



**Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health**

# **Promoting and Maintaining Workability (PMWA) as an Approach on Well-being at Work for an Aging Workforce in Finland**

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- The "why" of the "Promotion and Maintenance of Work Ability (PMWA)" – strategy in Finland
- Why the PMWA concept has been accepted rapidly in Finnish work places?
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  - "Age management"
  - Life course and support for critical transitions
- Benefits of the PMWA

# The "why" of the "Promotion and Maintenance of Work Ability (PMWA)" – strategy in Finland I

## Demographic change

- aging work force and economics
- sustainable careers
- lack of young ones - competition
- transfer of tacit knowledge
- competence ← matching skills with task needs, life long learning

## Changed values and expectations among work force

- appreciation, participation and influence
- fairness, confidence, flexicurity, leadership
- work and life balance

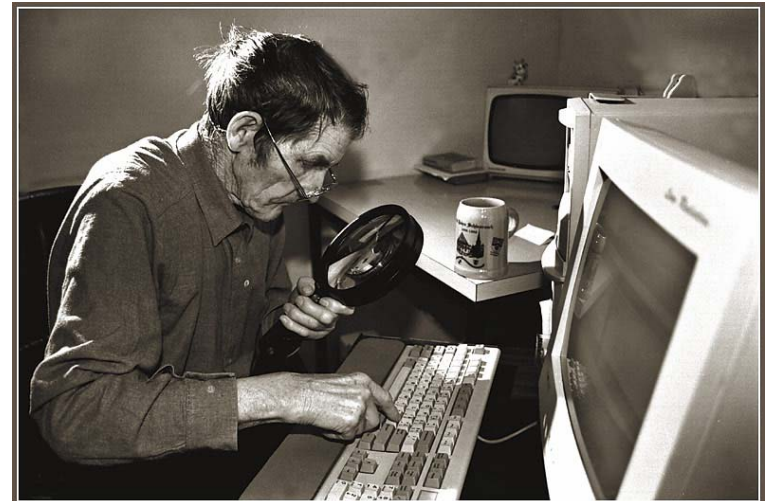
## Maintenance of employability

### ← increased "vulnerability"

- females, workers in reproductive age, young and elderly people, handicapped and people with chronic diseases, unemployed, insufficiently trained, ethnic groups

## Fast **turbulent** changes and new technologies

- JOT, intensification, "mosaicism", outsourcing,
- Cognitive and emotional coherence at work  
← mental stress and strain due to "borderless" jobs
- productivity expectations and relation to wellbeing
- demands for collaboration at work
- ↓
- need for adjustments, flexibility needs



# Why was PMWA developed and introduced in Finland since late 1970's II ?

(Ilmarinen 1999)

Support from longitudinal research results (since 1981):

- → Mismatch between man and work varies with age and work
- → Work ability varies widely between branches and trades
  - work should be adjusted for humans
  - flexibility is needed through the life course
  - new abilities are needed for more "communicative" info-jobs

Retired, temporary hindered and unemployed have work ability still

- return to work needs support
- employment rate should be increased

Problems to appear:

- agriculture and forestry, pulp and paper- and metal industries, transportation, construction, social services

# Annual physical capacity changes and age

- muscular strength decreases c. 0.8-5.0 %
  - 1,5 – 2 % among 65+
  - women > men
- oxygen uptake decreases c. 0.5-1.5 %
- mobility (motion) decreases c. 1.0 %
- BMI (body weight) increases c. 0.5 %

**-> Average decrease of capacity c. 1%/year**

# Why was PMWA developed and introduced in Finland since late 1970´s III ?

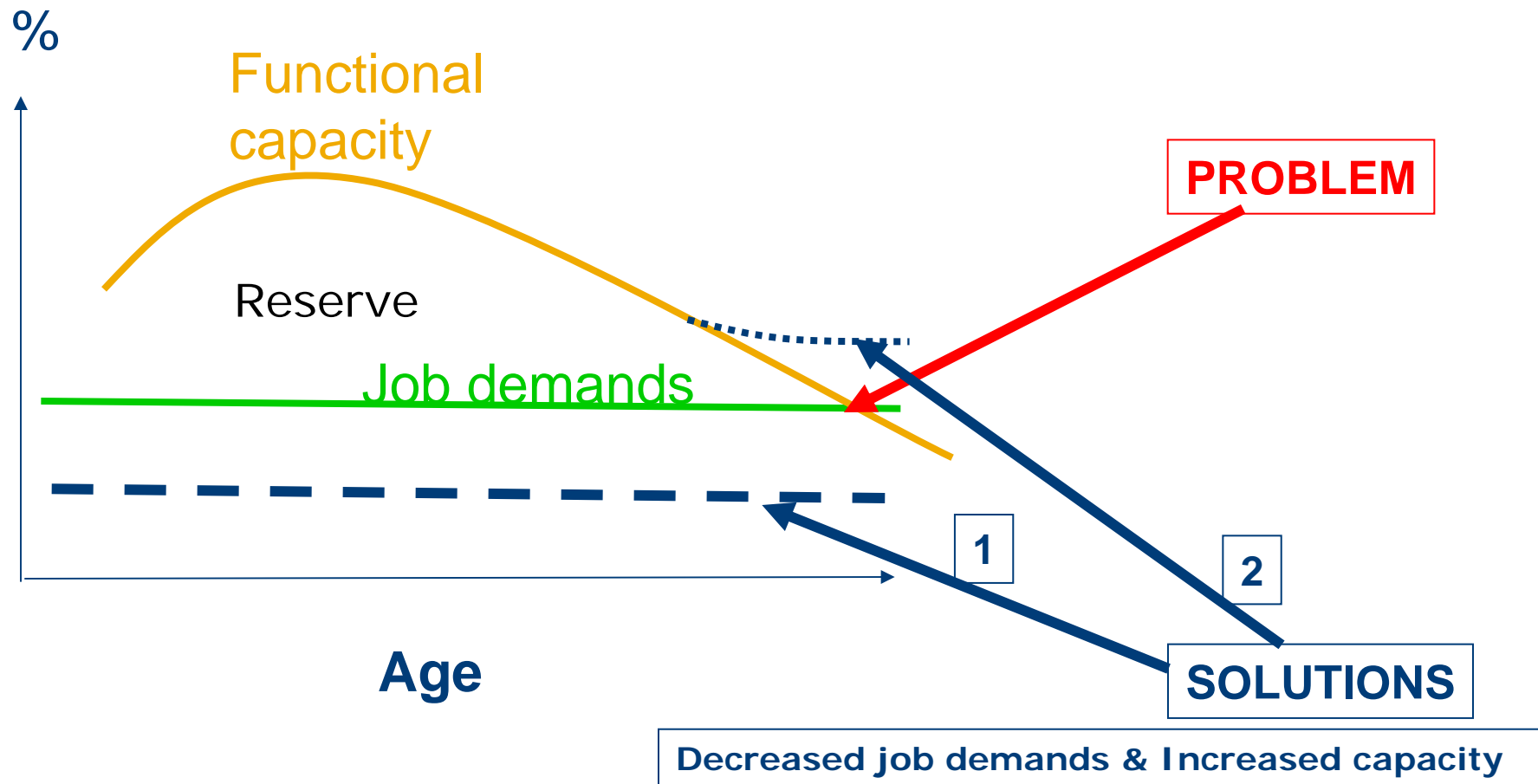
(Tuomi 2005, Ilmarinen 2007)

