



Employment and labour market policies for an ageing workforce and initiatives at the workplace

National overview report: Slovenia

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Introduction

Slovenia has demographic trends common to almost all European countries that encounter low (and declining) birth rates, a rise in life expectancy and low migration inflows of younger people. Consequently, Slovenia faces a trend of ageing population and ageing workforce. In 2004, the share of people aged over 65 was about 15 % and is estimated to grow to 19 % in 2020. The employment rate of the generation 65+ was almost twice as high as the European average (7.2 % vs. EU-25: 3.7 %) but it is lower for people aged between 50 and 64 (46.7 % vs. EU-25: 51.9 % in 2004). The reason for the low employment rate of the elderly population is the transition processes in the 1990s. Retiring was the most advantageous alternative to unemployment and resulted in a relatively low retiring age: in 2003, the average exit age was only 56 years and 2 months which is lower than the European average (EU-25: 61.0 years). It is expected that the effect of the pension reform in 2002 will be a gradually older workforce.

Present demographic trends show that in the next decades the older population in Slovenia will grow further. It is expected that between 1997 and 2020 the working population share will decrease by 3.5 %-points and the non-working age population share will increase by 8.8 %-points. In 2020, people aged over 65 years are estimated to represent 19.0 % of the Slovenian population, people aged between 15 and 64 years 64.7 % and people aged less than 15 years 16.3 %.

The implications of the ageing population after 2006 will be important not only in terms of a slowdown in living standards but also with regard to fiscal and other economic policies. In the coming years (especially after 2006) demographic trends will cause a gradual decrease in the supply of labour and consequently exert pressure on wage increase. Demographic trends will also create bottlenecks in financing the growing expenses particularly for retirement pensions, but also for health services and care for elderly people. These tendencies are questioning the future funding of social protection and the viability of the social security system.

Main problems older people are confronted with on the labour market in Slovenia could be summarised as follows:

- Employment legislation does not sufficiently protect the older workforce from dismissal because of the company's reorganisation (in practice, companies dismiss older employees more often than younger ones).
- There is no efficient consultancy for older unemployed people at employment services because consultants are overburdened.
- Human resource management and employment policy of companies and other organisations is discriminatory. The reasons are the fear of older employees of losing their jobs, the need of companies to accommodate to new technology, the passive role of unions in defending the rights of the ageing workforce and older unemployed people and the unwillingness of some companies to employ older people.
- Disabled older unemployed workers face additional problems because of their disability: older people represent the largest part of disabled workers.
- Older unemployed people have psychological problems (low self-esteem, negative self-image, lack of socialisation, loss of skills and work habit etc.).

Slovenian employment legislation defines the ageing workforce as employed people aged 55 years and over (Slovenian Employment Relationship Act). Hard-to-employ are: (i) unemployed people aged over 50 who are registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia for more than 6 months, and (ii) people aged over 45 whose highest educational attainment is a secondary school degree and who are long-term unemployed (Regulation on implementation of active employment policy measures 2001).

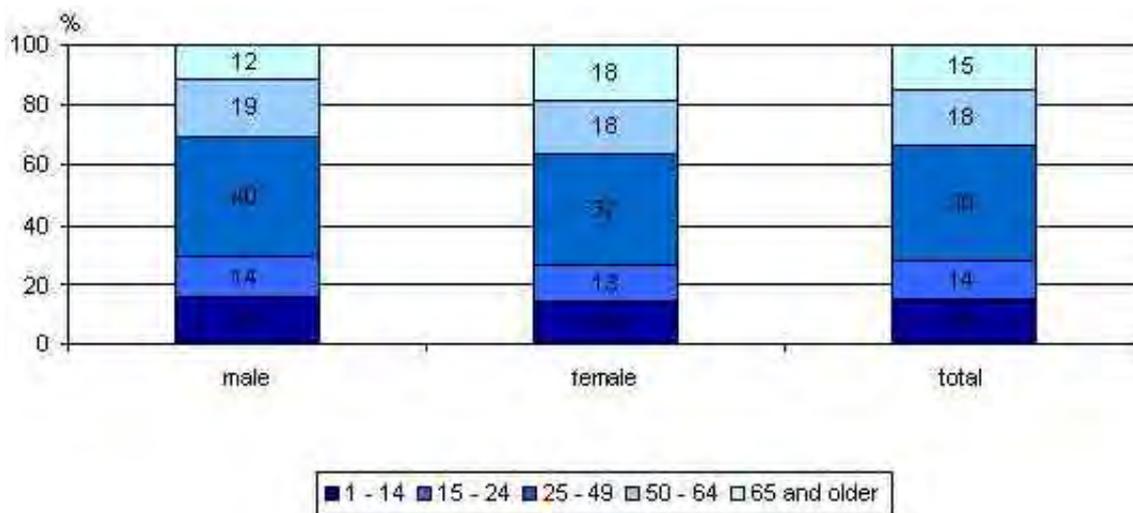
In Slovenia, the ageing workforce has been essentially backed by the government through employment policy since the end of the 1990s, and by activities performed by different actors in the field of adult education and life long learning. Most of the direct activities designed to promote employment of older persons are carried out within the measures that stimulate employers to create new jobs, employment of disadvantaged people and training and education for employment.

However, at present no particular strategy to foster employment of the older workforce and active ageing has been adopted in Slovenia. Ageing workforce issues are tackled in the Strategy for the Economic Development of Slovenia 2001 – 2006 (SEDS), Slovenia’s Development Strategy 2006 – 2013 (SDS) and, partially, in sectoral and regional development strategies, national programmes and other development documents based upon the SDS and SEDS.

Situation of older workers in Slovenia

Slovenia is characterised by a slightly older population compared to the European average (EU-25). About one third of the inhabitants were aged 50+ in 2004, whereby, in particular, the share of persons aged 65+ is higher for women than for men (see Figure 1). Between 1991 and 2004 the share of the older population (50+) increased by about 5 %-points, which is due to a decreasing number of young people.

Figure 1: Share of the population of Slovenia by age group and gender in %, 2004



Source: Eurostat

As regards the educational attainments of the Slovenian population, the younger generations on average have a higher level of formal qualification than the older ones. While, for example among the population aged 65+ the share of those having only completed (pre-)primary and basic education amounted to 51 % and as few as 9 % were academics in 2004, only 16 % of the 25 - 49 year old ones left the formal education system after (pre-)primary and basic education and 20 % completed tertiary education. There are clear differences by gender: whereas older women (45+) are less educated than older men, almost no differences or even higher educational attainments of women can be found in the younger age groups. An analysis over time shows an increasing educational level (i.e. increasing share of inhabitants with completed tertiary education and decreasing share of those with (pre-)primary and basic education) in all age groups. Still, the share of the Slovenian population having completed tertiary education is slightly lower than the European average while the percentage of persons with (post-)secondary education is much higher.

In comparison to the EU-25, Slovenia is characterised by a considerably higher disability rate: In 2002, about 19.5 % of the Slovenian population indicated to have longstanding health problems or disabilities (EU-25: 16.2 %). The prevalence of health problems / disabilities increases with age (e.g. 8.3 % of the 25 - 34 year olds suffered from health problems/disabilities, while the respective share was as high as 30.6 % in the age group 45 - 54 and 41.2 % for the 55 - 64 year old persons). The disability rate is slightly higher for the male than the female population and almost twice as high for persons in unemployment as among the employed. The highest disability rates can be found in the agriculture sector and among skilled agricultural and fishery workers (almost one third), respectively. (Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2003). Between 1990 and 2004, the number of recipients of disability pension (average number per year) has been increasing almost continuously. In 2004, the average age of Slovenians receiving disability pension referred to 53.3 years for men and 49.4 years for women. (Source: Slovenian Pension and Disability Insurance Institute, Annual report 1994).

The employment rate (i.e. the share of employed persons aged 15 and over in the total population of the same age) of Slovenia is higher than the European average. However, differences by age groups can be shown: while the Slovenian employment rate for the generation 65+ is almost twice as high as the European average, it is considerably lower for the 50 - 64 year old ones (see Table 1). The average exit age from the labour market in Slovenia is lower than the European average (56.2 years vs. EU-25: 61.0 years in 2003). Nevertheless, the employment rate of persons aged 50 - 64 has been increasing for the few last years (the one for the 65+ is, however, decreasing). The highest incidence of older employees can be found in the agriculture sector and in public administration, education, health and other services (one fifth of the employees of each of these sectors were aged 50+ in 2004). Comparatively few older employees are active in tourism.

