

**New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work
CEMR/EPSU**

Executive Summary

by

Jane Lethbridge
j.lethbridge@gre.ac.uk

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The Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) investigates the impact of privatisation and liberalisation on public services, with a specific focus on water, energy, waste management, health and social care sectors. Other research topics include the function and structure of public services, the strategies of multinational companies and influence of international finance institutions on public services. PSIRU is based in the Business Faculty, University of Greenwich, London, UK. Researchers: Prof. Steve Thomas, Dr. Jane Lethbridge (Director), Dr. Emanuele Lobina, Prof. David Hall, Dr. Jeff Powell, Sandra Van Niekerk, Dr. Yuliya Yurchenko

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Forms of Service Delivery for Municipalities, the Contribution of Social Dialogue and Good Practice for Well-being at Work'

This is the summary of the final report of the 'New Forms of Service Delivery for Municipalities, the Contribution of Social Dialogue and Good Practice for Well-being at Work' project. The project aimed to:

1. Explore new policies and forms of restructuring in public service delivery and link it to trends and policies on health and safety at EU level;
2. Identify the challenges and opportunities for public sector workers and employers of new forms of work organisation and technological developments;
3. Jointly evaluate and diagnose how social partners can be supportive in these reform processes;
4. Highlight the relationship between restructuring and the well-being at work and the prevention and implementation of health and safety;
5. Provide knowledge and practices in relation to 'good restructuring' in the public sector and the role of social partners.

The project adopted a methodology of exploring four issues - digitalisation, migration, recruitment and retention and occupational safety and health - which were felt to encapsulate the tensions of restructuring LRG services, the requirements for an effective way of addressing health and safety and the role of social dialogue. Four reports and the discussions in four seminars focused on these issues and showed that there are some commonalities between these issues which can form the basis for a more detailed understanding of new forms of service delivery in local and regional government (LRG) and the promotion of occupational safety and health (OSH).

This summary has five sections:

1. Policy context;
2. New ways of working;
3. Social inclusion;
4. Impact of austerity policies;
5. Conclusion

1 Policy context

In 2014, the European Commission published a “Quality framework for restructuring and anticipation of change” which proposed ‘fiches’ for employees, employers and social partners with good practices on how to deal with restructuring. It recommended that frameworks for worker involvement to anticipate and prepare for change should be drawn up, and measures to help individual workers should be developed e.g. to increase their skills and mobility.¹

The EU Social Dialogue Committee Local and Regional Government (LRG) was involved in these discussions, and issued a joint response to the European Commission’s Green Paper COM (2012) 7 “Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience” in March 2012 for the local and regional government sector.² In particular, the effects of restructuring within municipalities were felt strongly due to pressures on municipal finances and new forms of public service provision. In addition, it should be noted that the Annual Growth Survey (EPAC), published in November 2011, emphasized the modernization of public administration as one of the five priorities for action by the Commission and the Council.

In 2014, the European Commission published a ‘Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 – 2020’ which identified key challenges and strategic objectives for health and safety at work and presented key actions and instruments to address these. This new Framework aims to ensure that the EU and social partners continue to play a role in the promotion of high standards for working conditions and well-being at work both within Europe and internationally, in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy.

2 New forms of service delivery

Digitalisation, migration, demographic changes and OSH needs have created new forms of service delivery at LRG level. These factors operate in different ways but have all led to pressure to deliver services in new ways. An influential factor is the interaction of national and local policies. This project found that the relationship between national /federal policies and local / regional government influenced the role that LRG could take but not just in a reactive, top-down way. There is growing evidence to show that LRGs can also influence and shape public policy, especially when trying to deliver appropriate public services for the local population.

2.1 Digitalisation

First, digitalisation has been defined as the “*adoption or increase in use of digital or computer technology by an organization, industry, country, etc*”.³ Second, and in a broader sense, digitalisation has been defined as “*economic and social transformation triggered by the massive adoption of digital technologies to generate, process, share and transact information*”.⁴ These two definitions start to capture the impact of digitalisation in that it is a transformative process which had only just started to impact on local and regional government. The term e-government is defined as “*using information and communications technologies to support modernised, joined up and seamless public services*.”⁵

A 2012 EU report on digitalization in Europe measured progress in four government service clusters.

