times. This is particularly likely if the operator has not fully understood the reasons for the sequence of operations and learned where each fits into the productive process. Committing such tasks and sequences to memory is not therefore a good practice. In this section of our survey we asked how far the need for support of various kinds was taken into account. Responses are given below.

10 | Jobs entailing complex tasks and operations may provide special challenges for older workers. How far do you take these into account in allocating and designing work?

Written instructions

Instructions need to be in writing as a ready point of reference. It is arguable, though by no means a proven fact, that the performance of older workers may be particularly affected if such tasks are not supported by written instructions and materials and instead, workers are expected to rely on their memories and learning.

The majority (61 per cent) of employers mostly supported complex tasks and sequences by written instructions as aids to memory. There was relatively little variation by size of employer.

Authorised experts or training

The value of having someone who can demonstrate a process by example cannot be underestimated. (Older workers are unlikely to be alone in finding this supportive in coping with new or complex tasks.) Table 10.2 summarises the responses from employers on this point.

As may be seen, the use of experts or training to support the introduction of new or complex tasks is widespread with only 17 per cent of employers saying that this was not done usually and a majority of 56 per cent saying that they mostly supported new or complex tasks in this way.

Allowing older workers more time to become familiar with tasks

The adage that 'old dogs can't learn new tricks' is often dismissed with the observation that, nevertheless, perhaps older workers do need a little more time to learn new skills than their younger counterparts. How far does this maxim apply in the ways that chemicals industry employers approach the introduction of new and complex tasks? Table 10.3 summarises the responses.

As may be seen, a minority (17 per cent) of employers mostly allowed older workers more time to become familiar with new and complex tasks though 36 per cent did so only sometimes. Close to half (47 per cent) responded that they did not usually make such allowances, believing (it might be inferred) that there was no need to do so.

TABLE 10.1 | Complex tasks and sequences are supported by written instructions as aids to memory (by employer size, N = 187)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mostly	114	60.96	27	58.70	37	57.81	48	64.00
Sometimes	41	21.93	12	26.09	14	21.88	15	20.00
Not usually	32	17.11	7	15.22	13	20.31	12	16.00

**TABLE 10.2 | New or complex tasks are supported by authorised experts or training
(by employer size, N = 187)**

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mostly	104	55.61	26	56.52	37	57.81	40	53.33
Sometimes	52	27.81	15	32.61	12	18.75	24	32.00
Not usually	31	16.58	5	10.87	15	23.44	11	14.67

**TABLE 10.3 | Older workers are given more time to become familiar with new and complex tasks
(by employer size, N = 187)**

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mostly	32	17.11	15	32.61	12	18.75	4	5.33
Sometimes	67	35.83	15	32.61	18	28.13	34	45.33
Not usually	88	47.06	16	34.78	34	53.13	37	49.33

WORKING TIME

The survey questionnaire presented the information that “Working time, working patterns and attention to work-life balance can make a difference to work capacity, fatigue and the way workers feel about their jobs.” Participants were invited to indicate whether three sets of arrangements (flexible hours, special leave and opting out of shifts) were available in their organisation for workers generally, for older workers only or not available. Responses are shown in tables 11.1 to 11.3 below.

11 | Does your company take working time, working patterns and attention to work-life balance into account bearing in mind the difference that can be made to work capacity, fatigue and the way workers feel about their jobs?

Flexible hours

Table 11.1 addresses the main question (above) by seeking information about the extent of flexible hours arrangements. The examples cited fall into the broad category of working time accounts such as annualised hours and flextime, but also part time working, job sharing and the right to work flexibly by other means.

As may be seen, companies that offer these forms of flexibility tend overwhelmingly to offer such conditions to workers generally rather than reserve them specifically for older workers. Larger employers appear to be somewhat more likely to offer flexible working though as many as 64 per cent of the smallest employers did so.

Special leave arrangements

Table 11.2 summarises the responses to our question on leave arrangements that would be likely to

TABLE 11.1 | Working time accounts (such as annualised hours, flextime, etc) part time working, job sharing or the right to work flexibly by other means. (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Available for workers generally	133	72.68	29	64.44	44	70.97	59	79.73
Available for older workers	9	4.92	4	8.89	1	1.61	4	5.41
Not available	41	22.40	12	26.67	17	27.42	11	14.86

TABLE 11.2 | Leave for workers with caring roles, career breaks or other forms of longer term leave to allow time out of the job (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Available for workers generally	102	55.74	22	48.89	32	51.61	46	62.16
Available for older workers	8	4.37	2	4.44	1	1.61	5	6.76
Not available	73	39.89	21	46.67	29	46.77	23	31.08

TABLE 11.3 | Right to opt out of specific shifts or shift patterns (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Available for workers generally	44	24.04	14	31.11	14	22.58	16	21.62
Available for older workers	18	9.84	6	13.33	4	6.45	8	10.81
Not available	121	66.12	25	55.56	44	70.97	50	67.57

benefit older workers (or others whose personal commitments lead to difficulty with continuous full time working). As can be seen, a range of specific forms of leave are mentioned, though the list is by no means exhaustive.

