Socio-demographic analysis of the European Sugar Sector: challenges and opportunities for successful succession planning, youth employment and better health at work
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 10 years, the sugar sector has been particularly hit by a massive wave of restructurings leading to the closure of almost half of its factories and half of its workforce. Partly as a result of that process the current sugar workforce in Europe is particularly old in comparison with the rest of the Food and Drink industry and the economy as a whole. The sector also suffers from the handicap of being a highly technical sector located in rural areas, where there is generally a scarcity of qualified workers. Finally, the sugar sector also endures the difficulty—common to the rest of the Food and Drink industry—to attract young recruits.

As this study has shown, the EU sugar sector has raised above many of those challenges. Indeed there are multiple examples of age-specific or age-sensitive initiatives and policies in sugar companies to facilitate the adaptation and ensure the retention of senior workers and their knowledge (more on that in section 2 of this report). Succession planning and the timely transmission of knowledge also appear as aspects widely identified by sugar companies as key for the management of their workforce (Section 3) whereas multiple efforts are developed to attract young graduates and to train young local workers with no prior qualifications (Section 4).

Across the report there are numerous individual examples of sugar companies that provide useful ideas and good practice examples for companies in the sugar sector and beyond. We can mention for example the concept of ‘sequential retirement’ (allowing retired workers to come back to work for the time of the processing season) in Slovakia, the inter-generational and multi-disciplinary teams put in place in The Netherlands, the integration in a single process of succession planning, recruitment and transmission of knowledge in Spain and the development of a comprehensive program for workers aged 58+ covering aspects such as health, training, working time and retirement policies in Finland.

As the situation ahead will remain not less challenging for the sector with the end of sugar quotas in 2017, those efforts must be continued. Thus the social partners call for the sector to continue and consolidate the efforts it has put in place. They also call for national authorities to put in place regulatory frameworks that promote and support companies’ adaptation of workplaces and working conditions to older workers. National legal frameworks should also allow for gradual and flexible retirement practices to flourish as a way to keep senior workers for longer in the workforce while allowing them to keep their full rights to pensions and other social benefits. The EU can play an important role in promoting Member States initiatives in that regard.

For questions or remarks on this report please contact CEFS or EFFAT Secretariats at Oscar.Ruiz@cefs.org and E.Brentnall@effat.org. The report will be available online on the Social Partners’ common website www.Eurosugar.org and on their respective organisations’ websites.

Acknowledgement

CEFS and EFFAT would like to thank Eurofound, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, for their support and comments in reviewing the final draft version of the report.
Introduction

Background and objectives of the study.

In 2012, employers and employees representatives at the EU Social Dialogue Committee in the sugar sector agreed that there were increasing concerns regarding succession planning as it was perceived that the sector workforce was ageing rapidly.

As in most manufacturing sectors and in the EU population in general, the increase in life expectancy and retirement age in most EU 27 countries is calling on social partners in various sectors to reflect upon new ways to ensure successful succession planning (involving a smooth transition and the transmission of know-how to the new generation of workers) as well as health-related management issues, in particular for elder workers.

Over the past 10 years, the sugar sector has also been particularly hit by a massive wave of restructurings. One of the challenges has been to manage such changes and the consequences those changes can have for the mood of employees and its health impacts, including socio-psychological risks. Social partners would therefore like to continue their exploration of the issue to draw lessons from the experience of the sugar sector in this field and to encourage their members to mainstream the topic of health at the workplace (including psychosocial risks). Youth employment also enters the picture as it has now clearly become a major social and economic problem in the EU. Despite the difficult restructurings it has faced over the years, the EU sugar industry has a role to play in providing young people with access to the labour market, in particular in rural areas.

Methodology and report structure.

Data was gathered through a survey of EU sugar companies and trade unions in the sugar sector conducted between the end of 2013 and the first half of 2014. Due to the desire to respect individual companies’ confidential figures, only aggregated figures are published in this report. The forms used for the surveys are provided as an annex to this report.

The socio-demographic analysis itself (Section 1) contains a wealth of new data on the sugar workforce at EU level. The report also looks into measures that sugar companies have put in place to promote active ageing (Section 2) as well as addressing succession planning and the transmission of know-how (Section 3). Finally, the reports also describes the measures put in place to promote youth employment in the sector (Section 4) and the Job profiles in higher demand in the EU sugar industry (Section 5). The report also includes a number of conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the report (Section 6). A summary of good practices is presented at the end of the report in the form of an annex.

The quantitative part of the questionnaire was answered by 18 companies or groups of companies representing 15,774 workers or 76% of the total EU sugar sector permanent workforce. The highest rate of response (76% of permanent staff) was achieved for the questions relating to the workforce.
split according to age, gender and socio-professional category. The rate of response for questions relating to the level of education attained by the permanent workforce were appreciably lower (50%), possibly indicating that comprehensive company records in the area of workforce education are not widespread yet. Questions regarding the type of contract, split by professional category and gender, received a higher rate of response, covering 18,515 workers representing 64% of the total workforce including the very significant group of seasonal workers (20-30% of the total).