1. Income generating for government e.g. taxation

2. Registration e.g. births, marriages, deaths
3. Service returns – health, social, libraries
4. Permits and licences – building, education, passport. ⁶

The adoption of digital technologies in government and specifically municipal services has been gradually expanding since the 1990s. These definitions show that there is a difference between digitalisation, which refers to the use of digital technology, and e-government, which uses information and communications technologies, to improve delivery of public services. Digitalisation provides opportunities for sharing information in new and different ways, which can provide new ways of delivering public services.

Many public services can be improved using new ways of sharing information. These range from improved home health care to the development of new ways of organising public administration. These new forms of public service delivery may change the relationship between the service user and the public sector worker. The impact of digitalisation on public services is only slowly being understood. With the introduction of new technologies there will be continuous opportunities for delivering public services in new ways but these need to be evaluated from both the user and worker perspective

2.2 Migration

- **Asylum seeker** - someone fleeing persecution or conflict and seeking international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees.
- A **refugee** is an asylum seeker whose claim has been approved.
- An **economic migrant** has left their country in search of improving their economic position.⁷

All three groups are often described as migrants but not all migrants are refugees or asylum seekers. The term 'third country national' has been used in this report to refer to asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants.

Migration policies within the EU are fragmented. The EU2020 strategy acknowledges the importance of labour migration to address labour shortages. It has been estimated that 66 million labour migrants will be needed by 2020. Germany will have a shortage of 2.4 million workers. Other countries, such as France, Italy and the UK will experience labour shortages after 2020. However there is a more ambiguous approach to recognising the human and social rights of migrants. Since 2014, the European Commission (EC) has had responsibility for migration policies covering legal migration, illegal migration, borders, visas and a Common European Asylum System.

Table 1: Number of asylum applications made in January – December 2015

Country	Number of asylum applications
Germany	442,000
Hungary	174,000
Sweden	156,000
Austria	86,000
Italy	83,000
France	71,000
Netherlands	43,000
Belgium	39,000
UK	39,000
Switzerland	38,000
Finland	32,000

Norway	30,000
Denmark	21,000
Bulgaria	20,000
Spain	15,000
Greece	11,000
Poland	10,000
Other	15,000
Total	1,325,000

Source: Eurostat in Pew Research Center (2016)

There have been some changes in the demographic structure of migrants. Until 2015, the majority were single men but in 2015 there was a large increase in the number of families with children, who have more complex needs. In 2016, young men have once again become the largest group of migrants in many countries. The practical strategies required to deal with these large numbers need to include housing, education, health and other related services, most of which are the responsibility of local and regional authorities. The quicker that migrants are integrated, then the sooner they become self-sufficient, employed and pay taxes.⁸

LRGs may also start to operate in different ways. Bilbao, Spain, where the number of third country nationals has increased recently, has adopted an “intercultural city strategy and an intercultural action plan”.⁹ A local strategy aims to increase integration and managing diversity within the city, based on an overall goal of inter-culturalism. The Local Action Plan draws stakeholders together through different activities, for example, training, networking, employment, housing and education. Bilbao, with the Spanish government and NGOs has organised a network of institutional collaboration to meet asylum seekers who are to be resettled from other European countries.¹⁰

2.3 Recruitment and retention policies

The Member States of the European Union are expected to undergo some significant demographic changes in the period up to 2060. Overall, population will reach a peak in 2050 and then decline slightly. Life expectancy is expected to increase for both men and women with a slight convergence of rates.¹¹ An ageing population affects labour markets because of a decrease in young people entering the labour market and a reduction in older workers due to retirement. Until recently, retirement ages were fixed, usually with different ages for women and men. Retirement was the point at which workers could claim their pension. This was part of a national welfare system which was designed when life expectancy was shorter and men formed the largest part of the workforce. With the increasing participation of women in the workforce, patterns of employment have changed. Although there are some significant differences between countries in terms of the share of women in the workforce, even where the national levels of female participation in the workforce are low, there are still a large number of part-time workers.¹²

Although the total labour supply is expected to stabilise by 2023, it will decline by 8.2% between 2023 and 2060. The working age population is expected to decline because many people of working age are expected to retire but smaller numbers of younger workers will enter the workforce. Although the labour supply will decrease, rates of employment among different groups will increase, with rates for women and older workers rising most rapidly.

