

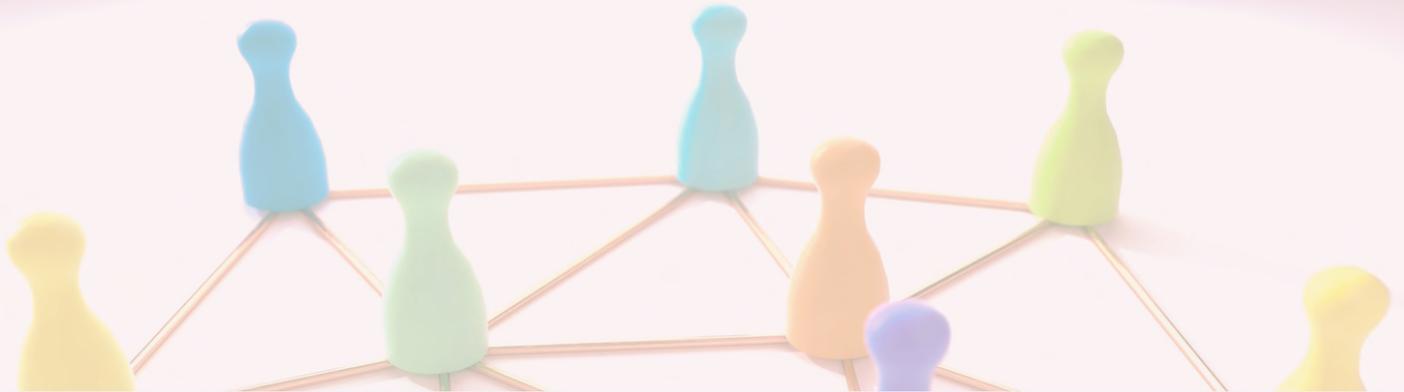
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 1

**Understanding the unique needs, motivations,
and challenges of older workers**

IntegrAGE Train the Trainer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

Table of contents

Table of contents	3
Introduction	7
1. Module 1 – Understanding the unique needs, motivations, and challenges of older workers	8
1.1. Description	8
1.2. Smart objectives	8
1.3. Introduction	8
1.4. Session 1: Understanding employees of senior age	9
1.5. Session 2: Creating a sustainable environment between generations	12
1.5.1. Case study 1	13
1.5.2. Case study 2	14
1.5.3. Role play exercise	14
1.6. Closing	16
2. Module 2 – Strategies for combating ageism, fostering an inclusive workplace	19
2.1. Session 1	19
2.2. Session 2	22
2.3. Session 3	25
2.4. Case Study 1 - "InnovateTogether"	27
2.5. Case Study 2 - Performance evaluation at "Iner&Son"	28
2.6. Case Study 3 - Retaining quality staff	30
2.7. Role-Play Scenario: "Developing practices against discrimination"	31
3. Module 3 - Strategies for Physical and Mental Health Management, Guidelines for Workplace Ergonomics	33
3.1. Introduction	33
3.2. Theoretical knowledge	34
3.3. Case studies/good practices	36
3.3.1. Case study 1: General Electric	36
3.3.2. Case study 2: De-stressing activities (Wegmans)	36
3.3.3. Case study 3: Johnson & Johnson	36

3.3.4.	Case study 4: Unilever -----	37
3.4.	Strategies/Practical tips and advises-----	37
3.4.1.	Strategies/Practical tips and advises:-----	37
3.4.2.	Mental Health Management-----	38
3.4.3.	Ergonomics of the workplace - guidelines -----	39
3.4.4.	Practical exercises -----	41
3.5.	Conclusion -----	45
4.	Module 4 – Methodological guide: The educational module: Mentoring and reverse mentoring in the workplace -----	46
4.1.	Introduction to mentoring and reverse mentoring -----	47
4.2.	SMART Goals of the Trainer curriculum-----	48
4.3.	Definition of Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring -----	50
4.3.1.	Who is a Mentor and a Mentee-----	51
4.4.	Benefits of Mentoring and Reverse mentoring-----	51
4.4.1.	Benefits of Mentoring for the organisation -----	51
4.4.2.	Advantages and challenges of Reverse mentoring-----	51
4.5.	Building effective relationships between mentor and mentee -----	53
4.5.1.	Importance of trust, respect, and open communication -----	53
4.5.2.	Key roles and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee -----	53
4.5.3.	Key elements of a successful mentoring programs-----	54
4.5.4.	Skills required for effective mentoring-----	55
4.5.5.	Adaptation to generational differences -----	56
4.6.	Mentoring process-----	58
4.7.	Measuring the success of mentoring-----	61
4.8.	Conclusion -----	61
4.9.	Role-Playing Scenarios -----	63
5.	Module 5 – Technology Training, Digital Inclusion Strategies, and Fostering Lifelong Learning -----	65
5.1.	Description -----	65
5.2.	Smart objectives -----	65
5.3.	Introduction-----	66
5.3.1.	Basic concepts -----	66

5.3.2.	Background information	67
5.4.	Session 1: Digital Skill Gaps and Lifelong Learning	69
5.4.1.	Topic 1: Digital Skill Gaps	69
5.4.2.	Topic 2: Lifelong Learning (LLL)	70
5.5.	Session 2: Promotigon of digital skills through Technology Training	72
5.5.1.	Case study 1: Digital Skills Barometer	72
5.5.2.	Case study 2: Online Training Providers	72
5.5.3.	Case study 3: Networking for cross-company qualifications	74
5.6.	Session 3: Implementation of positive change	75
5.6.1.	Positive change	75
5.6.2.	Role play exercise	76
5.7.	Closing	77
5.7.1.	Summarizing the workshop	77
5.7.2.	Key takeaways	78
5.7.3.	Q&A and Feedback	78
6.	Module 6 – Age-Friendly Employment Practices and Strategies for Phased Retirement	80
6.1.	Description	80
6.2.	Smart objectives	80
6.3.	Introduction	82
6.3.1.	Basic concepts	82
6.3.2.	Background information	83
6.4.	Session 1	85
6.4.1.	Topic 1: Age-Friendly Employment Practices for Older Workers	85
6.4.2.	Topic 2: Strategies for Gradual Retirement	87
6.5.	Session 2: Promotigon of digital skills through Technology Training	87
6.5.1.	Case study 1: Phased Retirement in the Company "Energie"	88
6.5.2.	Case study 2: IT Training for a Municipal Employee Over 55	90
6.5.3.	Case study 3: Older Employee Experience Compensating for Lack of IT Skills	91
6.6.	Session 3: Implementation of positive change	92
6.6.1.	Role play exercise	93



6.7.	Closing	94
6.7.1.	Summarizing the workshop	94
6.7.2.	Key takeaways	95
6.7.3.	Q&A and Feedback	95

Introduction

The "Train the Trainer" curriculum was developed within the framework of an international project called IntegrAGE, funded by the European Union. For preparation of the material, expert groups from the participating countries worked on various thematic training scenarios for 6 different modules. The main goal of these modules is to facilitate synergistic collaboration between employees over the age of 55 and younger colleagues. The curriculum can be utilized by colleagues and trainers from employer organizations, allowing the topics discussed to be adopted to each company's local conditions.

The curriculum consists of six modules, which are as follows:

1. Understanding the unique needs, motivations, and challenges of older workers
2. Strategies for combating ageism, fostering an inclusive workplace
3. Strategies for Physical and Mental Health Management, Guidelines for Workplace Ergonomics
4. Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring
5. Technology Training, Digital Inclusion Strategies, and Fostering Lifelong Learning
6. Age-Friendly Employment Practices and Strategies for Phased Retirement

An important intention of the project is to support participating organizations in developing a more inclusive culture and acquiring specific techniques that can enable intergenerational collaboration between younger and older workers. Another potential outcome of conducting trainings and workshops within companies is the reduction of the likelihood of age-based stereotypical thinking, strengthening mutual acknowledge and acceptance among generations, improving conflict resolution through open communication, and ultimately increasing efficiency, organizational performance, and competitiveness within the whole organization. At the same time, older workers can feel more secure, and younger employees can receive appropriate professional support and mentoring from the experienced senior colleagues. Establishing an ergonomic work environment also serves the health of employees, while collaborative systems based on mutual benefits and strengths (e.g., concerning travel and work scheduling) can further enhance work satisfaction, professional recognition, and retention of the colleagues.

Each module includes theoretical background summaries, training exercises, role-playing games, simulations, quiz questions, and case studies that promote deeper engagement of participants and the application of learned concepts into practice.

1. Module 1 – Understanding the unique needs, motivations, and challenges of older workers

1.1. Description

This module focuses on understanding and addressing the unique needs, motivations, and challenges faced by employees over 55 years old in the workplace, particularly in the context of the Danube Region. Through theoretical inputs and interactive discussions, participants explore strategies to discover how their age-friendly workplace could look like.

The module emphasizes the importance of leveraging the strengths of employees of senior age and addressing their vulnerabilities through targeted and timely interventions. In addition to understanding individual needs, the module promotes intergenerational cooperation by encouraging collaboration between older and younger employees. Ultimately, the module equips companies with tools to balance individual aspirations with organizational goals, ensuring a resilient and cohesive workplace.

1.2. Smart objectives

This training module can be summarized in five main SMART objectives and learning outcomes:

Objective 1: Participants will be able to identify and describe key challenges faced by employees aged 50 and older.

Objective 2: Participants will develop an understanding of motivational factors (e.g., desire for meaningful work, financial stability, and lifelong learning) driving older workers.

Objective 3: Participants will be able to implement two strategies to address older employees' workplace needs, strengths, weaknesses and motivations.

Objective 4: Participants will achieve an 80% success rate in a quiz assessing their knowledge of the challenges and opportunities affecting older workers in the workplace.

Objective 5: Participants will collaboratively create a framework outlining at least three actionable steps to foster an inclusive environment for employees over 55, shared during the workshop's wrap-up and feedback session.

1.3. Introduction

The Danube Region, like much of Europe, faces significant challenges related to the integration and support of older workers in the labour market. Ageism and workplace discrimination against employees aged 50 and older remain persistent issues, despite comprehensive legislative frameworks aimed at ensuring equality. This module seeks to equip

companies across all industries with the knowledge and tools necessary to create age-friendly workplaces and foster an inclusive environment that leverages the strengths of all generations.

Ageism in the workplace is often perpetuated by stereotypes, company culture, and managerial attitudes, with older employees frequently perceived as less adaptable or technologically proficient. OECD and AGE Platform Europe studies reveal that significant proportions of workers aged 55–64 experience age-related discrimination, particularly during recruitment processes or work schedule reductions. Such biases not only undermine the dignity and contributions of older workers but also deprive businesses of diverse perspectives and knowledge retention.

Research highlights a preference for younger job seekers, often driven by the misconception that they are always quicker to adapt to technological demands. This bias disproportionately affects older workers with lower digital literacy, limiting their access to education and career advancement. In contexts of economic digital transformation, these workers are at higher risk of job loss or forced retirement, as seen in studies from the Danube Region.

Despite these obstacles, there is a growing recognition of the value older employees bring to the workplace. Inclusive workplace attitudes and supportive management can significantly extend the career trajectories of older workers, contributing to organizational resilience and intergenerational collaboration. For companies operating in the Danube Region, addressing these issues is not only a matter of compliance with EU directives but also a strategic opportunity to use the potential of an aging workforce.

1.4. Session 1: Understanding employees of senior age

Topic 1: Common Challenges of Older Employees

To understand the challenges that older employees face, it is essential to understand some basic concepts on why it is important to foster age management and why senior employees can be very vulnerable at the end of their careers, if companies do not value their expertise.

- **Vulnerability of an employee of Senior Age:**

An employee of senior age refers to a worker typically aged 55 or older, who is approaching or surpassing the standard retirement age. These employees often bring extensive experience, institutional knowledge, and valuable interpersonal skills to the workplace. However, they also face declining physical endurance and susceptibility to workplace discrimination. For that reason, companies should consider following aspects when thinking of their age-friendly strategy:

- **Technological obsolescence**, due to rapid digitalization in many industries.
- **Health-related concerns**, such as musculoskeletal conditions or chronic illnesses.
- **Job insecurity**, as older workers are often disproportionately affected by downsizing or restructuring efforts.

The vulnerability can be tackled by evaluating the needs of senior employees in a specific way and by ensuring Job adequacy and Workplace safety to respond to those needs:

- o **Job adequacy:**

It refers to the alignment between an employee's capabilities, skills, and health conditions and the demands of their job role. For senior employees, achieving job adequacy becomes increasingly important, as physical, cognitive, or psychological changes may impact their ability to perform tasks at the same level as earlier in their careers. This goal can be achieved by promoting:

- **Adaptation of job roles:** This includes reducing physical strain, offering flexible schedules, and adjusting workload expectations to match the employee's current capacity.
- **Providing targeted training:** Upskilling programs, particularly in digital literacy, can help older employees stay competitive and confident in their roles.
- **Career path adjustments:** Introducing phased retirement plans, mentorship roles, or consulting opportunities allows senior employees to transition smoothly while contributing meaningfully.

- o **Workplace Safety:**

For older employees, it involves ensuring that the physical and psychological work environment and mitigates risks associated with age. Older workers are more susceptible to injuries, slower recovery times, and ergonomic challenges. Ensuring safety is therefore critical to supporting productivity in the workplace. This adaptation can take place through:

- **Ergonomic improvements:** Adjusting workstations, seating, and tools to minimize strain and support the physical well-being of senior employees.
- **Proactive health measures:** Regular health checks, wellness programs, and ergonomic assessments can help identify and address potential risks early.
- **Psychological safety:** Creating an inclusive culture where senior employees feel valued and protected and offering flexible work arrangements.

