


# Occupational health and safety (OHS) and risk factors of workers over 50 years old - the participation of older citizens in the labour market and proposals for measures in the industrial and commercial sectors - part 1

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**Bezpečnost a ochrana zdraví při práci (BOZP) a rizikové faktory pracovníků nad 50 let - uplatnění starších osob v pracovním procesu s návrhy na opatření na úrovni odvětví a podniku - 1. část**

**Lenka Svobodová<sup>1</sup>, Bohumila Čabanová<sup>2</sup>, Pavel Kučina<sup>3</sup>, Eva Hanáková<sup>4</sup>, Paulína Tabery<sup>5</sup>, Bohuslav Švec<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Occupational Safety Research Institute, Prague, [svobodovaL@vubp-praha.cz](mailto:svobodovaL@vubp-praha.cz)

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Prague

<sup>3</sup>Occupational Safety Research Institute, Prague

<sup>4</sup>Occupational Safety Research Institute, Prague

<sup>5</sup>Public Opinion Research Centre Institute of Sociology Academy of Sciences, Prague

<sup>6</sup>Occupational Safety Research Institute, Prague

starší pracovníci

stárnutí

pracovní podmínky

prevence rizik

BOZP

trh práce

SWOT analýza

projekty

VÚBP

## Abstract

In several parts results of project Occupational health and safety and risk factors of workers over 50 years old - the participation of older citizens in the labour market and proposals for measures in the industrial and commercial sectors will be presented. The project is aimed at the design of proposed ways, methods and means for creation work conditions contributing to the occupational safety and health of older age groups workers, to surmount present and

possible future discrimination persons over 50 on the labour market, to extend their work activities, to enhance their flexibility and attraction for employers. The first part describes the project and presents the result of SWOT analysis.

**Keywords:** elderly worker, employers over 50 years, quality of working life, working conditions, safety and health at work, risk prevention, SWOT analysis, projects, results, Occupational Safety Research Institute

## **Abstrakt**

V několika následujících příspěvcích budou čtenářům představeny výsledky projektu “BOZP a rizikové faktory pracovníků nad 50 let – uplatnění starších osob v pracovním procesu s návrhy na opatření na úrovni odvětví a podniku”. Ten je zaměřen na navržení způsobů, forem a prostředků pro vytváření vhodných pracovních podmínek přispívajících k bezpečnosti a ochraně zdraví při práci pracovníků starších věkových skupin, pro překonávání současné i možné budoucí diskriminace osob starších 50 let na trhu práce, pro prodloužení jejich pracovní aktivity, pro zvýšení jejich flexibility i atraktivity pro zaměstnavatele. První část seznamuje s celým projektem, použitými metodami a představuje výsledky SWOT analýzy.

**Klíčová slova:** starší pracovníci, zaměstnanci ve věku 50+, kvalita pracovního života, pracovní podmínky, trh práce, bezpečnost a ochrana zdraví, prevence rizik, SWOT analýza, projekty, výsledky, VÚBP

## **Goals of the project**

Among the main goals of the project are:

- objectively presenting problems in the area of OHS, including the identification of risks, the mapping and analysis of current barriers and opportunities for long-term employment in the labour force for people over 50,
- proposing measures for improving the quality of working life for seniors and people over 50, to better accommodate their interests, needs and possibilities to increase the overall variability of employment for this target group.

## **A further activity of the Solutions Team is focused on finding answers to the following questions:**

- In what way is the given target group limited and how do we identify and characterise this?
- What basic statistical data and information do we have about this target group (demographics)?
- What are the sickness rate and work injury figures of this target group? What are their most common causes? What are their main health limitations?
- What is the quality of working life of this target group? How do they perceive and evaluate their working life? How do they evaluate the separate aspects of work? Are there any anomalies in this group compared to the rest of the population?
- What are the changes in capabilities and work competence for this target group?
- What are some real basic barriers and obstacles to further employment for these individuals? What are some obstacles placed before this group by the state (legislative, politico-economic, etc.); placed by employers (attitudes, incentives, etc.); placed by the target group themselves – employees, job applicants (motivational, etc.)?
- What opportunities are there for improving the labour market situation and quality of working life for the target group?
- What does the target group's self-evaluation (self-confidence and self-assurance) look like?
- What is public opinion about this group within society and the business community?
- What is the current social and economic status of Czech senior citizens?