Again, it can be seen that where the sorts of arrangements mentioned in the question are available, they tend to be offered to workers generally rather than reserved for older workers. Forty per cent of organisations did not offer such arrangements at all

and a further 93 employers (33 per cent of the whole sample – not revealed in the table) did not respond to the question. Had they done so, the extent of non-availability revealed might be assumed to have been greater. Sixty-two per cent of largest employers compared with 49 per cent of the smallest offered special leave arrangements.

Opting out of specific shifts or shift patterns

Research suggests that older workers are more likely than others to suffer detrimental health effects from rotating shift patterns. On the other hand, continuous production processes often mean that in chemicals plants, shift working is a fact of life. While shift working is sometimes a factor in decisions to retire early (and may at least militate against working on beyond normal retirement [1]) it is not necessarily a straight forward matter to allow some workers to opt out of shift work. Table 11.3 summarises the responses of employers to this dilemma, giving responses to our question on whether they allow workers the right to opt out of specific shifts or shift patterns.

As can be seen 24 per cent of responding employers stated that shift opt-out rights were available to workers generally whilst 10 per cent reported that such arrangements were available to older workers specifically. Two-thirds of employers stated that such opt outs were not available. One hundred and twenty-one employers (121 – 33.7 per cent of the whole sample) did not, unfortunately, respond to this section of our survey.

Small employers (31 per cent) appeared rather more likely to grant shift opt out concessions than medium (23 per cent) and large (22 per cent) employers though our customary warning applies to treat the comparison with the utmost caution.

HEALTH PROMOTION

It is well established that health related issues are among the foremost reasons for people retiring early. Not surprisingly, in studies of age management, health issues focus prominently. [2] Traditionally, the role of the employer in providing a safe and healthy workplace has been the main starting point but country cultures, social systems, legal frameworks and Government policies can all have an influence on approaches and the kinds of issues that are emphasised. We posed a series of questions to participants inviting information on the provisions their organisations have made to help workers become more health aware, adopt healthier life styles and generally to achieve and maintain a good state of physical and mental health.

12 | Helping workers to maintain good health can impact on their employability and work capacity in later life. Which of the following do you have in place in your company?

Occupational health services

The extent to which employers are able to support employees in dealing with their own health problems (either arising from work and the working environment or stemming from other causes) depends in large measure on access to the necessary resources, at the centre of which is occupational health provision. Specialist occupational health services are common in large organisations providing a range of services to employees and analysis of health data for company management. We know too that sometimes arrangements provide services to individuals on a shared employer basis, though the extent to which facilities of either kind are available in the chemicals sector was not known. Our first question in this section relates to this question. Our question was phrased specifically

[1] Van den Berg T J et al 2010, Influence of Health and Work on Early Retirement, Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. A Danish Work Environment Cohort Study, 2008 notes the connection as well as various studies commenting on the health impact of shift working.

[2] There is a large literature but some of the most significant work is by Alan Walker in a series of articles and reports, for example Combating Age Barriers in Employment – A European Research Report, European Foundation, Dublin 1997, and many subsequent publications by Walker, with other collaborators for example Combating Age Barriers in Employment – A European Portfolio of Good Practice, Walker and Taylor 1998, A guide to good practice in age management Gerhard Neagle and Alan Walker 2006, to mention a few.

to ask whether there is support for individuals in relation to their health concerns, though other broader questions might equally usefully have been included.

A large majority of employers (83 per cent) have occupational health services that deal with individual health concerns and counsel individuals on their specific health problems. There are some differences according to the size of organisations, though size alone seems not to be the only limiting factor with medium sized employers (74 per cent with arrangements “in place”) performing less well than the smallest employers of which 82 per cent gave the “in place” answer.

Monitoring of risks and exposure to hazardous substances

Most developed countries have detailed rules and

regulations concerning the protection of employees and members of the public from toxic substances. At European level, such regulations are complex pieces of legislation. Avoiding exposure of employees to hazards is always the first priority though in chemicals companies in particular, monitoring the health of employees and ensuring that threshold levels of exposure are not passed are very important aspects of health and safety management. Taking such responsibilities seriously is a key element in the prevention of harm to employees and therefore, vital in their health and wellbeing.

As can be seen, the overwhelming majority of employers appear to be monitoring health risks to employees (including their exposure to hazardous substances and giving them health checks). Whilst this is a reassuring statistic, our survey did not of course test the reliability of these claims.