By addressing the vulnerability of employees of senior age through job adequacy and workplace safety, companies start building a robust base for an age management strategy that supports the well-being of older workers while leveraging organizational success.

Topic 2: Common Needs & Motivations of Older Employees

In general, employees over 55 years old in the Danube Region seek meaningful work that aligns with their expertise and allows them to contribute to their organization's success. They value recognition for their experience and skills, often seeking roles that allow them to mentor younger colleagues or take on responsibilities that highlight their strengths.

Flexible working arrangements, such as part-time schedules or remote work options are also critical to balancing professional responsibilities with personal needs, including health management and family commitments.

To remain engaged and happy at their workplace, older employees need a supportive environment and a culture of inclusion and respect, free from age-related biases, where they feel their contributions are valued equally to those of their younger colleagues.

Clear pathways for phased retirement or career transitions, combined with open communication about their future at the company, further motivate them to stay and thrive within the organization.

However, each person is different, and each employee has also individual needs that cannot be generalized. Therefore, we suggest starting from the particular and move towards the general. To help HR and management better understand the unique needs, strengths, and hopes of employees over 55, your company could organize in-person Workshops with senior employees, where they can express individual needs related to their job position.

By using the TREE method as a metaphorical framework, your company could gather individual and group-level insights that inform age-friendly workplace adaptations.

TREE METHOD

Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Begin by explaining the purpose of the workshop: to explore the experiences and aspirations of employees over 55 to better align their roles and workplace conditions with their needs.
2. Introduce the TREE Method: An example tree is draw in a big flipchart, so the following metaphor can be explained:
 - **ROOTS** (Weaknesses/Challenges): Aspects that hinder their work experience or create barriers.
 - **CORE** (Strengths): What they currently bring to their roles—skills, expertise, or personal qualities.
 - **BRANCHES** (Hopes/Motivations): Their expectations, goals, or aspirations for their job position and career.

Individual Reflection (30 minutes)

Provide each participant with a visual of a tree (drawn on paper or digitally). Encourage them to fill out the three sections and help them with some guiding questions.

Group Sharing and Discussion (45 minutes)

3. In small groups (20 minutes): Divide participants into smaller groups (4–5 people). Have each person share their tree, highlighting key insights from their roots, core, and branches.
4. Common Themes Identification (25 minutes): As a group, identify recurring themes across individual trees. A facilitator can record these themes under three headings:
 - Weaknesses & Challenges
 - Strengths
 - Hopes & Motivations

Plenary Session: General Needs and Arrangements (30 minutes)

Facilitator Summary: Present the identified themes to the entire group and brainstorm about potential workplace arrangements or interventions that could address the challenges and hopes while leveraging the identified strengths. Try to be as complete as possible.

By the end of the workshop, HR and management will have a clearer understanding of the challenges, strengths, and hopes of employees over 55 and a set of practical ideas for creating a more age-friendly workplace, with actionable steps to support older employees.

1.5. Session 2: Creating a sustainable environment between generations

Creating a sustainable environment between generations in the workplace requires leveraging the unique strengths of both younger and older employees to foster mutual growth and collaboration. In the Danube Region, where companies face a mix of aging workforces, assigning employees to roles that align with their strengths is crucial. For example, older employees can take on mentorship roles, sharing their expertise and institutional knowledge, while younger workers bring fresh perspectives and technological proficiency.

Structured programs that pair employees across generations for skill-sharing, such as reverse mentoring, create opportunities for each group to learn from the other while enhancing mutual respect.

Engaging employees from different generations also involves creating collaborative and cross-generational projects and teams. Facilitating regular team-building activities, such as workshops or problem-solving sessions, helps break down stereotypes and builds trust.

Companies in the Danube Region could promote flexible policies that accommodate the diverse needs of both age groups. Providing leadership development and mentorship for younger employees, which could be led by older employees. This additional task should not be a hurdle and additional responsibility for older workers, but it should be rewarded, either economically or through time compensation and recognition.

Such approach keeps all generations engaged and productive and fosters a culture that recognizes the value of intergenerational collaboration, through rewards or public acknowledgment of successful team projects. This mindset can only work if the company is committed to include concrete actions and benefits in their long-term strategy.

1.5.1. Case study 1

Siemens Ecosystem

What: Siemens AG offers a mentoring program where senior executives mentor students from Munich universities, focusing on IT and technology-related fields.

Where: The program is based in Munich, Germany, and involves students from the Technical University of Munich (TUM), Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU), and the Munich University of Applied Sciences (HM).

How: Selected students are paired with Siemens senior executives who provide guidance and advice over at least one year. The program includes regular meetings, networking opportunities, and insights into career prospects.

Why: The program aims to bridge the gap between academic studies and professional careers, offering students practical insights and fostering a diverse innovation ecosystem.

1.5.2. Case study 2

IBM's Mentor Place

What: The program connects experienced employees, often over 55, with younger staff to share knowledge and foster professional development.

Where: The program operates across IBM's U.S. offices, with a focus on departments experiencing rapid technological changes.

How: Mentors and mentees are matched based on expertise and development needs. The program includes regular meetings, collaborative projects, and access to IBM's extensive learning resources. Feedback mechanisms are in place to assess progress and adjust objectives.

Why: IBM aimed to leverage the extensive experience of its senior employees to accelerate the development of younger staff, ensuring continuity of high standards and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Adaptability Round for the Case Studies

- How could your organization adapt the duration, structure, or focus of the mentoring cycles (e.g., six months to a year) to better fit your specific workplace needs and schedules?
- What challenges might arise in implementing a similar mentoring program in your company?
- How would you measure the success of such a mentoring program in your organization?
- What features of the mentoring programs do you think could be replicated effectively in your company?
- Do you see it as realistic in your context to establish mentoring relationships where senior employees? Why or why not?

1.5.3. Role play exercise

This roleplay exercise aims to foster empathy between older and younger employees by encouraging them to step into each other's roles, explore real-life challenges, and collaboratively identify solutions for better intergenerational cooperation. This simple and flexible exercise creates a safe space for both groups to voice their experiences and work together toward building a more inclusive workplace culture.

Walking in each other's shoes

Preparation (5 minutes)

5. Divide participants into small groups of four, with an equal mix of older (55+) and younger workers.
6. Briefly explain the purpose of the activity: to understand each other's challenges and perspectives and to find ways to work together more effectively.

Sharing Challenges (10 minutes)

Each participant takes a turn to briefly describe a real-life challenge they've faced at work.

- Older workers: Challenges might include adapting to new technologies or being perceived as less adaptable.
- Younger workers: Challenges might include being dismissed due to lack of experience, feeling undervalued, or struggling to prove their worth.

Swapping Roles (5 minutes)

Each older participant takes on the role of a younger worker, and each younger participant takes on the role of an older worker. They have the opportunity to write how they feel in their new role in a notebook.

Representing both scenarios (15 minutes)

Using the challenge described by their partner, participants represent such scenario. They can ask other participants to help them represent, but they must never forget the role they are in. If the colleague expressed fear of public speaking, they should try to feel like that and represent it.

After some minutes of representation, the moderator will stop the performance and will say:

➔ ALL PARTICIPANTS GO BACK TO THEIR REAL BEINGS

After this intervention, the person who was representing the problem will try to solve it as he or she would do in real life.

Collaborative Problem-Solving (10 minutes)

After acting out the scenarios, participants reflect on what they learned from stepping into the other person's shoes.

Participants will compare what they felt in the situation:

- When they were young
- When they were older

Some guiding questions would be:

- What did you learn about the other generation's challenges?
- Did stepping into their role change your perspective on the situation?
- How can you apply these insights to improve teamwork in your workplace?

Group Debrief (15 minutes)

After these concrete scenarios, the facilitator should try to summarize some general challenges that could be addressed through intergenerational cooperation and teamwork. The focus should be on:

- Communication improvements.
- Ways to support each other's strengths.
- Intergenerational mentoring opportunities.

Finally, the facilitator will summarize common themes and highlights actionable steps for fostering intergenerational collaboration and will write them down on a shared sheet or flipchart.

1.6. Closing

Summarizing the workshop

To summarize the workshop, use the metaphor of a train to capture the participants' learning journey. Each part of the train represents a key aspect of the workshop:



7. **Provide materials and explain the metaphor.** Hand out 3–4 sticky notes to each participant in three different colours that represent the following:

RED	Tracks	Concerns or not so positive aspects
BLUE	Carriages	Learnings and positive aspects
GREEN	Engine	Future aspirations and next steps

8. **Instruct participants to write:**

- On red notes: Challenges or gaps that slowed down progress during the workshop.
- On blue notes: Key takeaways or insights gained during the workshop.
- On green notes: Suggestions or aspirations for the company to move forward based on what they learned.

9. **Draw a train on a flipchart and represent the three categories.**

10. **Place sticky notes:** Ask participants to place their sticky notes in the appropriate sections.

11. **Group similar ideas:** Organize the sticky notes in each section, clustering similar points together to identify common themes.

12. **Closing:** This metaphor emphasizes a forward-moving journey, allowing participants to reflect on where they've been (challenges), what they've carried forward (learnings), and what drives them toward their destination (future hopes).

Finally, connect this closing to real actions of the HR department and management positions. It is very important that the feedback generated in this workshop is considering improving the situation of the target group.

Ideally, this workshop would not be a single session, but it would be periodically implemented to discuss progress and changes made.

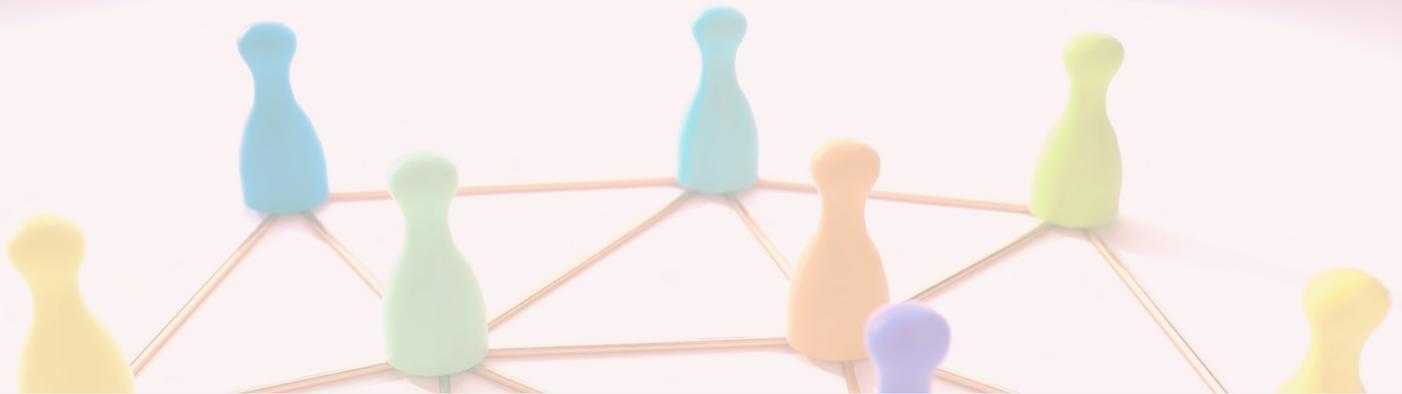
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 2

**Strategies for combating ageism, fostering
an inclusive workplace**

IntegrAGE Train the Trainer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

2. Module 2 – Strategies for combating ageism, fostering an inclusive workplace

Introduction to the topic

In the modern work environment, intergenerational collaboration is becoming increasingly important, given the diversity of teams composed of employees from different generations. With the rapid changes in technology and social norms, understanding the perspectives and needs of various generations can significantly enhance team dynamics, creativity, and efficiency. This module explores strategies for fostering mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation among employees of different age groups.

Module objective

The goal of this module is to empower participants to effectively identify and overcome the barriers to intergenerational collaboration. Through practical exercises and discussions, participants will be equipped to improve intergenerational relationships in the workplace.

Learning outcomes of the module

Upon completing the module, participants will be able to:

13. Identify the key challenges and advantages that different generations bring to teams.
14. Develop strategies for creating an inclusive work environment that encourages intergenerational collaboration.
15. Plan and implement team activities that promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

Relevance of the module

This module helps develop an organizational culture that values diversity and inclusivity, enabling organizations to leverage the strengths of all employees. This improves team dynamics and increases productivity. Participants will gain the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully manage teams in the modern business environment.

2.1. Session 1

Ageism is a form of discrimination based on an individual's age and typically involves negative biases and stereotypes about people due to their age. This phenomenon can include prejudices against younger, older, or middle-aged individuals. Ageism manifests through verbal, non-verbal, or structural forms of discrimination, such as exclusion from work activities, unfair evaluation of work abilities, or devaluation of personal qualities and capabilities based on age.

Consequences of ageism in the workplace and on employees:

1. **Reduced productivity:** Employees facing ageism may become demotivated, leading to decreased productivity and work quality. A negative environment can affect their engagement and creativity.
2. **Increased stress and anxiety:** Individuals experiencing age-based discrimination may suffer emotional consequences, including stress, anxiety, and depression, which can further impact their mental health and overall well-being.
3. **Loss of talent:** Ageism may result in the loss of talented and experienced employees who feel unwelcome or inadequate. Organizations that do not value the contributions of all age groups may lose valuable resources and knowledge.
4. **Poor team dynamics:** Age-based discrimination can create tension within teams, making collaboration and communication between employees of different age groups difficult. This can result in reduced cohesion and team effectiveness.
5. **Limited development opportunities:** Older employees are often excluded from training and advancement opportunities, leading to career stagnation. This can reinforce stereotypes surrounding older workers.
6. **Negative impact on organizational culture:** Ageism can undermine an organizational culture based on values such as diversity, inclusivity, and respect. Organizations that fail to recognize and address ageism may become unattractive to new talent and clients.
7. **Legal and reputational risks:** Age-based discrimination can lead to legal issues for organizations, including lawsuits and loss of reputation, which may affect business relationships and trust in the brand.

