

COST Action IS1409*
Gender and Health Impacts of Policies Extending Working life in Western Countries

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17 March 2017
Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED)
Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) Campus, Bellaterra, Spain.

Stakeholder consultation (held in Spanish and Catalan) on:
SEGURETAT LABORAL I ESTABILITAT ENTRE ELS MAJORS DE 50 ANYS
(Labour security and stability among workers older than 50 years of age)

Web site: <http://ced.uab.es/seminaris-i-activitats/jornada-seguridad-laboral-y-estabilidad-entre-los-mayores-de-50-anos/>

REPORT

Scope: The objective of the Stakeholder Consultation was to better understand the current situation of job security and employability of older workers in Spain. Six researchers were invited to present completed or on-going research related to the general theme of the event, while high profile government and union representatives and a human resource specialist were invited to talk about their efforts to defend the interests of older workers and improve their employability in the final debate.

Participants: 39 persons signed the attendance sheet. There were 14 speakers and moderators who were mainly based in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. 8 out of the 10 main speakers were not from the host institution, CED. Apart from PhD students, researchers and supporting staff from CED (21), 4 came from a research centre on occupational health (CiSAL), 3 from various institutes and departments of the UAB, 2 from other universities in Barcelona, 2 from a labour union (CCOO), 2 were foreign PhD students from Colombia, 1 politician (Congress Deputy), 1 high representative from the Catalan government, 1 from a territorial network institution (EGARSAT), 1 medical doctor from Italy and 1 self-employed (the person who offers courses to older workers) attended the Stakeholder consultation.

*The main goal of this Action is to advance scientific knowledge about the gendered impacts of extended working life on the health and economic well-being of older workers in Europe and to support informed gender-sensitive future policy, explicitly considering the differential needs of women and men. Specific aims are (1) to develop new understandings and best practice for research into extended working life and gender and to create a platform which harmonises a number of methodologies, disciplines and approaches; (2) to enhance and add value to current research in these fields and build capacity for future collaborative research; (3) to provide training, support and mentoring for emerging researchers in the field of gender and extended working life; (4) to act as an innovative platform for knowledge exchange and dissemination of good practice among researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders including trade unions and employers.

Location: Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (Demographic Studies Centre – CED).
Edifici E-2, Ca n'Altayó, Autonomous University of Barcelona Campus, 08193 Bellaterra, Spain.

Date: 17 March 2017 from 9:30 till 18:30.

Summary of the Event: The event started with a welcome address from the Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics' (CED) director, **Dr. Albert Esteve** and the Local Organizer, also from CED, **Dr. Jeroen Spijker**. The event was divided in 4 parts: 3 sessions based on a particular theme with two presentations in each followed by a final debate. The audience was able to participate at the end of each session as about 15-20 minutes were reserved for questions and comments.

The first session, moderated by **Dr. Pau Miret** (CED), was on **employment trajectories**. The first presenter was **Margarita León** from the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGOP) who gave a presentation on the *impact of time spent caring on the labour force participation of women*. Although the presentation was mainly focussed on parenting, it highlighted the general lack of possibilities of taking leave or reducing working hours for care responsibilities in Spain without it affecting one's income or (possibly) ones career. The second presentation was given by **Dr. Helena Ysàs** from the Department of Public Law and History of Law (UAB) on *the role of social actors in employment policies affecting older workers*. In Spain there is a lack of social dialogue within companies in order to implement organizational changes to improve employee satisfaction as this is not compulsory (unlike in other countries such as France). This has hindered the accomplishment of the so-called Global Employment Strategies for Older Workers (*Estrategia Global de Empleo de los Trabajadores y las Trabajadoras de Más Edad 2012-14*) to increase the labour force participation rates of 55+ by, for instance, adapting work speed, shift work, breaks, working hours and considering age in risk assessment.