Table 1: *Employment rate (i.e. share of employed persons aged 15 and over in the total population of the same age) of Slovenia and the EU-25 by age group and gender, 2004*

	Male		Female		Total	
	SI	EU25	SI	EU25	SI	EU25
15-24	38.3	39.2	29.1	33.4	33.8	36.4
25-49	88.2	85.9	84.8	69.4	86.5	77.7
50-64	55.8	61.4	37.7	42.8	46.7	51.9
65+	10.8	5.7	5.0	2.2	7.2	3.7
Total	61.8	59.6	49.4	43.6	55.4	51.3

Source: Eurostat

In line with the higher employment rate Slovenia is characterised by a lower unemployment rate (i.e. unemployed persons as a percentage of the active population of the same age) than the European average (6 % vs. 9 % in 2004) which holds true for all age groups (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the share of older persons (50+) among the unemployed has been continuously increasing for the last years (e.g. from 11 % in 2001 to 13 % in 2004) - a tendency that can be found for the EU-25, too (i.e. from 15 % in 2001 to 17 % in 2004). As a result, also the unemployment rate of the 50 - 64 year old ones is slightly increasing over time (from 4.2 % to 4.5 % for Slovenia and from 6.3 % to 7.2 % for the EU-25, respectively, between 2001 and 2004). In general, the duration of unemployment increases with age.

Table 2: Unemployment rate (i.e. unemployed persons as a percentage of the active population of the same age) of Slovenia and the EU-25 by age group and gender, 2004

	Male		Female		Total	
	SI	EU25	SI	EU25	SI	EU25
15-24	11.2	18.4	17.7	18.7	14.0	18.5
25-49	5.0	7.5	5.6	9.5	5.3	8.4
50-64	5.4	7.1	3.3	7.3	4.5	7.2

Source: Eurostat

Role of public actors in fostering active ageing

General public attitude towards the older workforce

Since the end of the 1990s public actors in Slovenia are more aware of the fact that the integration of older people into the labour market will constitute an important factor for ensuring economic growth in the future. Before that, employment policies and the organization of the pension system tended to promote inactivity of older workforce. As a result, strategies and policies for encouraging older workers to remain in employment (i.e. active employment strategy) have been established and the laws (Pension and Disability Act, Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act) have been changed.

Presently, no special active ageing strategy has been adopted in Slovenia. Ageing workforce issues are tackled in The Strategy for the Economic Development of Slovenia 2001 – 2006 (SEDS), Slovenia's *Development Strategy 2006 – 2013* (SDS) and sectoral and regional development strategies, national programmes and other development documents based upon the SDS and SEDS.

Visions, goals and attitude towards the ageing workforce are best represented by Slovenia's Development Strategy (SDS) that was adopted by the government in June 2005 and incorporates the objectives of previously adopted development documents. In preparing the Strategy ministries and expert groups by programme areas were involved. The Strategy was also subject to public debate that included employers' and employees' associations, NGOs, representatives of regional and local interests. Relevant proposals arising from the public debate were included in the final document.

In order to prevent problems and consequences related to ageing workforce SDS and SEDS have foreseen measures that increase citizens' motivation, capability and work possibilities (SEDS 2001, SDS 2005):

- Motivation for activity includes introducing bonuses and penalties in the pension insurance to stimulate longer activity, reforming social assistance programmes, linking social security benefits to a system of active help, relieving the citizens of the tax burden and obligations and institutionalising people's greater personal responsibility for their own social status;
- Ability (capability) for activity includes protecting workers' health, lifelong learning, training, acquiring knowledge and skills, assuring on-job health and safety;
- Possibilities for work include adjusting the working conditions for older employees and changing attitudes towards them, acknowledging their activity, reduce employers' social security contributions for older workers.

However, by the end of 2006 the Slovenian Government intends to adopt *Active ageing strategy* according to the National Action Plan for implementation of Lisbon Strategy, accepted by the government at the end of October 2005. The need for it was expressed in the second report on the implementation of BEPGs.

In order to effectively implement the SDS, the government set up a Reform Committee in 2005, a body in charge of implementing the key reforms related to the Strategy. The Committee prepared several propositions that the government adopted and have been subject to public discussion since the beginning of October 2005. To foster employment of the older workforce and to promote active ageing the Reform Committee suggests an improvement of labour market flexibility, promotion and enabling of life-long learning, a launch of activation systems of social security, a more precise definition of the target recipients of social benefits and services to encourage people to seek and accept work and the modernisation of the pension system. The reform proposals were also used in preparing the National Action Plan for implementation of Lisbon Strategy, which government adopted at the end of October 2005 and are at the time of writing subject to public discussion. Proposed measures for stimulating active ageing and increasing employment of older workforce helping to increase activity of older on long term within the National Action Plan for implementation of Lisbon Strategy, adopted at the end of October 2005 and now subject to discussion are:

- rise of retirement age according to the 1999 pension reform;
- adoption of comprehensive active ageing strategy by the end of 2006;
- enabling access to education, training and life-long learning and thereby substituting quantity of labour force with quality;
- development of integrated employment programmes for older workforce, establishment of working-places in social economy (quasi market) and development of system that would enable older workforce employment in 'normal' economic environment.

Legal framework

There were already some public initiatives for older workforce in the 1970s and 1980s, but they were mainly aimed at improving education, knowledge and employability of adult population and particularly the quality of living. The older workforce has become a topic of public discussion in the early 1990s and at the end of 1990s employment initiatives for an older workforce came to the political agenda in the framework of the Active Employment Policy and reform of pension and unemployment protection systems.

Most of the direct activities to promote employment of older people are carried out within the measures that raise employability of unemployed people, stimulate employers to create new jobs and employment of disadvantaged groups, and training and education for employment. Support as regards the re-entering of the labour market involves mostly (majority) the various financial incentives for employers. However, there is also some counselling done. Great importance is given to regional considerations, to employment of women, disabled and young. Activities are financed by national and European sources (mainly by European Structural Funds).

Modifications of the Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act in 1998 made retirement of unemployed and workers who were not needed anymore after companies have gone through a restructuring process more difficult, thus preventing them to become inactive. The active and more intensive search for jobs has become also the obligation of older unemployed. A reform of the pension system carried out in 1999 increased the retirement age and introduced financial bonuses/penalties for later/early retirement in order to stimulate longer activity. The government plans additional measures to promote longer activity, as for example: reducing restrictions imposed on recruiting retired people, promoting schemes of flexible employment and retirement of the elderly, including early, partial, gradual retirement and retirement conditional on hiring young people. There is also debate of further increasing the retirement age.

Active labour market policies and the preventive approach have become a priority within the National Programme for the Development of Labour Market and Employment up to 2006 and its yearly implementation programme (Guidelines

of Active Labour Market Policy for 2002 and 2003 and in the annual Active Employment Policy Programmes for years 2002 and 2003). The programme followed the EU employment policy guidelines.

Among six strategic objectives of the national programme the problem of older workforce was implicitly covered mainly under the objective of decreasing structural disparities (decrease in the share of long-term unemployed to app. 40 % and the share of unemployed without vocational education to app. 25 %). Older workforce together with young, women and disabled is namely highly present among disadvantaged groups on the labour market.¹ Since 2000, the annual programmes comprise measures and activities for greater employment of older people.

The measures focus on individual employees (e.g. fostering their employability by (re-)qualification, enabling flexible working arrangements or setting incentives for remaining longer in the labour market) or employers (e.g. subsidising labour costs for older employees) or by direct job creations (local employment programmes – public works, subsidising employment in providing home help and personal assistance and care for the disabled, employment in social economy). However, measures were usually part of measures aimed at disadvantaged groups.

Only in last two years special attention was given to older workforce. This in regard to European employment strategy and very low levels of employment rates among older workforce. In assessing the progress in the implementation of the JAP in 2003 the European Commission envisaged Slovenia to use specific tailor-made measures to increase the employment of older workers. In the 2004 update of BEPGs 2003 – 2005 Slovenia was requested to review the tax and benefit systems, with a focus on labour market participation of older workers, and to reassess the measures promoting active ageing by means of lifelong learning activities. With respect to that The Programme of measures for efficient access to the European Union in 2003 introduced a special measure aimed at employing older workforce and channelled through the tax system. Employers have been awarded an exemption from paying social contributions for employing a worker aged over 55 years. The measure was first carried out in 2004 and is still in use in 2005.

The National Employment Action Plan (2004, 2005) and Annual Active Employment Policy Programmes explicitly stated that employing older people (aged over 50) is one of the priorities of Active Employment Policy Programmes. Since 2004, the active employment policy schemes have been redirected towards more intensively addressing the problems of employing people aged 55 – 64 and other disadvantaged groups. In doing that, also regional differences in the unemployment rate are taken into consideration. The annual Active Employment Policy Programme 2005 was in August 2005 amended with a special measure designed for encouragement of new employment of older workforce - subsidies for employing people aged over 50 years full time for at least one year.

