

The range of target groups includes:

- Older workers
- Migrant workers and 'returning workers' (expatriates or migrants returning to home country)
- Ethnic minorities (country specific)
- Ex-offenders
- Long-term unemployed
- Low-skills workers (in low-skills jobs)
- High-skilled/specialized workers
- Long-term illness, and the handicapped
- Women victims of domestic violence
- The homeless
- Youth/recent graduates
- Precarious work (short-term and atypical contracts, risk of redundancy, etc)

Jessica Grandhomme has now finished the literature review. The review takes a global look at target groups and their training needs. This will be distributed to all SNOVE partners following the Steering Group in Sofia.

Interviews with experts, intermediaries and employers took place during the months of June and July, with further interviews, and focus groups, being organized over the coming 3 months. Interviews are conducted, transcribed and analysed by Jessica Grandhomme and Françoise Le Deist, soliciting employers' and experts' views on the groups, and gaining information from intermediate organizations which support the target groups. Focus groups will be formed with the help from the contacts being made.

Analysis of the literature review and interviews undertaken to date were used for a dissemination event in London – the conference on 'Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work in a Changing World', held at Middlesex University (UK) 10-11 September 2012, attended and presented by Jessica Grandhomme and Françoise Le Deist.

Further dissemination events have been confirmed, and are being organised, as follows:

- Workshop on Policy Learning and Transfer of Innovation – Toulouse Business School – 19 October 2012
- Third International Conference on Vulnerable Workers – Toulouse Business School – 12 & 13 September 2013

Jessica Grandhomme and Françoise Le Deist are currently revising a paper which will be submitted to the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* for consideration for a Special Issue on Vulnerable Workers, Precarious Work and the Role of HRM edited by John Burgess, Julia Connell and Jonathan Winterton to be published December 2013.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

- Aim – to research the needs of older and vulnerable employees, their professional integration and training needs; focusing on views of employers, employees and intermediary organisations
- Major target groups – older workers, migrant workers, ex-offenders, long-term unemployed, youth unemployed, low-skills jobs, low qualifications, long-term illness, the homeless, precarious work
- Global context – economic crisis, opening of national boundaries, regulated labour market
- Older workers
 - Pushing back of retirement age
 - Older vs. younger – discrimination/what is my place?
 - Getting a foot back in the door – the need for flexibility for/from employers, the need to consider changing roles (teacher, mentor, consultant); job search advice at this level is very relevant ('older workers can waste a lot of unnecessary time during job search, when time is of the essence')
 - Measuring up – healthier and more educated than past 'older' generations
 - Employers:
 - Younger managers uncomfortable supervising older workers
 - Older workers more expensive (salaries, pensions, healthcare, and training costs not recuperated over long-term)
 - Employers cite loyalty and experience, but sometimes need to choose cheaper (younger) option
- Migrant workers
 - The work is there, but at what price?
 - Misunderstanding vs. abuse – language and cultural barriers that can leave you open to employer abuse; fear of the unknown can lead to loss of rights
 - Qualifications not recognized
 - What happens when they return home?
 - Employers:
 - Better work ethic, cheaper, more flexible (UK especially)
 - Language barriers and cultural misunderstandings can leave employers vulnerable too
- Ex-offenders
 - Discrimination
 - Education
 - Lack of support from family and/or state
 - 'Why work for 800\$ a month when I was earning \$2000 a day illegally?'
 - Importance of support and training while serving sentence, in order to prepare for release and provide real 'rehabilitation'
 - Level of crimes and length of sentence can get in the way of the above
 - Leave prison with nothing – what now?
 - Employers:
 - Risk
 - What benefits for them compared to recruiting from 'normal' workforce?
 - Loyalty if recruitment is a success (UK – Richard Branson, etc. in drive to recruit ex-offenders and cites success and loyalty; US – 'ban the box' ...but how to explain on CV?)
- LTU and low-skills positions
 - Work vs. benefits/incentives vs. 'disincentives' – is it *worth* working on the poverty line?