## Support from longitudinal and other research results II:

- Workplace has a role in supporting work ability and health
  - well organised work, open communication and collaboration
  - opportunities to develop and influence
  - leadership and support
  - managing over- and underloading
    - physical, psychological
  - managing conflicts and insecurity at work
- Supporting work ability and health improves also the success of the company
  - well organised work and team work
  - opportunities to develop and influence
  - leadership and support

# Work, functional capacity and age

(Ilmarinen 1999)



# Example:– Health as the situation of Sisyphus

(Per Hjort; painting: Franz von Stuck)



**Stone = individual health**

- subjective value of health
- health deficiencies

**Sisyphus = individual resources**

- functional capacity
- skills and competence
- attitudes and motivation

**Slope of the mountain = social and situational conditions**

- environment, exposures
- adjustments
- help and support from other
- opportunities



# Why was PMWA developed and introduced in Finland since late 1970's ? IV

- **Health promotion was required in addition to the prevention activities!**

## Prevention



## Promotion

- risk factors
  - environment
    - causal relationships
  - incidence, prevalence, mortality
  - population/risk group
  - object for expert action
  
  - outcomes
- determinants of health
  - settings, context
    - wide range of motives
  - health, well-being, quality of life
  - population/supporting networks
  - empowered people in empowered co – operative community
  - processes, impact



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**Why the PMWA concept has been accepted  
rapidly in Finnish work places?**

# Promotion and Maintenance of Work Ability (PMWA) - Definition -

- Workplace activities aiming at promoting and maintaining the ability to work
    - include all measures,
    - that the employer and the employees as well as
    - the co-operative organizations at the workplace make in a united effort
    - to support the ability to work and to enhance the functional capacities of all persons active in working life
    - throughout their working careers
- Two-Partite Consensus with recommendation 1990
- Obligatory (employers duty) legislation 2001

The process of implementing the national programme on PMWA:  
**National policy and strategic background**

**The government prioritized the "Age Question":**

- Committee on prerequisites for ageing (45+) to be employed.
- National Programme on Ageing Workers (1998-2002)
  - recommendations into practice: 'experience is a national treasure'.
- Finnish EU Presidencies (1999 and 2006)
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health strategy:
  - support people to stay at work and to increase their work ability
- Ministry of Labour:
  - employment rate among (55-64) year 2010 up to 50 %
  - to raise the pension age by 3 years and
  - employment rate would be over 60%
- Ministry of Education:
  - training and education of less - skilled workers

# The process of implementing the national programme on PMWA II: **Legislation**

## **Working conditions should be designed according to the worker (duties of the employer !):**

- Occupational Safety and Health (OS&H) Act (1972 →)
  - personal capacities of the workers, such as age and vocational skills must be taken into account in the occupational safety
- Occupational Health Service (OHS) Act (1979 →)
  - maintain, promote and monitor health, working capacity and functional capacity of employees during work careers
- Working Hours Act
  - permits reduced working hours based on fatigue and reduction of work efficiency caused by aging.
- The Equality Act
  - active measures and plans; annual personnel and training plan
  - obligatory report on procedures, when discrimination is suspected
- Act on Codetermination in Companies:
  - Personnel and training plans: attention to the special needs of ageing workers

The process of implementing the national programme on PMWA:  
**Implementation through national programmes I**

- **Respect for the Ageing (FinnAge) (1990 – 1996)**
  - case studies, good practices, cooperation within companies
  - attitude change of employers and employees to respect ageing
  - Private industry
  - rescheduling work shifts, reduce of physical work-load of aged,
  - improving cooperation between young and old,
  - participative job redesign (teamwork)
  - development of a work ability index.
  - Public sector (fire-fighters, police officers, vehicle inspectors, professional cleaners and teachers)
  - job demands and mental, physical and health capacities for work.
  - Municipal sector (ageing home care workers, pipe and rail fitters, health care workers)
  - ergonomics and lifestyle, treatment of low back pain, shift work
  - training approaches for ageing workers with low computer skills

The process of implementing the national programme on PMWA:  
**Implementation through national programmes II**