The qualitative section of the survey was answered by 16 companies out of the 18 respondents, covering about 70% of the sugar sector permanent workforce. That high rate of response was stable across all the qualitative sections (i.e. Active ageing; Succession planning & transmission of knowledge; Youth employment and Job profiles).
Section 1. Socio-demographic features of the EU sugar industry workforce. ¹

The sugar sector at a glance

The EU sugar sector is a seasonal sector whose main operational activity takes place during the beet sugar processing campaign, running generally from September to January. During the 2012/2013 beet processing campaign, the total number of employees, including seasonal workers, reached 28 991 (CEFS, 2014).

Europe’s sugar supply is covered at 85% by home-grown sugar beet produced in 106 beet sugar factories whereas imports in the form of raw cane sugar processed in about 20 European refineries represent roughly 15% of its sugar consumption whereas (CEFS, 2014). Sugar cane is also grown and processed into sugar in the 6 factories located in the overseas territories of France (the Reunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique islands).

A deeply ageing workforce

The average age of sugar industry workers was 46 years old, corresponding more or less to the average age of blue collars (46), and slightly above the age of white collars (45).

Workers aged 55 or more accounted for a very significant proportion, 25%, of the EU sugar industry workforce with a similar distribution among blue and white collars. As a comparison, in the manufacturing sector in general, that percentage falls to 14% in Europe (Eurostat, 2013a) and remains relatively high in the US at 19.5% (Toosi, 2012). In the EU food and drink industry, the proportion of older workers would be even lower, i.e. below 10% (Improve, 2013, p. 40). According to some industry commentators consulted in the preparation of this report, the 2006-2009 reform of the EU sugar sector may have contributed to the increase in the average age of the sugar workforce. Indeed, as companies had to close many factories, they also had to relocate part of those workers in their remaining factories. The consequence of that was that, in many companies, no new recruits – potentially younger- may have joined the sugar factories during those years. According to other commentators external to the sector, in addition to the above factors it might also be the case that during a crisis, those workers with temporal contracts tend to be the first ones to be dismissed and normally we find a higher share of young workers with this contract.

According to our survey, in 2013, younger workers (aged 24 or less) represented a mere 5% of the sugar industry workforce, therefore representing a marginal element of the total workforce.

A predominantly male workforce...

¹ Most of the data regarding the sugar sector provided in this section comes directly from company surveys conducted prior or specifically for the purpose of this study. For the sake of comparison with the rest of the European food industry and the rest of the economy we have used mainly Eurostat Labour Force Survey Series.
Men represent approximately 80% of the permanent workforce in the sugar sector. The situation is similar across the different age groups although women are particularly under-represented among the young (16%) and the older (15%) workers groups. The situation would be slightly rebalanced among white collars, where women represented 30% of the staff.

![Figure 1: Employees in the EU sugar sector according to age group and gender.](image)

Source: Socio-demographic survey of EU sugar companies (2013-14)

...combined with high levels of qualification among female workers.

Whereas women represent on average 20% of the total workforce in the sugar sector, in the food and drink sector in Europe (FDE) women represent a much bigger proportion (43%) of the total workforce (Improve, 2013, p. 80). The sugar sector figures are also lower than those of the manufacturing sector as a whole where women represented 29.6% of the total workforce (Eurostat, 2013b). The relatively lower presence of women in the sugar sector workforce could be related to the fact that a very large proportion (80%) of sugar sold in the EU is delivered in bulk and therefore conditioning and packaging – manual job profiles often occupied by women in the EU food industry – remain relatively less important in the EU sugar industry. Moreover, the physically intense working conditions in sugar factories (running 24 hours, 7 days a week during the processing campaign) compared to the rest of the food industry may also make sugar factories a less attractive workplace for blue collar female workers.
On the other hand, in the sugar industry a very large proportion of women (approx. 50%) occupy managerial, professional, technician and associate positions against only 30% of men (see figure 2 further below). Although it is not possible to draw a definite conclusion due to lack of equivalent data, it is expected that women in the overall FDE industry will tend to occupy lower professional positions compared to women working in the sugar industry.

A high proportion of white collars and technical job profiles.

Blue collars represented the biggest group with 60% of the workforce. Among white collars, three out of every four workers were ‘technicians and associate professionals’, the rest being constituted by ‘managers and professionals’. As it will be developed further in this study, engineers and process technicians indeed constitute crucial job profiles in the sugar industry.

**Source:** Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) – 2013 and Socio-demographic survey of EU sugar companies (2013-14)
A significant demand for employees with higher qualifications.

In terms of qualifications, employees with low levels of education represented 28% of the workforce, a bit less than the overall food and drink industry (30%) but in line with the rest of the economy (28%)\(^2\). Men with secondary education were the biggest single group, representing nearly half of the total workforce (45%). Highly skilled workers represented a bit more than 17% of the sugar industry workforce, which is higher than the situation in the overall food industry (14%) but still lower than the situation in the rest of the economy (25%) (Eurostat, 2013d). On a positive note, highly qualified women represented 25% of the total female workforce in the sugar industry compared to just 16% for men.

\[\text{Figure 4: Employees in the EU sugar industry according to level of education and gender.}\]

Source: Socio-demographic survey of EU sugar companies (2013-14)

\(^2\) Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) – 2013. In its report on the Food industry (Improve, 2013, p. 39) the level of low skilled workers for the economy as a whole was wrongly reported as 21%. According to Eurostat those workers represented 29% in 2011, 33% in 2006 and 36% in 2000.
Despite a difficult context in the sugar industry, permanent employment is the standard situation.