Ageism presents a significant issue in the workplace, with numerous negative consequences for both individuals and organizations. Implementing policies and practices that promote intergenerational understanding and collaboration can help reduce ageism and create a positive work environment.

Recognizing and addressing bias:

1. **Awareness of bias:** Education on unconscious biases.
2. **Behavior monitoring:** Analysis of task allocation, praise, promotions, and performance evaluations.
3. **Feedback:** Anonymous surveys on perceived biases.
4. **Statistics:** Research on employment data.

Solutions:

1. **Education:** Training on inclusivity.

2. **Open communication:** Dialogue about biases.
3. **Inclusive policies:** Promoting diversity.
4. **Transparency:** Objective recruitment processes.
5. **Empathy:** Workshops for developing understanding.

Monitoring:

1. **Performance tracking:** Evaluation of inclusive policies.
2. **Sanctions and rewards:** Penalizing discrimination and rewarding inclusivity.

Supportive environment for all age groups

Creating and maintaining a supportive environment for all age groups requires a strategic approach that includes understanding and respecting diversity. Here are some key steps that can help achieve this goal:

1. **Promoting diversity awareness:** Organize training and workshops focused on understanding diversity, intergenerational differences, and recognizing biases. These educational efforts can help employees become more aware of their attitudes and behavior toward colleagues of different age groups.
2. **Creating an inclusive culture:** Incorporate the values of diversity and inclusion into the organization's mission and vision. Encourage open communication and respect among employees, regardless of age, and emphasize the importance of mutual understanding.
3. **Flexible work arrangements:** Offer flexible work options, such as remote work or adjustable working hours, to accommodate the different needs of employees, including those with families, health issues, or eldercare responsibilities.
4. **Involving all age groups in decision-making:** Ensure that employees of all age groups are included in decision-making processes. This participation can bring diverse perspectives and ideas, contributing to a better work environment.
5. **Providing development opportunities:** Ensure equal opportunities for training and professional development, regardless of age. Implement mentoring programs that connect older and younger employees, allowing the exchange of knowledge and experience.
6. **Creating a physically accessible environment:** Adapt the physical workspace to be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. Provide comfortable work and rest spaces tailored to various needs.
7. **Encouraging mutual respect and understanding:** Organize team activities and events that allow employees from different age groups to get to know each other and share experiences. This can help build mutual trust and cooperation.

8. **Gathering feedback:** Regularly collect feedback from employees about their experiences and needs. This can include surveys, interviews, or open discussions. Use this information to improve policies and practices.
9. **Recognizing and rewarding inclusivity:** Establish a rewards system for teams or individuals who demonstrate exceptional inclusivity and diversity in their work. This can encourage all employees to become more engaged in creating a supportive environment.
10. **Maintaining transparency:** Maintain open and transparent communication about the organization's goals and progress in the areas of diversity and inclusion. Regularly update employees on achievements and challenges to ensure everyone is involved in the process.

2.2. Session 2

Implementation of inclusive policies

Implementing inclusive policies creates a positive work environment that supports diversity, increases productivity, and enhances employee well-being. The key to success lies in the commitment of management and the ongoing development of these policies:

1. **Diversity training:** Organize regular training sessions for employees on diversity and recognizing biases to improve intergenerational communication.
2. **Flexibility in working hours:** Introduce flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or adjustable hours, to meet the needs of all employees.
3. **Equal access to development opportunities:** Ensure equal chances for training and advancement with transparent criteria.
4. **Mentorship:** Establish intergenerational mentorship programs for the exchange of knowledge and experiences among employees.
5. **Anti-Discrimination policies:** Adopt clear policies against discrimination and harassment, along with procedures for reporting incidents.
6. **Inclusive work environment:** Adapt the physical workspace to be accessible to everyone, ensuring a welcoming atmosphere for all employees.
7. **Diversity data:** Conduct analyses of diversity data to identify areas for improvement.
8. **Open communication:** Promote a culture of open communication through regular meetings and discussion forums.
9. **Diversity in hiring:** Develop recruitment strategies that actively seek diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all candidates.
10. **Teamwork:** Organize team-building activities that encourage collaboration among employees of different age groups.

Inclusive recruitment processes

Here are some inclusive recruitment processes organizations can apply to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates and promote diversity:

1. **Clear and inclusive job descriptions:**

- **Job preparation:** Create job descriptions that clearly define responsibilities, requirements, and skills needed for the position, using neutral language that does not exclude certain groups.
- **Emphasizing diversity values:** Include a statement highlighting the commitment to diversity and inclusion within your organization.

2. **Wide promotion of open positions:**

- **Diverse advertising channels:** Post open positions on various platforms to reach a broader audience, including specialized job boards, social media, and organizations focused on diversity support.
- **Networking and communities:** Actively participate in events and networks that focus on diverse groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, or ethnic minorities.

3. **Training for recruitment teams:**

- **Bias education:** Organize training sessions for recruitment teams to recognize their own biases and develop skills for fairly evaluating candidates.
- **Inclusive hiring practices:** Teach teams about strategies that support inclusivity during the recruitment process.

4. **Structured interview process:**

- **Standardized interviews:** Establish standardized guidelines and questions for interviews to ensure all candidates receive equal opportunities and are evaluated based on the same criteria.
- **Diverse interview team:** Include team members from different backgrounds in the interview process to bring in various perspectives.

5. **Flexibility in application procedures:**

- **Different application formats:** Allow various methods of applying (e.g., online, paper, video applications) to facilitate the process for different candidates.
- **Test adjustments:** Provide tailored versions of tests or assessments, if needed, to reduce barriers for candidates with disabilities.

6. **Evaluating candidates based on abilities:**

- **Focus on skills:** Concentrate on relevant skills and abilities of candidates rather than traditional criteria such as education or previous work experience.
 - **Practical assessments:** Include practical tests or tasks relevant to the position to better evaluate candidates' capabilities.
7. **Support during the recruitment process:**
- **Mentorship:** Provide mentorship or support for candidates who may face difficulties during the recruitment process.
 - **Welcoming atmosphere:** Create a friendly and supportive environment during interviews so that candidates feel welcome.
8. **Evaluation and monitoring:**
- **Analysis of recruitment processes:** Regularly analyze the recruitment process to identify potential biases and opportunities for improvement.
 - **Collecting feedback:** Gather feedback from candidates about their experiences during the recruitment process and use this information for enhancement.
9. **Setting diversity goals:**
- **Quantitative goals:** Establish clear goals for hiring diverse candidates to track progress and accountability within the organization.
 - **Reporting results:** Regularly report on achievements related to diversity and inclusion within the organization.

These strategies not only promote an inclusive workplace but also contribute to overall organizational success by leveraging the strengths of a diverse workforce.

2.3. Session 3

Developing practices against discrimination

Developing practices against discrimination requires a comprehensive approach that includes policy, education, and monitoring results. Here are some key steps organizations can take to combat discrimination:

1. Adopting a clear anti-discrimination policy:

- **Define the policy:** Adopt a comprehensive policy that clearly defines discrimination and its forms (based on gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.). The policy should emphasize zero tolerance for discrimination.
- **Ensure accessibility:** This policy should be easily accessible to all employees, and understanding it should be ensured through training and workshops.

2. Training and educating employees:

- **Organize training sessions:** Regularly conduct training on diversity and inclusion to help employees understand the importance of these topics and recognize their own biases.
- **Education on legislation:** Inform employees about relevant laws and regulations regarding discrimination so they understand their rights and responsibilities.

3. Encouraging open communication:

- **Creating a safe environment:** Ensure that employees can freely express their opinions and concerns without fear of retaliation.
- **Open channels:** Introduce feedback channels where employees can report incidents of discrimination or express their opinions about the work environment.

4. Establishing procedures for reporting and addressing complaints:

- **Define procedures:** Develop clear procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination, including steps employees can take and whom they can contact.
- **Investigating complaints:** Ensure that all complaints are taken seriously and investigated impartially, with confidentiality for the reporter.

5. Monitoring and evaluation:

- **Data collection:** Regularly collect data on diversity and discrimination within the organization to identify potential issues.
- **Policy evaluation:** Periodically assess the effectiveness of existing policies and practices against discrimination and adjust them according to the needs of the organization and its employees.

6. Promoting diversity:

- **Incorporating diversity into hiring:** Actively seek diversity in the hiring process to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates.
- **Encouraging inclusive practices:** Create teams that include employees from different backgrounds and age groups to promote diversity.

7. Support and resources:

- **Provide resources:** Offer resources such as support groups, mentorship, and additional training for employees facing discrimination.
- **Management support:** Ensure that management supports and promotes anti-discrimination practices, setting an example for other employees.

8. Cultivating an inclusive culture:

- **Nurture a respectful culture:** Create an atmosphere where diversity is valued and all employees are respected. Organize events and activities that promote diversity and inclusion.
- **Rewarding inclusivity:** Recognize and reward teams or individuals who contribute to creating an inclusive work environment.

Developing practices against discrimination requires ongoing effort and commitment from all members of the organization. Through clearly defined policies, education, and open communication, organizations can create an environment that respects diversity and fosters inclusion, thereby reducing discrimination and improving the work environment for all employees.

Conclusion

At the end of this training, we would like to highlight several key messages we explored during the workshop:

1. **Awareness of biases:** We understood that biases against different age groups can significantly affect team and organizational dynamics. Awareness of these biases is the first step toward overcoming them.
2. **Intergenerational collaboration:** Connecting different age groups brings unique perspectives and skills that can enrich the team. The exchange of experiences and ideas is crucial for innovation and enhancing team cohesion.
3. **Communication:** Maintaining open and transparent communication between team members of different age groups is essential. Setting clear expectations and guidelines can help bridge differences in communication styles.
4. **Support and training:** Providing training and resources for all employees, regardless of age, can reduce biases and empower all team members.

5. **Involvement and engagement:** Actively involving all workers, especially older employees, in projects and initiatives fosters a culture of respect and mutual learning.

2.4. Case Study 1 - "InnovateTogether"

"InnovateTogether" is a modern company focused on developing technological solutions in the field of education. Their mission is to provide innovative tools and resources that enable more effective learning and teaching, using advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and online learning platforms. They pride themselves on their team of passionate professionals from different generations, which contributes to creativity and diverse perspectives in developing their products.

However, despite their success, they face challenges regarding intergenerational collaboration. Different work styles, communication methods, and values between older and younger employees often lead to misunderstandings and tensions. Older employees may feel excluded when younger colleagues overly focus on new technologies, while younger team members sometimes perceive older colleagues as conservative and resistant to change.

These challenges hinder team dynamics and may affect the innovation and efficiency of their work. Therefore, it is important to develop strategies that encourage intergenerational collaboration, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and ensure that all team members contribute to common goals.

Tasks for participants

1. **Pair work:**

Divide participants into small groups (2-3 members) and assign each group a task to develop a specific part of the scenario.

2. **Group tasks:**

- **Group 1:** Develop a plan for organizing introductory workshops. How will the workshops be structured? What topics should be covered?
- **Group 2:** Design how to form mixed teams and set goals for project work. How can it be ensured that all team members contribute?
- **Group 3:** Prepare a methodology for feedback sessions. How can all team members feel their contributions are valued?
- **Group 4:** Identify potential challenges in implementing these practices and develop strategies to overcome them.

3. **Presentation of solutions:**

After groups have completed their work, each group will present their solutions to the other participants. These presentations should be brief (5 minutes), with a possibility for questions.

2.5. Case Study 2 - Performance evaluation at "Iner&Son"

Sani Criner is a supervisor at "Iner&Son," where he faces an overwhelming workload and frequent demands from the HR department for implementing planned activities related to the employees he oversees. This week, alongside annual performance evaluations, Sani faces immense pressure as management insists on improving intergenerational collaboration within the team and requests a report on it.

Sani is overloaded with urgent requests for innovations in educational tools developed by older and younger employees. Additionally, HR has informed him that he is late in completing the performance evaluations. Instead of taking the time for each employee to assess them properly, Sani decides to save time by "simplifying" ratings for everyone, regardless of their actual performance.

As he checked whether he had entered ratings in all required fields, Sani thought about how he had given high ratings for the amount of work to everyone and communicated this. David, an older team member, often raised questions about decisions made, which created tension within the team. Instead of noting these comments and providing constructive criticism, Sani merely told him that he was nearing retirement and should not complain.

For the youngest employee, Robert, whom he knew to be slower and dependent on assistance from more experienced colleagues, Sani also gave the same ratings as the others, hoping to avoid hurting his confidence. However, this decision led to frustration among other team members who worked harder than Robert.

Sani also did not provide space for open discussions as he was rushed to deliver the report, causing employees to feel excluded and dissatisfied. Younger team members often felt overlooked as their suggestions and innovative ideas were not acknowledged, exacerbating communication issues between generations.

In the end, Sani was pleased to have completed the evaluations and wrote the report:

Report on Intergenerational Collaboration in the Team - Iner&Son

This report is written as a result of recent performance evaluations and management requests for improving intergenerational collaboration in our team. Through analyzing team dynamics and considering various employee perspectives, I have ensured that the evaluation process contributes to strengthening team cohesion and overall effectiveness.