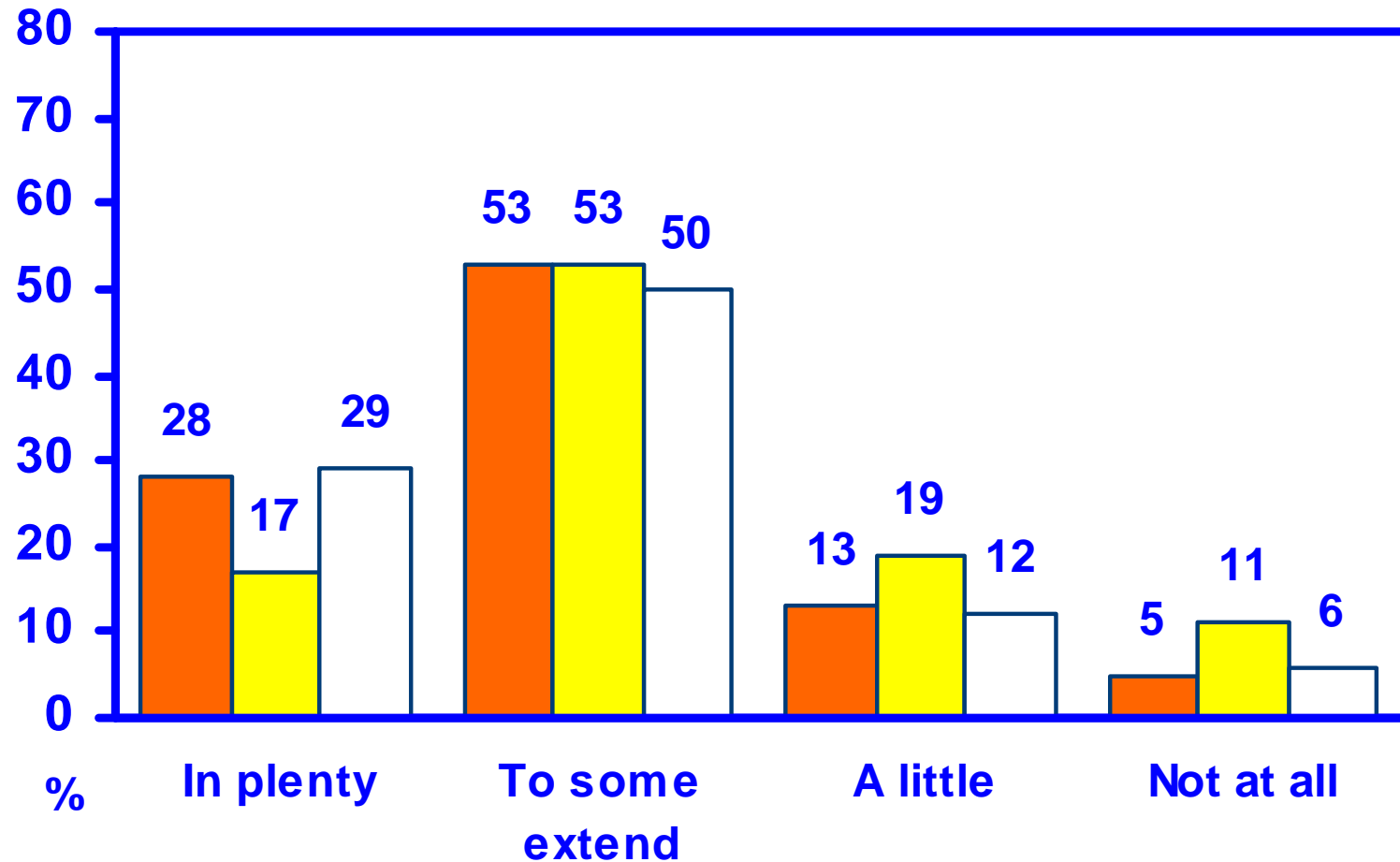
- **1996 Cabinet Committee: Ageing people at work**
- **1998-2002 National Programme for ageing workers**
  - strengthen the status of aged on labour market, employability, stay at work.
  - legislative, scientific and educational approaches, media campaign and training
- **The Well-Being at Work Programme 2000-2003**
  - promote working capacity and competence, and well-being at work.
  - address the high stress levels revealed by work climate studies.
- **The National Workplace Development Programme (1996 - )**
  - boost productivity and the quality of work life and use and development of staff know-how and innovative power
  - develop human resources and organizations to reform their modes of operation with workplace-initiated projects,
  - co-operation networks to disseminate and build up knowledge and competence
  - in focus: new forms of management, work and work organization and co-operation skills.
  - team work and empowering methods of management, increasing multi-skilled workforce, improving coping at work and building networks between companies
  - managements and employees take part in planning and carrying out the projects

# The process of implementing the national programme on PMWA: Implementation through national programmes III

- **National Productivity Programme 2000-2003**
  - functioning of work communities, productivity, competitiveness and to raise the employment rate and level of income.
  - improve and utilise competence of employees throughout their career,
  - productivity of SMEs in the industrial and service sectors
- **VETO ("Attraction") (2003 – 2007)**
  - **"National action programme for the continuation of staying on at work, employee well-being and rehabilitation"**
  - OHS, OS&H inspectors and service providers, and rehabilitation institutes.
  - work ability and prevention of marginalisation from work life,
  - prevention of premature work incapacity, improve opportunities to return to work.
- **NOSTE ("Lifting") (2003 – 2007)**
  - **"Improve the employability, career prospects and staying at work among the least educated adults"**
  - improvement of employed and entrepreneurial skills
  - training of unemployed less skilled people for attaining professional examination, and training in computer literacy, including aging people.
- **KESTO ("Sustain") (FIOH) (2003 – 2007)**
  - **"Sustainable Work Career Development Programme 2003-2007"**
  - research for work ability, attractiveness of work life, and social inclusion.
  - "Age and change management" training in leadership training institutes



# The quantity of PMWA in Finnish workplaces



■ Management (n = 882)

■ Personnel (n = 813)

□ Occupational health services (n = 743)



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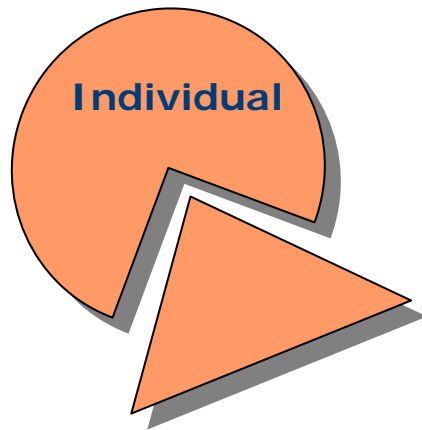
# The Finnish PMWA concept and praxis

# Definition of work ability and PMWA

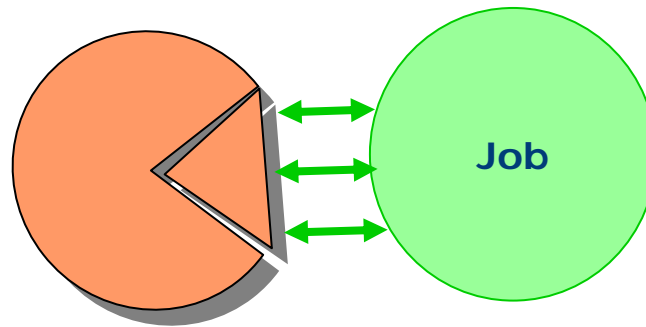
## Work Ability: the change of the focus

← from handicap via balance model towards a multifactorial PMWA approach

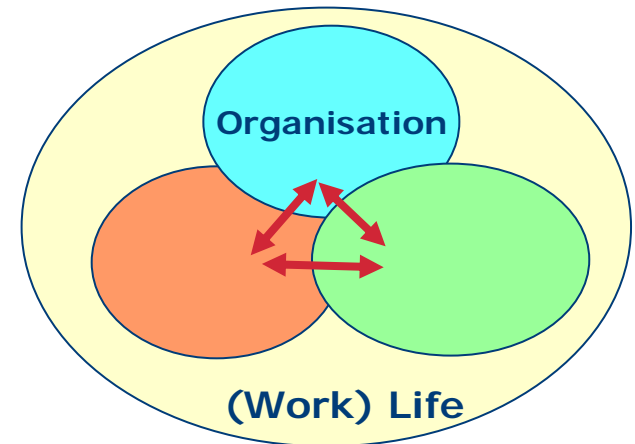
Individual with a handicap



Individual with limited abilities in regard of job demands



Individual in the work life context and "system"



