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Improving well-being at work with the participatory Metal Age method

Disposition of the presentation

- **BACKGROUND**
 - WASI – Work Ability and Social Inclusion project
 - The Metal Age method
- **AIM & METHODS**
 - Aim of presentation
 - Data collection methods
- **CONCLUSIONS**
 - Opinions about the Metal Age method and its' effects
 - Factors affecting implementation success

WASI – Work Ability and Social Inclusion



- Central Baltic Interreg IV Program 2007-2013
 - Funded by the European Union
- **Objectives**
 - Map out & improve well being at work of ICT/office workers
 - **Use Metal Age as a method** for improving well being at work and analyze the effects of the program

- **Project partners:**



Background

- Increased awareness of **relationship** between **well-being at work** and **productivity**
- **Participation** an important factor regarding effect of interventions aiming at improving well-being at work (e.g. Nielsen et al., 2010)
- Participation central also in the **Metal Age method** (Näsman, 2011)
- To understand intervention failure / success important to consider the **implementation process** (Egan et al., 2009; Goldenhar et al., 2001; Griffiths, 1999; Nielsen, Taris, & Cox, 2010; Saksvik et al., 2002).

The Metal Age program

Orientation phase

The orientation matrix is presented
The groups' results in the KIVA questionnaire (7 questions on well-being at work) are presented and discussed

➡ Solution oriented view on problem solving

Intervention planning phase

Discussion of development areas in pairs
Making list of development areas together in the whole group.

➡ Grouping of issues

Prioritizing phase

Prioritizing of development areas based on:
A: Importance
B: How widely spread
C: Possibility to influence

➡ Result:
AxBxC

Concrete solutions

Planning of concrete solutions for development area priority nr. 1
Planning of person(s) in charge & timetable for each solution

➡ Plan

Follow-up

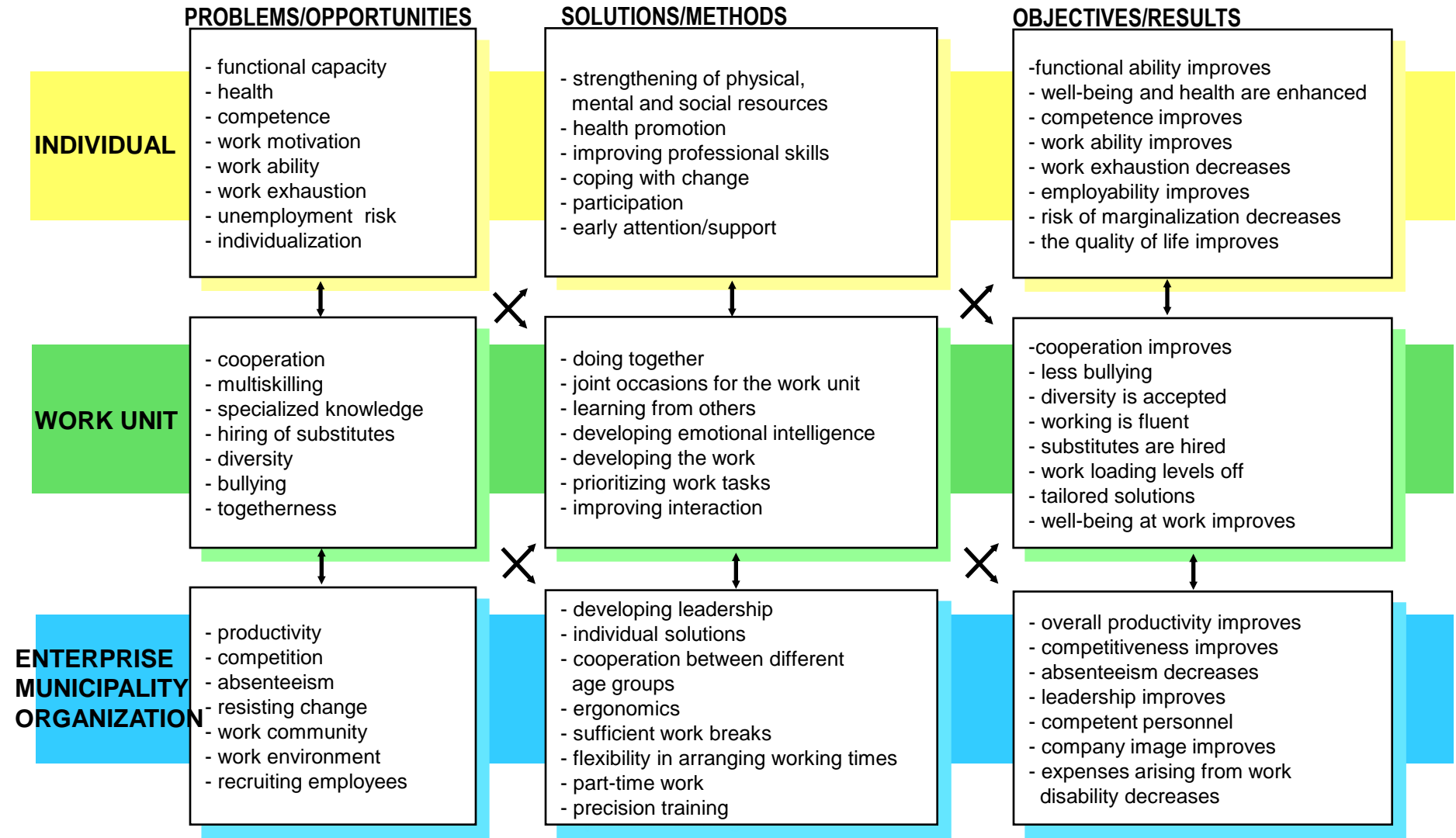
After 3-6 months
The implementation of the concrete solutions is discussed
Planning of concrete solutions for development area priority nr. 2