Performance Evaluation

In the process of evaluating employee performance, I took the following steps to ensure a fair and transparent system:

- 1. Preparation and Planning: Before starting the evaluation, I organized a meeting with all team members to explain the process and gather their input on evaluation criteria. This practice allowed for open communication and encouraged the engagement of all employees.*
- 2. Individual Assessments: I dedicated time to each employee, analyzing their specific contributions, work habits, and interactions with colleagues. For example, I gave David a high rating for the amount of work because he often asked constructive questions that improved team dynamics.*
- 3. Constructive Feedback: I provided clear feedback to each team member, including development recommendations. I gave Robert guidance on how to improve efficiency while highlighting his positive contributions to the team.*

Team Cohesion and Intergenerational Collaboration

Aware of the importance of intergenerational collaboration, I undertook several initiatives to strengthen team cohesion:

- 1. Open Discussions: I practice regular team meetings where all members have the opportunity to share their ideas and comments. This practice has allowed younger members to feel included and valued.*
- 2. Feedback: I introduced a feedback system that allows team members to express their opinions about the work of others. This process has contributed to strengthening mutual trust and open communication, addressing issues in a timely manner and improving working relationships.*
- 3. Mentoring with Employees: I organized a mentoring program in which older team members provide support and advice to younger colleagues. This collaboration has facilitated the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as strengthening intergenerational bonds within the team.*

Implementing these requirements has resulted in improved intergenerational collaboration and overall team efficiency. Employees felt more included in the decision-making process, and team cohesion has significantly increased. I believe that continuing these practices will contribute to creating a positive work environment and help the team achieve its goals.

Respectfully,

Sani Criner

Supervisor, Iner&Son

Discussion questions for participants

1. What are the key challenges that highlight the need for a more proactive approach to improving intergenerational collaboration and communication within the team?

2. After the group discussion, each participant should devise and write a concrete plan for improving intergenerational collaboration, including key steps and responsibilities.
3. Presentation of Proposals: Finally, participants could present their concrete proposals for improving Sani's approach and discuss them.

2.6. Case Study 3 - Retaining quality staff

Given the current job market, recruitment and selection costs are becoming higher than ever for organizations. After facing the challenges of attracting and hiring talented individuals, no one wants to lose them. Staffing challenges have emphasized the need to retain valuable and high-quality human resources.

Applied Industrial Technologies (AIT), a company based in Cleveland, faced a significant problem with high employee turnover. The reason for this became clear after receiving the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey. It was revealed that both new hires and long-term employees were dissatisfied with career advancement opportunities, diminishing their motivation and leading them to consider seeking new challenges.

AIT took decisive steps to reduce their turnover. Specifically, they developed a program called **self-fulfillment** — a process that helps each individual reach their maximum potential — a core value of the company. According to Executive Director John Dannemiller, the company views this self-fulfillment program as important as salary and benefits in motivating talented employees. The results are striking. The company attributes its revenue doubling over the past eight years and a turnover rate below the industry average to the self-fulfillment program. Here is a summary of the self-fulfillment strategy at Applied Industrial:

- The company commits to 40 hours of training each year — a significant amount.
- Applied Industrial conducts regular leadership and personality testing. The results are used to identify areas for personal improvement and measure growth.
- The company offers a large library of books and reimburses employees for development costs.

Discussion questions:

1. **What additional actions could be taken to improve the program?**
2. **Now assume you are a manager in HR:**
 - a) How would you guide an employee who has been hired for a specific role but does not care about the self-improvement program? Until now, the employee has met the expectations but does not fulfill all the requirements of the job for which they were hired.

- b) What steps could you take to assess whether employees of all age groups will respond effectively to the self-fulfillment program? (Tip: Consider the characteristics of older and younger employees that may influence their reception of this type of program.)
3. **Now assume the job market is shifting toward increased supply. Should Applied Industrial continue to invest in its human resources through the self-fulfillment program? Explain your recommendation.**

Task for participants:

Design motivation programs tailored to the needs of older and younger employees, ensuring that each generation feels valued and motivated, thereby increasing their retention and engagement in the company.

2.7. Role-Play Scenario: "Developing practices against discrimination"

Objective: Participants will familiarize themselves with anti-discrimination practices through the simulation of situations in an organization. This scenario allows them to explore different approaches and solutions.

Roles:

1. **HR Manager:** Responsible for policy and training against discrimination.
2. **Employee 1 (young worker):** Feels that their contributions are undervalued due to their age.
3. **Employee 2 (older worker):** Faces prejudice due to their ethnic background.
4. **Team Manager:** Leads the team and must ensure an inclusive environment.
5. **Diversity Consultant:** Provides resources and support for training and development.

Scenario:

6. **Opening scene:** The HR manager explains the importance of developing practices against discrimination and presents the new policy. All employees are invited to training.
7. **Team meeting:**

- The team manager opens the meeting and invites all employees to share their opinions on the current work atmosphere.
- Employee 1 expresses concern that younger employees are not receiving enough advancement opportunities.
- Employee 2 shares their experiences of discrimination based on ethnic background.

8. HR Manager reacts:

- Encourages open communication and explains the procedures for reporting discrimination.
- Promises that all incidents will be taken seriously and investigated impartially.

9. Diversity training:

- The diversity consultant leads a training session on recognizing biases and the importance of inclusion.
- Participants engage in exercises that help them understand their own biases.

10. Policy evaluation:

- Participants discuss how the effectiveness of the new policy should be monitored and how to collect diversity data.
- The HR manager invites everyone to provide suggestions for additional resources and support for employees.

11. Conclusion:

- The team manager emphasizes the importance of cultivating respect and diversity.
- All participants agree to continue working on promoting an inclusive workplace and sharing experiences.

Post-Scenario discussion:

- How did participants feel in their roles?
- What did they learn about the barriers that exist in organizations regarding discrimination?
- What recommendations do they have for improving current anti-discrimination practices?

This scenario will allow participants to actively exchange opinions and experiences and develop strategies for implementing anti-discrimination practices in their work environment.

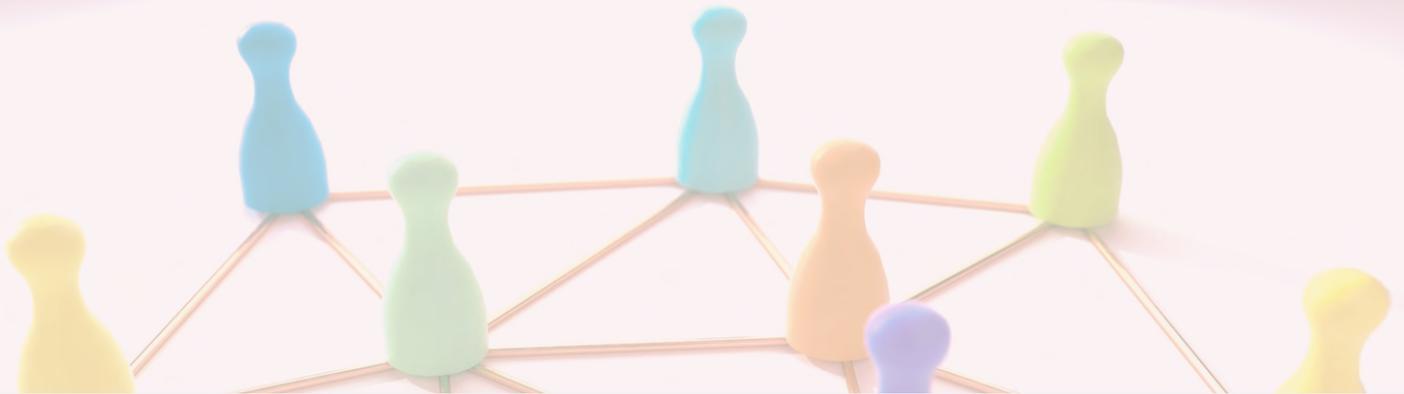
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 3

**Strategies for physical and mental
health management**

IntegrAGE Train the Trainer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

3. **Module 3 - Strategies for Physical and Mental Health Management, Guidelines for Workplace Ergonomics**

3.1. Introduction

Physical and mental health are both incredibly important, and they are deeply interconnected, playing a crucial role in overall well-being and quality of life. They are fundamental to living a happy, fulfilling, and productive life. Physical and mental health are closely intertwined and influence each other in powerful ways. Taking care of both is essential for achieving overall well-being.

Effective physical and mental health management involves integrating regular exercise, proper nutrition, restful sleep, and stress reduction techniques, while also paying attention to emotional well-being and building strong social connections. A balanced approach promotes resilience, enhances well-being, and helps manage daily life more effectively.

Workplace ergonomics refers to the science of designing a work environment and organizing tasks in a way that optimizes comfort, efficiency, and safety for workers. It involves adjusting workstations, tools, and tasks to fit the physical capabilities and limitations of employees, minimizing the risk of injury and promoting well-being.

The goal of ergonomics is to improve the interaction between workers and their environment, reducing strain on the body, improving posture, and preventing work-related injuries like musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), which are common from repetitive strain, poor posture, or long periods of sitting.

The learning outcomes of the module are:

- Improved knowledge about the significance of the physical and mental health;
- Improved knowledge about the main components about Physical Health Management;
- Improved knowledge about the main components about Mental Health Management;
- Improved knowledge about how to optimize workplace ergonomics for elderly people;
- Improved skills in practical exercises in the workplace.

Questions for discussion

- Do you know methods to improve your physical health?

- Do you know what the mental health covers?
- Are the physical and mental health in correlation?
- Could you show us some stretching exercises?

3.2. Theoretical knowledge

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing cognition, perception, and behaviour. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is a "state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community". It likewise determines how an individual handles stress, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making. Mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others.

From the perspectives of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and to create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Cultural differences, personal philosophy, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how one defines "mental **health**". Some early signs related to mental health difficulties are sleep irritation, lack of energy, lack of appetite, thinking of harming oneself or others, self-isolating (though introversion and isolation aren't necessarily unhealthy), and frequently zoning out.

Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

Traditionally **physical health** is defined has been defined as the absence of disease or serious illness. However, in recent years the medicine has changed this viewpoint. The World Health Organisation has expanded the definition of health beyond the scope of sickness and disease. The WHO now defines the health in the sense of overall well-being of a person, physically, mentally and socially. These aspects are intricately linked and the health of an individual encompasses all of them. Physical health involves many aspects of life such as: sleeping well, eating well, being physically active, having good hygiene, and getting enough relaxation.

Mental and physical health is fundamentally linked. There are multiple associations between mental health and chronic physical conditions that significantly impact people's quality of life, demands on health care and other publicly funded services, and generate consequences to society.

The social determinants of health impact both chronic physical conditions and mental health. Key aspects of prevention include increasing physical activity, access to nutritious foods, ensuring adequate income and fostering social inclusion and social support. This

creates opportunities to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors related to aspects of mental and physical health.

Understanding the links between mind and body is the first step in developing strategies to reduce the incidence of co-existing conditions and support those already living with mental illnesses and chronic physical conditions.

Ergonomics, also known as human factors or human factors engineering (HFE), is the application of psychological and physiological principles to the engineering and design of products, processes, and systems. Primary goals of human factors engineering are to reduce human error, increase productivity and system availability, and enhance safety, health and comfort with a specific focus on the interaction between the human and equipment.

The field is a combination of numerous disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, engineering, biomechanics, industrial design, physiology, anthropometry, interaction design, visual design, user experience, and user interface design. Human factors research employs methods and approaches from these and other knowledge disciplines to study human behavior and generate data relevant to previously stated goals. In studying and sharing learning on the design of equipment, devices, and processes that fit the human body and its cognitive abilities, the two terms, "human factors" and "ergonomics", are essentially synonymous as to their referent and meaning in current literature.

Human factors engineering is relevant in the design of such things as safe furniture and easy-to-use interfaces to machines and equipment. Proper ergonomic design is necessary to prevent repetitive strain injuries and other musculoskeletal disorders, which can develop over time and can lead to long-term disability. Human factors and ergonomics are concerned with the "fit" between the user, equipment, and environment or "fitting a job to a person" or "fitting the task to the man". It accounts for the user's capabilities and limitations in seeking to ensure that tasks, functions, information, and the environment suit that user.

To assess the fit between a person and the used technology, human factors specialists or ergonomists consider the job (activity) being done and the demands on the user; the equipment used (its size, shape, and how appropriate it is for the task), and the information used (how it is presented, accessed, and changed). Ergonomics draws on many disciplines in its study of humans and their environments, including anthropometry, biomechanics, mechanical engineering, industrial engineering, industrial design, information design, kinesiology, physiology, cognitive psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, and space psychology.

Ergonomics is a branch of occupational science. An **ergonomic workplace** is one that is optimally adapted to the needs of the person working there. The aim is to protect people at work from physical damage, even when they are performing their work over a long period of time. The focus is on improving the human-machine interface.

This includes the objects themselves, such as work table, work chair, computer, keyboard, screen as well as computer and software surfaces and the environment in the

broadest sense. Light, background noise, room design, working atmosphere contribute significantly to mental and physical well-being.

3.3. Case studies/good practices

3.3.1. Case study 1: General Electric

- **Employee Wellness and Aging Programs:** GE has long been committed to employee health. Their "**Health Ahead**" program emphasizes overall well-being, including physical fitness, nutrition, mental health, and stress management.
- **Chronic Disease Management:** GE's wellness program includes health risk assessments, on-site health services, and support for chronic disease management—areas particularly relevant for older employees.