In addition to the tax subsidies and public work programmes the government intends to further increase employability of long-term unemployed aged over 55 by their greater inclusion in the programmes of life-long learning, programmes of assistance with planning a career path and seeking employment, advanced and basic training programmes, Programme 10,000+ - for education and the acquisition of national occupational qualifications and certification for unemployed, work-place training and local Public Works employment programmes, employment in the social economy, positive discrimination in public procurement procedures for companies employing disabled or disadvantaged groups (The National Employment Action Plan 2004, 2005).

¹ With regard to older workforce, the definition of disadvantaged group was according to Active Employment Policy Programmes from 2001 to 2003 unemployed people aged over 50, which were registered at Employment Service of Slovenia more than 6 months and people aged over 45, which had a most secondary school degree and were long-term unemployed. From 31. 12. 2003 only the unemployed aged over 50 are included. Other groups included are long-term unemployed, young, disabled or people with reduced working ability, women and single parents.

Great importance was attached to life-long learning and training. However, only recently, the government explicitly states the importance of greater involvement of older people in the programmes of life-long learning and of greater amount of resources given to this field (Government working plan for 2005, National Action Plan for implementation of Lisbon Strategy). In the second report on the implementation of BEPGs (January 2005) the European Commission acknowledged that some activities have been launched to facilitate access to lifelong learning, however they would need to be embedded in a comprehensive active ageing strategy, including financial incentives and flexible working arrangements, to ensure that the retirement age will increase notably. As stated before, the government plans to prepare an active ageing strategy by the end of 2006.

With regard to education and training the Resolution on the National Programme for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until the year 2010 was passed in 2004. Among its priority fields are general education and learning for adults, education in order to raise the educational level and education and training to meet the needs of the labour market. There is also a special Adult Education Act governing the education process of adult population.

From the beginning of the existence of Active Employment Policy Programmes great emphasis was given to the integration of disabled workers or workers who have complex barriers and special needs. Since 2000 there were all the time special initiatives to foster their integration for example: (i) On-job training and integrated training programmes for disabled persons, (ii) Employment rehabilitation, and (iii) Commissions of Experts to categorise disabled persons. In addition, the rehabilitation of disabled is covered also under the Pension and Disability Act. There are special Companies for Disabled, which provide rare possibility of hiring disabled persons and represent type of social entrepreneurship. In 2004 the Act on the Employment-Related Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities was passed (amended in 2005), which brought about new solutions in the field of the employment of persons with disabilities such as: early inclusion in vocational rehabilitation programmes, introduction of quotas, which protect and support employment, enterprises for disabled persons, incentives for the creation of suitable jobs for persons with disabilities, as well as incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities from the side of persons with disabilities, as well as from the side of employers. Also a special Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Promoting the Employment of Persons with Disabilities² has just been constituted and is just starting its work. Its first task will be collection of data to set the quotas for engagement of disabled people in different economic activities.

Public actors

The main public actor in the field of employment initiatives for ageing workforce is the Ministry's of Labour, Family and Social Affairs responsible for the arrangement and implementation of laws and other legislation in the area of employment, labour relations, on-job health and safety, pension and disability insurance, insurance against unemployment, employment and status of disabled persons and social inclusion.

Also other ministries are responsible for policies that foster greater employment of the older workforce. The duties of The Ministry of the Economy in increasing the employment of the older workforce are predominantly connected to promotion of entrepreneurship. In the future the ministry is planning to promote employment via social entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Health is responsible for preparing the health insurance legislation, on-job health and safety and public health. The guidelines for the work of the ministry are set in the National Health Care Programme until 2004 - Health for everybody until 2004 and in the Resolution on national programme for safety and health at work. By now, the ministry has levelled programmes for the whole population, older people after retirement (social care) and special target

² <http://www.gov.si/mdds/z/?PID=148&CID=150&L=sl>

groups (patients with certain diseases, people with addiction problems etc.). The Ministry of Education and Sport has the responsibility for the school system from pre-school education and (upper) secondary to post-secondary education. It is responsible for both, initial and adult education. The Minister responsible for adult education is above all responsible for the regulation of the system of adult education. There is, within the Ministry of Education and Sports, a special Sector for Adult Education. The Ministry of Finance has to check the availability of financial resources.

The central implementing institution for employment policy in Slovenia and the most important mediator between current supply and demand in the labour market is the Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia (ESS). It implements activities which lead to decreases in the number of unemployed and a reduction in the structural disparities in the labour market. The ESS also implements programmes in Slovenia which are co-financed by the European Social Fund (increasing employability, ensuring social inclusion, the creation of new jobs and increasing the adaptability of enterprises), and as a partner, participates in the projects of the EQUAL initiative.

There are also several agencies, institutes and services that implement the legislation in the field. The Institute for Rehabilitation³ performs programmes of employment rehabilitation. It is also responsible for the co-ordination and adjustment of legislation to developments in the field, for standardising the employment rehabilitation services and training programmes. The Institute of Public Health⁴ is responsible for health promotion. They develop and implement preventive programmes and projects to exercise an influence on life style and other health-related factors. They also conduct various surveys concerning the behaviour affecting people's health. In addition to that, the institute also collects, organises and analyses different health-related statistical data, data on communicable diseases, prepares contents for legislation in the field of health activities, takes care of environmental health and advises those who travel abroad on necessary protective measures.

The Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Promoting the Employment of Persons with Disabilities⁵ has recently been constituted. It is supposed to encourage the development of employment for persons with disabilities and the preservation of jobs for persons with disabilities.

In order to ensure fully co-ordinated co-operation of all governmental actors as well as to raise awareness to the highest possible level regarding mechanisms, means, and last but not least, policies available in this field, in the widest possible circle of the interested public, the government established a Project Group for the Development of the Labour Market, Employment, Social Affairs, and Pension System at governmental level. The project group ensures the harmonisation of the policies of various ministries which affect the situation in the labour market and is managed by the Minister in charge of employment. In 2003 the Government, formulated a special coordinating body on the level of the State Secretaries, which prepares the bases for the functioning of the mentioned project group and also cooperated in the preparation of NAP 2004.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (ACS)⁶ was established by the government in 1991. The Institute's basic mission is to foster the culture of lifelong learning and education in Slovenia by research, development, counselling, and education activities all supported by adult education information system. It has a key role in the development of in-service training of managers, trainers and organisers of adult education and training. Its activities in this area are divided

³ <http://www.ir-rs.si/>

⁴ <http://www.ivz.si/ivz/index.php>

⁵ <http://www.gov.si/mdds/?PID=148&CID=150&L=sl>

⁶ <http://www.siae.acs.si/>

into basic andragogic training, specialised training for obtaining international certificates and training related to implementation of innovations in the field of methods and forms of adult education. The lack of high quality trainers represents an important limitation in the efforts of the Institute to meet the needs of adult education and training staff (Ignjatović 2003).

Role of social partnership

The development of social partnership is one of the objectives of the active employment policy and is supposed to improve the labour market situation in Slovenia. At the moment, the social partners in Slovenia do not have any particular guidelines, strategies or statements regarding the employment of older people (interview with social partners). They are engaged in fostering older workforce employment by participating in the Economic-Social Council (ESC). The ESC is the main forum for tripartite consultations of social partners and government; 5 members of the ESC are from trade unions, 5 from employers' organisations and 5 members represent the government. The ESC gives opinions on legislation drafts and other documents relating to economic and social policy. The positions and recommendations of the ESC are not binding for the government or parliament. According to experts, the social dialogue in Slovenia is well developed at the tripartite level. However, the bipartite autonomous dialogue between employers and employees is underdeveloped and should be promoted at sectoral and company level.

Public initiatives for fostering active ageing

In Slovenia, the aim of many public measures is to raise participation rates or improving productive employment among older people, indirectly or/and directly.

Generally speaking, initiatives for the older workforce that are covered by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and performed by the Employment Service of Slovenia address the following sections: training, qualification, skill development, career management, flexible working practices, return to work programmes for older unemployed persons and return to work programmes for people on disability schemes.