➡ New plan

Based on Näsman (2011)

ORIENTATION MATRIX

1.



Intervention planning

(Objectives-development areas)



Aim & Methods

- **Aim**

- Present the Metal Age method and some factors affecting implementation success

- **Methods**

- Feedback questionnaire with both fixed and open answers ($N=59$) (Org. 1-4)
- 15 interviews with participants from one organization (Org. 2)

Feedback from the Metal Age seminars

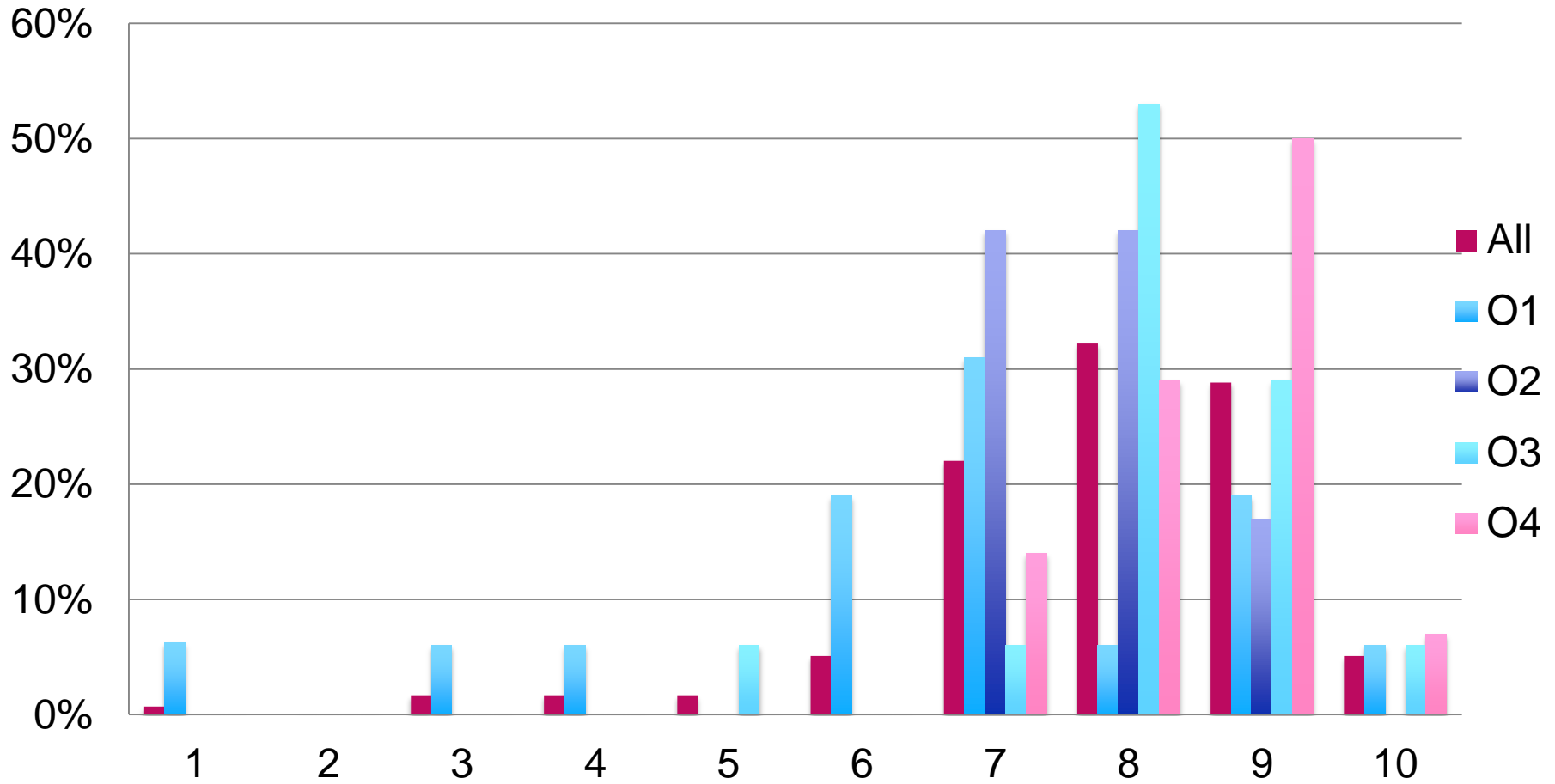
N= 59 (84 %)
Mean: 7,75

Question; On a scale from 1-10...	All N=59		O1 N=16		O2 N=12		O3 N=17		O4 N=14	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