Medical invalidity



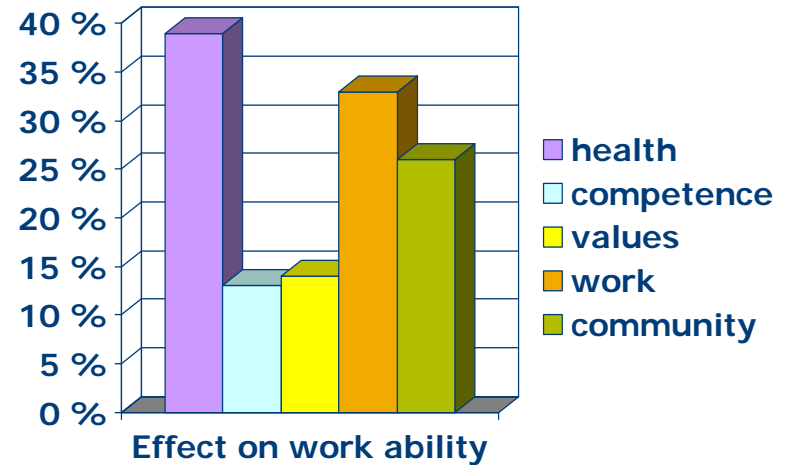
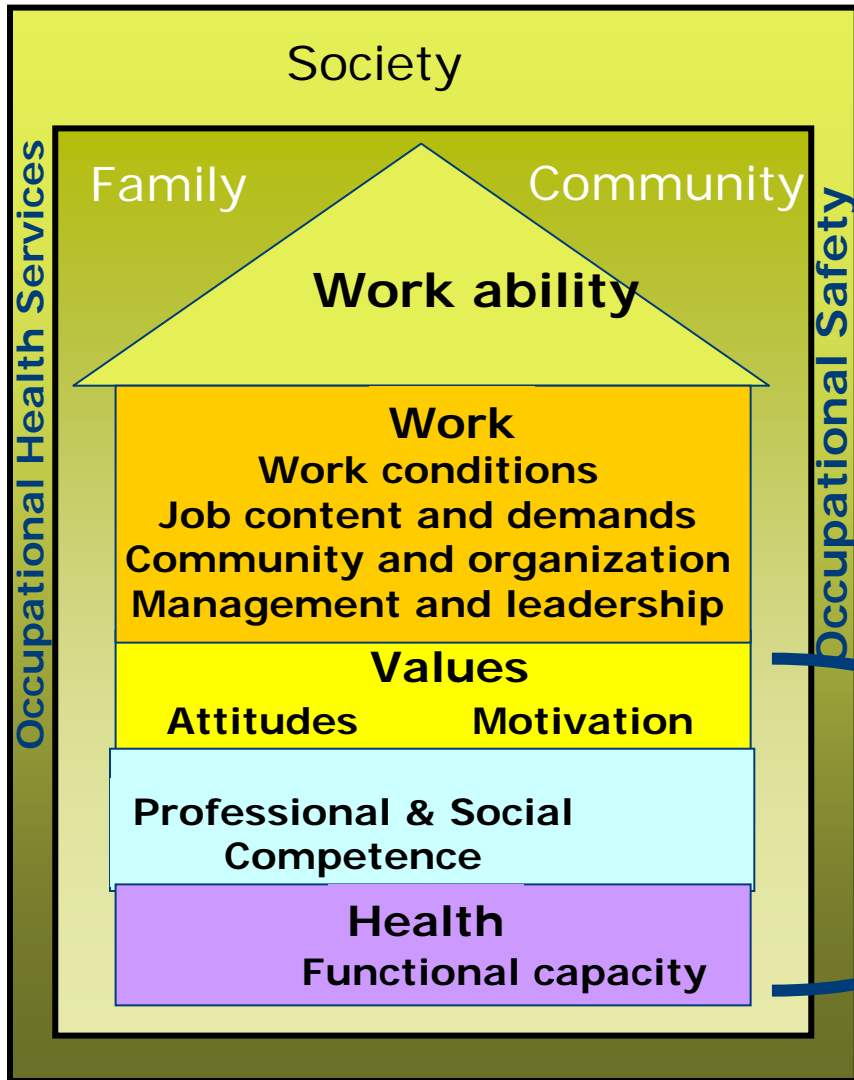
Disability



Bio – Psycho – Social "residual" work ability

# The PMWA model I:

Work ability is always related to the demands of the work  
- dimensions of the work ability



Individual human resources

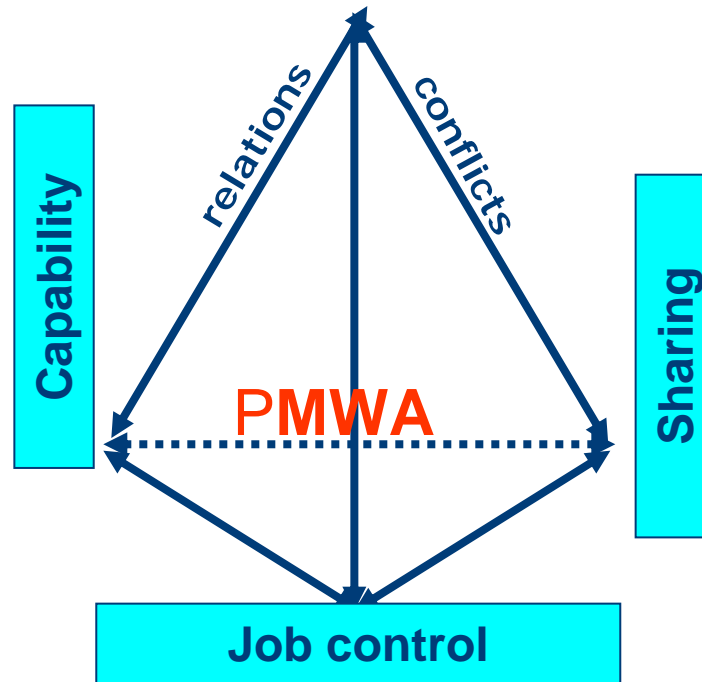
(Ilmarinen 2003)

# The PMWA model II:

- targets of activities at workplaces (examples)

**Individual abilities:** personal resources and health: functional capacity/hardness (physical, mental, cognitive, social), self initiative, health behavior and life style

**Work and work environment/conditions:** physical & mental loads: work distribution and processes, ergonomics, design (postures and movements, work spaces and tools) exposures, occup. hygiene & safety,  
• organization of work