Local and regional governments employ over 17 million workers across Europe to deliver essential public services (CEMR), the majority of them women.¹³ The effect of these demographic changes in local and regional government needs to be considered in the context of some important employment policy changes which have taken place in many

European countries. The introduction of equal opportunities policies in the 1960s/ 1970s resulted in an expansion of women workers in the local government workforce. In addition, changes in technology and increasing levels of education have changed the entry point into public administrations. The use of computers and photocopiers led to a decrease in the number of basic administrative jobs previously held by young entrants. Fewer school leavers enter public administration but increasingly more highly educated older people, including women, have entered the workforce. The impact of public management reforms has led to the devolution of employment responsibilities to external agencies makes it more difficult for public authorities to monitor trends within the workforce.¹⁴

In England, the Timewise Pilot Programme is funded by the Local Government Association (LGA) in partnership with Timewise, a company specialising in the promotion of flexible working. It aims to support local authorities to work with Timewise and create flexible working arrangements, which will attract and retain a workforce by using flexible working to encourage applicants. The scheme will contribute to the creation of a more diverse workforce and is expected to increase productivity in the context of budget cuts. Local authorities which become part of the Timewise scheme will be expected to share the learning from this new workforce practice with local employers.¹⁵

Flexible working can benefit people of all ages, especially women. Camden Council (London, UK) advertises all its posts as open to flexibility and as a result new staff have started with flexible working arrangements. Stoke City Council (UK) found that the retention rate for skilled workers who returned from maternity leave has improved. 36% of employees returned to work after maternity leave and all are still in post. Stoke City Council has found that Timewise has improved the way in which it meets the needs of its older workers because of an emphasis on workforce planning, the 'shape' of the organisation and job redesign. An example of this can be seen in the way Stoke City Council has started to work, in a project funded by the Department of Health, with local employers to ensure that workers who have caring responsibilities, mainly women, remain in employment.¹⁶ Flexible ways of working are likely to benefit women.

2.4 OSH

Occupational health and safety (OSH) – safety, health and welfare of people at work

Workplace health promotion (WHP) – the combined efforts of employers, workers and society to improve the health and well-being at work. This can be achieved by: improving work organisation and work environment; promoting active participation of all stakeholders in the process; and encouraging personal development.¹⁷

When analysing the OSH and well-being measures that local and regional government are responsible for promoting, it is useful to consider two basic models of workers' health:

- The labour approach to health in the workplace;
- The public health approach to health in the workplace and local communities.

An understanding of these two models will help to appreciate the scope of local and regional government in promoting occupational safety and health and well-being in public services.

Women form the majority of workers in local and regional government (LRG) in Europe. There is evidence to show that women are exposed to different occupational health risks and problems. For example, women workers in education and health care are "exposed to organisational risks such as monotony, high demands and limited authority (which have

been linked to fatigue, depression and unhealthy behaviour)".¹⁸ Women are also strongly affected by third party workplace violence because they form the majority of the workforce in public services where they have to interact with clients and service users.¹⁹

The problems of effective implementation of the EU Directives has still not been fully addressed by all Member States. In addition, LRGs are not always given specific implementation responsibilities in national OSH legislation. LRGs have responsibility for OSH in their own workforces and often for the local workforces in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). They are also responsible for policy areas linked to the Europe 2020 strategy such as education and training, entrepreneurship, labour market, infrastructure and energy efficiency, which have OSH implications. In some countries, LRG has a very specific role in the inspection and regulation of OSH but in other countries it has a less well defined but supportive role.