TABLE 12.1 | Occupational health service that deals with individual health concerns and counsels individuals (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In place	151	82.51	37	82.22	46	74.19	67	90.54
Under consideration	18	9.84	5	11.11	10	16.13	3	4.05
Not provided	14	7.65	3	6.67	6	9.68	4	5.41

TABLE 12.2 | Regular monitoring of health risks, exposure to hazardous substances and health checks (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In place	170	92.90	40	88.89	59	95.16	69	93.24
Under consideration	9	4.92	2	4.44	3	4.84	4	5.41
Not provided	4	2.19	3	6.67	0	0	1	1.35

TABLE 12.3 | Health promotion activities supported by the company, e.g. quitting smoking, improving diet or alcohol consumption (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In place	135	73.77	31	68.89	37	59.68	67	90.54
Under consideration	18	9.84	4	8.89	9	14.52	3	4.05
Not provided	30	16.39	10	22.22	16	25.81	4	5.41

Health promotion – reforming lifestyle habits

Campaigns to encourage workers to adopt healthy life styles (including tackling habits of diet, smoking and alcohol consumption) can all make big contributions in the short term, even though improvements are not always sustained. Engaging with employees and their representatives on these issues is important. The following table summarises responses by chemicals employers to our question on the extent of adoption of the specified activities.

As can be seen, 74 per cent of employers state that they have “in place” health promotion activities such as quitting smoking, improving diet or reducing alcohol consumption. Over 20 per cent of both the small and medium sized employers groups (representing all firms below 1,000 employees) neither provided such health promotion measures currently nor claimed to be considering their introduction. It might be commented that that compared with the provision of occupational health or sporting and exercise facilities, measures in this category (i.e. promoting life style changes) are both cheap and easy to provide. The relatively poor performance of the smaller employers cannot therefore be simply explained in terms of affordability.

Support for physical exercise

There is a well understood and strong case for everyone to engage in physical activity regularly, preferably throughout their working lives. The business benefits to employers (in terms of improved motivation, attendance, mental alertness and ability

to work longer) are considerable. While healthy habits and behaviour are ultimately an individual lifestyle choice, it certainly seems that a workplace culture can have an important impact on individuals. Creating a culture in which regular social interaction, physical activity and fitness are encouraged can contribute to an effective and happy working environment. As a contribution to longer and more productive working lives, support for physical activity therefore seems an excellent investment. The next table summarises the extent to which our survey participants have made such provisions.

As can be seen, some 44 per cent of all employers currently have support for physical exercise “in place” in the ways listed with a further 17 per cent stating that such active support is “under consideration.” Smaller employers appear significantly less likely to provide such arrangements. While in some measure this is explicable on grounds of cost, the question was written in deliberately broad terms. So, for example, smaller and medium sized employers might perhaps give support to good health by simple, inexpensive encouragement of physical exercise as employees travel to work.

Prevention of stress

Our next question sought to test how widely employers have adopted stress prevention strategies. There is considerable evidence that stress damages individual’s health. Early retirement decisions are frequently made for a combination of reasons, including sometimes, a desire to avoid an unpleasant,

damaging and stressful working environment. Not all stress is of course work related, but in many cases, combinations of stressors from the home or work can contribute to high stress levels in individuals. (All human beings are different, which makes the management of stress complicated.)

In part, stress can be reduced by the provision of health promoting interventions – such as exercise, dealt with in the previous section. But many health and safety practitioners believe that the elimination of stress should begin with work design, organisation, culture and management style. The adoption of robust policies is good practice and can pay dividends in reduced absenteeism and sickness.

As can be seen, relatively few (17 per cent) of our employers reported that they had robust policies on stress prevention “in place.” 35 per cent had them “under consideration.” Small employers (11 per cent “in place”) were the least likely to have adopted stress prevention policies and medium sized employers (15 per cent “in place”) were less likely than large employers (23 per cent) to have done so.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION

In applying age management policies to organisations, career development and the maintenance of motivation of individual workers are significant factors [3] to consider.

TABLE 12.4 | Active support for physical exercise (health clubs, active commuting, etc (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In place	80	43.72	9	20.00	24	38.71	47	63.51
Under consideration	32	17.49	10	22.22	8	12.90	13	17.57
Not provided	71	38.80	26	57.78	30	48.39	14	18.92

TABLE 12.5 | Robust policies on the prevention of stress (by employer size, N = 183)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In place	31	16.94	5	11.11	9	14.52	17	22.97
Under consideration	64	34.97	13	28.89	22	35.48	27	36.49
Not provided	88	48.09	27	60.00	31	50.00	30	40.54

[3] See for example, Mak B L “A Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Employee Motivation and Retention,” Information and Management 2001

Our questions test the extent to which existing policies are consistent with age management approaches.