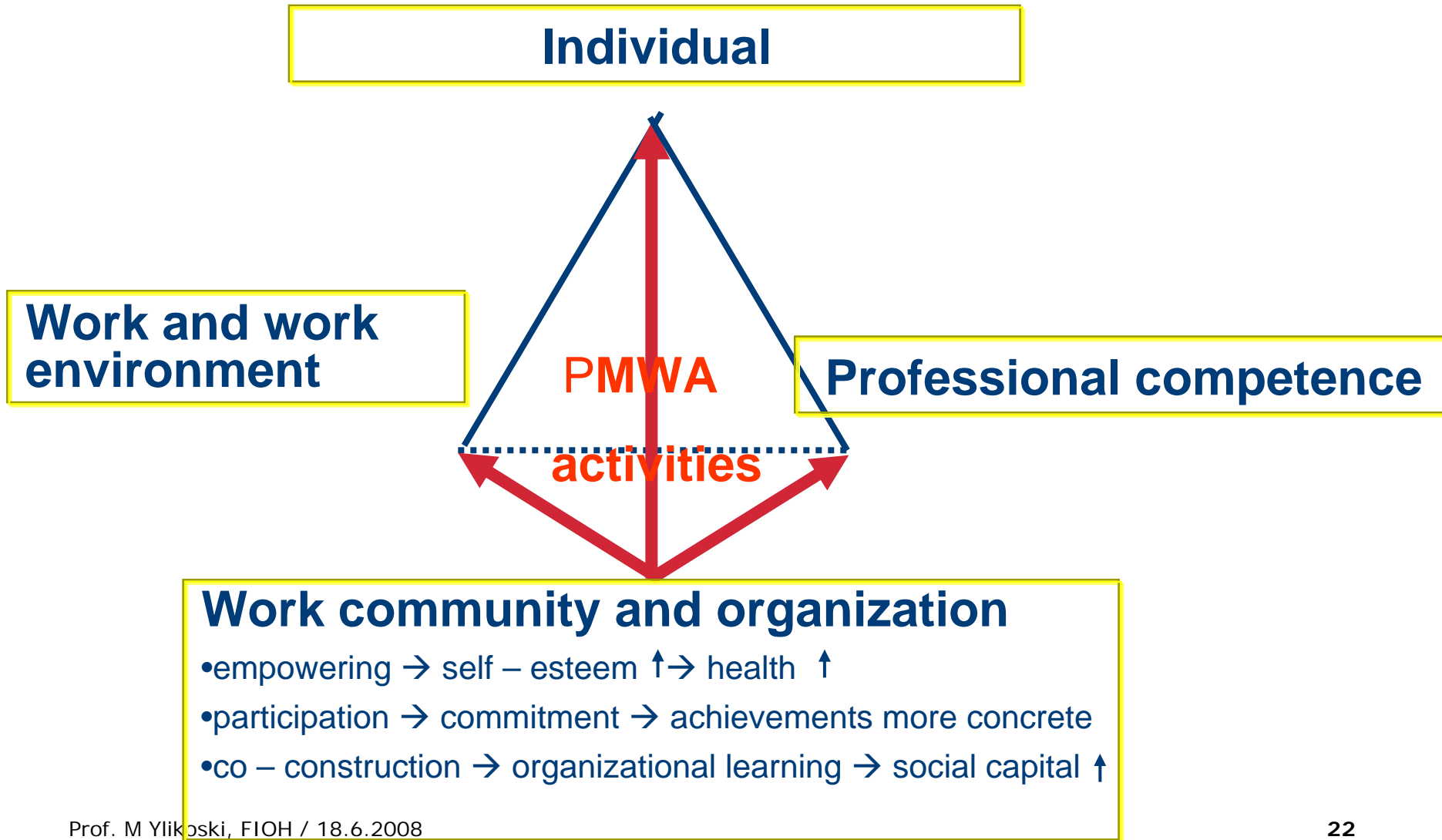
**Work communities and organizations:** values, attitudes, management principles: leadership, co-operation, climate, workplace's HR practices, social support

- organizational development
- team building
- work arrangements
- schedules, job hours

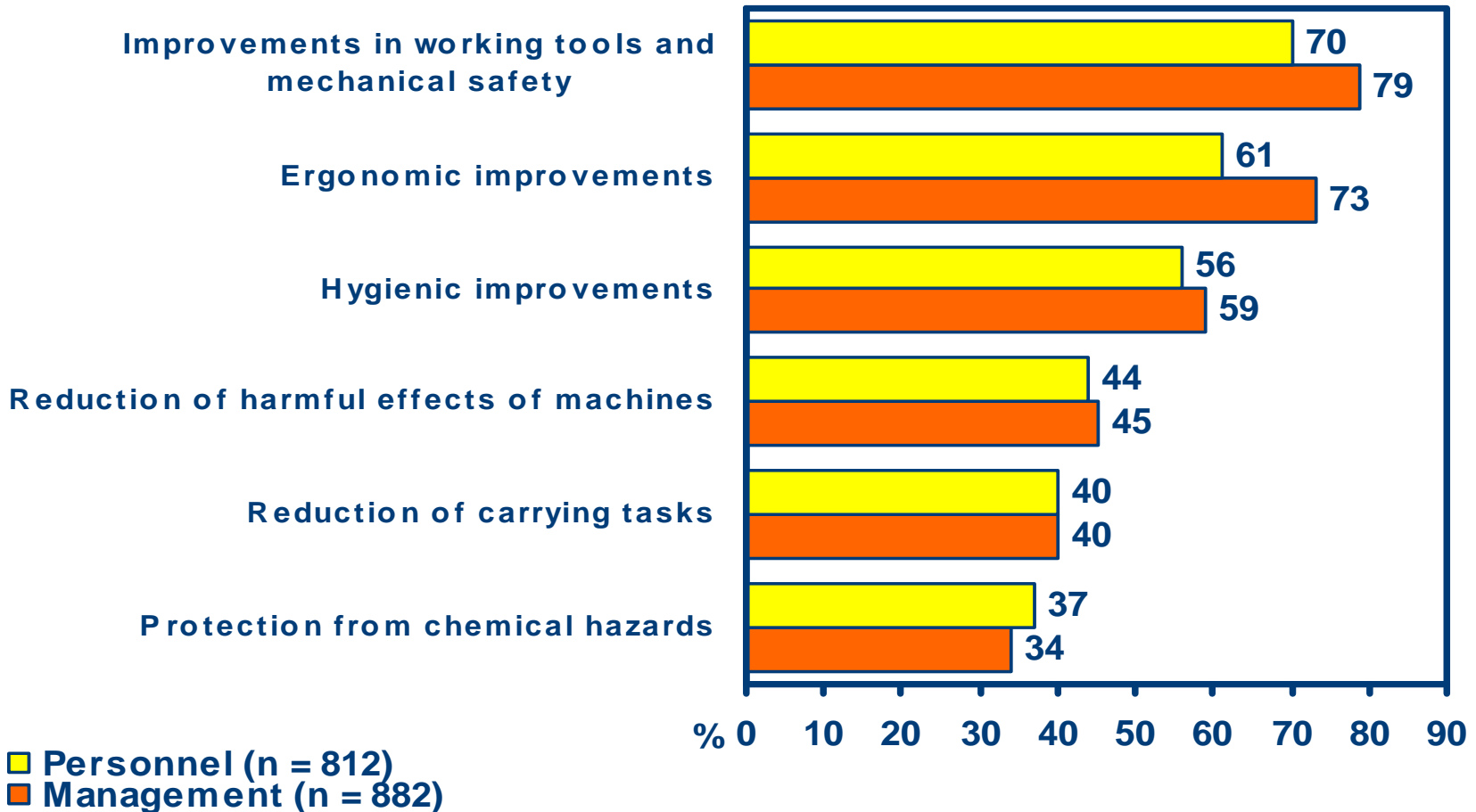
**Professional & social competence:** skills, competences & attitudes: abilities to influence, to learn and to develop at work (multi-skills, new technology and social skills), role balance, employability