The realisation of these initiatives is backed by the following strategic documents and legislation:

- National programme for the labour market development and employment by 2006 (Ur.l. RS, 92/2001),
- National Action Plan for Employment 2004,
- Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act (Ur.L. RS, 5/1991, 12/1992, 71/1993, 38/1994, 69/1998, 67/2002),
- Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005, and
- Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

The Employment Service of Slovenia provides 8 initiatives or programmes which are listed in Appendix 1. In compliance with the EU employment strategy, activity of older people and inclusion of women is a priority target of the Slovenian active employment policy programmes for 2005. Hereinafter are represented the most promising (including the largest number of individuals) initiatives and activities which are intended for various target groups, including the ageing workforce or older people.

Initiative 1:

*Advice and help at employment, Employment Service of Slovenia (Svetovanje in pomoč pri zaposlitvi, Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)*⁷

The initiative is intended for unemployed persons and workers who are going to lose their jobs. In 2005, 14,500 persons have enrolled the programme, of which around 54.5 % represent women. The Employment Service of Slovenia estimates that in 2005 in approximately 31 % of persons involved in this programme will get employed. For the implementation of the initiative there will be a budget of €2,810,000⁸ (672 million SIT). The initiative is financed from budget funds of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

Help in planning careers and job seeking (Activity 2.1) (Pomoč pri načrtovanju poklicne poti in iskanju zaposlitve (Aktivnost 2.1))

The objective of this activity is to motivate unemployed persons towards a more active approach to solving their own unemployment problem by acquisition of fundamental knowledge and skills for active and effective job seeking, communication and social skills and managing their own career. The initiative is performed in the form of workshops which are provided by external contractors or educational institutions selected through public tenders, or by advisers of the Employment Service of Slovenia. The aim of the workshops is to change the attitudes of unemployed people regarding their own career, their own activity of job seeking, and to assume responsibility for them.

Programmes are given for different groups of unemployed persons and are implemented when a required minimum of participants is in place. For the ageing workforce a 'Workshop for employment of older people' is provided. It is adjusted to the needs and characteristics of older unemployed persons. They last for 3 months.

Initiative 2:

*Training and education, Employment Service of Slovenia (Usposabljanje in izobraževanje, Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)*⁹

Education and acquisition of national professional qualifications programme: 10,000+ Programme (Activity 3.3) (Program izobraževanja in pridobitve certifikatov o nacionalnih poklicnih kvalifikacijah za brezposelne osebe – Program 10,000+ (Aktivnost 3.3))

The initiative 'Training and education' consists of formal education to acquire national professional qualifications. The target groups are all unemployed persons, but particularly unemployed persons without primary education, a vocational or professional education, all unemployed women older than 40 years without a vocational or professional education and unemployed persons who have a trade or professional education but cannot obtain employment in their field and have been registered with the Employment Service for over six months. The largest share of participants represents those with the lowest degree of education (59.7 %), the smallest share represents unemployed with high education (0.4 %). Unemployed aged over 40 represent 5.8 % of the participants; unemployed aged from 25 to 34 represent 37.2 %. In 2004, 163 disabled persons were engaged in the 10,000+ Programme.

⁷ Source of activity: Program ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja za leto 2005 (Active Employment Policy Measures Programme) and Katalog ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja 2005 (Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005).

⁸ Average Exchange rate (Bank of Slovenia) in 2004 was 1 € = 238.86 SIT.

⁹ Program ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja za leto 2005 (Active Employment Policy Measures Programme 2005) and Katalog ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja 2005 (Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005).

Initiative 3:*Employment Incentives, Employment Service of Slovenia (Spodbude za zaposlovanje, Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)*

This initiative combines 3 activities: Maintaining jobs, partial cost supplement to maintain jobs and encouraging new employment. The latter two refer to increasing employment activity of older people. In 2005, there are 6,300 new participants included in the Employment incentives programme; 52 % are women. The Employment Service of Slovenia estimates that 83 % of participants in this initiative will get employment in this year.¹⁰

Partial cost supplement to maintain jobs (Activity 4.2) (Nadomestitev dela stroškov (plače) za ohranitev delovnih mest (Aktivnost 4.2))

The programme is aimed at retaining jobs of employed over 50 and of disabled persons by securing equal employment opportunities and promoting the employment of disadvantaged unemployed persons in companies or with other employers. The partial pay supplement for disadvantaged unemployed persons is for at least one year of employment. The subsidy amounts to 2,093.- € (500,000.- SIT) for retaining one workplace for at least one year. In 2005, there are 21,485,000.- € (5,132,000,000.- SIT) allocated to the initiative, covered by the integral fund of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs¹¹.

Encouraging new employment (Activity 4.3) (Spodbujanje novega zaposlovanja (Aktivnost 4.3))¹²

This activity comprises two sub-activities: (i) encouraging additional hiring of disadvantaged unemployed persons through a lump sum subsidy and (ii) encouraging additional hiring of seasonal workers.

Encouraging of additional hiring of disadvantaged unemployed persons – lump sum subsidy (Spodbujanje novega zaposlovanja težje zaposljivih oseb – subvencija v enkratnem znesku)

The aim of the activity is to encourage additional hiring of disadvantaged unemployed persons and workers from industrial sectors in restructuring who are in procedure of losing job and unemployed persons who have been registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia for a maximum of one year. The employer is granted a lump sum subsidy, if he employs workers from the target group full-time for an indefinite period and if the employee works for him at least one year.

Target groups of the initiative are disadvantaged unemployed persons defined as: (i) disabled and unemployed persons who are registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia for more than 12 months during the last 16 months; (ii) people aged over 50 who have been registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia for more than 6 months; (iii) first time job seekers aged under 25; and (iiii) employed in sectors in restructuring.

Initiative 4:*Integration of disabled persons, Employment Service of Slovenia (Integracija invalidov¹³, Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)*

The initiative consists of three activities: (i) On-the-job training and integrated training programmes for disabled persons, (ii) Employment rehabilitation, and (iii) Commissions of Experts to categorise disabled persons. In 2005, 1,100 participants have been newly included in these activities; 54 % of them are women. The employment service of Slovenia estimates that 52 % of participants will be employed in this year.

¹⁰ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹¹ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹² Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹³ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

On-the-Job Training and integrated training programmes for disabled persons (Activity 5.1) (Usposabljanje na delovnem mestu in integrirani program usposabljanja za invalide (Aktivnost 5.1))

The initiative is aimed at increasing and improving the work integration of persons who have complex barriers and special needs deriving from sickness, infirmity, functional limitation or hindrance. The activity refers to qualifying people at particular workplaces in a company and assisting them in their employment after they successfully finish the training. It is designed for non-profit organisations. Training in the workplace lasts from 1 to 3 months. After successfully finishing the training the employer and the employee conclude an employment contract for a period of at least 12 months. The subsidy is assigned for a maximum of one year.¹⁴

Employment rehabilitation¹⁵ (Activity 5.2) (Zaposlitvena rehabilitacija (Aktivnost 5.2))

Employment rehabilitation is a help system for unemployed disabled persons and its aim is to qualify them for particular jobs, to enable them to become employed and to promote or change their own career. The target group are disadvantaged unemployed persons aged over 50 with health malfunction in preliminary preparatory process for determining the status of disabled persons, registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia.

Initiative 5:

Direct job creation, Employment Service of Slovenia (Activity 5.3) (Neposredno ustvarjanje novih delovnih mest, Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)

This initiative consists of three activities: (a) Local employment programmes - public works; (b) Subsidising employment through providing home help and personal assistance and care for the disabled, and (c) Encouraging personal complementary work. In 2005, 5,800 participants were newly included in those programmes, 55 % of them were women¹⁶. The Employment Service of Slovenia estimates that about 120 participants will be employed this year¹⁷. In 2005, 22,582,266.- € (5,394,000,000.- SIT) were allocated to the initiative and are covered by the integral fund of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

Local employment programmes - public works (Activity 6.1) (Lokalno zaposlitveni programi – javna dela (Aktivnost 6.1))

Programmes of public works are local or national employment programmes that are intended to foster work and social inclusion of the most vulnerable unemployed persons, to increase their knowledge level and abilities, to motivate and develop their long-term career and to develop new jobs as well as to stimulate employers to hire employees for an indefinite period and to activate local communities to solve unemployment problems. The programme's target groups are women over 50 years, men over 55 years and disabled persons and persons that will be retired in 5 years or less. Unemployed persons are included in the programme part time (maximum of 30 hours weekly or up to 4 days per week), but they are included in training, education and active job seeking for one fourth of the programme duration. Participants are included in public work usually for one year, but the participation can be extended, if it is not possible to ensure the unemployed a suitable job.

¹⁴ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹⁵ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹⁶ Source: Employment Service of Slovenia. Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

¹⁷ Source: Active Employment Policy Measures Programme and Catalogue of Active Employment Policy Measures Programme for 2005.