In Denmark, the Municipality of Aabenraa worked with a local kindergarten, Vuggestuen Kernehuset and the Trade Union of Educators (BUPL) to set up a project which would reduce the incidence of muscular-skeletal disorders and retain older workers. Child care involves frequent lifting and repetitive movement which puts physical strain on workers, often resulting in workers leaving the workforce. The project started by commissioning a work ability analysis. An occupational therapist observed each worker for several hours and then recommended what was needed to improve the way in which they worked. This included changing the height of tables and chairs, allowing workers to have more time off and achieve a better work-life balance and introducing a better workload allocation system to reduce the number of repetitive tasks. As a result, workers continued to work for longer, overall health improved and the incidence of muscular-skeletal disorders has dropped. The success of the project depended on trade union and management commitment, the use of an external expert, individualised work analysis and the use of a variety of measures.²⁰

Digitalisation, migration, demographic changes and OSH strategies are all creating new ways of delivering public services. These new forms of services have implications for public sector workers. New jobs may be created or existing jobs may change and there are extensive OSH implications in many of new ways of delivering services. The next section looks at how LRGs have special responsibilities to promote social inclusion which also result in new forms of public services.

3 Social inclusion

LRGs have a pivotal role to play in promoting social inclusion. LRGs are taking an active role in both formulating and implementing public policies, especially for issues that directly affect the citizens and workforce of LRG. One of the most immediate issues is migration but LRG is also concerned with the expansion of digital inclusion, the promotion of services and employment that addresses the needs of different age groups and expanding the responsibility for OSH from its own workforce to other local workforces.

3.1 Digitalisation

Many digital services involve a direct interface between citizen and municipality. This raises questions about the level of digital involvement of the local population within municipal boundaries. In the UK, 9 million people are considered to be digitally excluded.²¹ Older people, people with disabilities and people in low income groups are most likely to experience problems in accessing the internet, whether because of lack of access to hardware and/or lack of digital skills.²² When introducing digital services for basic services, provision for the digitally excluded population will have to be addressed by local

governments, but more research is needed to understand how people use the internet for particular types of services, especially at local municipal levels.

3.2 Migration

Europe has predicted labour market shortages by 2020. Many local and regional authorities are aware of the pressures on the local labour market and its role in economic development. One of the most significant strategies that local authorities can pursue is to support the integration of migrants into the local labour market. Once migrants can earn their living and start to pay taxes, they are able to make a contribution to society and the economy. LRGs are recognizing that they have to ensure that public services are provided in a safe and appropriate way for third party nationals.

Labour market statistics show that there are significant differences between third country nationals, intra-EU migrants and nationals in terms of economic activity rates, unemployment rates, temporary work contracts and over-qualification rates. The activity rates for intra-EU migrants is higher than for either third country nationals or for the reporting country, which is reflected in economic activity rates of both women and men.²³ Unemployment rates among third country nationals are higher than among the reporting country population. Similarly, a higher percentage of third country nationals have temporary work permits than either intra-EU migrants or national citizens.

It is not just a lack of language skills and education that affects the position of third country migrants in the labour market. The lack of recognition of the qualifications is a major barrier that affects their progress in the labour market. 39% of foreign citizens are over-qualified for their employment/ jobs compared with 31% of intra-EU citizens and 19% of national citizens. There is also a difference in the over-qualification rate of third country citizens when divided into countries of origin with a high and medium/ low development index. Third country citizens from countries with medium/low development index have even higher levels of over-qualification.