Each of the next series of questions hints at an approach that could be part of a progressive HR strategy or used to lay the basis for a considered approach to age management with particular reference to career development and motivation.

13 | Which of the following arrangements exist in your organisation to ensure that employees continue to develop their careers and remain employable throughout their life courses?

Career development interviews

Many employers consider career development interviews a useful approach in delaying wasteful early exits. Career development procedures provide opportunities for managers to gain some understanding of and influence over the goals of the employee. They may encourage an older employee to consider a knowledge transfer or mentorship role for example, which may be helpful to the organisation and support the employee in working longer.

Making a timely change could mean for example, that career curtailing arduous work is put aside in favour of more manageable work for a given individual at a point when he or she has the opportunity to learn a new role or work towards new skills or qualifications.

Our question was meant to discover how widely approaches are adopted that are at least consistent with these ideas.

Some 60 per cent of employers offer career development interviews to employees regardless of age whilst a further 26 per cent do so sometimes. Ninety-four employers did not enter answers to this question, implying either lack of knowledge about policies or possibly, lack of provision in this area.

Personal development plans

The argument for personal development plans is similar to that set out above in relation to all age career development interviews. Encouraging all employees to have such plans and adopting policies that achieve them, helps to convey a message that employees of all ages are valued. It underlines the point that while retirement may be an option in the foreseeable future, this does not necessarily mean that it is only option or that employees' futures are inextricably linked to the same roles as they have always performed. Results are summarised in table 13.2.

Thirty-five per cent of employers stated that that employees have personal development plans and that regard is paid to maintaining interest in job and career performance with ageing. Forty per cent of the medium sized employers reported that their employees had such plans.

Changing work roles and job rotation

Encouraging changes in work roles, for example

TABLE 13.1 | Responses to the statement, "Career development interviews are held with employees, regularly and regardless of age." (by employer size, N = 182)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
We have	110	60.44	28	62.22	32	51.61	48	65.75
We do sometimes	48	26.37	12	26.67	17	27.42	19	26.03
We don't have	24	13.19	5	11.11	13	20.97	6	8.22

through job rotation, can be a useful way of maintaining interest in the job. Such approaches can help ensure individual employees use a wider

range of skills and thus maintain a degree of choice and versatility. Supporting employees in this way might enlarge options for continued employment in

TABLE 13.2 | Responses to the statement, "Employees have personal development plans and regard is paid to maintaining interest in job and career performance with ageing." (by employer size, N = 182)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
We have	64	35.16	14	31.11	25	40.32	23	31.51
We do sometimes	84	46.15	26	57.78	22	35.48	36	49.32
We don't have	34	18.68	5	11.11	15	24.19	14	19.18

TABLE 13.3 | Responses to the statement, "Employees are encouraged to change work roles periodically, for example through job rotation." (by employer size, N = 182)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
We have	38	20.88	9	20.00	12	19.35	17	23.29
We do sometimes	76	41.76	20	44.44	22	35.48	34	46.58
We don't have	68	37.36	16	35.56	28	45.16	22	30.14

TABLE 13.4 | Responses to statement, "Employees are made aware of their continued value to the organisation up to and beyond retirement. (Later life changes, where possible, are encouraged)." (by employer size, N = 182)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
We have	41	22.53	9	20.00	18	29.03	13	17.81
We do sometimes	76	41.76	20	44.44	24	38.71	31	42.47
We don't have	65	35.71	16	35.56	20	32.26	29	39.73

the event that need for a particular role diminishes or should an employee face job insecurity for other reasons. Table 13.3 displays responses to the statement regarding changes in work roles.

A fifth of employers reported that employees are encouraged to change work roles periodically whilst 42 per cent of employees reported that they did so sometimes and 37 per cent stated we don't have. On this evidence there is little difference in the ability of small and large employers alike to offer changes in work roles.

Making employees aware of their continued value to the organisation up to and beyond retirement

Employers increasingly value older employees and appreciate the need to retain them in light of demographic changes. How far do they convey these messages to their employees however? For example, how far do employers actively encourage later life changes? Our next question addresses this issue. Results are shown in table 13.4.

Twenty-three per cent of employers claimed to make employees aware of their continued value up to and beyond retirement and 42 per cent did so sometimes. Alternative interpretations are possible. Firstly, it could be that there is low support among employers for the idea that employees are of continued value to the organisation up to and beyond retirement. (Only 23 per cent had policies that made employees aware of this outlook.) Moreover, a proportion of employers seemed at best, selective in such value awareness raising – 42 per cent did so sometimes.

An alternative way of reading the responses is that if there are positive evaluations of older workers, then these are not being directly communicated to them along with suggestions to support later life changes to remain working longer.

LEARNING AND TRAINING

Learning and training measures are vital in any consideration of human resources policies. The extent

to which employees continue to learn throughout their careers may have a significant impact on their employability and work capacity (or work ability) in later life.