3.3.2. Case study 2: De-stressing activities (Wegmans)

Reduce employee stress and boost engagement by offering classes in yoga, meditation, tai chi, or similar relaxation techniques. While you may not intentionally stress your employees out, there are surely times their job causes tension and stress. Show your employees you recognize the stressful times and are willing to help out by prioritizing mindfulness in the workplace.

Employees who can deal with stress effectively are proven to be among the best team members. Set your staff up for success by helping them learn to relax and manage tension.

Wegmans makes our list again with its on-site health and wellness screenings and customized yoga plans available to all team members. Stressed-out workers are not the best employees, and Wegmans decided to tackle the problem head-on. Their customized yoga programs give team members the tools and techniques to relax, decompress, and even get healthier.

3.3.3. Case study 3: Johnson & Johnson

- **Health and Wellness Initiatives:** Johnson & Johnson's "**Healthy & Me**" program supports employees of all ages, including those nearing retirement, by offering physical fitness programs, health assessments, stress management, and mental health support.
- **On-Site Health Centers:** The company provides on-site health services that cater to both general wellness and chronic disease management, with personalized care plans and telehealth options for those who need more flexible healthcare access.
- **Retirement Planning:** They also offer resources for financial planning, pension schemes, and preparing for retirement, crucial for aging employees.

3.3.4. Case study 4: Unilever

- **Wellbeing Programs for All Ages:** Unilever's global wellness program, "**Lamplighter**", supports mental and physical well-being by offering fitness classes, mindfulness training, and health checks. It's designed to address the different needs of employees at various life stages, including older workers.
- **Flexible Work and Retirement Support:** They provide older employees with flexible working options and extensive retirement planning resources, ensuring a smooth transition from working life to retirement.

3.4. Strategies/Practical tips and advises

3.4.1. Strategies/Practical tips and advises:

The topic related to management of the physical and mental health effectively requires a combination of strategies that address both aspects in a holistic manner. The key strategies include:

Physical Health Management

- Regular Exercise
 - **Aerobic Activity:** Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise weekly.
 - **Strength Training:** Include muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week.
 - **Flexibility and Balance:** Incorporate activities like yoga or tai chi to improve flexibility and balance.
- Healthy Nutrition
 - **Balanced Diet:** Consume a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats.
 - **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Limit sugary drinks and alcohol.
 - **Mindful Eating:** Eat with awareness, listening to your body's hunger and fullness cues.
- Sleep Hygiene
 - **Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.

- Sleep Environment: Make your bedroom conducive to sleep—cool, dark, and quiet.
- Pre-Sleep Routine: Establish a relaxing routine before bed, like reading or taking a warm bath.
- o Preventive Healthcare
 - Regular Checkups: Visit your healthcare provider for routine screenings and vaccinations.
 - Stress Management: Engage in activities like deep breathing, meditation, or hobbies that help reduce stress.
 - Avoid Harmful Behaviors: Don't smoke, limit alcohol consumption, and avoid drug use.

3.4.2. Mental Health Management

- o Mindfulness and Meditation
 - Mindfulness Practices: Incorporate mindfulness techniques into your daily routine to stay present and reduce stress.
 - Meditation: Practice meditation regularly to enhance emotional stability and focus.
- o Stress Management
 - Identify Stressors: Recognize common stressors in your life, such as work, relationships, or financial issues, and find ways to manage them.
 - Coping Strategies: Use healthy coping mechanisms such as exercise, hobbies, talking to loved ones, or journaling to handle stress.
 - Relaxation Techniques: Practice deep breathing, yoga, or listening to calming music to reduce tension and promote relaxation.
- o Therapy and Counseling
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Consider CBT for managing anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.
 - Support Groups: Join support groups for shared experiences and mutual support.
- o Social Connections
 - Build Relationships: Maintain strong connections with family, friends, and community to combat loneliness and boost mental well-being.
 - Set Boundaries: Learn to say no and set boundaries to protect your mental health.
- o Mindful Technology Use

- Digital Detox: Take regular breaks from screens, especially social media, to avoid burnout and overstimulation.
- Limit News Consumption: Be selective about news sources and limit exposure to distressing news.
- o Mental Health Education
 - Learn Coping Skills: Educate yourself about stress management, emotional regulation, and resilience.
 - Recognize Warning Signs: Be aware of symptoms of mental health issues, such as persistent sadness, anxiety, or changes in behaviour, and seek help when needed.
- o Work-Life Balance
 - Time Management: Prioritize tasks and delegate where possible to reduce overwork and burnout.
 - Boundaries: Set clear boundaries between work and personal time, ensuring you have sufficient time for rest and self-care.
 - Leisure and Hobbies: Engage in activities outside of work that bring joy, such as hobbies, sports, or spending time with loved ones.

3.4.3. Ergonomics of the workplace - guidelines

Workplace ergonomics focuses on designing a workspace that promotes comfort, efficiency, and safety, reducing the risk of strain and injury. Here are key guidelines for optimizing workplace ergonomics for elderly people:

- o **Proper Chair Setup**
 - Adjustable Height: Ensure the chair is height-adjustable so that your feet rest flat on the floor, and your thighs are parallel to the ground.
 - Lumbar Support: The chair should have good lumbar support to maintain the natural curve of your lower spine.
 - Seat Depth: There should be a small gap (about 2-4 inches) between the back of your knees and the edge of the seat.
 - Armrests: Adjust armrests so that your arms rest comfortably with your shoulders relaxed, and your elbows form a 90-degree angle.
- o **Desk and Work Surface**
 - Height: The desk height should allow your forearms to be parallel to the ground when typing, with your wrists straight and relaxed.

- Space: Ensure there is enough space under the desk for your legs to move freely. Avoid storing items that could restrict leg movement.
- **Monitor Placement**
 - Distance: Place the monitor about an arm's length away from your eyes (20-30 inches).
 - Height: The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level, so you don't have to tilt your head up or down.
 - Angle: Tilt the monitor back 10-20 degrees for optimal viewing, reducing glare and strain on your neck.
- **Keyboard and Mouse Position**
 - Keyboard: Place the keyboard directly in front of you, allowing your elbows to be at a 90-degree angle when typing. Keep your wrists straight and relaxed.
 - Mouse: Position the mouse close to the keyboard, and use your whole arm, not just your wrist, to move it. Consider using an ergonomic mouse or a mouse pad with wrist support.
 - Avoid Reaching: Keep frequently used items like the mouse, phone, or notepad within easy reach to minimize excessive stretching or reaching.
- **Posture and Movement**
 - Neutral Posture: Maintain a neutral posture with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, and feet flat on the floor. Avoid slouching or leaning forward.
 - Frequent Breaks: Take short breaks every 30-60 minutes to stand, stretch, and move around. This reduces strain on muscles and improves circulation.
 - Micro-Movements: Incorporate micro-movements like stretching your arms, rotating your neck, or shifting your sitting position to prevent stiffness.
- **Lighting and Glare Control**
 - Lighting: Ensure adequate lighting to reduce eye strain, ideally with a combination of natural and artificial light. Avoid overhead lighting that creates shadows or glare.
 - Monitor Glare: Position your monitor perpendicular to windows or light sources to minimize glare. Use an anti-glare screen if necessary.
- **Document Placement**

- Document Holder: Use a document holder placed at the same height and distance as the monitor to reduce neck strain from looking up and down frequently.
- Positioning: Place documents close to the monitor, at eye level, to maintain a consistent line of sight.
- **Phone Ergonomics**
 - Hands-Free Options: Use a headset or speakerphone to avoid cradling the phone between your ear and shoulder, which can strain your neck and shoulders.
 - Position: Keep the phone within easy reach to avoid excessive stretching.
- **Ergonomic Accessories**
 - Footrest: Use a footrest if your feet don't rest flat on the floor to reduce pressure on your lower back and legs.
 - Ergonomic Keyboard/Mouse: Consider ergonomic keyboards and mice designed to reduce strain and improve comfort.
 - Wrist Rests: Use wrist rests for the keyboard and mouse to maintain a neutral wrist position.
- **Mental Ergonomics**
 - Stress Reduction: Organize your workspace to minimize clutter and create a calm environment, which can reduce mental stress.
 - Task Management: Prioritize tasks and take regular mental breaks to avoid cognitive overload and maintain focus.
- **Personalized Adjustments**
 - Custom Fit: Adjust the ergonomic setup to fit your specific body dimensions and work habits. What works for one person may not work for another.
 - Periodic Review: Regularly review and adjust your workstation setup as needed, especially if your work tasks or environment change.
- **Training and Awareness**
 - Ergonomics Training: Participate in workplace ergonomics training sessions to learn proper techniques and best practices.
 - Awareness: Stay aware of your posture and ergonomics throughout the day, making adjustments as necessary to maintain comfort.

3.4.4. Practical exercises

<p>CALF RISES</p> <p>Stand up from your chair and place feet hip width apart. Slowly move up onto your tip toes and slowly back to the ground. Repeat up to 15 times</p>	
<p>LEG RAISES</p> <p>While seated, straighten one or both legs and hold in place for 5 seconds. Lower the leg(s) back to the ground without letting the feet touch the floor. Repeat (alternating legs if raising them separately)</p>	
<p>WALL SQUATS</p> <p>Standing with your back against the wall, bend the knees and slide your back down the wall until the thighs are parallel to the floor.</p>	
<p>PRAY</p> <p>Sitting upright place the palms of your hands together in front of your body to make a pray position. Ensure your elbows are at 90 degrees and in front of the body. Slowly move the hands downwards and feel a stretch under the wrist. Hold for 10 seconds then release.</p> <p>Reverse pray: place back of your hands together and move the hands upwards.</p>	

<p>HANDSHAKE</p> <p>Sitting up and with feet flat on the floor, clasp hands together as if giving yourself a handshake (with one thumb pointing to the floor and the other pointing to the ceiling). Then pull! Resist the motion of both arms (you should definitely feel this in those biceps).</p>	
<p>SHOULDER SHRUG</p> <p>Simply raise both shoulders up toward the ears, hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat for 15 reps.</p>	
<p>HELLO</p> <p>Using a hairband or elastic band, place the band around the fingers and stretch out the band using the strength of your fingers. Open your hand as wide as possible against the resistance to wave 'Hello'.</p>	
<p>SHOULDER SQUEEZE</p> <p>Pull back the shoulders until the shoulder blades are pinched together. Pretend you're holding a pencil between the shoulder blades (or try it for real!). Hold for 5-10 seconds, release. Repeat for 15 reps.</p>	

ISOMETRIC NECK

Sitting upright in your chair, place your hand over your forehead. Push against your hand with your head and use your hand to resist this push. You are creating an isometric contraction of your neck muscles which will promote blood flow and prevent stiffness from when sitting for prolonged periods.

You can do the same movement by placing your hand at the back of your head and repeating the resistance movement. Hold the contraction for 5-10 seconds before releasing.



SPINAL STRETCH

Place your hands behind your neck to open out your chest. Slowly lean backwards to create a curve in the middle of your spine. Hold the stretch for 5-10 seconds before returning to an upright position



PELVIC ROTATION

Sit slightly forward in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and hip width apart. Place your hands on your thighs.

Rotate your upper body to the right and move your left hand down the left thigh.

Hold the end range of movement for 5 seconds before returning to the start front facing position. Repeat the same turning to the left and moving the right hand down the right thigh.



CHAIR TWIST

Sit sideways on the chair with the back of the chair on the right or left. Rotate your upper body to hold the back of the chair for 10 seconds.



3.5. Conclusion

Managing both physical and mental health is essential because they are deeply interconnected, and both are necessary for achieving overall well-being. Focusing on both areas allows individuals to prevent disease, manage stress, improve quality of life, and build resilience to life's challenges. Optimal physical and mental health together lead to longer, more fulfilling lives with greater emotional balance and physical vitality.

By other side good ergonomics in the workplace is essential for maintaining both physical and mental health. By addressing the physical demands of work, such as proper posture, workstation setup, and movement, ergonomics helps prevent physical pain and injury. Simultaneously, it reduces stress, mental fatigue, and cognitive strain, leading to a healthier, more productive, and more mentally resilient workforce. By investing in ergonomic solutions, employers can create healthier work environments that promote both physical and mental well-being, ultimately leading to better productivity and lower absenteeism.

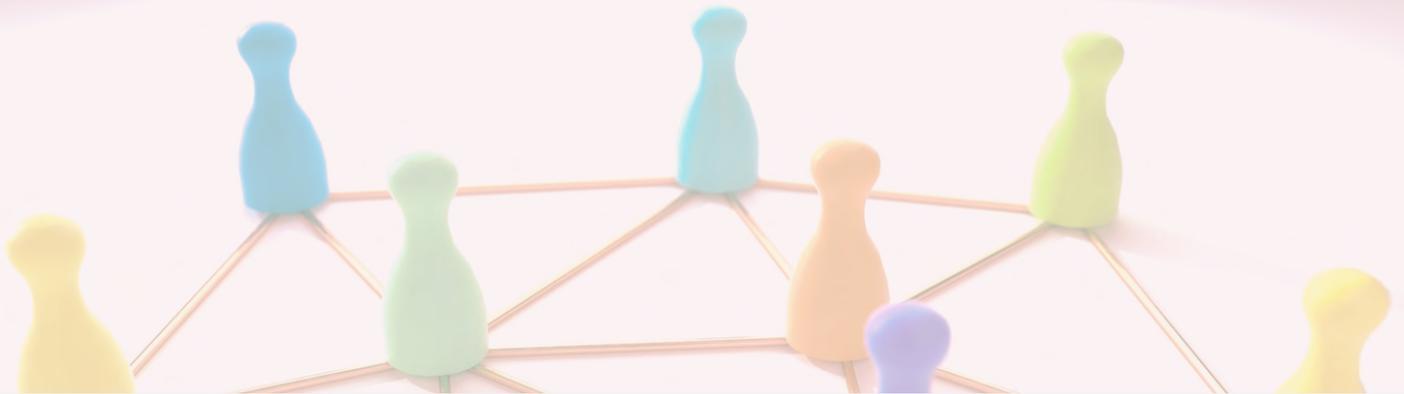
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 4

Mentoring and reverse mentoring in the workplace

IntegrAGE **Train the Trainer**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

4. Module 4 – Methodological guide: The educational module: Mentoring and reverse mentoring in the workplace



4.1. Introduction to mentoring and reverse mentoring

Behind every successful person is someone who helped them achieve their goals. Many well-known and influential personalities had mentors who were themselves influential and famous. Mentoring is a term often encountered in both informal and formal education contexts. However, it has gained significance in companies and international corporations in recent years as an excellent tool for employee professional development and unlocking their potential. One of its key benefits is that it helps companies transfer "know-how" and knowledge from generation to generation.