After a short coffee break we began with the second session that had as theme collective bargaining. Moderated by **Dr. Elisenda Rentería** (CED), the first presentation was on *collective bargaining for part-time workers during the crisis years* and was held by **Dr. Raul Ramos** from the Regional Quantitative Analysis Group (University of Barcelona). Research conducted by him and his colleagues has shown that in a context of the tertiarisation of the demand and the feminization of the supply of labour as well as labour market flexibilisation policies, part-time employment has slowly increased in Spain, as it has in other countries. However, at the same time, there is a negative wage gap (in terms of hourly wage) for part-time workers compared to full-time workers and this pay penalty is more pronounced in the case of women (it is about 25% less for women and 10% less for men). Government policy should therefore be more focussed on reducing this salary gap between part- and full-time work. The second presentation was given by **Dr. Pau Miret** (CED) on *the labour biography before the age of 50*. He showed that during the economic crisis, Spain has never had as many potential workers as before. Moreover, employment rates of the university educated hardly changed. Although they observed a slight delay at the start and end of one's career, this was less so than in the case of people with vocational training or a Baccalaureate qualification. Moreover, at each age, labour force participation rates of those with the highest educational level were higher. Concerning those with only compulsory employment, the crisis caused a huge delay in labour market entry with no postponement in retirement, whereby during the period 2011-13 and 2014-16 no age group actually reached a participation rate of 50%. In terms of gender difference, according to Dr. Miret an economic boom often leads to men leaving the educational system early while women do the opposite, reason why women of younger generations are on average higher qualified than men. He also raised the concern that lower educated older women who have lost their job (voluntary or involuntary) do not plan to re-enter the workforce because they know that they will depend on their husband's or widowhood pension. Upon the session's ending, it was time for lunch, which was held in the institute's library.

The third session was on occupational health. **Dr. Mònica Ubalde** (Research Centre on Occupational Health (CiSAL)) gave a presentation on *trends in the temporary disability among the working population resident in Catalonia (2012-2014): What happens after the age of 50?* First, the presenter explained the different types of work absenteeism (health related, non-health related, subsidies, non-subsidised), how temporal disability is administered in the Spanish Public Health and Social Security Systems, the different types of determinants as well as effects for employers and employees. Based on trends in episodes of sickness absence since the start of the economic crisis one recommendation that came out to the fore was to better protect workers who ask for sick leave as petitions had plummeted in fear of job loss. One could therefore conclude that Spain does not have a very generous welfare system regarding sickness benefits where individuals are more likely to report sick when their ailment does not represent a medical hindrance for attending work. More detailed trends since 2012 did show that the incidence (though not the duration) has increased again among temporal and less qualified workers. The final presentation was imparted by **Dr. Amand Blanes** (CED) on the *effect of health on working life from the age of 50*, research that forms part of the PhD thesis of **Antía Domínguez** who could not be there. Factors that influence both labour force participation and exit include gender, age, level of education, household structure (e.g. single mothers have a higher participation rate), years of contribution to the pension system, government legislation and health status. Results from their research show that while labour force participation among 50-69 year olds obviously declines with health deteriorates, in Spain the difference takes on a position somewhere in the middle compared to other European countries. For instance, in The Netherlands and UK differences are much larger, likely due to capital accumulation among individuals and a more generous welfare system for workers who have fallen ill.

After the coffee break it was time for the debate. Led by the local organizer from the CED, **Dr. Jeroen Spijker**, each of the four invited speakers first held about a 10 minute talk on their efforts to defend the interests of older workers and improve their employability before the floor was given to the audience.

Montserrat Mirabent, Deputy Director General of Work Permits, Department of Employment, Social and Family Affairs, Government of Catalonia. For many years she worked for the Catalan Employment Service (Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya) of the same Department and therefore has excellent knowledge of the labour market. According to Ms Mirabent labour force activity rates of 50+ workers steadily increased from the early 1980s to early 2000s and that this age group resisted the crisis the most. On the other hand, once a 50+ worker has left the labour force (e.g. due to unemployment or illness) they are unlikely to return. The Catalan Employment Service tries to maintain a certain balance between the labour force participation rates of different age groups, encourage unemployed workers to return and establish services and benefits for the 50+ by defining and implementing specific policies. These include specific interventions for specific groups; the creation of services based on the concept of flexibility that better suit their situation with respect to their personal needs; and specifically for the 50+ promote pro-activity, improve their competitiveness and chances of re-incorporation through orientation, (re)assessment, training, mediation and the accreditation of competence (as many older workers lack formal diplomas).