The arrangements described in this section of our survey are practical examples of ways in which some employers integrate training and learning interventions into their age management strategies, though most of them might be equally deployed as discrete measures to address specific challenges.

14 | Which of the following arrangements exist in your organisation to ensure employees participate in learning throughout their working lives?

Training arrangements support individual career plans and personal interests as well as company needs

The underlying idea of this, our first policy possibility, is test how far chemicals industry employers encourage and support learning that relates to the individual's needs rather than purely transmission of role related knowledge. Table 14.1 below sets out the responses to the question. A strategic age management approach would seem to demand support for employees to make lateral career moves, follow personalised plans and commit to forms of learning which are intrinsically developmental. The approaches referred to in the statement would seem consistent with this.

As can be seen, nearly 60 per cent of employers supported the statement of policy in Table 1 to the effect that training should support individual career plans and personal interests A further 36 per cent applied this principle sometimes. The largest organisations appear to be strongest supporters of wider dimensions in training arrangements and career plans.

Training and life long learning as aspects of company culture

The issue of company culture is important in that it may or may not encourage employees to make commitments to learning. Companies which claim to

have embedded training within the culture of the organisation typically say they have created a 'thirst for learning'. Such employers work hard at ensuring employees appreciate that learning in its own right is valuable.

Such employers seem to have adopted the right tone.

[4] The effectiveness of such approaches can be measured in higher incidences of learning taking place and employees feeling valued. The likelihood is that the same employees will be more responsive to change and readier to learn new roles and responsibilities when the need arises.

Table 14.2 provides details of responses to this policy statement.

Fifty-nine per cent of respondents agreed that their company had an embedded training culture which encouraged a desire to learn and mental agility. Twenty-seven per cent stated that their company took this approach sometimes.

It could however be said that the word sometimes indicates an 'on – off' approach at odds with the strong commitment implied in the statement. A possible explanation is that companies may lay stress on training unevenly, only supporting training for some employees whilst being more neglectful of others. However, survey responses are in their nature quick and impressionistic and there are probably simpler reasons for this apparent inconsistency.

Training to support changes of role or tasks including horizontal changes that support older workers

Much company training is directed towards support of employees in current roles. However, some change in roles may be important as workers move through different life course stages. Maintaining opportunities for workers to perform new and continuingly useful roles implies that they must sometimes be taken out of their direct areas of experience (beyond their 'comfort zones' in short).

Table 14.3 Sets out the statement offered and responses received from employers.

Forty-seven per cent of employers indicated that they offer training to support changes of roles including horizontal changes which may help older workers, with a further 30 per cent doing so sometimes. Larger employers may be readier to provide such training (54 per cent, compared with 42 per cent for the medium and small employer categories).

Age conscious learning methods

Learning and development research has highlighted that whilst older workers accept and engage with learning when it is offered, there is sometimes resistance to learning if it appears repetitive or takes place in a formal context. Biological age has little effect on a person's ability to learn though other factors, such as work organisation, socialisation of the employees and also spare time activities play a far more important role. Some employers, appreciating the significance of these findings have devised approaches that optimize the effectiveness of learning activities for older employees. Table 14.4 shows responses to the policy option given.

As can be seen, only 8 per cent of employers design learning methods and delivery of training specifically to suit older employees though 26 per cent said that they did so sometimes. The majority of employers, 65.36 per cent, indicated that they did not follow such approaches.

Using older workers to deliver training

Some employers use older workers to deliver training or to mentor younger employees. This is partly because they see this as an effective way of transferring the knowledge of older and more experienced workers through the organisation. Also, using such an approach offers alternative work opportunities to older workers and helps to retain them in the organisation.

Table 14.5 examines the use of older workers in this way.

[4] Evidence in support of this statement is drawn from TAEN's own examination of international best practices through its involvement in the AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50 (International) Awards.

TABLE 14.1 | Responses to statement, "Training arrangements support individual career plans and personal interests as well as company needs." (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	106	59.22	23	51.11	34	56.67	48	66.67
Sometimes	65	36.31	19	42.22	24	40.00	21	29.17
No	8	4.47	3	6.67	2	3.33	3	4.17

TABLE 14.2 | Responses to statement, "Training and life long learning is embedded within the culture of the company. (You encourage an intrinsic motivation to learn and mental agility)." (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	105	58.66	26	57.78	33	55.00	44	61.11
Sometimes	49	27.37	13	28.89	14	23.33	22	30.56
No	25	13.97	6	13.33	13	21.67	6	8.33

TABLE 14.3 | Responses to statement, "Training is offered to support changes of roles or tasks, including horizontal changes that help older workers." (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	84	46.93	19	42.22	25	41.67	39	54.17
Sometimes	54	30.17	15	33.33	15	25.00	24	33.33
No	41	22.91	11	24.44	20	33.33	9	12.50

16 per cent of organisations report that they actively use older workers in delivering training with a further 48 per cent saying that they do so sometimes. There appears to be little difference in the frequency of use

of older workers in training between the smallest and largest organisations, except that rather fewer small organisations sometimes use them.