Mentoring and reverse mentoring help bridge generational gaps in the workplace. They support employees' personal and professional growth, which in turn enhances productivity and innovation. These programs create a harmonious environment for all generations.

Mentoring is a "professional partnership" where a senior and more experienced colleague helps a younger and less experienced colleague grow both professionally and personally. In reverse mentoring, these roles are reversed. Mentoring and reverse mentoring are essential tools for employee development and the organisation. A well-executed mentoring process increases team efficiency, improves interpersonal relationships, and fosters a culture of continuous learning.

Reverse mentoring and mentoring are key tools for supporting intergenerational collaboration in the workplace. These techniques not only help in sharing professional expertise between older and younger employees but also help overcome age-related stereotypes. They allow older employees to stay relevant and adapt to technological and cultural changes by learning from younger colleagues. On the other hand, younger employees benefit from the valuable life and work experience of older mentors.

In the broader context of organisational goals, reverse mentoring and mentoring contribute to creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment where employees help each other improve their skills, thus supporting their professional growth and increasing the overall effectiveness of teams.

This methodological guide was created as a supportive resource for trainers who will work on mentoring and reverse mentoring in companies and organisations, with a special focus on working with employees aged 55+.

4.2. SMART Goals of the Trainer curriculum

In this methodological Trainer Curriculum guide, are settled clear and actionable goals essential for guiding participants effectively and ensuring successful outcomes. One powerful framework for defining such goals is the SMART method. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—a formula that helps trainers establish clear objectives and measure progress in a structured way. By implementing these two SMART strategies, trainers can tailor their approach based on the specific needs of their trainees, ensuring that each session not only meets immediate objectives but also supports sustainable growth and professional development.

Goal 1: Improve understanding of the roles of the mentor and mentee in mentoring relationships

- ✓ **S (Specific):** Training participants will be able to clearly distinguish between the roles of the mentor and mentee and identify their key responsibilities.
- ✓ **M (Measurable):** Understanding will be assessed through a final test, where at least 80% of participants achieve a minimum of 85% correct answers on questions related to these roles.
- ✓ **A (Achievable):** The goal is attainable using practical examples and simulations during the training.
- ✓ **R (Relevant):** Understanding these roles is crucial for building effective mentoring relationships within the organisation.
- ✓ **T (Time-bound):** The goal will be achieved by the end of the two-day educational module.

Goal 2: Increase the number of participants who practically apply the principles of mentoring and reverse mentoring and improve the effectiveness of mentoring programs in the organisation

- ✓ **S (Specific):** Participants will be able to identify areas where they can apply mentoring and reverse mentoring and will develop a proposal for a new or improved mentoring program for their organization.
- ✓ **M (Measurable):** Within three months after the training, at least 80% of participants will begin utilizing reverse mentoring at work and provide feedback on its benefits, with 90% of proposals implemented within six months.
- ✓ **A (Achievable):** The goal is attainable through clear instructions, training sessions, practical exercises, ongoing support, and supporting documentation provided during the training.

- ✓ **R (Relevant):** Reverse mentoring and effective mentoring programs are important for transferring skills between generations, increasing employee satisfaction, and supporting their development, particularly in technology.
- ✓ **T (Time-bound):** The goal will be monitored over three months after the training concludes

4.3. Definition of Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring

In multigenerational workplaces, mentoring and reverse mentoring have become vital tools not only for promoting collaboration but also for fostering professional and personal growth. Mentoring is a process in which a more experienced individual (the "mentor") provides guidance, support, advice, and expert knowledge to a less experienced colleague (the "mentee"). This relationship is built on trust, respect, and open communication, with the primary goal of developing the mentee's personal and professional skills. Mentoring can take place formally — during work hours at the workplace — or informally, where mentor and mentee meet outside of work based on a personal agreement.

The main objective of mentoring is to help the mentee achieve their goals, overcome challenges, and progress in their career or personal growth. Mentoring is highly beneficial not only for the mentee but also for the mentors themselves. For older employees, mentoring provides an opportunity to maintain an active role in the organisation, share their professional knowledge, and contribute to the development of future generations. Through mentoring, senior employees can strengthen their position within the team, gain new perspectives, and find fulfilment in passing on their expertise.

In reverse mentoring, younger employees mentor their senior colleagues, particularly in areas like innovation, digital skills, and current work trends. This process is mutually beneficial. Senior employees acquire new skills and knowledge, while younger employees gain confidence and a sense of responsibility for the development of their colleagues.

Effective intergenerational collaboration is crucial for addressing the challenges of the modern workplace. Older employees bring problem-solving experience and analytical skills to the team, while younger employees contribute fresh ideas, agility, and digital expertise. Combining these strengths can significantly improve productivity and innovation within the team.

Mentoring and reverse mentoring are tools that not only bridge generational gaps but also promote a culture of continuous learning and mutual respect. For older employees, these approaches offer a way to maintain their sense of relevance and actively shape the company's future. For younger employees, they provide an opportunity to develop leadership skills and play a proactive role in team development.

4.3.1. Who is a Mentor and a Mentee

"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."¹

Oprah Winfrey

A mentor is an individual with extensive experience who can effectively guide and support a mentee.

A mentee is a learner who seeks to grow and acquire new knowledge. An ideal mentor should not only be an expert in their field but also empathetic and capable of motivating their mentee.

4.4. Benefits of Mentoring and Reverse mentoring

4.4.1. Benefits of Mentoring for the organisation

Mentoring and reverse mentoring are beneficial for the organisation and all involved parties. They promote creation of a harmonious and productive work environment where every employee feels valued and motivated. These tools not only support the personal growth of individuals but also contribute to the overall success of the organisation, which can effectively leverage the potential of all its employees, regardless of age.

Mentoring helps the mentee develop professional skills, gain confidence, and facilitate career growth. For the mentor, it enhances leadership abilities, improves communication skills, and enriches their personal experience. Through mentoring, organisations increase employee engagement, enhance teamwork, and help retain talent.

Activity

- Describe the main benefits of mentoring for the mentor and mentee.
- How do these benefits contribute to the success of the organisation?

4.4.2. Advantages and challenges of Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring where younger employees mentor older colleagues, offers numerous benefits for both parties, along with some challenges that need to be addressed. Reverse mentoring creates an opportunity for mutual knowledge exchange. Younger employees can assist their older colleagues in acquiring digital skills or better understanding modern technologies, such as social media or project management tools. Conversely, older employees

¹ Together Platform blog, Inspirational Quotes About Mentors by John Crosby. Available online at Together Platform's official website.

can impart valuable experiences, business strategies, and insights into corporate culture to younger employees.

Reverse mentoring helps shift perceptions of individual generations. Older employees may come to appreciate the innovative approaches of the younger generation, while younger workers can learn more about traditional practices and values. This form of mentoring promotes equality and inclusion in the workplace by allowing both parties to feel engaged and valued, regardless of age. Through the sharing of diverse perspectives and problem-solving approaches, all employees become more adaptable and better prepared to face change.

Activity

- Explain how mentoring and reverse mentoring can bridge generational gaps in the workplace. Provide examples of how older and younger employees can benefit from these programs.

4.5. Building effective relationships between mentor and mentee

4.5.1. Importance of trust, respect, and open communication

Trust, respect, and open communication are the foundational pillars of successful mentoring and reverse mentoring. Without these elements, an effective relationship between the mentor and mentee cannot develop, which may weaken the entire process of learning and collaboration. Both participants should feel free to express their opinions, thoughts, and concerns without fear of criticism or humiliation. Mutual trust enables open dialogue and leads to a better understanding of personal and professional needs, thus enhancing the effectiveness of mentoring.

Regardless of age or level of experience, both participants must respect one another, acknowledging their perspectives and approaches to problem-solving. This mutual respect eliminates biases and stereotypes that may arise from generational differences.

Mentoring and reverse mentoring require an active exchange of information, sincere feedback, and a willingness to listen. Open communication means that all parties can express themselves freely, discuss issues, and seek common solutions. By establishing a relationship based on trust, respect, and open communication, both mentor and mentee can foster a healthy collaboration that positively impacts the personal and professional development of both parties.

4.5.2. Key roles and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee

Mentor:

- Guides the mentee, offering advice and support in achieving their goals.
- Share their expertise and insights, enriching the mentee's learning experience.
- Helps the mentee develop key skills essential for their professional and personal growth.
- Offers constructive feedback that aids the mentee in improving their abilities.
- Creates a safe environment based on trust and openness, allowing the mentee to share concerns and questions.
- Encourages the mentee's independence and decision-making, helping to build their confidence.

Mentee:

- Actively participates in the mentoring program and meetings, taking the initiative to ask questions.
- Defines their goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship.
- Accepts feedback and works on their weaknesses.
- Regularly update the mentor on their progress and achieved goals.
- Takes responsibility for their development and seeks learning opportunities.
- Respects the mentor's time and plans meetings with adequate notice.

4.5.3. Key elements of a successful mentoring programs

1. The key to a successful mentoring program is having **clearly defined goals**. Both the mentor and mentee should have clear expectations regarding what they want to achieve, along with a plan of action to reach those goals.
2. **Open and regular communication** – successful mentoring requires open, effective, and regular communication. The mentor must be able to convey their experiences and advice clearly, while the mentee should be ready to ask questions, listen, and respond.
3. Each mentee is unique, so the mentor needs to **adapt their approach to meet the mentee's needs**. **Flexibility** in approach and a willingness to change strategies are keys to successful mentoring.
4. The mentor should have **sufficient expertise and experience** in the area they are mentoring. This enables them to provide valuable advice, share best practices, and offer relevant problem-solving solutions.
5. The mentor should be **empathetic**, capable of understanding the mentee's challenges and providing support. Empathy helps build trust and creates an environment where the mentee feels safe and motivated.
6. Both the mentor and mentee should be **dedicated to the mentoring process**. They should regularly connect, diligently fulfil agreed-upon tasks, and take responsibility for their personal growth.
7. Good mentoring involves ongoing giving and receiving of **feedback**. The mentee should be open to criticism and ready to grow from it, while the mentor should provide constructive feedback that encourages improvement.
8. Effective mentoring is not a one-time activity but a **long-term process**. Successful mentoring relationships often develop over an extended period, allowing for a deeper understanding and development of the mentee's abilities.

9. Good mentoring is a **reciprocal process** where both the mentee and mentor learn and grow. This relationship should be dynamic, where both partners gain new perspectives and skills.

4.5.4. Skills required for effective mentoring

A mentor should help the mentee develop essential skills and abilities. This can include offering practical advice, training, or access to new opportunities that will assist the mentee in achieving their goals:

1. **Active listening:** The ability to listen carefully and understand the mentee's needs, concerns, and goals. This means focusing completely on the mentee, not just hearing their words but also picking up on their emotions and non-verbal cues. The mentor should maintain eye contact, ask open-ended questions, and summarise or restate key points to confirm understanding.
2. **Effective communication:** Clear and concise communication skills for conveying information and feedback.
3. **Empathy:** The mentor should be able to put themselves in the mentee's position, understanding their challenges and offering support. Empathy helps build trust and creates an environment where the mentee feels safe and motivated.
4. **Patience:** Taking the time to guide the mentee through challenges without frustration or haste.
5. **Flexibility:** Adapting mentoring styles and approaches based on the individual learning style and needs of the mentee.
6. **Problem-solving assistance:** Helping the mentee navigate problems and challenges effectively.
7. **Goal setting:** Knowing how to establish realistic and achievable goals that support the mentee's personal and professional development.
8. **Knowledge sharing:** Providing valuable insights and experiences to enhance the mentee's learning.
9. **Motivational skills:** Encouraging and inspiring the mentee to achieve their goals.
10. **Cultural sensitivity:** Being aware of and respecting diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and generational differences to foster an inclusive mentoring environment.

Activity

- What are the most important skills and abilities a mentor should have?
- Why are soft skills just as important as professional expertise?

Role-Playing:

Practical exercises to simulate workplace situations, such as a potential disagreement between the mentor and the mentee.

The mentor must also be capable of adapting to generational differences, which means understanding and respecting the different expectations, values, and work styles of various generations. Within mentoring, the mentor may encounter four generations in the workplace, each with its approach to work.

4.5.5. Adaptation to generational differences

Mentoring is an excellent tool for improving collaboration among different generations in the workplace. Older employees can share their experiences, knowledge, and work habits with younger colleagues, while the younger generation can bring fresh perspectives, technologies, and trends to work processes. This reciprocal relationship helps bridge generational gaps, fosters mutual understanding and respect, and leads to stronger team collaboration. Intergenerational mentoring also reduces biases and stereotypes between generations, creating a more open and effective work culture.

