

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

The STSM applicant submits this report for approval to the STSM coordinator

**Action number: IS1409**

**STSM title: “Supporting Older Workers in Extending Their Working Lives: Approaching a Gender-sensitive Framework for the Analysis of Services”.**

**STSM start and end date: 16/04/2018 to 24/04/2018**

**Grantee name: Dr Eva Katharina Sarter**

### PURPOSE OF THE STSM/

(max.500 words)

Over the last few decades, Western Welfare states have experienced a trend towards the increased marketization of services (Aucoin, 1990; Bode, 2009; Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2013; Van Slyke, 2003; Veggeland, 2008). This development has also affected employment related services, such as those aiming to support older workers, which are nowadays oftentimes contracted (Breidahl and Larsen 2015; Jahn and Ochel 2007; Larsen and Wright, 2014; Sol and Westerveld, 2005).

Yet, despite the emergence of empirical research on impacts for working conditions in contracted services and the impact on specific services (Benjamin, 2016, 2017; Epstein, 2013; Grimshaw et al, 2015 ), major gaps in research and knowledge persist. Most importantly, a conceptual framework for the gender-aware analysis of public contracting of services, job-quality and service quality is still missing.

Taking this gap in knowledge as a starting point, the core purposes of this STSM was to

- a) facilitate the joint development of a conceptual framework that can be used in the analysis of services to support older workers by enabling intensive in-depth discussions and exchange and
- b) lay the ground for further collaboration between the Grantee and Prof Dr Orly Benjamin at Bar-Ilan University.
  - a) Development of joint conceptual framework for the gender-aware analysis of contracted services

The STSM’s purpose was to create the space and opportunity for joint in-depth interdisciplinary discussion and exchange between Prof Orly Benjamin, a sociologist with a renown expertise and extensive empirical research experiences in the field of public contracting of services, job-quality, and gender, and the Grantee, a political scientist working on the regulatory policies on public procurement and their implementation. Facilitated through discussions and exchange, the STSM aimed to facilitate collaborative work to tackle the existing lack of a gender-aware concept for the

analysis of services aiming to support older workers. Specifically, the first aim of this STSM was to produce a gender-sensitive conceptual framework for the analysis of the impact that public procurement practices have on job-quality and the quality of services by creating the space for detailed and in-depth collaboration at Bar-Ilan University.

b) further collaboration

Based on the conceptual framework developed (the first aim of the STSM), the second purpose of this STSM was to facilitate discussions about future collaboration in empirical research. Specifically, it sought to create the opportunity for discussions about a future joint project and collaborative work on proposal for funding for a joint project that examines services targeting older workers (65+) discussions.

### **DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS**

(max.500 words)

The work outlined in the application was to jointly produce a conceptual framework for the analysis of contracted employment-related services for older workers, draft an article, and to discuss future collaboration.

1) Development of conceptual model that can facilitate future empirical research on services to support older workers

In order to establish this framework (and in accordance with the work plan set out in the application), Prof Dr Orly Benjamin and myself, the Grantee, have met regularly to exchange the knowledge in our fields of expertise. Based on this exchange, we have discussed extensively how the relationship between marketization, contracting practices, job-quality, the quality of services, and gender can be conceptualised. Drawing on our empirical and theoretical expertise in different fields and countries, the STSM enabled us to have in-depth discussions on the factors that a conceptual framework needs to account for as well as their relationship and interaction. Based on the results of these discussions, we developed a conceptual model (see below).

2) Drafting of article

The second part of the STSM was to facilitate collaborative work on a joint article. Adding to the development of a conceptual framework (and based on the success of this first part of the work to be carried out), the STSM has enabled us to work collaboratively on an article in which we outline the conceptual framework we developed in the first stage. Collaboratively, we developed a draft for an academic paper. Currently, we are in the final revisions of this paper, which will be submitted to a high-ranking academic journal.

3) Discussing future collaborations

In addition to regular meetings to elaborate a conceptual model and the collaborative drafting of an article, we met to discuss future collaborations in the form of a joint project that uses the conceptual framework developed in the first stage to empirically examine services that seek to support older workers (65+) in employment.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED**

(max. 500 words)

The main result of the STSM was the development of a conceptual framework that facilitates the gender-aware analysis of contracting of services. Through our in-depth exchange and discussions, we have established a conceptual model for the analysis of public procurement practices and factors that influence service quality in soft services such as employment-related services for elderly workers.

Grounding in existing literature as well as our empirical findings from other research projects, we have identified service standards set by procurement officers and job-quality as one of the major factors influencing quality of services. In the following discussions, we focussed on factors that influence job-quality in soft services. Thereby, we have identified major factors that influence the job-quality services, namely the nature of the service, government regulation and individual procurement practices relating to the regulation of competition. Based on existing empirical evidence, in the field of services as well as beyond, we were able to identify factors that influence whether or not procurement practices are likely to include stipulations that influence job-quality.

### **FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)**

(max.500 words)

One aim of the STSM was to establish a working collaboration between the Grantee and Prof Orly Benjamin, Bar-Ilan University that can be the foundation of future collaborative work. Hence, during the STSM, we have explicitly discussed future collaborations.

At present, we are collaboratively engaged in the final revision of the draft that we developed during the STSM. In addition, we envision to jointly present the conceptual model at academic conferences in the near future; hence, we will submit an abstract for a presentation on our model to the Final Conference of the COST Action IS1409 in Galway at the end of this year. Furthermore, we envision further collaboration, also in empirical research.