**Findings from Spanish pilot workshop**

**Mariano Sánchez & Pilar Díaz**

1. **Summary**
* Attendees’ profile: 5 trade union reps, 1 senior executive (on behalf of her CEO); 3 men, 3 women; participants’ ages concentrated mostly in the mid-to-late 50s.
* Sectors covered: sports and tourism (public); education (public); caregiving services for frail people (private); industry (private).
1. **Context**
* Industrial relations seem to develop very differently depending on each company. However, it was somehow acknowledged that peaceful and integrated relations between employers and trade unions are the exception.
* The value of dialogue and negotiation was underscored as a strong tool for workers to progress in the attainment of their objectives. However, alternative means are at hand: in one of the public organizations involved in the workshop there is now a huge industrial conflict including periodic strikes.
* Except for one of the companies in attendance, a general atmosphere of confronted positions between trade unions and employers pervaded the workshop.
* Nowadays, the real focus of industrial relations has to do with employment stability and salaries’ rise after a decade of economic hardship with very negative impact in the region.
* The current normative labour framework facilitates the so-called ‘flexi-security’ which in the end means that possibilities to fire workers are easier than before.
* It is true that older workers see themselves in a frail position and consider the younger workers to be a threat.
1. **Pre-disposition / orientations**
* This workshop helped our attendees to get acquainted with the concept of active ageing: most of them acknowledged that they had learned about the concept through our invitation to participate in the project. Therefore, we may say that our context is one with a very high degree of **active ageing illiteracy**.
* The most installed concept of active ageing in the region has to do with very old people (80+), retirees (therefore, it has nothing to do with the workplace context), and their capacity to being active from a physical, psychological and social point of view.
* It was manifested very, very clearly throughout the workshop that what workers (except for those in the sector of education) really want is getting access to retirement as soon as possible in the best economic conditions through whatever available means. **The culture and practice of extending working life is fully foreign**. Actually, the real trend in terms of pre-disposition among workers is not reaching the last stage in life (i.e., 65+ or so) still at work.
* In a nutshell, **the majority of (but not all) attendees think that employers will only be interested on active ageing if it means lower costs for them and their companies**. Hence, the persistence of a culture in favour of supporting early retirement for it implies getting rid of older and more expensive workers.
* Governments are really supporting active ageing as a means not to improve workers’ lives but to confront the breaking of the public pension system.
* If the use of technology advances across sectors, and therefore employment is reducing, has it any real sense to talk about extending working lives?
1. **Attitudes on component ideas once shared**
* **None of the workshop attendees was able to cite an example of active ageing measure/policy in their companies**. Why? Firstly, because what workers really want is just the contrary (i.e., ending as soon as possible their work trajectories); secondly, because there is no real knowledge about the concept; and thirdly, because introducing the idea of active ageing in the context of social partners’ bargaining would be very difficult (employers want to save costs at any rate, and workers want to work less provided that they may have access to a good retirement pension).
* During the workshop the following idea emerged strongly: older workers tend to feel part of the company, they have a sense of belonging, but employers don’t take advantage of this feeling. **There is a potential link to be explored between the active ageing culture and the bonding between older workers and the companies they are linked to**.
* Active ageing must be an option, the result of a voluntary decision-making process by the worker.
1. **Specific aspects of working life**
* **Health issues have emerged as the most important and visible reason to argue that active ageing should be considered in industrial relations**. Actually, some collective bargaining agreements mention chronological age as a variable to be taken into account for successful and progressive adaptation of employment’s features to employees.
* There must be way to assess the viability of active ageing depending on the worker’s trajectory, the sector they are in, and the normative environment ruling working life extension and access to pensions. Without such an assessment there is insecurity, therefore hesitation to consider active aging as an option.
* Age structure of human resources in a company needs to be analysed if one liked to understand the potential impact of introducing an active ageing culture. Grouping workers smartly by age cohorts (facilitating intergenerational teaching and learning) becomes an option when a good analysis of age cohorts in the organization has been previously made.
1. **Energy / enthusiasm to go further**
* Once the concept was understood, participants showed interest around it. Should the pilot workshop not being carried out it would have been very difficult to reach the next stage of the project.
* **Pilot participants are aware of the positive side within active ageing.** They suggested a few strategies for that side to be highlighted: providing case studies of retired people whose retirement stage is not being successful, older workers whose personal life gets worse from the day in which they feel that they are not appreciated at their workplaces any longer, etc.
* A system of rewards (less work hours, some extra income, and so on) should be implemented for those older workers who decide to extend their working life. Involving these workers in the training of younger ones would facilitate a richer, more efficient and more pleasant learning experience for the latter.
* Disposition and enthusiasm to go further was the rule once the pilot workshop ended.
1. **Ideas and tools to be noted**
* **Health and healthy ageing stand out clearly as the entry port to bring up active ageing in the context of industrial relations**.
* The introduction of the active ageing culture must start by asking all workers their thoughts about it.
* Generally speaking, in the region **there is resistance among employers to introduce innovations regarding industrial relations**. This attitude might be a serious obstacle to advance in the project.
* The size of a company may be critical to understand the level of acceptance that active ageing has among employers. The bigger the company, the higher probability for active ageing to be considered.
* Strict legislation setting the right framework for active ageing must enter into force if we really want that employers embrace the concept correctly. Some of the current legislation in place is not really being a vehicle for active ageing but for cutting down personnel and save costs (older workers engage in a replacement process, but younger substitutes don’t get hired on a permanent, more expensive basis as it was the case with older workers).
1. **Practical conclusions/lessons**
* **Diverse approach:** the introduction of an active ageing culture must be connected to the trajectory of industrial relations in each particular company. A clash of cultures may arise if active ageing is presented as a distinctive set of beliefs and values with no direct connection with the rest of relevant issues at stake in the company. Otherwise said, a one-size-fits-all strategy to introduce active ageing would be a wrong move. Now, the question is how we may combine issues from particular industrial relations in a company with more general content as it’ll be presented in our education and training materials.
* **Educational component:** future workshops will have to include an introductory presentation of the concept of active ageing given the demonstrated lack of knowledge about it. A challenge arises for us here, namely the introduction of the concept through us during the workshops might limit the construction of original, alternative and more context-rooted understandings of the concept. What would be the right strategy to provide orientation on what’s behind active ageing but without going too far and restrict the possibility for employers and trade reps to build their own concept? We may want to consider two different outlines of contents for our education and training materials depending on whether or not a previous culture and knowledge about active ageing is already present in a company’s industrial relations.
* **Practical focus:** workshops should not only cover specific features of the active ageing culture but down-to-earth strategies on how to introduce the idea of active ageing at the very table where social partners are negotiating. Workers and employers are expecting to hear about PRACTICAL RESOURCES for age management and active ageing policies in the work context. Should our workshops include a couple of good examples to illustrate how these practical resources may look like?
* **Case studies:** workshops should ask for and gather information about real cases in which pre-retirement and/or post-retirement times have had a negative impact on people’s lives. This would be a way to demonstrate how positive the infusion of an active ageing perspective might be.
* **Emphasis on workers’ health and quality of life:** we’d recommend that workshops cover somehow the link between healthy working conditions, quality of life in the workplace, extension of working life, and productivity.
* **Counting on ex-workers too:** current retirees who are already in the pension system but still maintain a link with their former employer may have a stake in the ASPIRE project. Should we involve some of them in the workshops? These ex-workers might bring in some personal experiences about the pros and cons of retiring earlier/later.
1. **Reflections from Interviews**

Reflections from interviews have been interspersed throughout the report.