



Changing attitudes towards an ageing workforce

– coping strategies in German business

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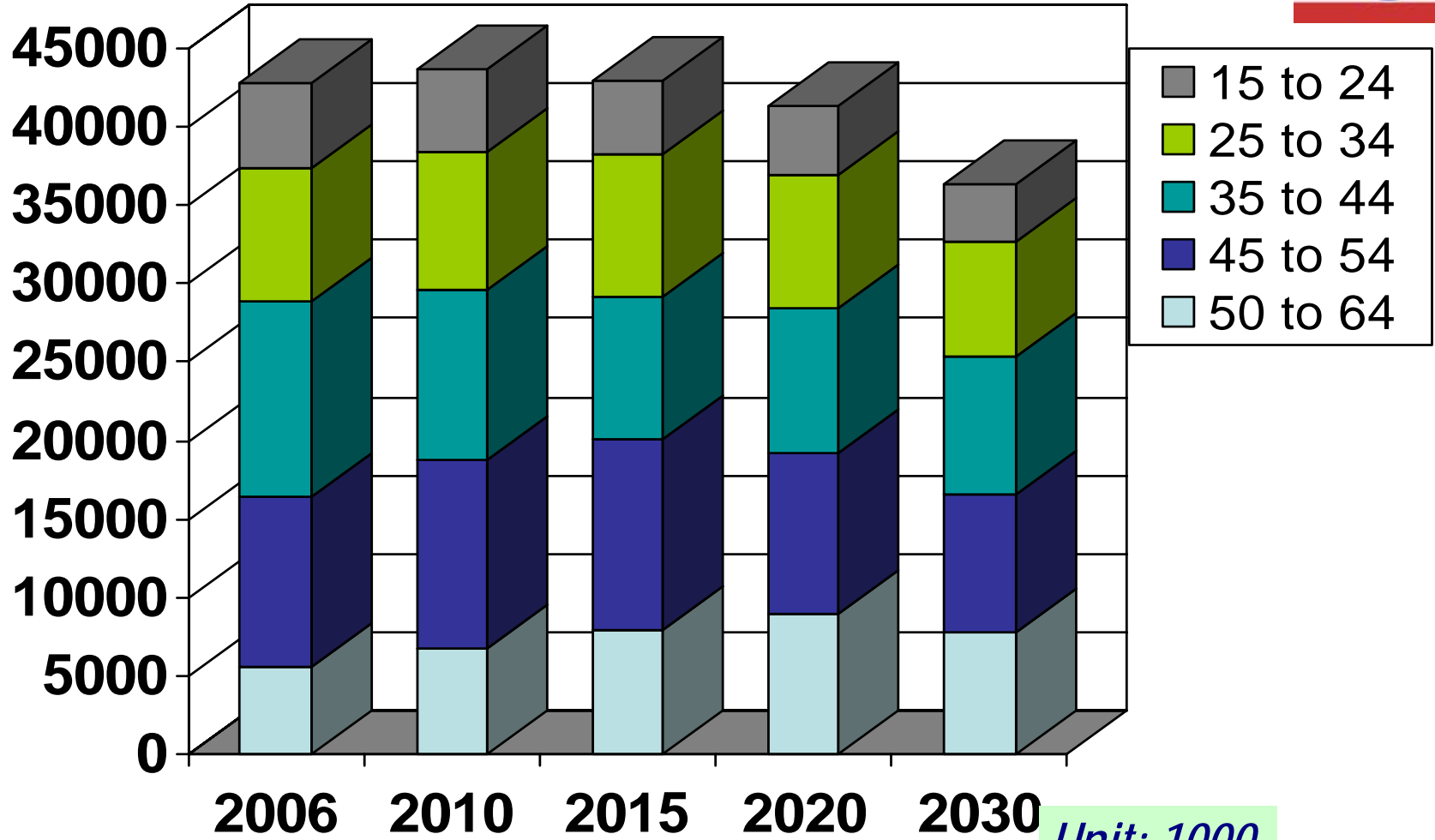


Demographic change in Germany

- In Germany, too, there is a clear demographic change – but with distinct regional differences.
- The 2007 employment rate for over 55-year-olds was 52.0% in Germany. This was an increase of over 10% from 2000.
- Compared with other EU countries, Germany is therefore in the top half (6% above the average).
- The number of 55 to 64-year-old workers will rise by around 40% by the year 2020.
- Consequences:
 - fall in the working population
 - lower tax income
 - high costs in health and social welfare



Trends in worker potential



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2006

Unit: 1000



Social coping strategies

Goal: keep people in work longer

- This topic has been on the social policy agenda for several years; the following strategies have been devised:
 - Making early retirement less attractive financially
 - + Increasing employability
 - + Providing information so as to overcome deficit models for age
 - + Creating awareness so as to combat prejudice
 - + Promoting the creation of suitable jobs