Managerial awareness of intergenerational differences and potential for learning and teaching

In workplace situations, some knowledge of intergenerational differences and awareness

of the positive attributes which each generation can bring can be helpful, most especially in managing a multi-generational workforce. Managerial awareness of such issues and the potential for generations to pass useful knowledge and skills on to one another

TABLE 14.4 | Responses to statement, "Learning and methods of delivering training are designed specifically to be suitable for older workers." (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	15	8.38	5	11.11	5	8.33	5	6.94
Sometimes	47	26.26	8	17.78	10	16.67	27	37.50
No	117	65.36	32	71.11	45	75.00	40	55.56

TABLE 14.5 | Responses to statement, "Learning and methods of delivering training are designed specifically to be suitable for older workers." (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	28	15.64	7	15.56	10	16.67	11	15.28
Sometimes	86	48.04	17	37.78	30	50.00	38	52.78
No	65	36.31	21	46.67	20	33.33	23	31.94

TABLE 14.6 | Managers are aware of (and make use of) intergenerational differences in the potential of employees as both learners and teachers (cross-mentoring). (by employer size, N = 179)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	27	15.08	8	17.78	11	18.33	7	9.72
Sometimes	89	49.72	16	35.56	33	55.00	40	55.56
No	63	35.20	21	46.67	16	26.67	25	34.72

is increasingly important – hence this statement of policy. Table 14.6 summarises the responses to it.

Fifteen per cent of responding employers stated that managers were aware of (and made use of) intergenerational differences in the potential of employees both as learners and teachers. Forty-nine per cent said that this was sometimes the case. More information on how this issue is approached would be of interest.

STRUCTURING WORKING CONDITIONS TO INCENTIVISE WORKING LATER

Opinions differ on whether it is good practice to offer older employees incentives, in the form of more favourable working conditions, to induce them to work longer before retirement. Examples have existed since at least the nineteen nineties of company and state level policies that have, with varying degrees of success, offered such incentives. Often, these are related to enhanced pension arrangements for those who are able to work longer. [5]

Do organisations structure conditions to incentivise delayed retirement?

Our first question sought to establish how far companies structure working conditions so as to incentivise working later or delaying retirement. Table 15.1 summarises the responses.

Thirteen per cent of employers answered directly yes to the above question with a further 49 per cent answering that they would consider structuring employment conditions to incentivise delayed retirement in selected cases. Thirty-one per cent of employers had not considered the possibility of taking such action whilst 12 per cent would be opposed in principle. None of the responding companies rejected this course on grounds of their concern at the risk of legal action.

A larger number of small employers responded yes to the effect that conditions are structured towards retention of older employees (25 per cent compared with an overall 12.92) though a far smaller proportion consider doing so for selected cases. Unfortunately, whilst these differences are of interest they are statistically fragile.

TABLE 15.1 | Responses to: “Does your organisation offer any conditions of employment which are structured to incentivise working later / delaying retirement?” (by employer size, N = 178)

RESPONSE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	23	12.92	11	25.00	4	6.67	8	11.11
Not generally but would consider in selected cases	78	43.82	12	27.27	31	51.67	35	48.61
No, we have not considered this or see no need	56	31.46	13	29.55	20	33.33	21	29.17
No, we would be opposed in principle	21	11.80	8	18.18	5	8.33	8	11.11
No, we would be concerned of risking legal action	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[5] Examples are quoted in Genevieve Reday Mulvey, Working beyond 60, 2005

Choice of conditions structured to incentivise delayed retirement

Our next question is addressed solely to employers answering yes to question 15.1. This therefore reduced our sample size to 23 cases and displaying responses by employer size ceases to have practical value.

The question with examples of possible conditions that could be so structured, is given as table 15.2

As can be seen, organisations chose a wide range of working conditions through which to attract workers to the idea of working later. None offered time out of the job as a regular condition though 12 organisations (52 per cent) offered this sometimes in given cases. Thirteen organisations (56 per cent) structured pay to provide incentives to work longer and the same number provided for flexible

working and health checks with similar underlying intentions.

Twelve organisations allowed for changed working hours, provided partial retirement arrangements or changed their shift patterns in some way. Seven changed jobs to remove burdensome elements. Five downsized the job (or did something similar) and a similar number introduced incentives via the pension scheme. Numerous organisations did some of these sometimes in specific cases.