The education department of the city of Malmo, Sweden has run a Centre for Validation of Occupational Skills since 2000. This provides support for third country national who do not have documental evidence of qualifications/ skills. With a recognition of their skills, third country nationals do not have to repeat formal learning of their existing skills but continue with learning Swedish and securing a job. Service users are 'mapped' with a counsellor. They then contact the Validation Centre, which identifies their skills and assesses their level of competence. Other integration programmes, for example, language teaching and the establishment of internships, contribute to the process of supporting the third country national into the labour market. Staff working in this Centre have backgrounds as guidance counsellors and other skilled crafts. They do not have multi-cultural training but are trained as tutors.²⁴

3.3 Recruitment and retention

The impact of the recession in Europe has affected young people most strongly, with growing levels of unemployment among young people. Austerity policies have contributed to this increasing level of unemployment. There are 5.5 million young people unemployed in Europe. The EU response has been to promote several Europe wide initiatives.²⁵ An EU report, published in 2013, entitled 'Working Together for Europe's young people – a call to action' asked national governments to develop strategies to reduce youth unemployment together with other stakeholders. LRGs have the potential to play an important role in national strategies.²⁶

The use of apprenticeships has traditionally been one way of supporting young people to enter the labour market. The current unemployment crisis for young people is again emphasizing the importance of apprenticeships. European countries have different policies towards apprenticeships, usually influenced by the effectiveness of vocational education and training systems. For example, Germany, has a well-developed system of apprenticeships, including federal public sector apprenticeships in 130 occupations.

In England, local authorities have played an active role in promoting apprenticeships as part of a wider strategy to engage the under-25 year olds who are not currently in employment, education or training (NEETs). Although the national Youth Contract scheme, with £1 billion funding, aimed to increase the number of vulnerable young people in education and work, only 27% participants have been able to enter education or employment.²⁷ However in pilot schemes which have been run by local authorities, over 57% of young people entered employment and / or education, which is a much higher success rate.²⁸

3.4 Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Local and regional authorities can play different roles in promoting OSH and well-being, for their own workers as well as for the local community. In some cases, LRG may be the initiator of the project but in many cases, it is one of several agencies which works to support social dialogue and the promotion of OSH and well-being. This is partly determined by whether LRGs have been given special roles in implementing OSH legislation and the LRG role in the promotion of decent work and well-being.

Decent work can be defined as:

“Decent work is about equal access to employment without discrimination, receiving a living wage, security in the workplace, social protection, when, for example, ill or pregnant, and the freedom to assemble and organize. Decent work is achieved through the implementation of four strategic objectives: Creating jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection and, promoting social dialogue with gender equality as crosscutting objective.”²⁹

LRGs have the potential to contribute to these four strategic objectives and the following examples illustrate the range of projects which have been implemented in Europe.

In Scotland, the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives aims to “work with employers to enable them to understand, protect and improve the health of their employees. This also means they will be better placed to support those with health problems who have re-entered work, to remain in work”. There are four medium term outcomes which cover: a healthier workforce; decreased sickness absence and presenteeism in workplaces; safer and healthier workplaces and; improved productivity of individuals.³⁰ The Scottish Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is a partner and the Centre works very closely with local authorities.³¹ This is an example of a project which has national aims but its implementation is dependent on close working with local authorities.

3.5 Conclusion

LRGs are in a good position to promote social inclusion as part of their wider mandate. Improving digital inclusion involves working with local communities as well as with the private ICT sector. Working towards the integration of third country nationals has to involve new ways of working through the creation of legislation, alliances and coalitions, which build on existing integration strategies. Similarly LRGs have been supporting the integration of young people into the labour force through training and apprenticeships. With OSH, LRGs are

becoming more active in promoting OSH for their own workforces as well as for their local communities.

4 Austerity

Austerity policies have had a tangible impact on many LRG services since 2010 and are often dictating new ways of working. This can be seen in the adoption of e-government services and the struggle for resources to integrate third country nationals.

4.1 Digitalisation

Digitalisation and the adoption of e-government has been further promoted by central and local regional governments as a way of modernising public services and reducing costs. The nature of the work and how the work is delivered can change dramatically when digitalisation takes place. For example, the inputting of data may become a more routine and monotonous process. Previous personal contact either face-to-face or by telephone may be reduced, which leads to a decline in job satisfaction and often a loss of control over the labour process.

As part of austerity policies but also as part of the 'modernisation' of public services, LRGs have introduced digital systems which change the way in which information is stored and the way in which services are delivered. Research which examined the impact of digitalisation on the labour process has found that it can result in a worker having less control over their work process. This can affect their level of stress, the level of job satisfaction and sense of being valued.