# The need assessment and the organizational development axis in the PMWA model III

- "two flies with one hit"



# Improvements made in working environment in Finnish workplaces during the previous 12 months



# Important reasons for staying at work until statutory old-age retirement by age groups?

- Over 55 (n=105)
  - decrease in workload and haste, 69 %
  - more opportunities for rehabilitation, 64 %
  - better health care, 57 %
- Age 45-54 (n=420)
  - decrease in work load and haste, 70 %
  - more opportunities for rehabilitation, 64 %
  - more challenges in work content, 59 %
- Age 35-44 (n=380)
  - more challenges in work content, 75 %
  - decrease in work load and haste, 71 %
  - better leadership practices, 67 %
- Under 35 (n=272)
  - more salary, 75 %
  - more challenges in work content, 74 %
  - more opportunities for education, 71 %





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## **Some tools in PMWA**

# What means "Age Management" ?:

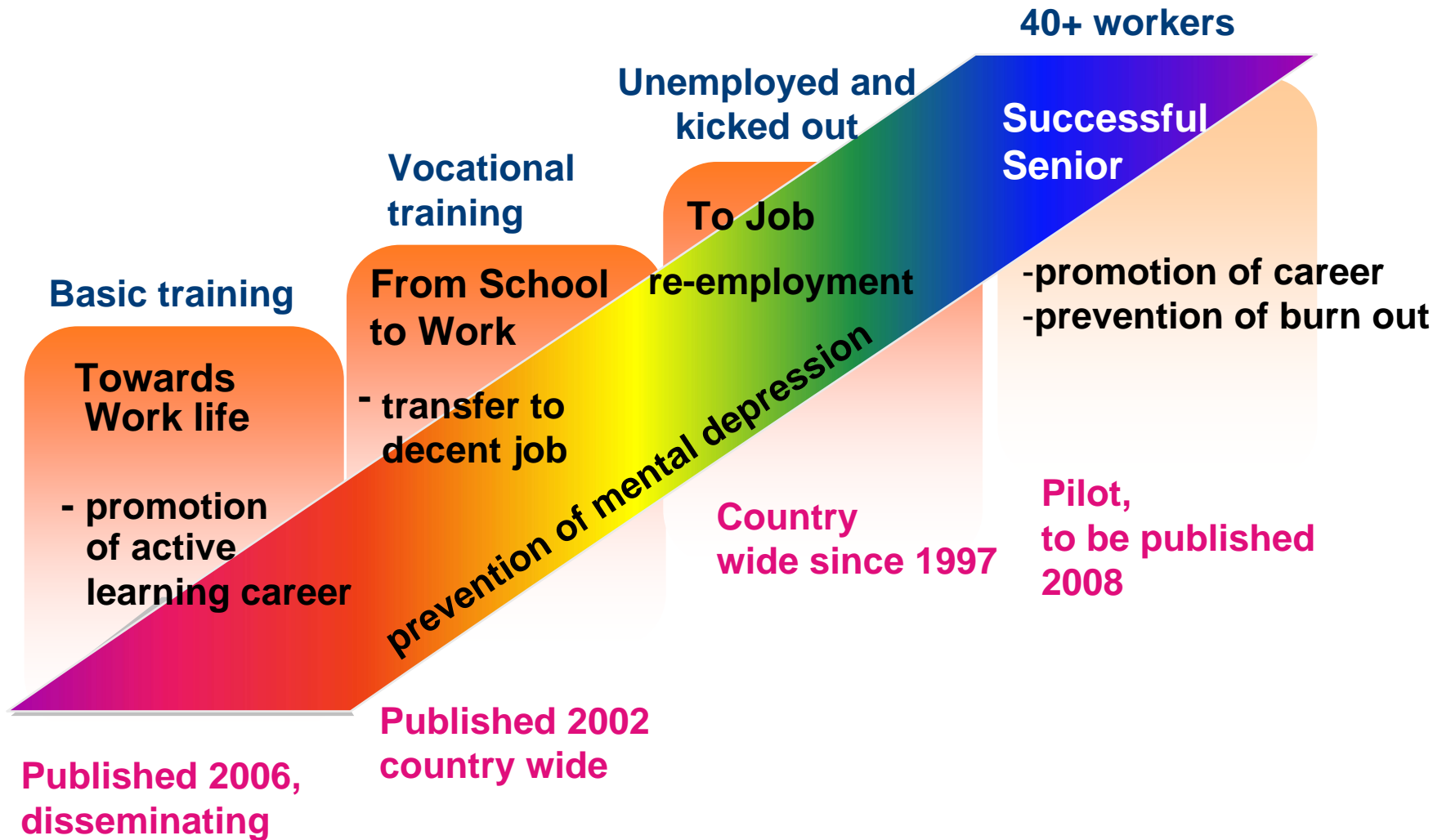
A comprehensive approach that strategically encompass a wide range of different coordinated measures

Taking into account:

- workers age and
  - age related factors in all ages and transfers at work from recruitment to transfer to retirement
1. In daily management,
  2. In organisation of work, and
  3. In work place adjustments and work challenges

With the aim, that everybody – independently of the age - is able to achieve his or her personal goals and the goals of the organisation

# Supporting career through the whole life course





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## **Benefits of the PMWA**

# Scientific results on the benefits of PMWA

(Elo et. al. 2001)