Initiative 6:*Companies for Disabled, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (Invalidska podjetja v RS, Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve)*

Companies for disabled are under the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. These companies are of particular importance as they provide the rare possibility of hiring disabled persons and represent a type of social entrepreneurship. Founding such enterprises started already before 1976, namely by establishing disabled workrooms. They were active until 1988 when they were reorganised into companies for disabled. Between 1988 and 2004 the number of these companies increased from 11 to 156. In 2004, the employment in those companies has sharply increased. At the end of 2004, 13,580 employees were employed in disabled companies, among which 6,348 were disabled persons.

The legal basis for founding companies for disabled is established by the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act. It determines conditions of activities, the process of gaining the status of a company for disabled, ways of operating and profit sharing, the impact of the state on property and the impact on accepting decisions and obligatory revision of annual balances. Such companies receive a monthly subsidy for every employed disabled person in accordance with the Regulations about measures for partly costs substitution for disabled companies. The Pension and Invalidity Insurance Act defines that the employed disabled person and the employer receive contributions payable on a special account of the employer. Contributions for pension and disability insurance which must be paid for employed disabled person are covered by the national budget. The Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia renounces payment of contributions for health care and insurance¹⁸. Companies for disabled are not paying payroll tax¹⁹.

Initiative 7:*Slovenian lifelong learning week, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) (Teden vseživljenjskega učenja, Andragoški center Slovenije)*

The Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week (LLW) was initiated in 1996 to contribute to the development and dissemination of the theory and practice of lifelong learning in the society. One of the primary aims of this seven-day event, traditionally held in the third week of October, is the raising of public awareness concerning the importance, necessity and omnipresence of learning, required by all people at all stages of their lives for the development and understanding of numerous aspects of their personalities - physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. The LLW thus helps to promote awareness of the fact that school education is insufficient for the attainment of enough knowledge and skills to last the whole lifetime and to open up all paths for one's personal development.

After eight years, the LLW has become a traditional event bringing together numerous organisations, associations and individuals committed to learning and education with the aim of helping to develop a positive attitude towards learning and promoting the recognition of it as the key to a better life. During the week, many presentations, educational, informative, advisory, cultural and other events and exhibitions are taking place at national and local levels. The LLW is being initiated and co-ordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE)²⁰ and besides being a nationwide promotional event, it has proven to be the best occasion for celebrating outstanding learning achievements of adults. The project is sponsored by the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Sports.

¹⁸ Health Care and Health Insurance Act.

¹⁹ Payroll Tax Act

²⁰ Andragoški center Slovenije (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education).

Initiative 8:

Adult education, Ministry of Education and Sport (Učenje za odrasle, Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport)

Adult education is characterised by rich programme diversity. Schools and higher education institutions, basically providing youth education, also offer formal education courses for adults, adapting the programmes and their organisation to the needs of adult learners. Non-formal education programmes are designed for various target groups, for example, employed people seeking to improve their employment opportunities or gain promotion, individuals wishing to enhance the quality of their lives, individuals pursuing a hobby, the unemployed, marginal groups, ethnic groups and foreigners. Access to most non-formal education courses is unrestricted.

The Adult Education Act regulates the adult education system and the specifics of its administration and financing. On the basis of this Act the public interest in adult education is going to be determined in future by the Adult Education Master Plan (*Nacionalni program izobraževanja odraslih*) which is to be accepted by the National Assembly and proposed by the government of Slovenia.

In principle, one may divide providers and institutional pillars of adult education into three groups: (i) Institutions whose main activity is the education of adults, the example of such institutions are Adult Education Centres; (ii) Organisations for the education of adults and youth (public and private) whose main activity is the education of the youth, but they also organise and offer programmes of adult education. (iii) Wide and diversified organisations which along their main activity (which is not educational) also provide adult education (mainly non-formal) as an important part of their programme.

Initiative 9:

Labour Relations Act, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs²¹ (Zakon o delovnih razmerjih, Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve)

The newly adopted Labour Relations Act entered into force in 2003. The Act sets the legal framework for all kinds of flexible forms of employment, determines special arrangements for small enterprises, enables working time flexibility etc. The Act improves the flexibility of the labour market. The objectives of the Act are the inclusion of workers in the working process, assuring that work and needs are reconciled, the prevention of unemployment by considering rights of workers to freely choose the work and rights to dignity and protection and finally to protect the interest of workers in labour relations.

There are special provisions in the act regarding the older workforce. Workers that are over 55 years old are entitled to special protection. They may not be dismissed from employment due to business reasons unless the worker fulfils minimum criteria to retire or if he/she is entitled to unemployment benefits until fulfilling minimum eligibility criteria for old-age retirement. According to the 'Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act' the old unemployed person may receive benefits for three years prior to retirement. This protection is not guaranteed in cases of insolvency and bankruptcy.

The new act also enables older workers to combine retirement with work (part-time work in combination with part-time pension). Overtime and nightly work of older workers are only allowed, if workers approve in writing. However, the new act does not give older workers rights to be redirected from a working place that is dangerous for his/her health and at the same time preserving previous wage level. In the Act there are also provisions concerning disabled workers. The

²¹ Zakon o delovnih razmerjih, Available: http://www.zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r00/predpis_ZAKO1420.html

employer is not allowed to dismiss the II. or III. category disabled worker or disabled person because of business reasons unless he is not able to provide other suitable work or part-time work.

Initiative 10

*Pension and Disability Insurance Act*²², Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (*Zakon o pokojninskem in invalidskem zavarovanju, Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve*)

The Slovenian pension and disability insurance system is based on intergenerational solidarity. The Pension and Disability Insurance Act regulates both, the obligatory and voluntary pension insurance. Obligatory insured persons are entitled to pension (old-age, disability, widow, family), disability allowances and some other claims. The Act was passed in 1999. Provisions regarding the pension system were enforced in 2000.

The most essential step in ensuring a sustainable pension system and raising older workforce activity was to rise the age of retirement and increase the pension qualifying period. Furthermore, the Act introduced bonuses and penalties for later (early) retirement. All measures aim at stimulating longer activity. After the changes, retired people are allowed to work part-time and combine wage with part-time pension.

The Pension and Disability Insurance act also regulates long-term and permanent work disability and occupational rehabilitation due to diseases and accidents. The provisions that were enforced in 2003 stimulate greater work-activity of disabled workers by enabling them access to rehabilitation and by reimbursing certain cost of rehabilitation to employers and employees.

Measures and initiatives implemented at individual company/organisation level

LIP Bled, d.d.

Organisational background

LIP Bled d.d. (Rečiška cesta 61 A, Bled) is a nationally owned private wood processing company organised as a joint stock company. Approximately 33 % of the shares are owned by employees, former employees and other natural persons and 67 % are owned by legal persons. The company was founded in 1948 as a saw-mill company. Today it is specialised in the production of builders' joinery. Its main product groups are construction panels, solid-wood furniture and doors. The company has a classical functional organisational structure.

It employs 672 employees, 419 male (62.35 %) and 253 female (37.65 %). The average age of the workforce is 41 years. The majority of the workforce are unskilled workers. In 2005, 15.43 % of the workforce had basic education, 28.37 % lower secondary vocational education (2 years), 28.27 % secondary vocational education (3 years), 20.16 % secondary technical education, 3.38 % post-secondary education, 4.17 % higher education and 0.23 % had a postgraduate degree. The qualification structure is not optimal and is determined by the labour-intensive nature of the sector. 70 % of the workforce is employed in production. The company is confronted with the shortage of joiners (secondary vocational education - 3 years). In order to overcome the problem, unskilled and less qualified workforce is being educated. Usually they are attending class units for adults at Srednja lesarska šola (Upper secondary school for wood processing) in Škofja Loka.

²² Available: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/online.jsp?urlid=200420&dhid=67781> (official consolidated text)

Practice today

The Human resource policy comprises a whole spectrum of non-age specific initiatives that are intended for all employees. It consists of training (part-time education, language courses and occupational training), rewards for encouraging innovation activities and measures for reducing the number of sickness leaves. In 2004, the company introduced annual personal interviews that should improve trust among employees, increase employees' efficiency and enable cooperation of employees in preparing the company's plans for the future.

A measure that exclusively targets the older workforce is their reallocation (reassignment) to less demanding workplaces while keeping their wage level unchanged. The measure was proposed by the trade union and was adopted after intensive social dialogue. It is quoted in the collective agreement in the section 'Protection of older workforce'.

