

Policy Document 7:

Research Priorities for Gender, Health and Extended Working Life

COST Action IS1409 assessed the Gender and Health Implications of Extended Working Life policies and found that a small but growing body of research is becoming available helping to understand the pension and employment

implications of these policies. However such research is uneven across Europe. There needs to be more in-depth cross-national research to investigate the needs of different groups of older workers to ensure effective sustainable policies.

Pensions research – current issues:

One of the most common EWL reforms is an increase in state pension age. Across most countries this is typically a one-size fits-all measure which affects workers in diverse occupations differently. It disadvantages those in physically demanding and/or precarious employment. State pension levels are being linked more closely to participation in the paid workforce, disadvantaging women. There has been a shift from defined benefit to defined contribution pension systems. Individuals need to provide more for their retirement pension than in the past. Research on the macro and micro impacts is needed. Research funding is needed to:

- assess the impact of changes of pension systems on income adequacy in old age.
- investigate how pensions systems interact with wider welfare provisions that ensure protection

of those who cannot contribute sufficiently for an adequate pension.

- understand how individuals adapt to pension changes extending working life. Research is needed on savings behaviours and family lifecourse decisions on labour force participation.
- evaluate policy changes in pension systems from a gender perspective.
- fund mixed methods research to investigate the impacts of pension changes extending working life for workers in different occupations.
- fund quantitative and qualitative longitudinal research which will show what policies are effective at what points in the lifecourse to prevent/reduce gender pension gaps.

Employment Research

While research into working beyond traditional retirement ages has been conducted in individual countries, it is important to fund cross-national, intersectional and/or multi-disciplinary research. Existing research highlights the importance of flexible working as a key facilitator of Extended Working Life (e.g. Loretto et al, 2017). Yet UK research shows there is little flexible working, with many older workers, especially women, unaware of available options (Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015; Ni Leime et al, 2017). Existing flexible work options are often tailored to parents of children and do not take into account the need to

accommodate elder-care responsibilities or health circumstances. Research in advanced countries indicates that automation can cause labour-market polarisation not just in terms of demand for qualifications but in wages as well. Demand may concentrate on qualification requirements, for either low-skilled or high-skilled labour (Frey, Osborne, 2013), typically in non-regulated economies (Hall, Soskice, 2001). There is a need for research into how digitalization and demographic change affects age-based marginalisation/privilege in work organisations.

Employment Research is Needed:

- to address the experiences and outcomes of different groups of workers, in the light of extended working life employment policies.
- international research addressing multiple levels – work organisations, governments, trade unions and older workers.
- intersectional research addressing experiences and outcomes of EWL policies for diverse groups of workers – occupational, migration status, ability status as well as gender and age.
- mixed methods research from a lifecourse perspective on health outcomes of working longer for older workers.
- on the intersection between different areas – work, pensions, health and training.
- assessing the outcomes of promising Age Management policies across Europe.
- investigating the impact of automation and robotization on jobs and incomes for older workers.
- to understand and disseminate a broader and more nuanced vision of flexible working in extending working lives to discover what works: for whom, how and when.
- RCTs on training and flexibility measures among the senior workforce.

Health of Older Workers:

Current indicators of population health typically report average health outcomes (e.g. healthy life expectancy measures the average number of years individuals are expected to live in good health). Insight would be gained by complementing these measures with new ones that consider inequality in the underlying distribution and applying them also to vulnerable sub-populations (Permayer et al, 2018).

Indicators: Available data sets include LFS, SHARE, EQLS, EWCS, EVS, EU-SILC, but funding

is needed to develop indicators that can measure existing inequalities from a gender perspective.

Funding should be devoted to develop longitudinal surveys covering different dimensions of well-being for 50+ individuals to enlarge the number of indicators and to estimate models to measure well-being dimensions, their interactions and the impact of different institutional factors that need enough observations at country and regional levels.

References:

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For Full Policy Brief please see:

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