## Most "explaining" variables for the "successful" PMWA programme:

1. Comprehensive approach (all four dimensions!)
  2. Goal – oriented process with a responsible coordinator (OHS, HR, OS&H)
  3. Need assessment
  4. Participatory approach
  5. Commitment, participation and support of management
  6. Personal skills of the actors
- In a number of PMWA projects in SMEs in Finland positive results have been achieved, especially regarding:
    - collaboration in work communities and
    - psycho – social environment of work places

# Economic appraisal of the promotion of well – being in enterprises.

- SME companies (n: 200), different branches)
- Benefit / Cost ratio: from 3 to 20
- Benefit: Reduction of absenteeism and work incapacity 50%, increase in productivity 50%. (Bergström and Ahonen 2000, Pelletier 1999)

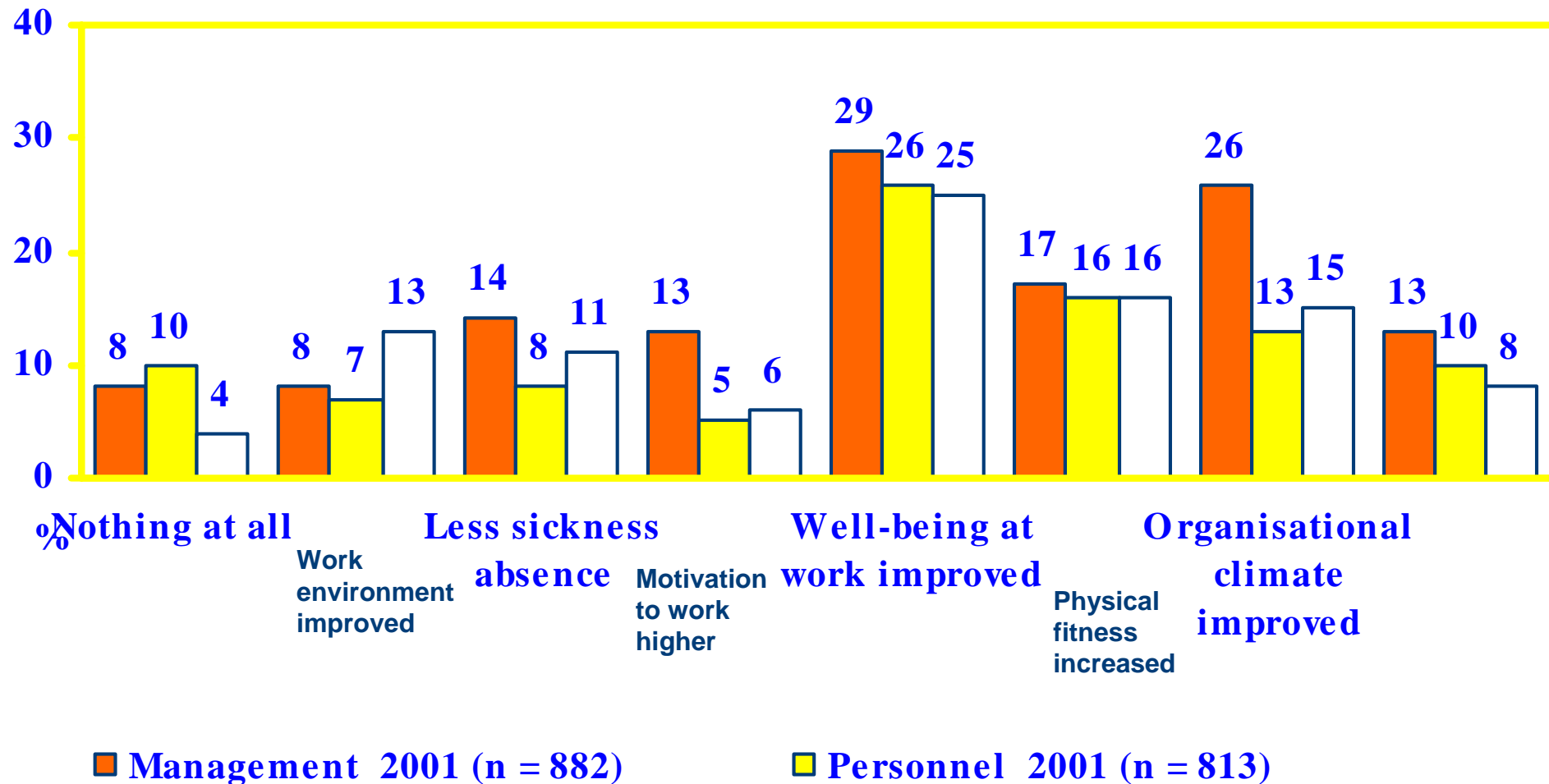
- "Metal Age" Fundia Ltd: Promotion of well – being increases the effective working time, job satisfaction and productivity:
- Return On Investment (ROI): +46% /year.
- (Rissa K: Well-being creates productivity, 2007)

- Finnish Railroads PMWA – Programme:
- Sickness Absenteeism 2003 – 2007: from 14% → 6,2%

- Most beneficial projects:
  1. Focused on clearly districted targets
  2. Wide and comprehensive company programs. (Ahonen 2007)