The measure is aimed at employees aged over 50 (or 55) that voluntarily want to change their current workplace for less-demanding one. The reallocation (reassignment) is proposed to the employee by his/her immediate superior. Older worker's impairment of productivity must be confirmed by medical evidence. The employee is offered a new workplace with regard to his/her age and remaining ability to work. A new employment contract must be signed in agreement with the employee.

After the reassignment the employee receives the same or even a better salary than before. The described measure is implemented in combination with annual interviews, a regular annual medical examination of the employees (being related to keeping records on the number of sickness leaves).

The measure can be applied to all workplaces. It is used by approximately 50 % of workforce that completes 50 years. Reasons for this decision are exhaustion and incapability for qualitative work performance. Among the beneficiaries, there are more women than men. Until now only one employee has refused the offer for reassignment.

The main reason for the introduction of the measure was the preservation and stimulation of employees' work efficiency. The measure was proposed by the trade union for wood processing (Sindikat lesarstva Slovenije – SINLES). The negotiation started in 1991 and was completed in 1993 when the collective agreement was signed. Key actors in performing the measure are the human resources department and individual employees.

Sources to finance the difference in earnings are provided by the company. Gross costs per employee are relatively low and amount to approximately 20,000 tolar (83 euro) per month. Costs are compensated by employees' higher productivity in the new workplace. There is also a reduction in losses that were incurred because employees at previous workplaces were unable to fulfil targeted results.

The opinion of the company is that the measure has predominantly positive effects on employees and the company. Employees' productivity in the new workplace is increased, the work on reassigned positions is better done, employees fulfil targeted goals and standards and there is also less sickness leaves. The company benefits from the improved contentedness of employees, an improved organisational climate and from a closer link-up of employees with the company.

The company plans to set up a company for disabled that will employ older workforce and disabled workers that are already employed in LIP Bled. In addition to them it will also employ employees for whom disability will be established by annual preventative medical examination. The purpose of the measure is to improve the qualification and age structure in the current company (LIP Bled). At the same time, the new company for disabled will be able to take advantage of legal provisions regulating those companies.

Hitherto development of the case study

The company was engaged in active human resource policy already before the introduction of the measure described. The measure is, therefore, one in the stream of human resources activities for promotion and development of all employees irrespective of their age or education attained.

However, the measure has brought new momentum as it reoriented human resources policy towards greater concern for the older workforce and their productivity and contentedness at work. This move can be in great deal attributed to good social dialogue in the company that resulted in a collective agreement in which provisions of reallocation (reassignment) to a less demanding workplace due to impaired productivity while keeping the wage level unchanged are quoted.

The described measure complements other company's measures such as: annual interviews, measures for keeping records and reduction of the number of sickness leaves and measures to promote education and training.

Further information

Contact person with whom the interview was carried out: Anton Koncilja, Human resource and educational department, Head, LIP Bled, d.d.

LIP Bled, d.d., homepage, available online: <http://www.lip-bled.si/>

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Annual Report 2002 (in Slovene language). Letno poročilo 2002 LIP Bled, d.d. Available online: <http://www.seonet.ljse.si/menu/default.asp>

Trading company

Organisational background

The company²³ is a nationally owned private trading company organised as a joint stock company operating as a single trading company since 2002, when four companies were incorporated. The company is specialised in trade with technical and industrial goods as well as with products for household and construction.

Approximately 95.5 % of the shares are owned by a Group, consisting of 19 affiliated companies. It is diversified into six divisions: Rubber Manufacturing, Chemicals, Trade, Tourism, Real Estate and Investment Finance. Company Group companies are linked by capital, organisational structure and management.

In April 2005, the company employed 333 persons, 50 % male/female. The average age of the workforce is 44 years. 67.2 % of employees are aged 40+ (69.1 % female), 17.1 % are 50 - 55 years and 9.3 % are 55 - 60 years.

²³ At a later stage the company made a decision that it did not want to be named in the project. All relevant (contact) information is available at the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management, University of Maribor, Faculty of Economics and Business

The company is confronted with a shortage of skilled workers with secondary vocational education. 44.4 % of the unskilled workforce are older and disabled workers.

The company follows the company group's learning organisation strategy. Non-age specific initiatives are applied, providing for training and development of all employees. The Human Resources Department is in charge of development and implementation of education programmes, scholarships and practical work policy, human resources development and labour psychology.

Practice today

In February 2005, a workshop on improving the employees' health by changing their attitude to work (*'Self-motivation for health improvement: How to do something that can not be done'*) was organised by the human resources department. Targeted group were employees who frequently had been on sickness leave since the four companies were incorporated in one in 2002. In general, they are males aged over 50 with basic education and with disability in several cases.

The workshop was initiated by the company group as a part of the company's business strategy of cutting down operating costs by reducing the number of sickness leaves. In the company sickness leaves represent 6.2 % of all monthly working hours. On average, there were 20.7 workers on sickness leave per month. Between January and April 2005, 19 employees were absent for more than 30 days. The company faced the occurrence of the so called 'merger syndrome' after the merger in 2002. Its characteristics are overburdening, thinking on the worst possible options, stressful responding, crisis management, chimera of being controlled and shortage of information. Disquiet and fear provoked by the merger have adversely affected employees' morality, work efficiency and health. The consequences were an increase in sickness leaves of male employees aged over 50 years with basic education.

The workshop's goals were: i) to reduce sickness leaves in order to enable optimal job performance, ii) to find and understand reasons for tensions and sickness leaves, iii) to reduce stress and increase productivity, creativity and relaxation of employees and their affiliation to company, iv) to ensure that employees take over responsibility for their health. The employees should discover, understand and use their hidden potentials and, thereby, reduce sickness leaves.

25 employees participated in the workshop that was financed by the company in accordance with its business plan in the field of employees' education (training). The workshop consisted of lectures (8 hours), team work with employees' active participation (8 hours) and personal interviews. All invited employees, selected by Human Resources Department and Heads of Departments, took part in the workshop. The council of workers and the trade union were not involved in the formation and implementation of this human resources policy. Social dialogue is limited to negotiations on collective agreement regarding whole trade sector.

The initial resistance to the workshop eventually vanished and participants became more caring and began to think about themselves, their problems at job and about possible solutions to them. It was revealed that on average they had gained many previous negative experiences in work and in personal life. On the second day the group was much more relaxed and open to 'new and strange' ideas.

All participants exposed the problem of bad personal relations resulting from their fear of losing employment, meeting market demands, meeting owners' expectations and management demands and having insufficient knowledge on intra personal relations. Their recurrent response to changes was that they are too old, that it is too late for them, and they saw sickness as a solution for their problems.

The workshop has qualified them to better understand themselves and their way of reasoning. They have learned how to recognise basic reasons for stress and simple methods to overcome it. Employees have realised that demands of the

market, owners and management will not change. However, by gaining mastery over personal relations and by understanding how they and other people work they will be able to influence certain things.

The number of sickness leaves has not fallen, yet. Despite that the company considers the training to be successful. The participants have changed their way of thinking and taken over the responsibility for their health status. They have learned that there are always solutions and that they have an important part in looking for them. The personal relations on workplaces have improved.

In accordance with the learning organisation strategy of the company group, the company plans to continue with permanent activities in the field of formal and non-formal education and training of employees to improve the company's qualification (education) structure and adjust to market demands. They have not yet decided whether to repeat the described workshop. However, some other measures to reduce sickness leaves and to improve the health and well-being that will include older workers are being discussed.

Hitherto development of the case study

Human resources policy comprises a whole spectrum of non-age specific initiatives that are intended for all employees. No measure or workshop specifically targeting the older workforce has been carried out, yet. The described measure has brought new momentum as it was intended predominantly to male workers aged over 50. However, the main selection criterion to participate in the workshop was employee's history of sickness leaves, not his/her age.

To reduce the number of sickness leaves the company organised another workshop dealing with problem of acceptance of hard-to-accept persons (*'Kako sprejeti nekoga, ki ga je težko sprejeti'*) in 2005. It was intended for directors of working teams who are daily involved in managing different personal relations and it complemented the workshop for employees. Its main emphasis was to understand the connection between personal relations and communication in job with the employees' private life. The directors have learned new perspectives on management, personal relations and on the possibilities they have to influence the decrease of employees' sickness leaves. Both workshops are part of a broader initiative of joining four different after-merger organisational cultures into a new one.

RTV Slovenija

Organisational background

RTV Slovenija (Kolodvorska 2, Ljubljana) is a public, non-profit radio-television organisation performing radio and TV broadcasting and other activities. It operates on the basis of the Law on RTV Slovenija (1994) and several amendments adopted by the legislator, and in compliance with the Law on Media of Republic of Slovenia (2001). RTV Slovenija was founded by the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia. It started as Radio Ljubljana in 1928 while first television broadcast was in 1957. RTV Slovenija consists of 9 organisational units. Its managing body is The Council of RTV Slovenija. Business and operations of RTV Slovenija are managed by the Director General.

