



Consultation of the working document on the future "EU 2020" strategy

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) is a sectoral institute of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland. FIOH is one of the world leading research and specialist organization on the area of occupational health, safety and wellbeing. Besides focusing on research, development and innovation (RDI), FIOH produces client services and contributes to the development of legislation, good practices, and standards.

The purpose of the Commission is to seek the views of the other Institutions and stakeholder on the working document of the new EU 2020 strategy. In this statement we evaluate the Commission working document from the view related to the development and quality of the working life.

Focus of the EU working document "EU2020" strategy

The Commission working document "EU 2020" strategy calls for deep post-crisis transformations for Europe focusing on more competitive but simultaneously sustainable and greener economy based on new innovations and higher productivity. Public expenditure is aimed to be reshaped in ways that enable to reach the 2020 vision. The new policies are planned to contribute to social cohesion, tackling unemployment and fostering social inclusion while securing well performing labour markers.

The Commission considers that the key drivers of EU 2020 should be thematic, focusing on

- 1) creating value by basing growth on knowledge
- 2) empowering people in inclusive societies and
- 3) creating a competitive, connected and greener economy

Sustainable social market is based on sustainable work

According to the EU working paper, The Commission's aim it to lead, compete and prosper as a knowledge-based, greener economy that grows fast and sustainably. It is very important that the paper highlights that Europe needs to develop high-quality jobs and should further on be a model for other countries to follow, projecting its values and fostering stronger labour, environmental and safety standards around the globe.

The change of the European working life will bring new possibilities but produce also new risks and challenges. We will witness major changes in the structures of employment, working places and organizations. Due to the growing international competition and insecurity, there are pessimistic worries on the long-term trends of the quality of the European working life (e.g. Kasvio et al. 2009). The growing insecurity in working life may activate dissatisfaction with the precariousness of the labour market and induce polarisation in workers' attitudes with existing jobs. The employees will be exposed to new kinds of work environment risks, and the present work-related patterns of mobility will undergo significant changes.

In order to carry out the change processes on a successful manner it is reasonable to apply the principles of sustainable development also into the use of human resources in labour politics and employing organizations. The concept of sustainability emphasizes a dynamic fit between the worker and the work, employee and working conditions. The factors that influence work motivation and ability include the balance between the competence, interests, and values of the employee and the corresponding work demands and tasks. The main target needs to be to promote a continuous movement towards a more sustainable working life. Like the EU2020 working paper seems to suggest, the building of more sustainable systems of work will not be possible unless the economic, human, social and environmental aspects of sustainability are taken into account simultaneously and on a balanced manner. Adapted work organisations are needed, which promote learning, quality of work, innovativeness and competitiveness, are essential to the goals of the EU2020.

Innovativeness is based on the skills, creativity and health of individuals

The call for new innovations in all policies, including the development of working life, has been active in Finland. In 2008, Matti Vanhanen's II Cabinet launched Finland's national

innovation strategy (<http://www.tem.fi/?l=en&s=2411>). The strategy aims at broad-based and multifaceted innovation policy and strengthening its implementation.

Based on the Finnish innovation strategy, the innovation-based development of productivity requires a competent and motivated workforce willing and able to develop further at work. "Indeed, within the innovation environment, quality of working life emerges as a critical success factor, with a direct influence on the efficiency, productivity and quality of operations. Innovation activity, like other competence-based high added value tasks, is based on employees' and working communities' enthusiasm, commitment and enjoyment of work." (Finland's National Innovation Strategy).

Finland's national innovation policy concludes that "the perspective of working life development needs to be included as a coherent part of innovation policy and the system for financing and promoting innovations".

Quality of working life and organizational performance are two sides of the same coin

Recent evidence convince us indeed that improvements in both the quality of working life and organizational performance work together well (Pot et al. 2009). For example, in the evaluation of a part (312 finished projects) of the huge Finnish workplace development programme the quality of working life and performance correlated well to each other (Ramstad 2007). 'Performance' in that study encompassed productivity, quality of goods and services, quality of operations, flexible customer service and smooth running of operations. 'Quality of working life' comprised co-operation between management and staff, team-like working processes, social relations in workplaces, mental wellbeing and development of vocational skills. Most organizations that improved the quality of the working life improved the performance simultaneously. There is also growing evidence that occupational safety and health interventions make a good business case also in terms of productivity (Verbeek et al. 2009). Policy interventions are essential for the design of such work organisations that can ensure that workers can use their talent, develop new skills and competence and creative potential.

Research and development of the working life is a forward-looking area that will enable the future EU 2020 policy

EU working paper calls for the public policy makers to find ways of triggering economic dynamism with limited budgetary margin for manoeuvre. When the public sector deficits are brought back under control, public expenditure are suggested to be reshaped in ways that enable to reach the 2020 vision. As agreed also by us, cutting spending in forward-looking areas such as education and research would make this more difficult to achieve.

The research and development of smarter, sustainable and productive work, working life and labour markets are clearly a forward-looking area which needs to be strongly supported by the EU commission. The Europe's dependency ratios reflecting the population's age structure are also increasing rapidly. To compensate with the rise in life expectancy and to fulfil the demands of Lisbon strategy, each EU country needs to improve the employment rate of 55 to 64 year olds to 50 per cent by 2010. The potential rise in employability of the 50-68 year olds is currently the highest.

Political decisions in retirement age are not efficient alone to improve the employment of aging workforce due to the obvious lack of sufficient work ability of many aging workers. The need to match future work demands with future human resources demands the development of work, work processes and methods as well as human skills and occupational health strategies. There is thus need to develop both occupational and primary health policies. (Aging report 2009, Finland's Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki)

The need to develop future work, work processes and methods and the needs to improve the work ability of aging workforce calls for efficient research and development on the area.

Future research needs of the working life

During the next 15 years, the following major trends in the working life need special attention through new research, development and innovations:

- a need for new OSH strategy (like integration of OSH to general management and productivity) due to changing OSH management systems, network economy and changes in safety cultures at work.
- simultaneous promotion of innovativeness and wellbeing at work

- new forms of employment contracts and job insecurity
- poor work-life balance: disintegration of work from time and place, atypical working hours
- work intensification (high workload and time pressure) and higher professional and emotional demands at work (including violence and bullying)
- complexity of new technologies, work processes and human-machine interfaces leading to information overload, increased mental and emotional strain
- new potential risks due to the use of new bio- and nanotechnology
- a need for higher protection of increasing high-risk groups: older workers, low status workers and the foreign workforce:
- pertinent high exposure to musculoskeletal problems at work
- moulds in indoor workplaces and good quality indoor (workplace) air

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