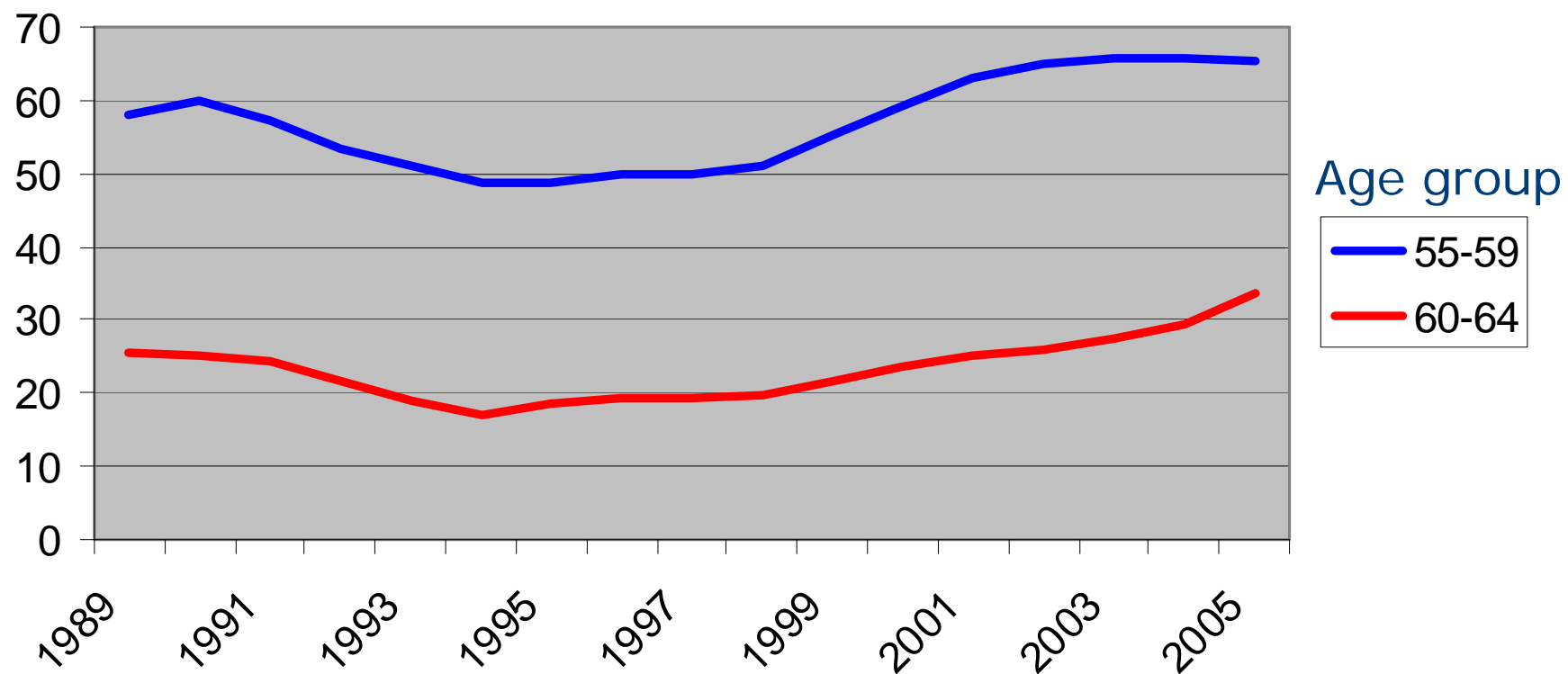


# The positive effects of MWA at Finnish workplaces during the previous 12 months



# Increase in the employment rate of ageing workers

## Employment rate



Statistics Finland 2006

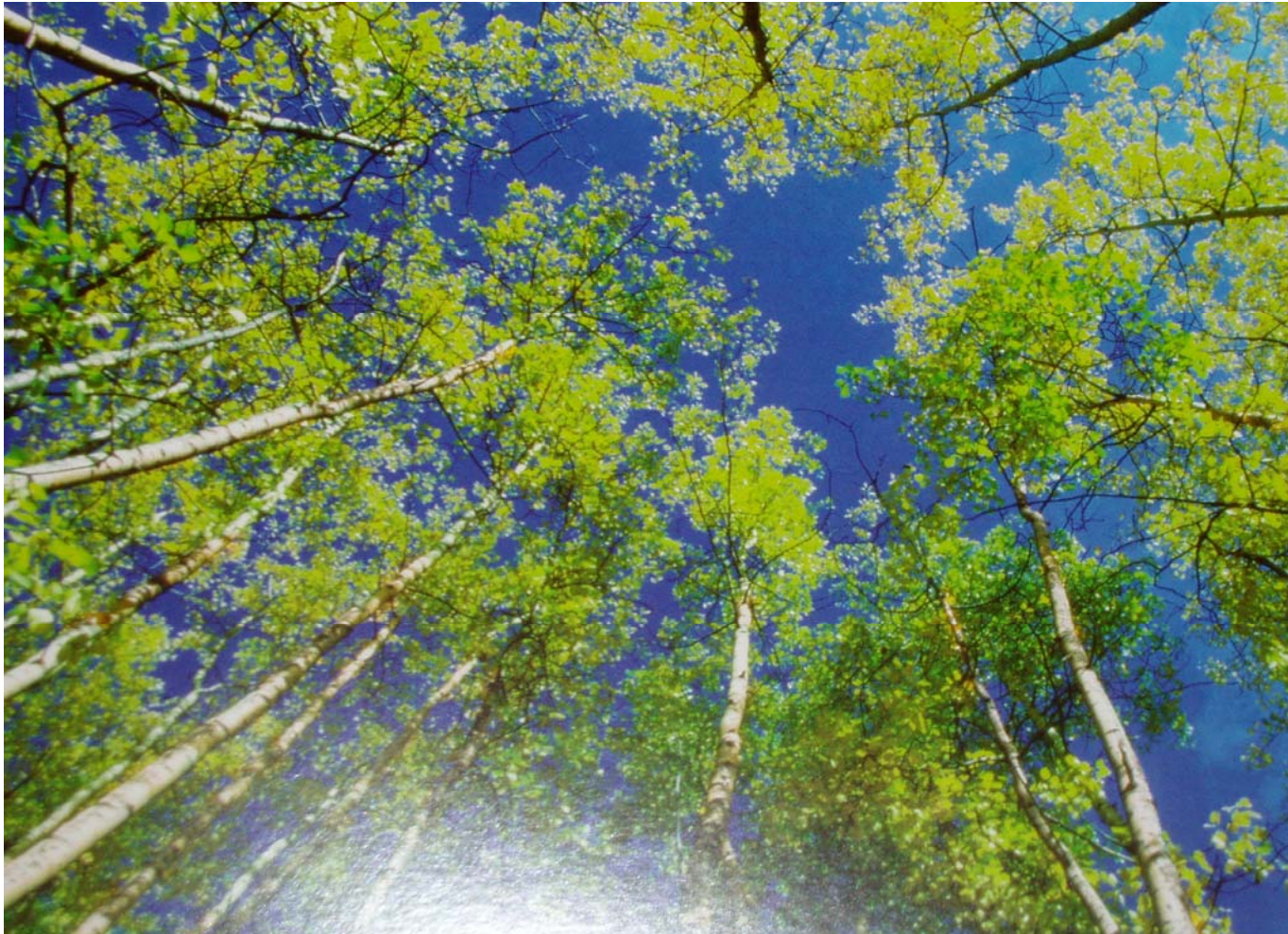


# PMWA Activities in Finland

## - evaluative summary

- Amount of PMWA quite high
- Versatile content of PMWA
- High confidence to economical benefits
- Good cost and benefit ratio
- Many positive effects
- Assessment of PMWA needs have been increased
- Follow-up of cost-efficiency of PMWA have been increased
- The role of OHS significant
- In some degree PMWA for aging workers
- SMEs need more support

More information: [www.ttl.fi](http://www.ttl.fi)



An aerial photograph of a large, deep blue lake surrounded by a dense, green forest. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The text "Thank You for Your Attention !" is overlaid in the upper center of the image.

**Thank You for Your Attention !**