As of 2013 and despite the difficult circumstances that the sector had to overcome during the sector restructuring in 2006-2009, permanent employment was the norm in the EU sugar sector with 80% of all staff being under a permanent contract. As a seasonal sector it employs supporting workers during the 3-4 months of the beet processing campaign. Seasonal workers represent about 11% of the total. The category ‘other staff’ (9% of the total) covers other forms of fixed-term employment, temporary work agencies and posted workers among others. Most of the workers in this category (>80%) are concentrated in just two countries, Germany and France, where there are large, well-established apprenticeship and professional training programs that also fall under this category.
Section 2. Measures to promote active ageing.

For most people work is not only a source of income but also an important aspect of their personal identity and social life. European sugar beet companies have the challenge of managing a diverse staff and allowing and encouraging them to work until retirement age.

Bearing in mind how important health in the broader sense is for employability and work capacity in later life, survey participants were asked what measures to promote active ageing they offered to workers, i.e. what measures they had in place to achieve the full potential of employees.

In particular, participants were asked what arrangements were made in the following areas:

a) **Employment and skills development** – measures that encourage employment, education and training of older people specifically, among other vulnerable groups and as a part of the life cycle approach to age management

b) **Health and work environment improvement** – measures that aim at adjusting workplaces and tasks to the physical and mental capacities of older workers, as well as initiatives for the general improvement of the working environment, easing mental and physical load throughout working life and promoting health more widely in the workplace; Health in the workplace includes measures to minimize relevant psycho-social risks at work

c) **Work organisation and working time** – policies that promote flexible work and working time arrangements as well as special provisions for older workers to ease or adapt workload in the run-up to retirement

d) **Changing attitudes** – initiatives aiming at raising awareness about demographic change, as well as measures designed to fight stereotypes and discrimination against older workers

Although the best efforts were made to try to obtain details regarding the effectiveness of the measures put in place by sugar companies it was not possible at this stage to draw conclusions in the absence of more detailed data, something that would go beyond the scope and the ambitions of this report but could be the object of future work.

Categories inspired from Eurofound’s report ‘Role of Governments and Social Partners in keeping older workers in the labour market’ (2013, p. 13).

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1323.htm
2. (a). **Active ageing: Employment and skills development** — measures that encourage employment, education and training of older people specifically, among other vulnerable groups and as a part of the life cycle approach to age management.

**Training and education for all, irrespective of age**

According to our survey, training programs in the sugar industry tend to be general and not specific for seniors. That does not appear to be problematic in so far it seems to be the general case in the industry that training programs are equally offered to all employees irrespective of their age.

One notable exception is Finnsugar’s dedicated program to senior workers called ‘+58 Program’ (see box below).  

In the French sugar industry the number of workers above 45 receiving professional training (‘périodes de professionnalisation’) is monitored yearly and constitutes a significant part of the total, with more than 50% of all the professional training periods being allocated specifically to workers aged 45 or more (COPANIEF-2013, p. 79-80).

Until 2013, 47% of all workers aged 45+ in the French sugar industry had benefitted, a choice made on a voluntary basis, from a career mid-term interview (‘entretien de seconde partie de carrière’) or a professional interview (‘entretien professionnel’).

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**Training and education: +58 Program (Finland)**

In 2013/2014 Finnsugar (a subsidiary of Nordzucker/Nordic Sugar) started a dedicated program for personnel aged 58 or more. The +58 program includes the following components, in so far training is concerned:

1) Training to motivate the persons to maintain and improve their professional skills although the retirement age is getting closer.

2) Training to clarify the persons changing job role during last working years

    - IT-knowhow increase in a way that the person can utilize the skills also in private life after retirement. It-skills are today basic social skills (Evaluation so far: only slight improvement in IT skills)

    - Company makes yearly training plans where the aging personnel is taken into account.

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5 in 2009, the Finnish trade union confederations proposed that collective agreements should contain a statute specifying that plans for active ageing should be devised in all organisations. However, as no consensus was reached on this proposal, the social partners agreed instead to develop a model of good practice in age management for companies during 2012 in a special tripartite working group. (Eurofound, 2013, p. 17)
According to a study by Eurofound (2013, p. 16), the presence of countries like Finland, Belgium, Germany or France among the countries with agreements regarding demographic change is not entirely surprising as all have been affected by the trend towards demographic ageing relatively early, have low participation rates among older workers and/or have strong traditions of tripartite and bipartite dialogue at national level, all factors that seem conducive to having national measures in place.

Pathways into retirement

An interesting example was provided by Slovakia of a new pathway into retirement called ‘sequential retirement’, meaning that the company allows former employees to be employed during the first years of their retirement. This measure provides the company with well-qualified campaign workers and to the retired employees the possibility to keep social contacts and obtain additional income concurrently with their pension. Of course such measures depend on the possibilities allowed by national legislation and may, unfortunately, not be available in other countries.

In some countries like France, more than 80% of the seasonal personnel hired by French sugar companies were 50+ years old (COPANIEF-2013, p. 71). As we shall see later on, when senior and retired workers constitute an important part of the seasonal workforce in some countries this can increase the opportunities for the transmission of company-specific knowledge between generations.

