

# Strengths and Development Needs in Temporary Agency Work: Temporary Work Agency Managers' Perspective

Susanna Mattila, Kati Ylikahri, Leena Rekola, Niko Cajander,  
Sari Tappura and Riitta Kärkkäinen

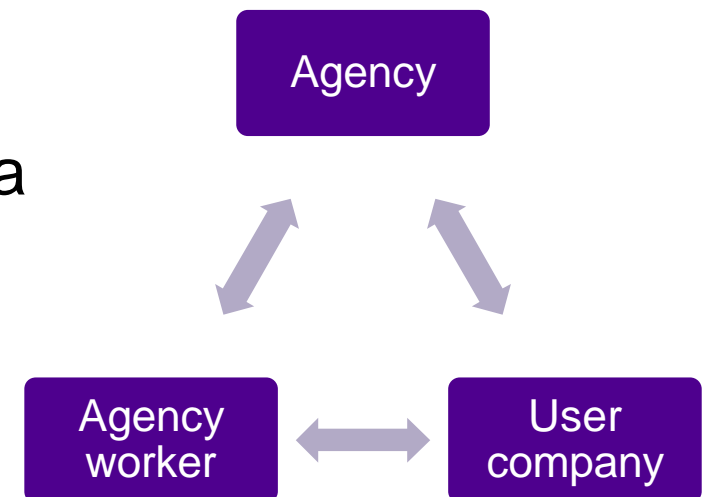


Leverage from  
the EU  
2014–2020



# Introduction

- Triangular employment relationship
  - A temporary agency worker is employed by a temporary work agency but he/she works under the management and supervision of a user company
  - An agency and a user company share responsibility for workers' occupational safety and health.
- An agency hires out a worker (work performance) to a user company



# Introduction

- Temporary agency work (TAW) is viewed as a flexible form of employment (Maroukis 2016)
- From the workers point of view many negative effects have been associated to TAW:
  - Higher accident frequency (Sysi-Aho & Kaari 2017, Tilastosovellus Pakki 2021)
  - Lack of orientation, training and supervision and inferior PPE (Hopkins 2017)
  - Higher levels of depression and fatigue (Hünefeld et al. 2020)
- Many deficiencies have been found in TAW (Finnish national supervisory authority 2019)

# Aim

- The aim of the study was to investigate strengths and development needs in TAW as perceived by temporary work agency managers (agency managers).

# Materials

- 10 agencies from different regions of Finland
- 19 agency managers

# Methods

- A qualitative, descriptive study
- Semi-structured interviews between December 2020 and March 2021
  - face-to-face interviews at the agencies' facilities, or online, or by telephone
  - one hour
  - one to three participants in each interview
  - recorded and transcribed
- Inductive content analysis

# Results – Strengths

## 1. Job–person matching

- Matching the right person to the right job
- The agencies had networks and were able to provide diverse jobs

## 2. Maintenance and development of professional skills

- The agencies were able to provide diverse jobs
- Additional training provided by the agency

# Results – Strengths

## 3. Job control

- Freedom to decide where to work, what kind of work to do, and when
- TAW is possible when a worker is retired or in addition to one's full-time job
- Work as a hobby

## 4. Rewards and benefits

- Access to occupational health care which can also include medical care
- Gym vouchers and massages



## Results – Strengths

5. A solution for getting needed workers and managing personnel costs and risks better
  - The user companies always had the number of workers they needed with stable costs.
  - The user company can utilize the expertise of the agency in employment matters and occupational safety.
6. Alleviation of labor shortages
  - Agencies ease the movement of labor

# Results – Strengths

## 7. Facilitation of employment

- TAW provides an entry to work life and enough work to earn a sufficient income.
- The potential and professional skills of immigrant workers were recognized.

# Results – Development Needs

1. Support for continued work or career development
  - Agencies should support continued work, including seasonal workers, and career development.
2. Communication
  - A communication and feedback culture between the agency, the user company, and the agency worker needs to be improved.
3. Integration
  - Agency workers had difficulty integrating in the work community

# Results – Development Needs

## 4. Risk management

- Incidents and near-misses are not reported correctly due to the system or a lack of motivation.

## 5. Compliance with legislation, ethical principles, and agreements

- There may be a situation in which the agency and the user company do not have the competency needed, and agency workers do not know their rights.
- Agency managers also identified unethical actions especially concerning foreign labor.

# Results – Development Needs

## 6. Development of co-operation

- The co-operation should be improved between agencies, user companies, occupational health care, employment offices, and labor unions.

## 7. Internal development

- Agencies should make internal changes after assessing social indicators and workers' well-being.

# Conclusion

- TAW has several strengths e.g. job-person matching, job control, and getting needed workers and managing personnel costs and risks better
- Still need to improve TAW practices and procedures for sustainable work e.g. risk management and compliance with legislation, ethical principles, and agreements
- Improvement requires co-operation among agencies, agency workers, and user companies.