4.2 Migration

The EUROMED (2012) survey of public service workers and their work with migrant users of services found that there had been a gradual deterioration of services with increasingly difficult working conditions, especially in initial reception services, where there was a lack of equipment and inappropriate premises. Public service workers were not receiving adequate training and information which made it more difficult to deliver public services.

4.3 Recruitment and Retention

The global financial crisis and resulting austerity measures have had an impact on employment in local authorities, to varying degrees. In several countries, e.g. UK, Sweden, Greece, austerity policies have caused a dramatic decline in the number of jobs, with local government workers either losing their jobs or not being replaced, and changes in the way in which local authority services are delivered. In other countries the impact on local government has been less severe.

Austerity measures have had a major impact on local government workforces in several countries. Efficiency and restructuring strategies have reduced jobs, introduced new ways of working and increased outsourcing of many 'back-office' services, which have altered the nature of work within local government.

4.4 Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Budget reductions have led to cuts in the number of jobs as well as increased workloads when there is a failure to replace workers. Some local authorities have outsourced public services so that workers are moved to a private sector employer. This has implications for the economic security of the workers as well as increased work pressures and new forms of work organisation. All these changes are recognised as affecting the health of individual workers.

LRGs have been affected by austerity policies and the full effect of the reductions in spending have still not been fully understood. Austerity has increased the digitalisation of public services but there is still much to be learnt about the effect on OSH and how service users respond. For third country nationals, austerity policies have had a direct effect on the services which they use and the public sector workers delivering these services. Pressure on public services more widely have influenced attitudes to third country nationals negatively. Young people have been disproportionately affected by the financial crisis and LRGs have focused on supporting young people into employment. Older people employed by LRGs have often lost their jobs as a result of budget cuts. The long term health effects of austerity policies and organisational restructuring will be felt by public sector workers.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

New ways of working have emerged as a result of new/ changes in technology, new ways of delivering services to meet needs of third country nationals and demographic changes and new occupational safety and health needs. Social dialogue plays an important role in the promotion of new practices.

The need for transparency and accountability emerges in all four topics. This places particular pressure on LRGs to make their own decision-making more transparent as well as following institutional systems of transparency and accountability. More information and consultation is needed.

LRG can play a lead role in promoting social inclusion, whether digital inclusion, social inclusion of third country nationals and social inclusion of older/younger people. LRG is best suited to promoting integration because of its responsibilities towards local populations.

The relationship between LRG policy / implementation and national level policy / implementation is becoming more important, for example, LRGs have taken a lead in migration policy when there was no national leadership.

LRG has responsibility for recruitment and retention and OSH in its own workplaces as well as the local community.

OSH is a theme that both cuts across three topics – digitalisation, migration and recruitment and retention. LRGs also have a responsibility to promote OSH among workplaces in their localities as well as to their own workforces.

Data collection is needed to assess the impact of digitalisation, understand how third country communities are changing, evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and retention and assess OSH issues. Data collection also contributes to transparent decision making.

Training, monitoring and evaluation are important for each topic.

5.2 Recommendations

This report has shown that new forms of service delivery, good practice for OSH and social dialogue have to be interlinked if the needs of both services users and public sector workers are to be met. There are several recommendations:

- Achieve a shared understanding by social partners of the nature of the problem, e.g. OSH issues;
- Establish an effective information and consultation process with all key stakeholders, e.g. when introducing digitalisation for services users and workers;
- Implement actions in an open and transparent way so that all stakeholders understand what is being done, e.g. how resources are being allocated for social integration of third country nationals;
- Gather adequate data to both inform an analysis of a problem and to oversee the implementation of a solution;
- Make public services accountable to the local population, e.g. designing and delivering services and employment policies which reflect local demographic trends;
- Design and implement monitoring and evaluation strategies, e.g. new forms of digital services and impact on labour process;
- Provide adequate training for workforce when introducing new forms of services delivery, e.g. new ways of addressing OSH problems.

Jane Lethbridge
j.lethbridge@gre.ac.uk
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