2.(b). Active ageing: Health and work environment improvement – measures that aim at adjusting workplaces and tasks to the physical and mental capacities of older workers, as well as initiatives for the general improvement of the working environment, easing mental and physical load throughout working life and promoting health more widely in the workplace; Health in the workplace includes measures to minimize relevant psycho-social risks at work.

Importance of health promotion programs

According to our survey, it is relatively common for European sugar companies to run specific workplace health programs that focus or particularly monitor senior workers which, as a consequence, usually receive more frequent health care check-ups. Companies commonly provide health insurance and medical benefits above national standards and several of them run internal health promotion campaigns in order to promote healthy lifestyles of employees irrespective of age.

In terms of specific actions addressed to senior workers, the Finnish +58 Program provides a best practice example in the industry (see box below).
Senior workers receive special attention according to their physical and health status

It is commonplace, in particular during the intense processing campaign, to adapt and change the schedules of working time of senior workers, especially in the case of shift work and working nighttime. In very hot conditions, some companies also offer water and promote additional water intake and the re-arrangement of time schedules for seniors. Where normal energy expenditure is exceeded, some companies also offer meals and beverages for staff at work.

A gradual adaptation of factory operations to senior workers’ physical skills

In general terms, seniors benefit from an extensive health and safety culture in sugar factories covering both existing staff as well as new and seasonal workers. According to the survey, it is a normal part of the companies’ risk assessment to take into account senior workers’ declining sensory capacities.

Health and working environment: +58 Program (Finland)

In the health and working environment area, Finnsugar’s +58 program includes the following components:

1) A yearly health discussion with the worker’s superior and health care and physical condition testing in occupational health care (this in addition to normal occupational health care that is organized for all personnel)

2) Improved facilities, more campaigns and actions to encourage personnel to improve their physical condition. Yearly plans.

3) Improved co-operation with occupational health care service provider and pension insurance company in order to decrease the sickness rate. Special attention and actions taken towards the aging personnel and persons with reduced ability to work. Yearly plans and focus areas decided together based on the assessment of reasons of major amount of sick leaves. (Evaluation so far: decreased sickness rate in Finnsugar)

4) Special guidelines developed in order to help persons to return to work more efficiently or permanently from long term sick leave to prevent unnecessary early retirements. (Evaluation so far: decreased sickness rate in Finnsugar)
2.(c) Active Ageing: Work organisation and working time — policies that promote flexible work and working time arrangements as well as special provisions for older workers to ease or adapt workload in the run-up to retirement.

Reduced working hours and flexible retirement policies are commonplace

Flexible working arrangements for older workers are quite common in the industry, either as part of national legislation or company policy. Often they include a combination of reduced working time (e.g. extra days off, no obligation to work overtime, possibility to progressively reduce working hours) and progressive age retirement management policies. Suiker Unie, a sugar company based in The Netherlands and Germany, provides a prime example of a comprehensive package of measures (see box below).

Suiker Unie (The Netherlands and Germany)

In the area of flexible working hours and progressive retirement policies, Suiker Unie company policies provide the following measures:

1) No obligation to work overtime for employees of 55 years and older.

2) An extra day off at the age of 55, 60, 61 and older.

3) At the age of 58 and older it is possible to work less hours per year: 16 hours less at the age 58, 32 hours at the age of 59 and 64 hours at the age of 60 and older.

4) A special arrangement for employees at the age of 58 and older. It includes that you work 80%, get salary for 90% and get company pension for 100%. *

*(Due to the increasingly longer retirement age and longevity, the company is looking for adjustments to this arrangement so as to make it economically sustainable in the longer run).

‘Our Flexible Retirement Policy recognises the benefits of employing an age diverse workforce and wishes to support employees who want to look at their retirement with a flexible approach. This policy aims to clarify the options available to employees wanting to retire.’
(British Sugar, UK)
2.(d) **Active ageing: Changing attitudes** – initiatives aiming at raising awareness about demographic change, as well as measures designed to fight stereotypes and discrimination against older workers.

### Sticks and carrots

Many companies have put in place internal rules, codes of conduct or codes of Ethics that aim to prevent harassment and/or discrimination among employees, including on the basis of age. Some companies have put in place or are currently preparing discrimination awareness training for managers.

Two notable examples include a company who has launched a specific campaign to raise awareness among employees regarding current negative demographic trends and another one aiming to improve the attitude of younger personnel towards older colleagues.

By creating teams where younger and older employees cooperate, many companies also aim to promote good working cooperation between generations, fight stereotypes and facilitate the transmission of knowledge (more on that in the next section of this report).

Most sugar companies have in place a range of special bonuses, reward policies and formal jubilee events for employees reaching a certain age and/or career duration with the company. These well-developed policies are probably, at least in part, a reflection of the fact that, in general terms, the average career duration in the sugar sector has traditionally been quite large.

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**A sweet, rewarding career**

Examples of rewards and recognitions applicable to senior workers (extracted from the responses to the survey):

- Pay rises
- Bonuses
- Post-campaign bonuses
- Jubilee bonuses
- Special prizes, money awards, prizes, praise in writing, diplomas
- Longer vacation
- Sugar allowance
- Bonus for working overtime
- Pay rise of 10% of the salary in the last year before retirement
- Sugar allowance for the retired
- Yearly celebration with retired employees
- Refund of purchase of the looking glasses (50% of the minimal wage)
- Celebration of jubilees (50, 55, 60) with Board member.