Situation in enterprises

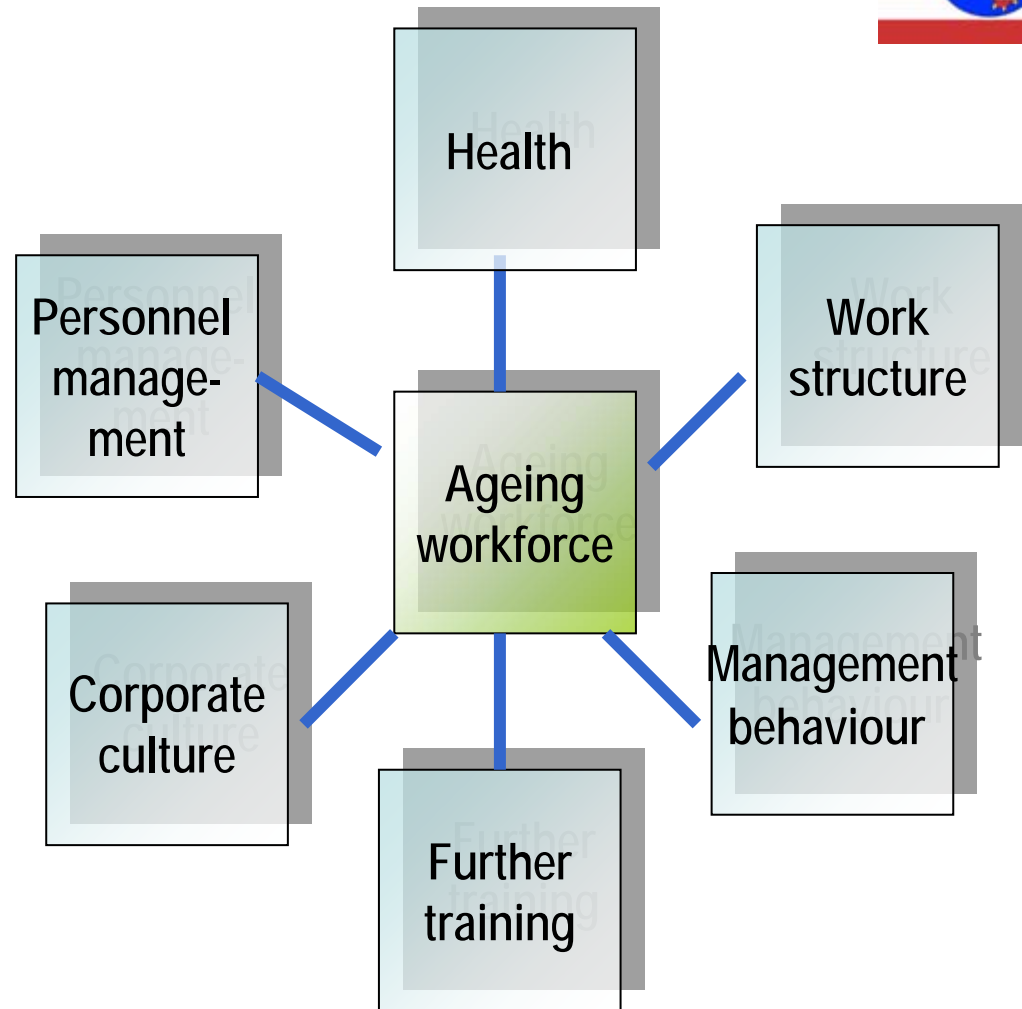
- Early retirement models were widespread and in use as a strategy to counter youth unemployment
- Result: in 2002 more than 50% of enterprises did not employ anybody over 50; they are often insufficiently prepared for age change.

Enterprises must adapt to the fact that:

- qualified personnel is already a scarcity in some sectors
- know-how is lost when older workers retire
- today's unhealthy workplaces are tomorrow's expensive outlay
- more and more, they will be dealing with older customers



**Sustained work
and health
protection
measures
integrated into
holistic personnel
development
concepts**





Potential of health and safety measures

The function of health and safety measures is to maintain working capacity and combat health decline through **effective design of work and organisation**, taking into account **all ages** and their various needs.

Risk assessments are a central and effective planning and control tool for the age-appropriate organisation of good work.

In an ideal scenario they focus on both the requirement profile of the workplace and the work profile of the employee.



Which stress factors must risk assessments take into account for older workers?

- Salubrious working conditions are to the benefit of all age groups!
- Making use of the experience potential of older workers by assigning suitable tasks
- Organisation of working hours (avoiding piece work, shift work)
- Less physically heavy work
- Suitable psychological strain (avoiding burn-out)
- Ergonomic workplaces (light, noise, reach)
- Organisation of work procedures (slower work rate where necessary, suitable instruction)

In addition:

- Measures promoting health, such as support groups or stress reduction measures
- Regular and specific skill-acquirement measures



Risk assessments: business reality

- Risk assessments are a new component in the German worker protection tradition.
- Only now are they beginning to be seen in enterprises as the basis for good working conditions.
- Until now, risk assessments usually focused on the job; with demographic change, they must also take account of the worker.
- Only for every third job are the physical dangers sufficiently known and evaluated.
- Only for every tenth job have risk assessments been carried out with respect to psychological strain.



Conclusion: how should an age-adapted working culture develop?

- Intensification of the cross-generation dialogue.
- Good jobs which continually exploit the development potential of the employees.
- Health at work must be guaranteed throughout working life; this also concerns psychological and emotional strains.
- Skill-acquirement measures must be available throughout working life.

The State Labour Inspectorates can perform a central role by supporting businesses in the carrying out and implementation of risk assessments. However, sustainable progress can only be achieved in cooperation with other players in society.



Demographic change presents enterprises with new challenges

Enterprises will have to remain innovative and flexible with an older workforce. The prerequisites for this are:

- Workforces of mixed ages
- Maintaining health and performance up to retirement
- Focusing on diversified workforces (older employees, women and migrants)

To achieve these, there must be:

- healthy workplaces for all age and worker groups
- attractive working conditions and a good working atmosphere
- further training options for all age groups
- long-term, systematic know-how transfer within the enterprise