... what was your opinion generally about the seminar?	7,75	1,60	6,63	2,36	7,75	0,75	8,18	1,07	8,50	0,85
... how well do you think the Metal Age method worked in your organization, as a method for improving well-being at work?	7,22	1,80	5,63	2,22	7,73	1,10	7,82	1,07	7,93	1,33
... how inspiring do you think the seminar was?	7,39	1,70	5,88	3,25	7,58	0,67	7,88	0,86	8,36	1,01

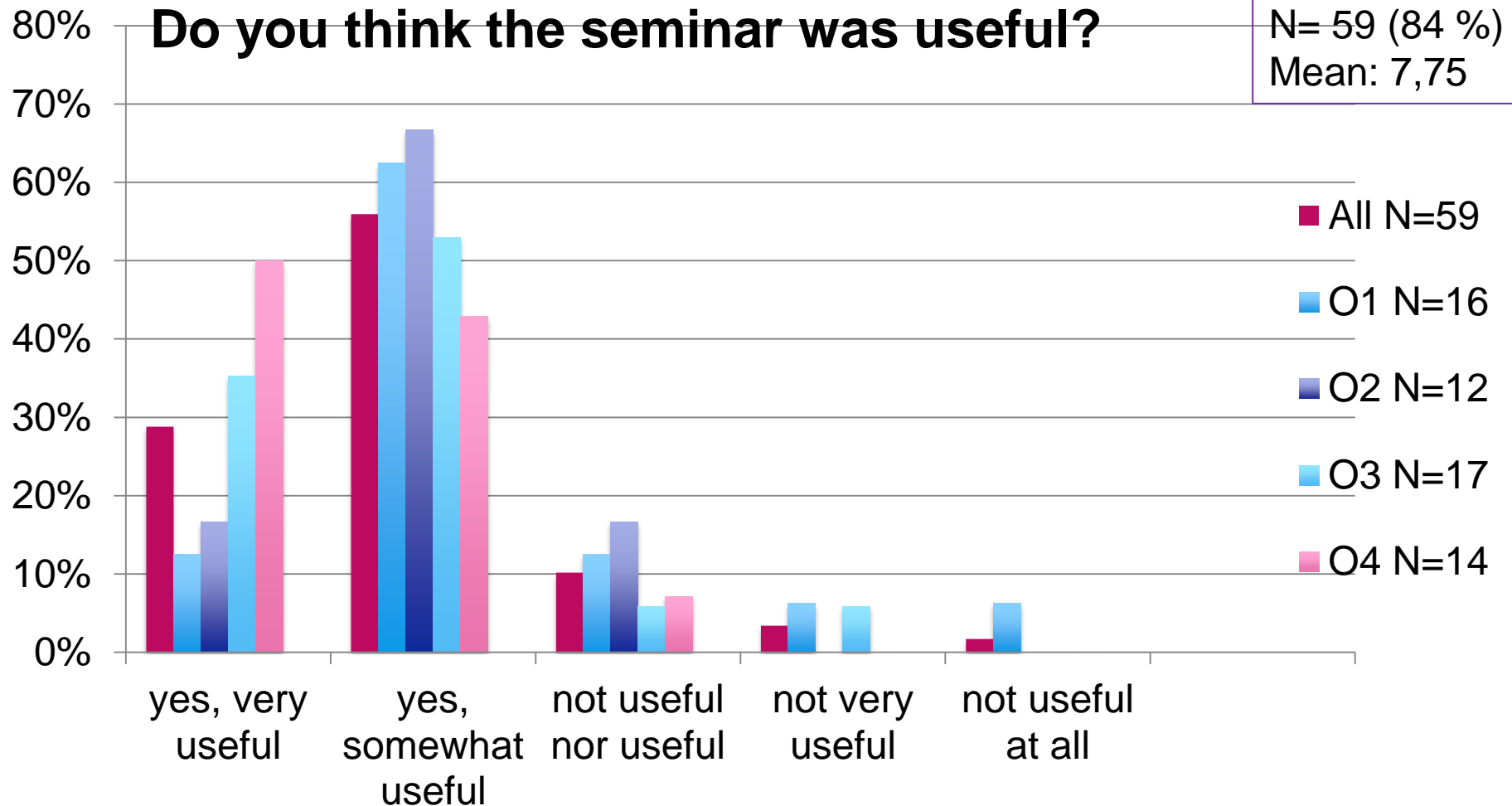
Feedback from the Metal Age seminars

On a scale from 1-10 what was your opinion generally about the seminar?