## The subject to be resolved

The object of carrying out this project is to define and identify problems of the target group (identification of the most endangered group included) particularly from the point of view of the quality of their working life, work conditions, occupational safety and health protection - including identification of their risks. Additionally it means mapping and analysing the current barriers and opportunities of older people in support of their continuance in the labour market and setting possible solutions to problems:

- From the point of view of an **individual** and the **target group** (health or performance restrictions, change in capabilities and professional competence, socio-economic aspects, willingness and motivation to find flexible paths to employment; suitable ways of integrating into lifelong education and others);
- From the point of view of the **employers** (views, attitudes, barriers, appropriate experience and other); changing attitudes through further education (spreading information, instruction and promotional materials in the area of creating suitable work conditions, new and flexible forms of work organization);
- From a society-wide perspective (EU, state, role of social partners).

## Methods

The following methods in particular were used in the execution of the project:

- **literary retrievals and secondary analyses** of accessible information sources, relevant documents, news, data files from research and investigation focused on the quality of working life, on satisfaction in work as a whole *and* the individual aspects of work, on working conditions and safety and health protections at work, work accident rate, disproportionate stress of the target group;
- carrying out **monothematic studies** on selected topics (e.g. "The target group of people over 50 from the point of view of social policies and the labour market", "The target group from the point of view of data, statistics and information systems", "Age and legal aspects" and others);
- quantitative sociological research – **empirical survey of the population between 50 and 65 years of age** (in cooperation with the Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Public Research Institution *or* CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i.);
- **qualitative research of a sample of SMEs** (guided interviews with the management of enterprises; questionnaire survey of employees);
- the holding of a thematic **workshop**;
- closing **report**;
- **publication** preparation and other publication activities.

## Results and outcomes

The carrying out of this project provides topical data about the target group, new findings from field research and analysis, and identifies causes and possible impacts. Only a summary of individual outcomes and their basic characteristics can be found in this part.

### Literary Retrievals

An extensive survey of literary retrievals was carried out (Czech, English, French, German, Italian texts; without territorial limits) – thematically focused on the proposed methods, forms and means for the creation of suitable workplace conditions conducive to safety and the safeguarding of the health of workers of older age groups, for

overcoming current and possible future discrimination against people over 50 years of age in the labour market, for extending their occupational activities, for increasing their flexibility and attractiveness for employers. Identifying opportunities, motivational and stimulating means to encourage a solution to the situation for the parties involved (i.e. state, employers and the target group). Key words: ageing, old age, age, employment, human factor, health risk, processes, discrimination, flexibility, OHS.

### Preliminary Study

The preliminary study has mapped significant problematic points and implications concerning the resolution of the problem.

### The SWOT analysis - Workers at the age of 50+

Members of the resolution team and other specialists from the Occupational Safety Research Institute, Public Research Institution (VÚBP, v.v.i.) carried out an evaluation on the strengths and weaknesses of the group and identified both opportunities and possible dangers that studied age group could come upon. The processed results represent the major spectrum of opinion and the perception of the problems by both older people (over 50) and their younger co-workers; 20 respondents altogether.

STRENGTHS		WEAKNESSES	
OLDER RESPONDENTS	YOUNGER RESPONDENTS	OLDER RESPONDENTS	YOUNGER RESPONDENTS
<b>work and professional experience, expertise</b>		<b>mental productivity</b>	
<b>work experience, professional experience,</b> expertise, skilfulness, ability, knowledge of already forgotten skills (fur processing, mending clothes and other)	<b>work experience, professional experience,</b> knowledge, professional maturity, wider range of expertise	psychophysical changes (perception, decision making, concentration), worsening sensory perception (sight, hearing), loss of potential, loss of knowledge, smaller short-term memory, longer response time, bad habits, learned personal habits	lower ability to learn, forgetfulness, slow decision making, lower performance
<b>qualities</b>		<b>motivation</b>	
reliability, opinion stability, responsibility, thoroughness, carefulness, accuracy, deliberation, patience, personal maturity	reliability, carefulness	loss of self-confidence and self-reliance, loss of occupational aspiration – placidity, less willingness to receive education for profession	lower motivation to perform, lower work commitment
<b>attitude to a performed job</b>		<b>productivity</b>	