- “Unemployed need not apply” – length of time out of employment = lack of employer interest
- The mountain to climb to get LTU back to work – a long process
- Employers
 - LTU
 - Very wary of someone who has been out of work for a long length of time
 - Expensive – training costs
 - Risk factor
 - Need ‘social’ training too
 - Low-skills positions
 - Lack of motivation
 - High training costs
- Handicapped, long-term illness
 - Many rights and incentives for employers to recruit from this workforce – but not so easy for small businesses
 - Education of some handicapped has been severely affected during their lives
 - Battling against the risk factor
 - Employers
 - Difficulties employing someone who needs regular time off for treatment – costs mostly covered by the state but who picks up the work? ‘Staffing headache’
 - Employee absence – where to cross the line?
 - Handicapped – good incentives, and larger companies can afford to adapt workplace
- The homeless
 - ‘No home, no job’
 - Long-term effects of social exclusion
 - Other problems that need addressing first
 - Employers
 - Less relevance for this target group – overlapping problems need to be dealt with
 - Most work comes through associations and charities who work in partnership with certain companies to get ‘feet off the ground’
- Youth
 - Current emergency group – “The Lost Generation” as cited by journalists in recent articles – youth unemployment (at all levels of education/qualification) are highest across Europe and US since 1950, and since 2007 have risen at an alarming rate
 - No experience, no job – employers can take their pick and prefer to keep who they have, or choose those with experience
 - Well educated and qualified youth leaving eastern and central European countries in search for work are causing ‘brain drain’ in their countries, and competition in adopted countries
 - Employers
 - High training needs
 - In difficult and competitive times, need experienced workers
 - School leavers (UK and US especially) ‘leaving school without basic skills’, lack of employability
 - University leavers (UK and US especially) ‘leaving with qualifications that don’t have much relevance to present workplace’ in some sectors
- Precarious work
 - Employers ‘shifting the risk’, concerned with tough labour regulations, or recruiting on a ‘needs’ only basis – increase in temporary, part-time contracts
 - Job seekers ‘forced’ to take precarious contracts to work

- Labour regulations – help or hindrance?
- Temporary contracts - stepping stone or poisoned necessity?
- Effect on training – workers on temporary contracts miss out on training opportunities
- Changing society – workers unable to plan for personal life (mortgage, marriage, health)
- Employers
 - Need to cut costs, stay competitive – recruiting ‘on demand’ more attractive
 - Labour regulations = HR risks = companies’ need to ‘protect ourselves’ = temporary contracts more attractive
 - ‘Shifting the risk’ to employees
- **Needs**
 - Training and re-training programmes – focusing on more vocational training in order to provide and improve skills, with work-based training (apprentiships, etc) being the most successful (but smaller companies need more support to provide this); need to ‘strengthen employability’
 - Training should include ‘personal development’ at some level (‘employees personal needs, ability to adapt, cognitive/behavioral aspects....etc...need to be addressed more’; ‘human support’)
 - Need to strengthen employability
 - Need to strengthen partnerships between employers and training/education institutions
 - Job search assistance – real, concentrated, relevant, individualized job search support should be improved for vulnerable groups (CVs, job applications, letters, interview techniques)
 - Flexibility – on both sides, employers and employees (older workers’ contracts, low salaries matched with attractive contracts, handicapped and LTI working conditions and hours related to their output)
- **France-specific summary**
 - Youth unemployment the most cited as ‘vulnerable’
 - Labour regulations making it difficult for companies, but also increasing precarious contracts
 - HR – what kind of role do they play?
 - Objectives and results – not clear
 - Larger French cities now producing a new class ‘working poor’ – those who have work, but salaries are not enough to cover cost of living
 - Many supporting associations/organisations – but working separately
 - RSA being more important, but still a low way to go
 - France compares well to the rest of Europe during these difficult times
 - The need to adapt to the times and to ‘create employment’ in France
 - Employers –
 - The heavy load of ‘administration’
 - Rights – abused?
 - RSA and diversity – what does this mean to employers? One employer ‘RSA/diversity: we need to look after our own employees first, before we can consider reaching out to vulnerable groups’

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

To date, Françoise Le Deist and Jessica Grandhomme have held face-to-face interviews with:

- 1 expert
- 1 employer
- 6 intermediaries (1 member of French prison system, 2 consultants, 1 union representative, 1 association for the handicapped, 1 representative from French state-run employment agency – all working on the professional reintegration of vulnerable groups)

Further interviews are being planned with approximately 10 employers/intermediaries/experts between now and December.

Interviews are being conducted and transcribed in French, with a summary translated into English, and any relevant additional information given (statistics, content, etc.).

EMERGING THEMES AND PHRASES FROM LITERATURE AND INTERVIEWS

- “Shifting the risk”: state → employers → employees
- “Le misère social” in France, especially concerning youth unemployment and LTU
- Everyone is vulnerable, across all groups – the most harmful factor being the length of time unemployed
- (Re)integration/time – dramatic consequences if vulnerable groups are not assisted quickly as regards to work
- Employability: relevant vocational training, competence, motivation
- Training: relevant, bespoke, personal support
- Multi-agency cooperation
- Uneven employer involvement
- Contextual country differences, as well as differences between groups and their needs, limit transferability and receptiveness

ACTIONS GOING FORWARD

- Interviews to continue
- Focus groups to be confirmed
- Literature review to be distributed to SNOVE partners
- Completion of exploratory phase and comparison with other national reports on TNA
- Assessment of market need in each country and audit of existing provision for groups
- Adaptation/development and piloting of training materials for selected target groups
- Evaluation and accreditation of training materials in each national context
- On-going dissemination activities

Jonathan Winterton
Françoise Le Deist
Jessica Grandhomme