PERSONNEL PLANNING

The adoption of age management strategies and practices in organisations demand a range of personnel or human resource management planning

TABLE 15.2 | Responses to: "Which of the following conditions of employment in your organisation are structured to incentivise working later/delaying retirement?" (Companies answering "yes" to question 15.1 only) (N = 23)

CONDITION	YES		SOMETIMES, IN GIVEN CASES		NO	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pay (regular salary/wage).	13	56	5	22	5	22
Bonus or lump sum (in addition to regular salary/ wage).	10	43	7	30	6	26
Changed hours of work (e.g. reductions).	12	52	8	35	3	13
Provisions for flexible working.	13	57	6	26	4	17
Shift pattern (e.g. no night shifts).	8	35	6	55	5	22
Provision of health checks or health benefits on reaching a certain age.	13	57	5	22	5	22
Holidays (e.g. extra leave).	6	26	8	35	9	39
Time out of the job (e.g. blocks of longer time, don't work in last six months, etc).	0	0	12	52	11	48
Pension benefits (i.e. do they accrue at a higher rate for older workers?).	5	22	3	13	15	65
Downsizing of job or something similar.	5	22	12	52	6	26
Changing the job to remove burdensome elements.	7	30	10	43	6	26
Welfare or other similar (e.g. paid for holidays, social events, etc).	6	26	5	22	12	52
Partial or phased retirement arrangements.	12	52	6	27	5	22

arrangements to be in place. The adoption of suitable policies, whilst not sufficient to establish an enterprise with a pro-active age management approach, is a necessary element in the process. Examples of some personnel planning arrangements are set out in our next question.

To summarise the above responses – age distribution analysis is undertaken by 67 per cent of organisations though (according to our figures) slightly fewer of the smallest organisations are so engaged (62 per cent). Clearly age and role analysis of this kind is a fundamental tool, crucial to an age management approach.

Sixty-six per cent of organisations undertake retirement planning and discuss plans with older workers. Again, the smallest organisations (55 per

cent) show a somewhat lesser tendency to engage in planning than the largest employers (64 per cent) and medium sized companies (76 per cent).

Seventy-one per cent of companies engage in succession planning to secure replacements for retiring employees.

In the three above areas, most companies seem to be following appropriate policies, consistent with good HR/ personnel planning. Nonetheless, between a third and a quarter of employers had not put either of these planning instruments in place. These organisations will presumably be challenged to introduce measures to manage demographic change and the ageing workforce.

Only 42 per cent of employers had arrangements in place to analyse the main reasons for employees

**TABLE 16 | Which of the following are features of your personnel planning arrangements?
("Yes" answers, by employer size, N = 177)**

POLICY OR PRACTICE	ALL EMPLOYERS		SMALL (1 - 250 employees)		MEDIUM (251 - 1,000 employees)		LARGE (1,001 + employees)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age distribution analysis (including age and skills or roles) at regular intervals	119	67.23	27	61.36	42	71.19	49	68.06
Retirement planning (scoping who will retire and discussing plans with older workers)	116	65.54	24	54.55	45	76.27	46	63.89
Succession planning to ensure replacements	125	70.62	29	65.91	40	67.80	54	75.00
Analysis of main reasons for early retirement	74	41.81	17	38.64	29	49.15	28	38.89
Policies and practices to address early retirement factors	87	49.15	17	38.64	26	44.07	43	59.72
Knowledge transfer, particularly focusing on intergenerational transfer of 'tacit knowledge' and experience	94	53.11	26	59.09	32	54.24	36	50.00
Recruitment of older workers into company	48	27.12	9	20.45	20	33.90	19	26.39
Age diversity and equality fundamental values throughout the organisation	128	72.32	27	61.36	43	72.88	56	77.78

retiring early. (This was 39 per cent for both the largest and smallest companies and 49 per cent for the medium sized employers.) And less than half of employers had policies to address the loss of employees through early retirement.

Worryingly, only 53 per cent of organisations had policies in place to ensure knowledge transfer, particularly focusing on intergenerational knowledge transfer including unwritten 'tacit' knowledge that is easily lost when older employees leave the organisation. (The smallest companies seemed slightly better than medium and larger employers in this respect).

Seventy-two per cent of employers claimed that age diversity and equality were fundamental values which had permeated their entire organisation – a positive note which might have carried more force had there been somewhat stronger evidence of commitment to recruit older employees – only 27 per cent of companies had such policies in fact.



Overall conclusions

This survey was not designed to give either an accurate Europe wide picture of the state of the chemicals sector as it faces the challenges of demographic change and workforce ageing. Nonetheless, it leads to a number of tentative points.