professional pride, more interest in work, familiarity with problems, knowledge of and orientation in the field, effort to give the best work performance	despite one's age remain a useful member of the work team, self-fulfilment	lower flexibility and speed, lower physical performance, quicker to tire, lower adaptability of the organism, lower mobility, inability to cope with the rate of work of some employers due to physical and health reasons	higher tiredness, pressure, burn-out, little verve, slower work rate, worsened accessibility to more distant work places, lower productivity resulting from unfavourable health conditions
<b>attitude to a firm</b>		<b>health condition</b>	
<b>loyalty</b> , willingness to meet the employer's demands, continuance in a firm even if not satisfied with work conditions, minimizing the length of possible temporary sick leave	job stability, low employee turnover	high rate of sick leaves, health restrictions, worsened health condition, higher threat of diseases, lowered resistance to unfavourable influences (infection etc.), becoming disabled or incapable of work	<b>more health problems</b> , longer and more frequent sick leave, worsened mobility
<b>networking</b>		<b>adaptability</b>	
	Contacts, knowledge of a particular range of firms, companies and individuals for networking	lower creativity, distrust of innovations, reluctance to learn new things, routine	worse adaptability to new things, inability to react to changes, worse adaptability to new methods and systems, routine
<b>priorities</b>		<b>attitude towards new technology</b>	
personal life solved (grown up children, housing settled and so on), no longer pursuing career, clear priorities, (satisfied even with economic situation), not competing	having grown up children, being able to fully focus on work, time flexibility, enough time, less ambitious than their younger colleagues	much delayed understanding of new advanced technology, lower computer literacy and skill to handle new technology	reluctance to learn, computer and internet literacy at average or only little above-average level, problems with handling new technology
<b>relationships, behaviour</b>		<b>behaviour, relationships</b>	

mature attitude towards people, being able to handle emotions, assertiveness, good interpersonal communication, deliberation and caution when communicating and performing	well-judged decision making, cool-headed acting	changes in communication and behaviour (lower tolerance towards others, negative emotional problems such as quick-temperedness, anxiety, depression and so on)	lack of adaptability or lower adaptability
		<b>other</b>	
		underestimating risks as a result of overestimating their experience and wisdom, lower requirements for the job and financial evaluation resulting from fear of losing the job	higher threat of injury, reluctance to team work, lower ability to keep up with younger employees

**Tab. 1 SWOT analysis - employees of over 50 years of age - strengths and weaknesses**

<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>		<b>THREATS</b>	
<b>OLDER RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>YOUNGER RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>OLDER RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>YOUNGER RESPONDENTS</b>
<b>forms of work</b>		<b>work opportunities</b>	
short-time work, job sharing, split shift working, working on the weekends, appropriate tools and integrating older population, create system of alternative working (when combining wage and pension) e.g. voluntary work, working for foundations or public sector, creating personnel agencies for older working population	short-time work, steady work rate, office work or doing rounds, for example, rather than manual work	fewer work opportunities i.e. lowering number of employees, restricted range of work opportunities, employment of younger population in threat due to retiring age extension, discrimination because of age, ability and competence	worse job offer in the labour market, fear from loss of work opportunities, faster work rate
<b>taking advantage of work experience</b>		<b>costs</b>	