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Section 3. Measures specifically addressing succession planning and transmission of know-how.

The value of intergenerational knowledge transfer is increasingly recognised within companies to address partly current company needs to make use of the knowledge accumulated during a career but importantly because the sugar workforce is an ageing workforce as section 1 above illustrates. The sugar industry faces the potential loss of workers with key skills as they approach retirement or leave early for a range of reasons.

Succession planning, something that can not to be left to improvisation

Faced with a deeply ageing European sugar workforce (see section 1), many companies have put in place formal succession planning policies, tools and procedures. That kind of systematic succession planning supports a structured approach in identifying the need for successors and ensures the timely transfer of company-specific and on-the-job transmission of knowledge. Generally, sugar companies have separate succession planning processes for management roles (in place for each critical business position) and factory operatives (linked to the resources planning process). Apprentice schemes also participate from the companies’ resource modelling and succession planning in factories. Finally, some companies adopt and promote the development of food industry-specific qualification programs (e.g. Food operator; Electro-mechanic operator for food industry machinery; Shift leaders and operators in primary food production, etc.).

An integrated approach to succession planning, recruitment and transmission of knowledge in Azucarera (Spain)

‘We have a succession plan for every position, from technicians to managers. According with this plan, we set every year a hiring program which feeds the succession plan. Additionally we have developed a knowledge map by position which allows us to identify the knowledge associated with the workers that are going to be retired. From this information we set a training plan to guarantee that the knowledge is transferred to other employees.’
Multiple ways and opportunities for the transmission of knowledge

Mentorship of new recruits by older employees seems to be one of the most common ways in which sugar companies put in place the transmission of knowledge between generations. In a major country like France, a significant proportion of workers (15% of the total workforce) volunteer as 'mentors', '50+ volunteers' or 'reference employees'. These are terms representing different levels of engagement, all of them aiming to facilitate the transmission of knowledge between and among generations (COPANIEF-2013, p. 70). In France, the government introduced in 2013 a new type of contract – the generation contract (contrat de génération) – to help the country’s youngest and oldest employees. The goal is to combine job creation for the young, aged between 16 and 25, with efforts to retain older workers, aged 57 and over. Part of the initiative involves a scheme to encourage older workers to help train young entrants to the labour market (Eurofound, 2013, p. 17).

In other countries, multi-age working teams are increasingly complemented with multi-disciplinary approaches aiming to facilitate the transmission of knowledge within the company, thus increasing the skills and employability of workers within the company and thus helping to alleviate the scarcity of certain job profiles (more on that in section 5).

As already indicated in section 2, senior and retired workers also constitute an important part of the seasonal workforce in some countries thus increasing the opportunities for the transmission of company-specific knowledge between generations.

Traineeship and apprenticeship programs also remain popular in the sugar industry as well-established ways of introducing new workers to the industry’s know-how. In that regard, sugar companies are increasingly cooperating directly with universities aiming at employing students for the duration of the campaign (training) and with secondary and trade schools aiming at admitting students for internships or apprenticeships.
Section 4. Measures promoting access of young workers to the EU sugar industry.

The sugar workforce faces potential labour and skills shortage and seems to have difficulty recruiting people with the right technical skills and qualifications into the industry (more on that in section 5). The immigration from rural areas to bigger cities and the isolation of sugar factories in those rural areas appear as important factors increasing the challenge for sugar factories to find new recruits. Sugar companies have deployed significant efforts and ingenuity to try to overcome those challenges.

Bring the factory to the school and vice-versa

Many sugar companies have decided to be proactive and go directly to the education system in order to find what they cannot find in their local labour market. A significant number of companies have indicated that they have developed different cooperation programs with technical schools and universities such as:

- ‘Study-work’ agreements providing for instance 4 days of work and 1 day of study in order to educate students in a technical function.

- Promoting teaching programs focusing on the sugar industry and agriculture.

- Organising sugar factory visits, ‘open days’, excursions, etc. of young students from different fields of study (e.g. mechanical engineers, agricultural engineers, food technology/quality).

- Students are encouraged and provided the opportunity to work during their vacation for short periods of time (1-2 months) under the supervision of foreman’s and shift leaders.

- Work placements for degree students as part of their industrial placement (a required formal learning experience to complete their degree).

- Selected students are given the opportunity to participate in sugar companies (international) trainee programs.

- Most sugar companies regularly participate in Universities’ and Technical Schools ‘Career Days’ or ‘Career Fairs’.

‘We have cooperated with Universities since 2006 on a regular basis. Our evaluation of that cooperation is partly successful (the negative background trends remain challenging: lack of young students in the required professions, decreasing interest in those professions and demographic change itself).’ (Moravskoslezske Cukrovary, Czech Republic)
Increasing awareness and attracting potential young recruits in local labour markets

Sugar companies do not seem to neglect either the potential of their own local markets as a source of potential new recruits. Hence, many companies try to increase local awareness about the opportunities they offer for apprenticeships and traineeships in sugar factories. They do so in different ways and through various means:

- Local advertising and radio campaigns to increase awareness about apprenticeship opportunities.