- 1 | There seems to be a fairly high degree of awareness of the implications of demographic change for individual companies in the sector. (The largest number of employers believed they could cope, a quarter had made changes which they considered would protect their businesses but 17 per cent were not sure what to do and 13 per cent believed that they would not be affected.)
- 2 | A large minority had adopted an age management strategy to respond to workforce ageing and demographic change but only slightly more than half of these reported that their strategy had the approval of the company board.
- 3 | Naming a manager to lead the strategy and briefing senior, middle and line managers seems

to have been one of the most commonly missing elements in application of age management in companies so far, making one suspect that policies and adherence to them may ultimately lack something in robustness.

- 4 | There was good evidence of employees being involved in discussion of issues connected with demographic change and age management, although there may have been little or no discussion of substantive responses to workforce ageing in a largish minority of employers. As an exercise in social dialogue, there would appear to be more to learn from the good and more to teach the less good in this area.
- 5 | Looking at approaches taken to age management, the bias is towards interventions favouring all employees though there are some companies that have directed efforts towards older employees too. (Both approaches are acceptable in given circumstances and it is a matter of judgment as to whether any particular approach is right for a given set of problems and issues.)
- 6 | Responses to the physical challenges questions show a worrying number (around 17 per cent) of employers either failing to consider specific hazards or taking the view that it is not practicable to redesign or change work or the working environment to address them. While, many employers take each of the factors into consideration, there would seem to be room for more structured approaches going beyond mere legal compliance and addressing prevention of loss of work capacity at source.
- 7 | In some of our survey areas there was a strong employer view that special measures were not generally needed to deal with any special problems and issues facing older employees. This appears in the questions about introduction of complex tasks for example, where 47 per cent of employers said that they did not usually allow older workers more time to become familiar with new tasks (though 36 per cent did so sometimes). When asked whether the physical issues listed in the survey were given more weight when considering the needs of older workers / those with age related conditions or disabilities, it was surprising that 20 per cent of employers answered negatively.
- 8 | Similarly, in the provision of flexibility of working time there were few signs that special provisions were being made for older workers, even though there would appear to be sensible adaptations which could be made and which might well support older workers specifically. (One might instance semi-retirement schemes, part time working and other arrangements that would mark a different approach to transitioning into retirement for example.)
- 9 | On the other hand, there are encouraging signs that chemicals employers are following excellent, age aware management practices in some cases. Examples of enlightened approaches may be seen for example, in the area of learning, where 60 per cent of employers believe learning and development plans should support individual needs and interests as well as company aims.
- 10 | Large majorities of employers have occupational health services and monitor the health of employees and their exposure to hazardous substances. However, smaller numbers engaged in active health promotion. Here there were differences according to the sizes of organisations – over 90 per cent of the largest organisations had health promotion measures in place such as encouraging employees to cease smoking or to improve their diets but far fewer among the smaller organisations did so – fewer than 60 per cent of the medium sized employers.
- 11 | Similarly, clear differences exist in the extent to which organisations support physical exercise through health clubs and encouragement of active commuting – more than three times as many of the largest employers offering support compared with the smallest. Relatively few employers (17 per cent in all) offered policies to

prevent employee stress, though again this was more common among the largest employers.


from closer examination of the data and discussion with the social partners in the sector.

- 12 | Forty seven per cent of employers offer training that would support older workers making later life career changes (including horizontally to posts in their organisation). Against this, only 8 per cent of employers designed learning methods specifically suited to older learners, though perhaps this is a more positive indicator than at first sight, given that 26 per cent of employers did so sometimes.
- 13 | There are other positive responses – the fact that 16 per cent of organisations actively use older workers in delivering training and mentoring younger workers for example, must be set alongside the fact that 48 per cent state they did so sometimes. Similarly, the fact that 15 per cent of employers consider their managers to be aware of intergenerational factors and make use of them in learning and teaching, is more of a “glass half full” figure when we note that 49 per cent stated that this was sometimes the case.
- 14 | As one would expect, there are signs that some employers in the sector have more to learn and ways in which they could become more strategically focused on the issues of workforce ageing and demographic change. The figure of 67 per cent of employers which are undertaking age distribution analysis in their organisations highlights a policy and practice gap for the one third of organisations that have not yet adopted this approach as a basic aspect of their workforce planning.
- 15 | The fact that a minority of employers had policies to analyse the causes of early retirements whilst only a similar number had policies to correct such losses, must surely be seen as a further weakness. While a bare majority of employers have seen the value in intergenerational knowledge transfer, this leaves a large minority that have not yet done so. There are other points which may emerge



Comment on further use of survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire used would seem, with some adaptation, to be capable of being used as a simple self assessment tool, or potentially as a device for promotion of discussion in workshops with employers should the project partnership wish to arrange them. However, some of the questions could lead to invalid inferences if it is incorrectly assumed that there are inevitably, "right or wrong" answers to each one. Hence, adaptation would be essential, particularly if the questionnaire were to be used to produce a score against which organisations may wish to roughly benchmark their own performances.



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