RTV Slovenija employs 2,187 full time employees, 841 (38.5 %) women and 1,346 (61.5 %) men. There are approximately 700 regular part-time workers and approximately 2,000 occasional workers. The average age of the workforce is 44 years with an average working period of 21 years. In the company, there is a works council and three trade unions representing journalists, cultural and art workers as well as broadcasting workers.

Practice today

The human resources strategy aims at decreasing employees' average age, improving educational and organisational culture and reducing labour costs. In 2004, the Educational Centre was established to meet the employees' needs for skills. The Centre offers internally certified seminars, providing specific skills (for example, on communication, culture

of clothing for journalists and public appearances etc.). In 2004, 950 employees took part in programmes of the Centre. The organisation also attaches considerable importance to protecting of employees' health. Except for a full-time study programme where priority is given to younger workers, other human resources policy initiatives are non-age specific.

The measure that predominantly includes employees aged over 50 is 'preventive medical examinations for the risk groups of employees, managers and workers who prove themselves with their attitude to work'. Risk groups consist of employees with chronic diseases, disabled workers, workers that have undergone a surgical operation, older workers and workers who decided to retire.

On the basis of regular annual personal interviews with employees, interviews with directors of departments and according to results of regular annual employee's medical examination the human resources department prepares the list of candidates for 50 places. The final decision is made by a special three member committee (president of the Council of workers, a social worker and one employee from the Human Resources Department). In addition, directors may suggest additional 20 employees. All together, 70 employees take part in the programme each year. Participation in the programme is voluntary and most of the candidates accept to take part in it. 80 % of the participants are older than 50 years and other 20 % are managers and employees under constant stress. The measure does not discriminate against gender. However, because of the structure of employees more men than women participated in it.

The chosen group of employees spends five days in one of the Slovenian spa centres where it is offered preventive medical treatment. Medical and hotel costs are covered by the organisation (60 %) and the employee (40 %). Days spent in the spa are qualified as regular holidays. The average annual costs of the total measure for the company amount to 33,370.- €²⁴.

The measure was initiated by the marketing department as a tool to sell the advertisement in media. The selected spa is entitled to advertising on RTV Slovenija up to the total costs covered by the company. In addition to business reasons, the management of RTV Slovenija sees the measure also as a way to motivate the target group for more efficient work, reward them for good performance and to keep and improve their loyalty to the organisation. An agreement between RTV Slovenija and the spa centre is signed separately each year.

As the company does not systematically evaluate effects of the measure on the employees it is not possible to identify its influence on employees' productivity. However, improved state of health and higher motivation for work has been noticed with reference to the participants. Employees' representatives are involved in the implementation of the measure. Social dialogue is primarily conducted between the management and the Council of workers. Social dialogue with any of the three trade unions is contaminated by distrust among participants and is, therefore, restricted (limited) to the issues of collective agreements. The future performance of the measure is subject to the new management and its decision whether to invest in human development with preventive health examination.

Hitherto development of the case study

The described case study is a part of activities aimed at improving health, increasing motivation and improving the organisational culture. Besides, the company is performing other health examinations, too, such as pneumologic examination and the examination of eyes and breast.

²⁴ Exchange rate per 31.12.2004: 1 € = 239,74 SIT

The measure is intended for the risk groups of employees, managers and workers who excel with their work attitudes. Before the introduction of the measure only employees with chronic diseases and workers that have undergone a surgical operation were allowed to participate in the treatment in the spa. Only 5 workers took advantage of the opportunity in 2005. The case study represents the development and improvement of preventive health examinations of employees which have been carried out for many years. Until three years ago, RTV Slovenija even employed a medical nurse who took care of employees' health and was coordinating measures with doctors. After she had retired the responsibility for health examinations was taken over by a unit of the Community (Primary) Health Care Centre situated near RTV Slovenija. Within the Human Resources Department special social work service is organised. The employed social worker is dealing with different employees' problems, including also problems due to ageing and impairment of work efficiency.

Further information

Contact person with whom the interview was carried out:

Aleksander Novak, Head of Human Resource department

RTV Slovenija homepage (in Slovene and English language), available online: <http://www.rtv slo.si>

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Revoz Novo mesto d.d.

Organisational background

Revoz, Novo mesto d.d. is a private joint stock company being the only car manufacturer in Slovenia and the most important Slovenian exporter. It is a member of the Renault International Group. From 1991 to 2003 the majority of its shares were owned by the French Renault S.A. and since December 22, 2003 the company has been owned to 100 % by Renault. To improve the performance in the commercial and industrial field the commercial branch Renault Slovenija was established on July 1, 2002 while Revoz maintains its capacities in the industrial domain.

In August 2005, the company employed 2,722 employees, 81 % of which are male and 19 % female. 83.2 % of the 1,933 employees directly engaged in production are male. The average age of the workforce in production is 35 years (male 34.8 and female 36.3 years). The age structure is considered to be optimal. 39.6 % of the employees in production are 30 – 39, 24.4 % are 40 – 49 and 7.3 % are aged above 50.

In August 2005, 46.8 % of the workforce had basic education, 0.4 % lower secondary vocational education (2 years), 27.1 % secondary vocational education (3 years), 17.2 % secondary education, 3.9 % post-secondary education, 4.9 % higher education and 0.2 % held a postgraduate degree.

The company is aware of the problems caused by an ageing population and is raising the statutory retirement age as Renault International Group companies in France and Spain have already been confronted with mentioned problems.

Practice today

One of the Group's measures aiming at increasing employability of employees is the introduction of ergonomics in health and safety at work policy, which is one of the Renault Group's priorities. It is non-age specific measure indirectly helping to deal with ageing population problems and to employ workforce with impaired productivity. The goals of the measure are improvement of workplace's ergonomics and incorporation of ergonomics in designs of the new vehicles' production process, thereby preventing (limiting) the occurrence of occupational diseases, solving ageing problems and problems of employability of hard-to-employ people and, finally, increasing the production's efficiency.

The first step in improving ergonomics is an analysis of existing workplace's safety (noise, strokes, cuts, falling of objects etc.) and ergonomics (position of body and upper and lower extremities, effort, adjustment and complexity). Two methods are used: simple method and Renault V3 method. Based on so simple method superiors judge workplace's safety and ergonomics as i) satisfactory (green), ii) satisfactory with minor limitations (yellow) and iii) satisfactory with important limitations (red). Yellow marked workplaces should be further evaluated and improved; red marked workplaces must be immediately evaluated and improved.

The Renault V3 method is applied to assess repeating activities and for in-depth workplace's ergonomics evaluations. According to physical and mental demands of the workplace its total workload is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 by four criteria (poise, effort, complexity (how burdensome is the number, type and variety of information that the employee has to process) and adjustment (to measure the flexibility of the worker to master changing environments as diversity of products, untypical (irregular) activities, changes of products etc.)) and the most burdensome operations are identified. Renault V3 method classifies workplaces as: appropriate (suitable) for employees with impaired productivity (level 1 and 2); appropriate, with acceptable limitations (risks), for male and female workers aged over 45; potentially health threatening, appropriate for young workers (level 4) and dangerous for health (level 5). The company's goal is to organise workplaces and ensure working conditions acceptable for males and females aged over 45 (target level).

The next step is implementation of improvements of workplaces which are introduced by the Kaizen method and with special working teams for improvement of ergonomics. Team members are supervisors (heads), (two) expert(s) in technology, an employee from the maintenance department, an expert in ergonomics, a safety engineer, a worker and an employee specialised in occupational medicine.

The Human Resources Department is responsible for introducing and implementing the measure. Also employees take part in the implementation process by giving suggestions on how to improve safety and ergonomics in their workplaces.

Due to the measure ergonomics in all units has been considerably improved. In the unit Chassis, for example, the share of red workplaces in total number of workplaces was lowered from 40.0 % (year 2002) to 23.1 % (September 2005) while the shares of green and yellow workplaces were increased (from 10 % to 24.6 % and from 50 % to 52.3 %, respectively).

Furthermore, the employability of workers over 45, especially of women, was improved. Such development is very advantageous for the company because of the characteristics of the regional labour market (shortage of male workforce and availability of a well qualified female workforce). For example, in the unit Car-body the rearrangement of workplaces to meet the abilities of the workforce over 45 years has increased company's recruitment opportunities. Secondly, the activity period of employees has been prolonged. Thirdly, the organisational climate has been improved.