Implementing mentoring programs in companies has become a key measure for enhancing team management, establishing more effective communication, and creating a motivating environment. In modern organizations, several generations often work together—from experienced Baby Boomers to dynamic Generation Z members. Each of these generations brings a unique set of values, experiences, and approaches to work. Because each generation has been influenced by specific historical events, technological advancements, and ongoing cultural changes that have shaped their worldview and work ethic, different age groups also exhibit varied attitudes, work habits, and communication styles. These generational differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, but with proper guidance, they can be transformed into advantages that strengthen the entire team.

- **Baby Boomers² (born 1946 – 1964):** This generation is often characterized by a strong work ethic, loyalty to employers, and a preference for hierarchical structures.
- **Generácia X³ (born 1965 – 1980):** Known for their independence, pragmatism, and adaptability to change.
- **Mileniáli⁴ (born 1981 – 1996):** The digital generation, they emphasise work-life balance, open communication, and quick feedback

² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/baby-boomers>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-X>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/millennial>

- **Generácia Z⁵ (born 1997 and later):** The youngest in the workplace, they are accustomed to constant digital connectivity, tend toward innovation, and seek work that has meaning.

A mentor should be able to adapt their mentoring style to meet the needs of each generation, fostering effective communication and addressing any misunderstandings that arise from these differences.

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Generation-Z>

4.6. Mentoring process

1. Setting Goals and Expectations

The first step in the mentoring process is defining clear goals for the mentoring relationship—SMART goals. The topic, subject, and purpose of the mentoring are defined through agreement between the mentor, mentee, and supervisor. The mentor and mentee need to discuss what they want to achieve and what the expectations are for both parties. These goals can focus on personal development, acquiring new skills, career advancement, or addressing specific challenges.

Activity

- Identify an area in which you would like to improve.

2. Planning and Implementing Mentoring Programs

This involves creating a clear framework and objectives for the program that supports the mentee's professional and personal growth. A crucial part is identifying suitable mentors and mentees who have the potential to create effective partnerships.

3. Choosing the Right Mentor

A mentor should not only be an expert in their field but also be willing to invest time and energy into the mentee's development. Both the mentor and mentee should be committed to the mentoring process. They should regularly communicate, diligently fulfil agreed-upon tasks, and take responsibility for their personal growth.

Good mentoring involves continuous feedback. The mentee should be open to criticism and prepared to grow from it, while the mentor should provide constructive feedback that encourages improvement.

Activity

- What kind of mentor would you choose to help you?
- What strengths and approaches should they have?

4. Building Trust and Developing the Relationship

A successful mentoring relationship is founded on mutual respect and trust. Both the mentor and mentee should respect each other's opinions, experiences, and personal boundaries. Trust enables open and honest communication.

5. Planning meetings

Regular meetings are essential for sustaining the momentum of the mentoring relationship. The mentor and mentee should agree on the meeting frequency and format, whether in person, online, or through other means. Each meeting should have a clear agenda to help accomplish the established goals.

6. Providing feedback

Feedback is a critical component of mentoring. The mentor should provide constructive feedback that helps the mentee grow and improve. It is equally important for the mentee to know how to receive feedback and use it to their advantage.

A successful mentor should be able to provide balanced and motivating constructive feedback. Effective feedback should be focused on specific behaviours or performance, not on personality. It should be well-timed and provided immediately after an event or situation to be relevant and relatable to the mentee. Balanced feedback should address not only areas needing improvement but also the mentee's strengths, fostering a positive approach to learning and development. Supportive feedback should be delivered in a manner that strengthens the mentee's confidence and motivates them to continue growing.

Activity

- Explain the importance of feedback in the mentoring process.
- How should a mentor provide constructive feedback, and what role does the mentee play in receiving it?

Activity: What a Mentor Does and Does Not Do (Yes – No)

- Observe and provides constructive feedback.
- Encourages and supports the mentee in their development.
- Teaches the mentee how to use mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Makes decisions for the mentee.
- Avoids criticism but provides positive feedback.
- Criticizes.
- Provides solutions without discussion.

7. Monitoring progress

The mentor and mentee should regularly evaluate progress toward achieving their set goals. This process includes reviewing and adjusting goals as needed and updating the mentoring plan to align with the mentee's evolving needs and circumstances.

Activity

- Worksheet to help structure the ongoing evaluation process and ensure that both parties remain aligned on goals and expectations.

8. Ending the Mentoring Relationship and Follow-Up Support

When the established goals have been achieved or when the mentoring relationship has developed to the point where it no longer requires active guidance, it is time for a formal termination of the relationship. This termination should be accompanied by reflection on the achieved goals. Even after the formal conclusion of the mentoring relationship, the mentor may continue to provide occasional support, which may include occasional consultations, advice, or networking opportunities.

Activity

- Propose an online questionnaire or other tool to measure the effectiveness of mentoring.

4.7. Measuring the success of mentoring

Measuring the success of mentoring is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness and achieving set goals. Various methods and assessment tools can be used to track progress and outcomes. The success of mentoring should be evaluated based on SMART goals, which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives. Regular feedback should be gathered from mentors and mentees through questionnaires or evaluation interviews. These tools should assess satisfaction with meetings, the quality of interaction, and the achievement of goals. Mentees should have the opportunity to regularly evaluate their progress in the skills they are developing within the mentoring framework.

Evaluation forms can help track how mentees are progressing and assist in identifying obstacles or areas requiring further improvement. Qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups with the involved parties, can also be beneficial for gaining a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of mentoring.

It is also recommended to evaluate the sustainability of results, such as whether mentees continue to use the skills they have learned after the mentoring has concluded.

4.8. Conclusion

Mentoring and reverse mentoring are immensely important tools for supporting both personal and professional growth in modern workplaces. They help bridge generational differences, promote a culture of continuous learning, and enhance team collaboration. Older employees can share their experiences and know-how through mentoring, maintaining their relevance and actively contributing to shaping the future of the organization. On the other hand, younger employees benefit from leadership skills and the opportunity to develop their professional and digital competencies, contributing to innovation and dynamism within the team.

Well-designed mentoring programs allow employees of all generations to gain new perspectives and skills that lead to increased productivity, motivation, and satisfaction. Collaboration between generations also contributes to a more inclusive work environment where every employee feels valued, regardless of age.

By implementing mentoring and reverse mentoring, organisations can better navigate the challenges of today's labour market, support the long-term professional development of their employees, and strengthen an internal culture of continuous learning and collaboration. This module provides trainers with examples of best practices, tools, and knowledge needed to effectively lead such programs, considering the specifics of working with older employees (55+), which is a key aspect for ensuring the success of these initiatives.

The overall benefit lies not only in the growth of individuals but also in the overall strengthening of the organisation, which can effectively harness the potential of all its employees and foster a healthy and productive work culture.



IntegrAGE PROJECT

4.9. Role-Playing Scenarios

Scenario 1: Addressing Workplace Challenges

Objective: Improve the mentor's ability to provide effective guidance and support to the mentee in solving workplace problems.

Scenario:

Participants: 2 people (mentor and mentee).

Situation:

The mentee (a younger employee) is facing a lack of confidence when presenting in front of the team. They have experience in content creation, but stress prevents them from effectively communicating their ideas. The mentee's presentation was not sufficiently clear and understandable. They tended to talk too much.

Mentor's Role: Help the mentee identify their strengths, provide advice on how to prepare a presentation correctly, and present it clearly and understandably. The mentor will also guide the mentee on overcoming nervousness and recommend techniques for improving presentations.

Mentee's Role: Openly share their concerns and actively accept feedback.

After the role-play, the trainer will provide feedback to both parties on their approach and communication skills.

Scenario 2: Reverse Mentoring – Learning Digital Skills

Objective: Support the development of digital skills among older employees and improve the ability of younger employees to mentor.

Scenario:

Participants: 2 people (mentor and mentee).

Situation:

An older employee is struggling to use new project management software (e.g., JIRA, Asana, Slack). A younger employee is well-versed in these skills.

The older employee is also having difficulty using a new attendance system (E-human). The younger employee guides them on acquiring the necessary skills.

Younger Mentor's Role: Provide patient guidance to the older colleague, show them how to effectively use the software, and motivate them not to be afraid of new technologies.

Older Mentee's Role: Be open to learning and share feedback on what works and their concerns.

After the practice, there may be a reflection and discussion on the benefits of this mutual process.

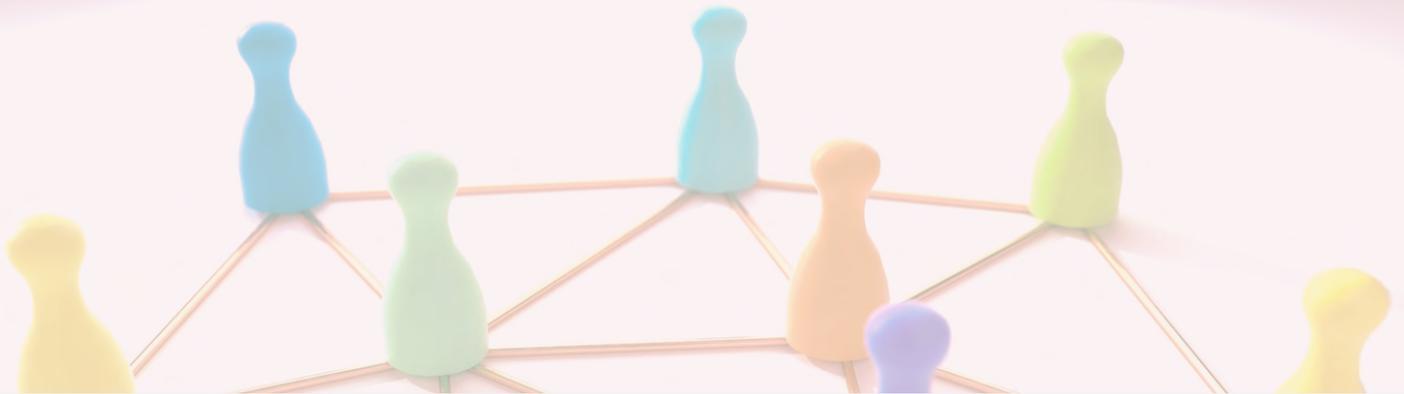
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 5

Technology training, digital inclusion strategies, and fostering Lifelong Learning

IntegrAGE Train the Trainer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

5. Module 5 – Technology Training, Digital Inclusion Strategies, and Fostering Lifelong Learning

5.1. Description

This module provides resources for effective technology training in companies and promotes digital inclusion among older employees. Based on common digital skill gaps, the modules offers a concrete training concept for business support bodies, who could implement it as a training program for companies.

In connection with digital learning, the modules emphasizes the importance of fostering a culture of lifelong learning, which encourages older workers to continually update their skills and knowledge. By supporting digital inclusion and ongoing education, employers can ensure that older employees remain competitive and confident in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

5.2. Smart objectives

This training module can be summarized in five main SMART objectives and learning outcomes:

Objective 1: Raise awareness and offer solutions on Digital Skill Gaps

The module will raise awareness on Digital Skill Gaps and will offer concrete solutions to train company employees for a long-term reduction of digital skill gaps.

Objective 2: Increase Technology Training Access

By the end of the training sessions, companies will have access to different digital open source tools, which they can adapt in their own company strategies to improve the digital skills of their employees over 55 years old.

Objective 3: Foster Lifelong Learning Culture

By the end of the training, participating companies will be aware of the importance of LLL and will have a filled template with some internal policies they could put in place to promote ongoing digital education and training for older employees, ensuring continuous skill development.

Objective 4: Implement Change in a positive way

After the training sessions, participating companies will have gained knowledge on the meaning of positive change and how to implement digital strategies gradually so they are accepted and welcomed by oldest employees.

Objective 5: Boost Confidence in Technology Use promotion

After completing the training, companies will report increased confidence in promoting digital tools in their day-to-day tasks of their company.

5.3. Introduction

The target group of the module are business support bodies, who work can share these materials and implement this type of workshop with companies.

When conducting a training, it is important to dedicate time for the presentation of participants. Getting to know each other and establishing some basic rules for discussion and collaboration is essential for a smooth workshop implementation. Please consider this when planning the workshop and include time for it in the main Agenda.

To start with some basic notions on the topic of lifelong learning and digital skill gaps, it is recommended to let the participants think by themselves. As a facilitator, you can orientate them and guide them, but you will adapt your explanations much better if you are aware of their baseline knowledge of the given topic.

To do this, you can divide the introduction section into three parts:

1. Defining basic concepts through the Snowball method
2. Testing baseline knowledge through a Quiz
3. Giving background information

5.3.1. Basic concepts

To let participants think about the topics proposed, you can use the snowball method, which aims at creating common definitions starting with one own's personal description and ending with a group description.

In this case, the given topics would be:

- Digital skill gaps
- Lifelong learning (LLL)

SNOWBALL

Give a concrete topic to the group and explain them that the objective is to define it in the best and most concrete way possible, so it is understandable by everyone.

First, all participants will **think individually** how to define the given topic.

After it, **they will meet in couples** and they will share their inputs, creating an updated definition of the topic.

They will **meet up continuously with other groups and they will re-shape the definition** till the whole group has come together and there is only one definition.

It is important to **write down this final definition**, which will be shared out loud.

The facilitator will make a **short debriefing** about it to complement the final definition and will give additional input on the given topic.