The second speaker was **Ricard Bellera**, Secretary of the Area of International, Migrations and Cooperation of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO), the largest trade union in Spain. He considers it contradictory that the believed demographic threat (i.e. population ageing) and mass-immigration are not considered together but as two separate threats even though the former could alleviate the latter. The threat of digitalisation also forms part of this partial discourse. Moreover, while the problem lies in declining national insurance contributions, whereby low qualification of (older) workers leads to earlier labour force exits, less than 10% of hiring of personnel are 50+. A frequent narrative, whose origins date back to gerontological studies performed early last century, is that of the physical and intellectual deterioration of older

workers. This narrative is still engrained in the business culture today and marginalises the hiring, possibilities for continuous training and maintenance of employment contracts of older workers. It also personally affects as this subjective narrative is internalised whereby one does not consider themselves capable of working until the retirement age. While certain physical jobs become more difficult as one becomes older, in terms of intelligence this is not necessarily so. According to the Cattell-Horn-Carroll model, there are two types of intelligence: 1. Fluid intelligence that deteriorates after the age of 30 and refers to quantitative reasoning, processing ability, adaptability to new environments, ability to take risks and novel problem solving. 2. Crystalline intelligence. Increases with age and refers to the accumulation of social, cultural and verbal knowledge and analytical and training skills. Older workers requirements should thus be adapted to their abilities, continual training and new stimulations be made available, including through the possibility to change jobs within a company. It is important for company departments to have a good age-mix, adapt to their labour environment and incorporate the 50+ into the digital revolution.

Mercè Perea, Deputy of the Spanish Congress of Deputies and Spokesperson of the Monitoring and Evaluation Commission of the Pact of Toledo Agreements (a series of Social Security reforms since 1995 that is again under scrutiny) talked about sustainability of the pension system and the state of poverty. The socialist (PSOE) government reluctantly increased the pension age to 67 in 2011 (the measure was accepted by labour unions and most political parties). Since then, the conservative (PP) government has introduced, unilaterally and without political or social consensus, several reforms. One such reform is the adjustment of the so-called “sustainability factor” that determines the amount of pension that is paid out. Rather than inflation, it is now based on life expectancy at age 65 and the pension system’s “expected income and expenses”. Given the vagueness of the latter, it received quite a lot of critique. Moreover, the worry is that many young adults –who have suffered long-term unemployment or inactivity–, will not be able to fully contribute to social security. The same applies to women, whose employment trajectories are often interrupted and unstable, and those 50+ who have been laid off and find it difficult to re-enter. Moreover, the age that the unemployment subsidy (*subsídio*), made available for older persons after receiving a maximum of two years the unemployment benefit (*prestación*), was raised from age 52 to 55. This has therefore raised the possibility of older former workers to be without income. Finally, Ms Perea explained the difference in pension income between the old and new scheme that is set to enter into force in 2019. Under the old system, an individual born on 1-11-1960 who started work (i.e. contribute to the Social Security’s General Scheme) on 1-11-1983 until 31-10-2010 when the worker who received a taxable monthly income of €1800 is laid off as part of a mass redundancy. The person will have received the unemployment benefit 2 years until turning 52 on 1-11-2012, when he or she qualifies for the unemployment subsidy until retirement (age 65). During these 13 years a total of €66.456 is received and after that a monthly public pension of €1243.05. Under the new scheme, the unemployment subsidy can be obtained from age 55 (i.e. in this case no income is received for a period of 3 years), the duration of the subsidy is just 6 years (totalling €25.660) as at age 61 one is obliged to retire, and the pension €879.71, despite having contributed the same amount.

The fourth invited speaker was **Laura Rosillo**, founder of the *Observatorio del Aprendizaje en la Madurescencia* (Learning at older age observatory), human researcher and e-learning expert who, in an emotional plea based on her four decades of personal experiences particularly encouraged continuous and additional training among both active and inactive 50+ workers, including in digital technology despite it is often not offered to this age group.

The presentations and the final debate were filmed and can be accessed, together with the PowerPoints of the presentations, for those who gave their authorisation, from <http://ced.uab.es/seminaris-i-activitats/jornada-seguridad-laboral-y-estabilidad-entre-los-mayores-de-50-anos/>. Any further query with respect to the stakeholder consultation can be raised by e-mailing **Jeroen Spijker** at jspijker@ced.uab.es.