## Good practice: Need adapting older worker’s job?

Workers’ capabilities change with age, both at physical, physiological and psychosocial level. Generally, older workers have a reduced workability and it is difficult for them to perform the previous tasks in the same conditions that when they were younger. In order to consent them to keep their job, or to find a new one, workplace and working conditions adaptations are necessary.

One of the most common adaptations of working conditions for older workers consists in working time reduction. The transformation of the full-time employment contract into part-time is one of the measures that in Italy are promoted both by law and by collective bargaining. According to law n. 208/2015, article 1, paragraph 284, private employees can transform a permanent full-time job into a part-time one if: they reach 66 years of age 7 months before 31/12/2018; they have at least 20 years of contributions; they reduce their working time by 40-60%. Working part-time can allow older workers to conciliate their job and their personal needs, for example, those related with their health status or with family, and to facilitate the transition to retirement. However, even if part-time could be considered as an active ageing measure, sometimes it is not the most convenient option from the economic point of view, both for the employer as money saving respect to full-time contract is not very high, both for the employee because salary is reduced and most of the times it is necessary to find another occupation. When older workers reduce working time also wages are reduced. This represents a problem if wage is the only workers’ income so it would be necessary to understand how to integrate the reduced wage.

Moreover, even if part-time could be considered as an active ageing measure, in those sectors where part-time is already the rule, particularly the tourism and the cleaning sector, it would be necessary to find other instruments to support older workers in the transition to retirement that do no represent an additional burden to the company.

Flexible working that may consist in changing shifts, smart working or telework are also important measures to allow older workers to keep working according to their needs. In order to consider smart working or telework as an efficient active ageing measure, it is needed to take into account the ecosystem in which the company operations are based, as well as the distance for the commuting. For example, if the company is based in a big city, and the worker lives by the company premises, he/she would probably prefer to go to the office, instead of staying at home. It is necessary to take into account that work from home could generate loneliness and exclusion, especially for older workers that are used to work from the office.

Also tasks’ adaptations are an important active ageing measure. Sometimes, the problem is not the age itself as nowadays the number of task that require extremely hard work is low. The problem is that as consequence of the digitalization, the way of work has changes and rhythms are faster and older workers could have more difficulties to follow these rhythms. In order to avoid that, employers need to offer training and retraining schemes to help older workers with upskilling and new technology. Another possibility is to reduce the workload of older workers.

Tasks’ or working time adaptations allow the retention of talented employees in areas where skills are scarce. In that companies where worker’s professionality has been developed along the years, early retirement of older workers represent an important problem in terms of labour productivity and for that reason, companies are interested in promoting active ageing measures.

In some sectors, like in the tourism sector workers do heavy and repetitive tasks and challenging schedules with shifts starting early in the morning. This typology of working conditions affects particularly older workers. In the retail sector, ageing problems affect older women that work as supermarket cashier. The dimensions of supermarket cash are being reduced and this represent a problem for workers with overweight problems, particularly, older women. The banking sector, in turn, is being particularly affected by digitalization that implies bank’s restructuration and a higher number of redundancies. A solution to allow older workers to keep their job consists in changing their tasks by creating a system of job protection. According to this system, older workers would be able to change their position in the organization in order to keep working. Older workers could perform roles that require less physical activity and more cognitive activity.

Also job-specific accommodations are key to promote active ageing. These adaptations are, for example, adaptation of workstation, ergonomic design of the equipment or other kind of supports. Thanks to new technologies the implementation of accommodations in working instruments that help older workers to perform their job is easier and cheaper. New technologies have allowed also the development of assistive technologies are any object or item that helps a person perform the job, e.g. computer software, organizers, recorders, and timers.

Adaptation of worker’s job is also important from the point of view of Occupational Health and Safety. The most common Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are those unisex and standardized that do not take into account problems related to ageing and gender, particularly the specific needs of older women. Sometimes, ageing causes important changes in worker’s morphology, particularly regarding size. In some cases, these changes could lead to a higher exposure to work-related risks. For this reason, standard PPE and work wear are not adapted to older workers.