The described measure is planned to continue in the future. Revoz is aiming at improving 20 % of the workplaces in

2006. In order to achieve this goal the company will continue to follow already established principles: i) workers must rotate among workplaces that differently burden their bodies – job rotation (each worker has to master work at three different workplaces), ii) workers' suggestions should be taken into account when rearranging the workplaces, iii) changes should be introduced gradually, iv) employees have to be educated and trained, v) ergonomics and certain efficiency aspects of the workplace (its occupation, quality mistakes and productivity) are not in conflict with each other.

The successful improvement of ergonomics requires that: i) ergonomics is included in the safety at work policy by the management, ii) tools to evaluate and improve the workplace and financial sources are defined and provided, iii) targets (level of improvement of workplace, priority workplaces and dynamics of work) are set, iv) participants are trained.

Hitherto development of the case study

The workplaces continuously improved since 1998. The described measure has been used since 2002 within the framework of preparation for the production of new Renault vehicles. In preparation for the launch of this new project, special attention was paid to the development of professions, of necessary competences and training for the development of personnel and helped to preserve quality and qualification of the personnel. The described measure complements and connects to the strategy of the Renault International Group for increasing productivity.

In order to motivate co-operation of employees the company introduced a system of useful suggestions ten years ago that rewards applied suggestions (acknowledgement or material award). The number of useful suggestions is steadily increasing and there are visible improvements in production. Financial sources for improvements are provided by Revoz.

Revoz employees have the same opportunities for professional development as Renault employees anywhere around the world. Mobility is a fact that is accepted by all workers in production (mobility/polyvalence at working posts) as well as technicians and managers (mobility between particular Renault plants, departments etc.).

In the company, attention is also paid to the quality of social dialogue. Two elected employees' representatives regularly cooperate in the Supervisory Board's work and the agreements they have concluded in the areas of flexibility and salary policy have proven to be successful. However, social dialogue between the works council and three trade unions (SKEI, Neodvisnost and SDR-Sindikata delavcev Revoza) is restricted to issues regarding employment forms, remuneration and working conditions.

Further information

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Conclusions

The discussion on employment initiatives for an ageing workforce is of special importance for Slovenia because of an ageing of population, low and declining birth rates and a rise in life expectancy. The implications of ageing populations in Slovenia are becoming important not only in terms of a slowdown in living standards but also with regard to employment, fiscal and other economic policies, especially as many structural reforms are still missing.

Public discussion about employment initiatives for an older workforce came to the political agenda at the end of the 1990s when issues of the employment of older persons became a part of *active employment policy* aimed at stimulating the creation of new jobs, employment of hard-to-employ persons and training and education for employment. However, the employment of older persons became one of the government's priorities only in 2004 and especially in 2005 when active employment policy schemes have been redirected towards addressing the problems of people aged over 55.

Some initiatives regarding the ageing workforce date back to the 1970s and 1980s but they were mainly aiming at improving the education and knowledge of the adult population and consequently their employability (adult education) and particularly the quality of living (lifelong learning and third age education).

National strategic and other documents, especially in the field of employment, indicate that the government of the Republic of Slovenia is aware of the problems arising from the ageing of the Slovenian population and workforce. Although there is a range of different measures aiming at the ageing workforce, the problems have been addressed mostly as a constituent part of the active employment policy and have not been harmonised at national level. There are also some inconsistencies in the government actions²⁵.

Furthermore, government measures are not compulsory or legally enforceable and are more in the form of recommendations to employers how they should behave in order to increase employment of older persons in the country.

In order to achieve the EU goal of the 50 % employment rate of people aged 55 – 64 by 2010, the plans of the Slovenian government in 2005 and 2006 are to implement different measures to reduce the dependency on financial social assistance. Active employment policy schemes are planned to be redirected towards the problems of the most disadvantaged groups (among them people aged over 55) in the labour market. The government also plans to reduce restrictions imposed on recruiting retired people, to promote schemes of flexible employment and retirement of the elderly, including early, partial, gradual retirement and retirement conditional on hiring young people, to encourage employment within the social economy and to enhance employment opportunities for disabled people.

Even though many documents and acts were accepted at governmental level, experts suggest that some additional measures to improve the flexibility of the labour market are needed. They propose faster integration of unemployed into employment programmes, decentralisation of decision making and adjustment of employment programmes to regional needs, further encouragement for learning, introduction of 'job-rotation' programmes and the removal of bonuses for working years. The recently appointed Reform Committee further proposed an adjustment of social assistance programmes and the modernising of the pension system.

²⁵ For example, Slovenia's Development Strategy (2005) states that the education yield in the population aged 55 - 64 is low and that a higher activity rate of the elderly can be achieved only through their slower withdrawal from the labour market. At the same time, one of the priorities of the government stated in the government work programme is to increase the share of ageing workforce in life-long learning.

For increasing employment of the older workforce policy measures should be more obligatory for employers and should also be aimed at awareness-building and attitude-changing of employers. Unless they become aware that older people with their knowledge and experience can be a valuable resource for a company, policy measures aimed at improving working conditions of the ageing workforce can not be successful in the long run. The media can play an important role in promoting the economic and social value of the ageing workforce. In addition, greater responsibility of individuals for their own social and health status should also be promoted.

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Appendix 1

Overview of active employment policy initiatives for 2005, provided by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Employment Service of Slovenia.

Initiative/programme	Activity
Initiative 1: Information and vocational advice	1.1 Centres for information and vocational advice
	1.2 The 'Something different about professions' programme
	1.3 Vocational guidance and orientation before inclusion in the initiative
Initiative 2: Advice and help at employment	2.1 Help in planning careers and job seeking
	2.2 Job seekers club
	2.3 Work trial
	2.4 Medical employment advice
Initiative 3: Training and education	3.1 Institutional training
	3.2 Training at a specific job
	3.3 Education and acquisition of national professional qualifications programme and 10.000+ Programme
	3.4 Project learning for younger adults
	3.5 Work funds
	3.6 Training and education for adults
Initiative 4: Employment incentives	4.1 Maintaining jobs according to Act Governing the Rescue and Restructuring Aid for Companies in Difficulty (Zakon o pomoči za reševanje in prestrukturiranje gospodarskih družb v težavah)
	4.2 Partial cost supplement to maintain jobs
	4.3 Encouraging new employment
	4.4 Encouraging new employment of older persons
Initiative 5: Integration of disabled persons	5.1 Training through work and integrated training programmes for disabled persons
	5.2 Employment rehabilitation
	5.3 Commissions of Experts to characteristics of disabled person
Initiative 6: Direct job creation	6.1 Local employment programmes - public works
	6.2 Subsidising employment in providing home help and personal assistance and care for the disabled
	6.3 Encouraging personal complementary work
	6.4 Projects of non-market employment programmes: Encouraging new employment of first job seekers and Partial cost supplements to disabled persons and hard-to employ persons
Initiative 7: Promoting self-employment	7.1 Help in self-employment
	7.2 Subsidies for self-employment
Initiative 8: EQUAL	

Note: Initiatives also targeting older people are marked in yellow

Appendix 2

Interviews with national experts

Barbara Gregorič Brezovšek, assistant to the general director for employment programmes and European social fund and for implementation of programmes and initiatives of EU, Employment Service of Slovenia (Zavod RS za zaposlovanje)

Samo Hribar Milič, M.Sc., general secretary, Slovenian association of employers (Združenje delodajalcev Slovenije)

Ana Vizovišek, consultant, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije)

Jolanda Pavliha, department of human resource, Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (Zavod RS za zdravstveno zavarovanje)

Zvone Vukadinovič, representative, Slovenian trade union of social and medical care

Slovenian Confederation of trade unions 90 PERGAM (Konfederacija sindikatov Slovenije PERGAM)

Aleksandra Tabaj, M. Sc. Directorate for Disabled, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (Direktorat za invalide, Ministrstva za delo, družino in socialne zadeve)

Erik Kos, M.Sc.v.d. general director, Directorate for Labour Market and Employment, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (v.d. generalnega direktorja, Direktorat za trg dela in zaposlovanje, Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve)

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Biserka Davidovič, Sector for Health Care, Ministry of Health (Sektor za zdravstveno varstvo, Ministrstvo za zdravje)

Barbara Eberl, Sector for Promotion of Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Economy (Sektor za promocijo podjetništva, Ministrstvo za gospodarstvo)

Mojca Gabrijelčič Blenkuš, director, Center for Health Promotion, Public Health Institute (predstojnica, Center za promocijo zdravja, Inštitut za varovanje zdravja)

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