- Work with local schools where pupils attend sugar company offices as part of work experience programs.

- Creation of local Trainee Program for young technicians and Corporate Trainee Program in Agriculture, Sales and Purchase.

- Creation of competitions among schools in order to select potential candidates for sugar factory positions.

- Creation of a strong employee branding material such as a video presentation of current employees in order to ensure higher awareness among younger candidates to apply for vacant positions.

- Use of the corporate website as a platform to raise awareness about apprenticeships opportunities and company graduate schemes.

‘We take part in training programs with students who make his internship with us. Some of these students finally join the company. Additionally we are establishing agreements with professional schools in order to have a source of young talents available to join us when needed. We are starting up a collaboration program to allow some students to work with us time share. Most or our new joiners are young people with short experience or even just graduates.’ (Azucarera, Spain)
Section 5. Job profiles in high demand in the EU sugar industry.

The responses to the survey questionnaire clearly suggest that recruitment difficulties exist for higher-level science and technology roles. Recent research conducted in the food and drink manufacturing and processing sector in Europe suggest that it is felt that potential applicants with these skills are often reluctant to enter the sector, as it was considered unattractive when compared to other industries, such as pharmaceuticals, automotive and aerospace. In the case of the sugar sector, this difficulty seems to be compounded by the isolation of sugar factories in rural areas. Maintaining the attractiveness of the sugar sector appears therefore as key to the attraction and retention of talent and skilled workers in the EU’s rural areas.

Participants to the survey highlighted that the job profiles most in demand in the sugar industry appear to range from engineers (sugar process engineers, electrical and mechanical engineers and agricultural engineers in particular) to qualified operational personnel. This is in line with the results of our socio-demographic analysis that has shown what a large group the technical and associated professionals constitute in the sugar workforce.

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**Job profiles in greater demand in the sugar sector (Ranked according to their priority for the industry and their scarcity):**

1) Sugar process engineers/technologists
2) Electrical/electronic technicians & associate professionals
2) Mechanical technicians & associate professionals
3) Agricultural engineers
4) Experienced (project) managers.

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**Job profiles’ basic description:**

- **Sugar process engineers/technologists:** they work notably on the implementation of new automatization projects and coordinate the maintenance and repairs for those automatization systems.
- **Electrical/electronic technicians & associate professionals:** they work notably on the electrical/electronic maintenance and repairs for machinery within the plant. At a higher level, they provide support for investment projects implementation and have

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responsibility for the electrical & control Systems, including compliance with the electricity at work regulations. They also maintain the reliability of the factory through asset development programs and energy optimisation.

- **Mechanical technicians & associate professionals**: they work notably on the mechanical maintenance and repairs for machinery within the plant. They also provide support for investment projects implementation.

- **Agriculture engineers**: they manage the supplier and customer base within a geographic area in order to achieve the agriculture business objectives.
Section 6. Conclusions and recommendations for further social partners’ actions.

Conclusions

This report has brought to light a number of interesting insights regarding the socio-demographics of the EU sugar sector. The sector has a deeply ageing workforce and for that reason it is a real-life example of the situation that many other industries could face in the near future. It was therefore very interesting to analyse in which ways the sector is facing the challenges of an ageing workforce, the transmission of knowledge between generations and attracting young workers to the industry. Finally, the EU sugar industry, largely isolated in less populated rural areas, has its own constraints in terms finding enough candidates for some of the job profiles it needs the most. The following is a highlight of the main conclusions resulting from the report:

Socio-demographic analysis of the sector:

- **A deeply ageing workforce.** At 46 years old in average, the group of workers above 55 years of age represent 25% percent of the total EU sugar industry workforce. That is much higher than the situation in the overall EU food and drink sector (below 10%) and the manufacturing sector as a whole (14%).

- **A predominantly male workforce combined with a highly qualified female workforce.** Men represent 80% of the workforce, significantly more than in the overall food and drink sector in Europe (57%) and above the manufacturing sector as a whole (70.4%). On the other hand, 50% of women working in the sugar sector occupy managerial, professional, technician and associate positions against only 30% of men. In terms of education, highly qualified women represented 25% of the total female workforce in the sugar industry compared to just 16% for the male workforce.

- **A high proportion of white collars and technical job profiles.** Engineers, technicians and associate professionals constitute crucial job profiles in the sugar industry. Together with managers and professionals, white collars represent 40% of the sugar workforce.

- **Permanent employment is the standard situation.** Despite the seasonal nature of its operations and the difficult situation brought by the 2006-2009 restructuring of the sector, 80% of all staff in the sugar industry works under a permanent contract. The rest is composed by seasonal factory workers (11%) and the ‘other staff’ category (9%), which mainly includes well-established apprenticeship and professional training programs.

Measures to promote active ageing:

- **Training and education for all, irrespective of age.** Some companies have put in place dedicated programs for seniors, but in most cases, companies simply include seniors in their training programs irrespective of their age. Good practice example: +58 Program in Finland.

- **Pathways into retirement.** Some sugar companies apply what they call ‘sequential retiring’, meaning that they allow former employees to be employed during the first years of their retirement. This measure provides the company with well-qualified campaign workers and to the retired employees the possibility to keep social contacts and obtain additional income concurrently with their pension.
• **Promotion of health programmes for senior workers.** It is relatively common for European sugar companies to run specific workplace health programs that focus or particularly monitor senior workers. Companies commonly provide health insurance and medical benefits above national standards and several of them run internal health promotion campaigns in order to promote healthy lifestyles of employees irrespective of age. Good practice example: +58 Program in Finland.