N= 59 (84 %)
Mean: 7,75



Feedback from the Metal Age seminars



Metal Age – practical, involves everyone

“An efficient way to learn to tackle problems in an easy and efficient way” (O3)

“ Everyone got the chance to express their opinions and to be heard” (O4)

“It [the seminar] was useful because the employees themselves got to figure out concrete solutions, which is not always that easy” (O1)

Metal Age – external facilitator important

- Almost all of the informants (interviews) thought it was **better with an external facilitator**:
 - Perceived as more objective
 - Everyone inside the organization has a role that involves certain preconceptions towards the person
 - Perceived to have more authority
 - New points of views

It was good to have the opportunity to ventilate opinions under the lead of an external leader on a “neutral ground”(O1)

Metal Age – creation of mutual understanding

- Both in the feedback form and interviews joint **discussion perceived as important part** of the seminar
 - The seminar gave participants time to discuss issues
 - Many thought it was valuable to hear different opinions from people working with different tasks than themselves
 - Discussion perceived by many as one of the most important parts of the seminar

[the best part of the seminar was...] the joint discussion and forming a mutual understanding about how to develop the working community. (O4)

Metal Age – feeling of solidarity

- Some of the participants felt the seminar and being together with their colleagues for 2 day **enhanced the feeling of solidarity**
 - Being away from the office environment perceived by the majority of the informants as a good option

“...the seminar increased the team spirit” (O3)

“At least I think we got closer to each other, which is positive” (O4)

Factors influencing implementation – atmosphere

- Many of the subjects expressed that the **atmosphere** (open vs. tense) **had an impact on the seminar**

“We have an open climate where employees can easily express their opinions and where they are also listened to.” (O2)

“The atmosphere was bad and tense. There is so much bubbling under the surface that should be dealt with first in some other way.” (O1)

“On the other hand it is not easy to bring out the most difficult things in this kind of event. The feeling that not everything was discussed remained” (O4)

Factors influencing implementation – atmosphere

- The general atmosphere was perceived as good by all informants (interviews) but at the same time a feeling of that not everything was discussed was expressed by some
- **Facilitator has an important role** in creating the atmosphere (e.g. activating everyone to participate, steering the discussion etc.)
- What **role leaders and other participants strive to take** and **participant attitudes** also mentioned as influencing the atmosphere

Factors influencing implementation – history of (failed) interventions

- Experiences of previous failed interventions seemed to create cynicism towards the new intervention

"We have previously participated in similar workshops and nothing has happened afterwards, why I believe that it is not useful, I'm a pessimist." (O1)

Factors influencing implementation –top management support

- Top management support for the intervention and the development work considered as an important factor for intervention success

[Negative about the seminar was...] That the top manager did not participate and some other persons were also missing. To be able to implement the program everyone should have been able to participate.” (O1)

What will happened with the planned solutions?

- Many of the subjects were worried about that planned solutions will be forgotten

We'll see what happens in reality. To discuss and act are two different things, and unfortunately you could notice immediately the following working day how easily you fell into the same thinking as before. You really have to make an effort not to think in the old way. (O1)

Conclusions

- Every participatory intervention where a group together discusses their development areas, prioritize them and find solutions to the problems is unique and **affected by the unique social context** the group is situated in (DeJoy et al., 2010, Egan et al. 2009)

 Inefficient to implement standardized processes without **considering organizational realities & organization culture** (Hussi, 2005)

Factors that should be considered in implementation of the Metal Age method

- **Group cohesion:** personal characteristics of group members (Taylor, 2007), organizational culture (Whyte, Greenwood & Lazes, 1991) , power relations (Cook & Kothari, 2007)
- **History of (failed) interventions** and success of earlier interventions (Cook & Kothari, 2007; Baugher, 2003; Granzow & Theberge, 2009; Heckschers et al., 2003)
- The **facilitator** and how she/he acts: facilitators sensitiveness for group, how program is adjusted to participating group etc. (Heckscher et al., 2003, Damart, 2010)

Factors that should be considered in implementation of the Metal Age method

- **Management support** (Ahonen & Näsman, 2008; Arneson & Ekberg, 2005; Cox et al., 2007; Doolen et al., 2008; DeJoy et al., 2010; Farris et al., 2008)
- **Communication** between facilitator and organization (e.g. personnel manager) before seminar (Doolen et al., 2008)

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Questions?

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