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**Trade union actions to support the needs of older and vulnerable employees**

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This paper will report interim results of the Leonardo da Vinci project *Supporting the Needs of Older and Vulnerable Employees*. Coordinated by the General Federation of Trade Unions, London (UK), the partners include the research group *Travail, Emploi, Santé* at Toulouse Business School (FR), the Balkans Institute of Labour and Social Policy, Sofia (BU), Työväen Akatemia (Workers’ Academy), Kauniainen (FI) and the United Nations Staff Union representing employees of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague (NE).

The aims of the project are to develop an understanding of the needs – training and otherwise – of vulnerable employees, as well as the needs and views of current and potential employers of the specified target groups.  These groups are vulnerable to unemployment and financial instability through redundancy or other workplace change particularly as a result of the global economic crisis. The purpose is to explore the scope for transfer of existing training materials for older and vulnerable employees. Where appropriate these materials will be adapted and where gaps are identified more relevant life-long learning materials will be developed to enable the target groups to gain vocational skills relevant to modern labour markets and to plan for financial security in retirement.

The French team is undertaking the literature review concerning initiatives to support vulnerable employees in general and exploring, through interviews and focus groups, the particular needs of certain vulnerable groups. The specific vulnerable groups targeted in France include:

* Older workers (*séniors*)
* Long-term unemployed (*chômeurs longue durée*)
* Ex-offenders (*anciens prisonniers*)
* Low-skilled workers (*personnes peu qualifiées*)
* Handicapped persons (*personnes handicapées*)
* Persons suffering from a long illness (*sortant de longue maladie)*
* Migrant workers (*travailleurs étrangers*)
* Those in precarious work or at risk of redundancy (*travailleurs en précarité*)

Interviews are being undertaken with employers, trade union officials and representatives of intermediary organisations, while focus groups are being conducted with members of the above groups. The purpose is to explore similarities and differences respectively between enterprises, unions and intermediary organisations, and between these institutions and individuals from the above categories:

* in terms of how vulnerability and precarity are understood;
* and in relation to perceived needs and priorities for training.

Depending upon the outcomes of this investigative phase, either materials developed in the UK for use with older and vulnerable employees will be adapted for piloting in France (and the other participating countries) or new materials will be developed for specific groups.