• **Senior workers receive special attention according to their physical and health status.** It is commonplace, in particular during the intense processing campaign, to adapt and change the schedules of working time of senior workers, especially in the case of shift work and working night time. Some companies also offer water and meals in very hot conditions or where normal energy expenditure is exceeded.

• **A gradual adaptation of factory operations to senior workers’ physical skills.** In general terms, seniors benefit from an extensive health and safety culture in sugar factories covering both existing staff as well as new and seasonal workers. According to the survey, it is a normal part of the companies’ risk assessment to take into account senior workers’ declining sensory capacities.

• **Reduced working hours and flexible retirement policies are commonplace.** Flexible working arrangements for older workers are quite common in the industry, either as part of national legislation or company policy. Often they include a combination of reduced working time (e.g. extra days off, no obligation to work overtime, possibility to progressively reduce working hours) and progressive age retirement management policies.

• **Changing attitudes: of sticks and carrots.** Discrimination, including by reason of age, is explicitly proscribed in many internal Codes of Ethics in sugar companies. Some companies also train their managers in discrimination awareness. Several companies try to raise awareness among employees regarding the socio-demographic challenges and create inter-generational teams. Most sugar companies have in place a range of special bonuses, reward policies and formal jubilee events for employees reaching a certain age and/or career duration with the company.

**Measures regarding succession planning and transmission of know-how.**

• **Succession planning, something that can not to be left to improvisation.** Many companies have put in place formal succession planning policies, tools and procedures thereby supporting a structured approach in identifying the need for successors and ensuring the timely transfer of company-specific and on-the-job transmission of knowledge.

• **Multiple ways and opportunities for the transmission of knowledge.** In the EU sugar industry those take the form of mentorships, multi-age and multi-disciplinary teams, sequential retirement and ‘seasonal seniors’, traineeships and apprenticeships programs.
Measures promoting access of young workers to the EU sugar industry.

- **Bring the factory to the school and vice-versa.** Many sugar companies have decided to be proactive and go directly to the education system in order to find what they cannot find in their local labour market. Many companies have developed different cooperation programs with technical schools and universities.

- **Increasing awareness and attracting potential young recruits in local labour markets.** Sugar companies do not seem to neglect either the potential of their own local markets as a source of potential new recruits. Hence, many companies try to increase, through different ways and means, local awareness about the opportunities they offer for apprenticeships and traineeships in sugar factories.

**Job profiles in high demand in the EU sugar industry**
(Ranked according to their priority for the industry and their scarcity).

1) Sugar process engineers/technologists
2) Electrical/electronic technicians & associate professionals
2) Mechanical technicians & associate professionals
3) Agricultural engineers
4) Experienced (project) managers.

**Joint recommendations from the social partners**

1. The social partners of the EU sugar sector take note with great concern of the situation of the deeply ageing workforce. While recognising that this may be in part the effect of the previous reform of the sector (2006-2009) they see the need to look further into the challenging future ahead of the sector with the end of sugar quotas in 2017.

2. Thus, the social partners recommend that the industry develops and consolidates further its existing initiatives in terms of 1) attracting young employment to the sector, 2) ensuring adequate conditions for senior workers by taking into account the individual workers’ fitness, capacities and skills and 3) to promote a timely transmission of knowledge and inter-generational cooperation between workers. The social partners also recommend that the effectiveness of those company initiatives be assessed and measured.

3. The social partners call in particular the attention to the need to ensure that new technologies, including electronic communications, computer-based trainings, etc do not exclude some senior workers from fully participating in the daily life of the company.

4. Finally, the social partners call for national authorities in the EU to put in place policies and regulations that promote and support companies’ adaptation of workplaces and working conditions to older workers. National legal frameworks should also allow for gradual and flexible retirement practices to flourish as a way to keep senior workers for longer in the workforce while allowing them to keep their full rights to pensions and other social benefits. The EU can play an important role in promoting Member States initiatives in that regard.
References


Annex: Survey form used for the study.

Socio-Demographic Analysis of the EU Sugar Sector

Send your reply by e-mail by Monday, 30 September 2013 to oscar.ruiz@cefs.org

Company/group ____________________________

Country(ies) represented in your reply ____________________________

Contact person ____________________________

Unless otherwise stated, all questions regarding staff numbers refer to permanent workers in the sugar industry as of July 2013.