taking advantage of life and professional experience, proving effective in areas where age and experience are an advantage (consultancy, jurisdiction, some medical branches and so on)	taking advantage of strong knowledge potential (specialization, qualification), proving effective in the field of science, research and consultancy	higher costs to the employer (operation and production), higher society-wide costs (social), sickness rate, work injuries and disability	higher risk of work injury or work related disease
<b>passing experience</b>		<b>relationships - employee/employer</b>	
transfer of knowledge and experience, giving training to new employees	reciprocal exchange of experience with younger colleagues	attitudes of employers to elderly employees, inability and lack of interest in employers to take advantage of the potential of elderly employees, absence of systems for working with elderly employees	
<b>retraining, education</b>		<b>relationships between younger and older employees</b>	
retraining courses, revitalisation programmes, general and nation-wide lifelong education programmes, support for further professional development of elderly employees	lifelong education	lower ability to compete with young ambitious colleagues, stressful working conditions when having young management, intergenerational tension	non-acceptance by young team, young colleagues as competitors
<b>new technology</b>		<b>health care</b>	
with the advance of technology the proportion of physical effort decreases which results in fewer differences between older and younger employees	opportunity to use new technology provided older employees have the will to learn new things	withholding optimal health care in cases of illness, diseases of civilization and unprovided adequate health care	
<b>other</b>		<b>presentation of older people in the society</b>	

mapping the opportunities and role of the state in supporting the continuance of older people in the labour market, creating appropriate work conditions for older employees, satisfaction of both employees and employers, saving personal costs, opportunity of another income for active pensioners	longer holidays (e.g. by 1 week)	current stereotypical sentiment about the 50+ age group, problem of older people in the labour market is shown schematically, and only in connection with retirees and illnesses, media offers examples of the work activities of older people only in the world of science and art	
		<b>other</b>	
		economic dependency on income from employment to higher age (housing costs, health care costs, etc.), missing social contacts after termination of employment	

**Tab. 2 SWOT analysis - employees of over 50 years of age - opportunities and threats**

Further aforementioned outcomes are briefly summarized in individual chapters of this brochure.

- **People over 50 as the target group from the point of view of social policies and the labour market**
- **The target group from the point of view of data, statistics and information systems (the topic of “work”)**
- **The target group from the point of view of data, statistics and information systems (the topic of “health”)**
- **Age and legal aspects**
- **Empirical survey of the over-50 population**
- **Qualitative survey of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)**

The findings of the project can serve as a foundation for conceptual work, methodical activity in the field of OHS and for the overall orientation of the social policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs so that the achievement of a desirable level of OHS for the older population can be ensured. Additionally, the project can contribute to minimizing the socially negative impacts to this target group.

## **Anticipated effects**

The outcomes of the project have provided topical information and knowledge about selected subjects pertinent to the



target group of employees 50 years of age and older.

This knowledge will be the basis for creating proposals and suggestions to increase the range of the target group's opportunities for employment and to better meet their interests, needs and choices; in order to:

- create conditions for increasing the employment of older workers and simultaneously lowering the unemployment for this target group;
- increase the quality of working life; contribute to securing a full, dignified life and a feeling of usefulness for senior citizens;
- socially and economically contribute to society – obtain significant working and economic sources (GDP formation, reinforcing the state budget by direct taxes, decreasing the strain on the social system etc.);
- increase opportunities for taking advantage of unique lifelong experience and knowledge;
- increase the flexibility of this labour force;
- strengthen equality of opportunity in the market place, combat undesirable discrimination and social exclusion, strengthen intergenerational solidarity, lower generational intolerance;
- support the rights and freedoms of senior citizens, increase the humanization of society;
- create conditions for the actualisation and achievement of a sustainable development of society.

Bring this subject to the media and present a positive experience in order to change current stereotypes about the 50-and-over age category and contribute to changing common negative self-perceptions within this age group. Bring new inspiration for employers to find better use for the potential of older workers, and for employed people already over 50 to increase their opportunities and to hold their ground in the labour market. Boost motivation to increase their qualifications, specialization and flexibility, reinforce their confidence and self-esteem, show them possibilities to gain new competences, to assess their gained life experience.

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Autor článku:

[Ing. Lenka Svobodová](#)

[Ing. Bohumila Čabanová, Ph.D.](#)

[JUDr. Pavel Kučina](#)

[MUDr. Eva Hanáková](#)

[Mgr. et Mgr. Paulína Tabery](#)

[PhDr. Bohuslav Švec](#)