1. Age and gender in the EU sugar industry split by main occupational categories (ISCO-08, see Annex). Please fill in the table below by indicating the number of workers that are:

   a) Managers and Professionals (Major groups 1 and 2 of ISCO-08)
   b) Technicians and Associate professionals (Major group 3 of ISCO-08)
   c) Other workers (e.g. clerical support workers, service and sales workers, plant operators, etc. (Major groups 4-9 of ISCO-08)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>15-24 (‘young workers’)</td>
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<td>25-54</td>
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<td>55-64 (‘older workers’)</td>
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<td>15-24 (‘young workers’)</td>
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2. Educational level achieved by staff in the EU sugar industry (ISCED 1997 education levels) split by gender. Please indicate the number of workers that are:

1. ‘Low’ (Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)):

2. ‘Medium’ (Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)):

3. ‘High’ (First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5 and 6)):
3. EU sugar industry workforce according to the type of contract, gender and main occupational categories.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td><strong>a. Permanent staff.</strong></td>
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<td>Managers &amp; Professionals</td>
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<td>Technicians &amp; Associate Professionals</td>
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<td><strong>b. Seasonal staff.</strong></td>
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<td>Managers &amp; Professionals</td>
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<td>Other workers</td>
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<td><strong>c. Other staff</strong></td>
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<td>(fixed-term contract staff other than seasonal staff, including temporary agency work, posted workers, etc.)</td>
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<td>Managers &amp; Professionals</td>
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<td>Technicians &amp; Associate Professionals</td>
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<td>Other workers</td>
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4. Measures to promote active ageing. Please indicate which measures/initiatives/strategies your company has already implemented/ is currently implementing or intends to implement in the future in the following areas related to active ageing:

- **Employment and skills development** – measures that encourage employment, education and training of older people specifically, among other vulnerable groups and as a part of the life cycle approach to age management; *(Please reply in the table further below)*

- **Health and work environment improvement** – measures that aim at adjusting workplaces and tasks to the physical and mental capacities of older workers, as well as initiatives for the general improvement of the working environment, easing mental and physical load throughout working life and promoting health more widely in the workplace; Health in the workplace includes measures to minimize relevant psycho-social risks at work. *(Please reply in the table further below)*

- **Work organisation and working time** – policies that promote flexible work and working time arrangements as well as special provisions for older workers to ease or adapt workload in the run-up to retirement; *(Please reply in the table further below)*

- **Changing attitudes** – initiatives aiming at raising awareness about demographic change, as well as measures designed to fight stereotypes and discrimination against older workers. *(Please reply in the table further below)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus area and description</th>
<th>Status (e.g. planned, implemented, ongoing, …)</th>
<th>Evaluation (if available)</th>
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</table>
4.b. Health and work environment improvement – measures that aim at adjusting workplaces and tasks to the physical and mental capacities of older workers, as well as initiatives for the general improvement of the working environment, easing mental and physical load throughout working life and promoting health more widely in the workplace; Includes measures to minimize stress-related and other relevant psycho-social risks at work.

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4.c. Work organisation and working time – policies that promote flexible work and working time arrangements as well as special provisions for older workers to ease or adapt workload in the run-up to retirement;

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4.d. Changing attitudes – initiatives aiming at raising awareness about demographic change, as well as measures designed to fight stereotypes and discrimination against older workers.

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5. Measures specifically addressing succession planning and transmission of knowledge.

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<th>Focus area and description</th>
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6. **Measures promoting access to the sector by young employees.**

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7. Job profiles in greater demand in the EU sugar sector.

Please indicate which are the 3 or 4 job profiles of greater interest and in greater demand by the sugar industry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job profile description</th>
<th>Ranking (1-4) by importance for the company based on number of staff concerned. (1 = highest importance; 4 = lowest)</th>
<th>Ranking (1-4) by difficulty to find suitable candidates (Please indicate possible reasons). (1 = highest difficulty; 4 = lowest)</th>
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Major groups and sub-major groups

1 Managers
   11 Chief executives, senior officials and legislators
   12 Administrative and commercial managers
   13 Production and specialized services managers
   14 Hospitality, retail and other services managers
2 Professionals
   21 Science and engineering professionals
   22 Health professionals
   23 Teaching professionals
   24 Business and administration professionals
   25 Information and communications technology professionals
   26 Legal, social and cultural professionals
3 Technicians and associate professionals
   31 Science and engineering associate professionals
   32 Health associate professionals
   33 Business and administration associate professionals
   34 Legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals
   35 Information and communications technicians
4 Clerical support workers
   41 General and keyboard clerks
   42 Customer services clerks
   43 Numerical and material recording clerks
   44 Other clerical support workers
5 Service and sales workers
   51 Personal service workers
   52 Sales workers
   53 Personal care workers
| 54 | Protective service workers |
| 6 | Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers |
| 61 | Market-oriented skilled agricultural workers |
| 62 | Market-oriented skilled forestry, fishing and hunting workers |
| 63 | Subsistence farmers, fishers, hunters and gatherers |
| 7 | Craft and related trades workers |
| 71 | Building and related trades workers, excluding electricians |
| 72 | Metal, machinery and related trades workers |
| 73 | Handicraft and printing workers |
| 74 | Electrical and electronic trades workers |
| 75 | Food processing, wood working, garment and other craft and related trades workers |
| 8 | Plant and machine operators, and assemblers |
| 81 | Stationary plant and machine operators |
| 82 | Assemblers |
| 83 | Drivers and mobile plant operators |
| 9 | Elementary occupations |
| 91 | Cleaners and helpers |
| 92 | Agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers |
| 93 | Labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport |
| 94 | Food preparation assistants |
| 95 | Street and related sales and service workers |
| 96 | Refuse workers and other elementary workers |
| 0 | Armed forces occupations |
| 01 | Commissioned armed forces officers |
| 02 | Non-commissioned armed forces officers |
| 03 | Armed forces occupations, other ranks |
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