Suggestion:

- If the group is big, divide it into two smaller groups and give them a different topic. They will work separately and share their definitions by the end.
- If the group is small, let them do the process twice, so they create a definition for both given topics.

5.3.2. Background information

After participants have reflected on the concept of lifelong learning and digital skill gaps, you could have some cards with baseline knowledge prepared. The main objective is to complement the information participants have already given with additional inputs.

Basic knowledge and notions that could be brought up to the table are:

Notion 1

As technological innovations continue to reshape industries, workers are required to continuously update their skills to remain competitive in the workforce. For companies, it is essential to invest in training programs that foster a culture of ongoing education and inclusion, particularly for aging employees who may be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of digital transformation.

<p>Notion 2</p>	<p>Lifelong learning is the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills throughout an individual’s career. For older employees, this principle is crucial as it promotes adaptability and resilience in the face of technological change. OECD reports that employees aged 55 and older are often overlooked in training initiatives, even though they benefit most from upskilling programs, as they tend to have more difficulties than younger colleagues in digital competencies.</p>
<p>Notion 3</p>	<p>The digital skill gap is a pressing issue for companies that want to stay competitive in our current digitalized global economy. This gap, defined as the difference between the skills employees have and the skills, they need to effectively use digital tools, disproportionately affects older workers. A study by the World Economic Forum found that by 2025, more than 50% of employees will need significant reskilling in digital competencies. Implementing targeted training for older employees helps companies close this gap, ensuring a more digitally capable and adaptable workforce.</p>
<p>Notion 4</p>	<p>Inclusive training programs are essential to ensuring that older employees are not left behind in the digital age. Companies must recognize the value that older employees bring to the workforce, including their experience, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills and must boost their employee engagement and retention. Research from the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicates that older workers who participate in well-designed digital training programs show improved job satisfaction and performance.</p>
<p>Notion 5</p>	<p>Fostering a culture of lifelong learning and digital inclusion is not just a matter of social responsibility; it is a strategic advantage. Organizations that invest in digital upskilling programs for older employees stand to benefit from a more innovative and efficient workforce, as their years of experience can be enhanced with the right digital tools. As noted by the European Commission, lifelong learning programs that integrate digital skills enhance overall workforce productivity.</p>

5.4. Session 1: Digital Skill Gaps and Lifelong Learning

After participants have explored and defined basic notions, it is time to provide them with deeper insights on digital skill gaps and lifelong learning.

To do so, this training concept includes two presentations, which are downloadable and contain following information:

5.4.1. Topic 1: Digital Skill Gaps

The digital transformation of the modern workforce has highlighted significant digital skill gaps, particularly affecting older employees. As traditional job roles evolve, proficiency in new digital tools and technologies is required.

The digital skill gap refers to the difference between the digital competencies employees have and the skills they need to perform their roles effectively. For older employees, this gap can be significant due to less exposure to new technologies over the course of their careers.

A skill gap could be therefore defined as the inability of employees, particularly older ones, to effectively use modern digital tools and adapt to rapid technological changes. This gap can lead to reduced productivity, efficiency, and job security for older workers, which in turn impacts company-wide performance. Studies show that older employees (55+) in regions such as the Danube area demonstrate lower levels of digital literacy and often face resistance to change and a lack of confidence in their abilities to learn new technologies.

Some of the challenges faced by older employees in today's digital workplace are:

- **Resistance to Change:** Some older workers are uncomfortable with rapid technological advancements.
- **Lack of Confidence:** They may feel less capable of adapting to new tools.
- **Limited Access to Training:** Older workers often have fewer opportunities for digital skills training.
- **Age Discrimination:** Negative stereotypes about their technological abilities can limit their career growth.

Closing this gap through targeted training initiatives helps companies remain competitive while ensuring older employees feel confident using new digital tools.

To close digital skill gaps, companies can:

- a) Offer diverse learning opportunities, including training programs, online courses, and mentorship initiatives.
- b) Foster a growth mindset by encouraging continuous improvement and embracing learning from mistakes. Fostering the use of technology without pressure and by implementing adaptability strategies for new digital tools.

- c) Provide targeted upskilling and reskilling programs that address specific skill gaps and offering a range of training options, such as self-paced online courses and hands-on workshops. Accommodating diverse learning styles is essential for a successful learning process.
- d) Implement knowledge-sharing programs, where senior employees can mentor others, contributing their deep institutional knowledge.

5.4.2. Topic 2: Lifelong Learning (LLL)

In today's fast-evolving job market, driven by technological advancements like automation, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation, **lifelong learning** has become a critical strategy for maintaining a competitive workforce. For companies, fostering a culture of **continuous learning** ensures that employees, particularly older ones, remain relevant, adaptable, and empowered to contribute effectively.

A critical strategy to addressing digital skill gaps is cultivating a culture of lifelong learning. This means encouraging all employees, regardless of age, to continuously update their skills. Leadership buy-in is essential to prioritize digital upskilling initiatives and create an inclusive workplace that values contributions from employees of all ages. Successful companies have implemented digital mentorship programs, customized digital workshops, and intergenerational learning circles, leading to increased productivity and a collaborative, **multi-generational work environment**.

Lifelong learning allows employees to continually **update their skills and knowledge**, preparing them for new challenges and opportunities. Organizations that cultivate this culture see benefits such as increased employee engagement, productivity, and innovation.

If we analyse different strategies from successful companies, who have a very diversified workforce, we can observe that many of them have their own training and learning platforms, through which they can address their employee's skill gaps. However, they also complement these platforms with On-the-job training initiatives during normal work hours and project tasks.

COMPANIES implementing LLL PROGRAMS		
AT&T	<i>Future Ready program</i> helps employees develop new skills, particularly in tech-related areas, through partnerships with educational institutions. Employees can take part in online	Read more

	degree programs and specialized courses to stay competitive in the evolving job market.	
Unilever	Future Fit program encourages employees to continuously develop their skills. They offer a range of learning opportunities, including digital tools, mentorship, and leadership programs	Read more
IBM	Your Learning platform offers employees opportunities to upskill in areas like data science, AI, and cloud computing. IBM's commitment to lifelong learning also includes partnerships with educational institutions and online platforms like Coursera to provide learning paths in technology fields	Read more
Google	Grow with Google , which offers employees and the public access to training in digital skills, project management, and more. Internally, Google encourages continuous learning through its open learning platform, Google Learning , which allows employees to access training and development resources.	Read more
Microsoft	Global Skills Initiative focuses on upskilling people with digital literacy and more advanced skills in cloud computing, AI, and cybersecurity. Microsoft employees are given access to internal and external learning platforms to keep their skills up to date.	Read more
Deloitte	Deloitte University platform provides leadership training, digital skills development, and industry-specific courses.	Read more

5.5. Session 2: Promotigon of digital skills through Technology Training

This session is composed of three case studies, which are basically example of good practices, resources and reference entities, through which you can learn about technological training and gain some insights on how your own organization could put in place these tools or similar ones.

5.5.1. Case study 1: Digital Skills Barometer

The first step to start solving digital skill gaps in your company is to assess the problem your employees have. Not all companies, neither all generations have the same literacy level and face same problems. That is why you should implement an evaluation system, which can be as simple as an online questionnaire, or a more detailed tool.

Divide the group in two and assign to each of them one platform. They will have 15 minutes to navigate it and 20 minutes to assess how it could be adapted for their organization's needs.

- **Fit4Internet** → It is an Austrian initiative that focuses on improving digital literacy among the population. It offers tests to test which is your current digital literacy level and it offers courses aimed at helping people understand and use digital technologies safely and effectively. It is available in German and English:

<https://www.fit4internet.at>

- **IntegrAGE Self-assessment Tool** → It is mostly tailor made for 55+ employees. It focuses on three areas technological proficiency, workplace integration skills, and well-being and job satisfaction.

<https://satool.ujep.cz/>

These platforms provide valuable resources for individuals and organizations looking to improve digital literacy and vocational skills.

Discussion

- What do you think of the tool in terms of technical and practical usability?
- Do you know or use other similar tools in your company?
- Would you be able to include in your company's strategy? If not, why? If yes, how?

5.5.2. Case study 2: Online Training Providers

Currently, there are thousands of training providers, which are high-quality and open source. The goal of getting to know this second case study is to navigate different platforms.

Learning by doing are one of the best ways to learn and this is also applicable to familiarizing ourselves with digital technologies.

Divide the group in couples or groups of three participants and assign to each of them one platform. They will have 15 minutes to navigate it and 20 minutes to assess how it could be adapted for their organization's needs.

Courser
a

Udemy

Khan
Academy

Synthes
ia

Gamma

Magic
School

Discussion

- What do you think of the training tools presented?
- Which one did you like the most and why?
- Do you know or use other similar tools in your company?
- How could you include and share these online training tools with your employees?
- Which measures would you put in place to ensure older employees profit from them?

5.5.3. Case study 3: Networking for cross-company qualifications

Apart from online training providers, it is essential to conduct in-person workshops, so employees can learn in a professional environment where they can solve questions and advance as a team.

Divide the group in two and assign to each of them one entity's website. They will have 15 minutes to navigate throughout their programs and 20 minutes to discuss the situation in their own context and how some ideas could be replicated to give response to their organization's needs.

WIFI⁶ is one of the largest training providers in Austria, offering a wide range of training programs. It is part of the Austrian Economic Chambers and focuses on developing skills across various industries to help individuals and businesses stay competitive.

Some of their programs are:

- Digital Skills and IT: It focuses on areas such as cloud computing, cybersecurity, and AI
- Leadership and Management: designed to help managers enhance their leadership abilities.

BFI⁷ is another major training provider in Austria, focused on adult education, upskilling, and labor market integration. BFI offers a broad range of training courses that target both employed individuals seeking career advancement and unemployed individuals looking to re-enter the job market. BFI is known for its strong emphasis on social inclusion and labor market support programs.

Some of their programs are:

- Digital Skills for All: designed to improve digital literacy among adults, with courses on basic IT skills, programming, and data analysis
- Labor Market Integration: Programs aimed at helping unemployed individuals re-enter the workforce, such as AMS-sponsored courses and career coaching.

Both WIFI and BFI play key roles in training and continuous education in Vienna and across Austria, supporting individuals in enhancing their skills to meet current labor market demands.

Discussion

- What do you think of the presented training network?
- Do you know similar networks and services in your region?

⁶ <https://www.wifi.at/>

⁷ <https://www.bfi.at/>

- Could you draw a brief stakeholder network of training providers that could help your organization reduce digital skill gaps of your oldest employees?
- Would you be able to participate or profit from such network in your services? If no, why? If yes, how?

5.6. Session 3: Implementation of positive change

5.6.1. Positive change

In the context of organizations, it refers to the intentional and strategic efforts to improve processes, behaviours, or environments in ways that create beneficial outcomes for the company and its employees.

It typically involves fostering a growth mindset, creating an inclusive environment, and addressing issues proactively to ensure all employees can participate and profit from change. Usually, it entails fostering a growth mindset, offering tailored-made training and recognizing and awarding progress.

Incorporating these steps into a well-thought-out change management plan can significantly help companies' close digital skill gaps and ensure all employees are equipped to adapt to the rapidly changing technological landscape.

With that objective in mind, we would like to dive in:

Kotter's 8 steps for leading change methodology⁸ → It is a framework designed to help organizations implement effective and lasting change.

1. It begins with **creating a sense of urgency** by identifying threats and opportunities to motivate stakeholders.
2. Next, a **guiding coalition** is formed, bringing together a team of influential leaders who can drive the change.
3. The third step is to **develop a vision and strategy**, clearly articulating the desired outcome and how it will be achieved.
4. **Communicating the vision** broadly is critical to ensuring everyone understands the direction and their role in the change.
5. Afterward, it's important to **empower employees for action** by removing obstacles and providing the resources necessary for success.
6. The sixth step involves creating **short-term wins**, celebrating early successes to maintain momentum.

⁸ <https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

7. The framework then advises to **build on the change**, using the credibility of early wins to drive deeper changes.
8. Finally, **anchoring the changes in corporate culture** ensures that new behaviors and practices become part of the organization's fabric, sustaining the transformation long-term.

5.6.2. Role play exercise

Implementing the use of Coursera for Older Employees

Situation:

You are the HR representative of a mid-sized company (*you could also use your own company as example*) that is introducing a new digital training platform, Coursera, aimed at closing digital skill gaps, especially among older employees (aged 55+).

You've recently received feedback from these employees expressing concerns about the complexity of the new platform, fear of using new technology, and anxiety over learning in a digital environment. They are resistant to the change.

Objective:

The goal of the exercise is to address the concerns of older employees and ensure a smooth adaptation to the new training platform. Participants will need to come up with strategies to make the transition easier, reduce resistance, and provide tailored support.

Roles:

- HR Representative/Manager: presents the benefits of the digital platform to older employees and address their concerns.
- Employee Representative (Older Worker): expresses concerns regarding the complexity of the platform, anxiety about using new technology, and fear of not keeping up with younger colleagues.
- Tech Support Representative: provides insights into how to make the platform user-friendly and what support can be offered to employees who struggle with digital literacy.

Scenario & Flow:

1. Opening Discussion: HR representative + Employee Representative

HR introduces the platform and explains its benefits to the company. The employee representative responds by voicing concerns about the complexity and fear of the platform.

2. Problem-Solving Session: All

The HR representative, tech support, and employee representative discuss possible solutions. The goal is to come up with actionable solutions that ensure these employees feel supported and empowered during this transition.

Outcome:

By the end of the role-play exercise, participants should have proposed concrete strategies to:

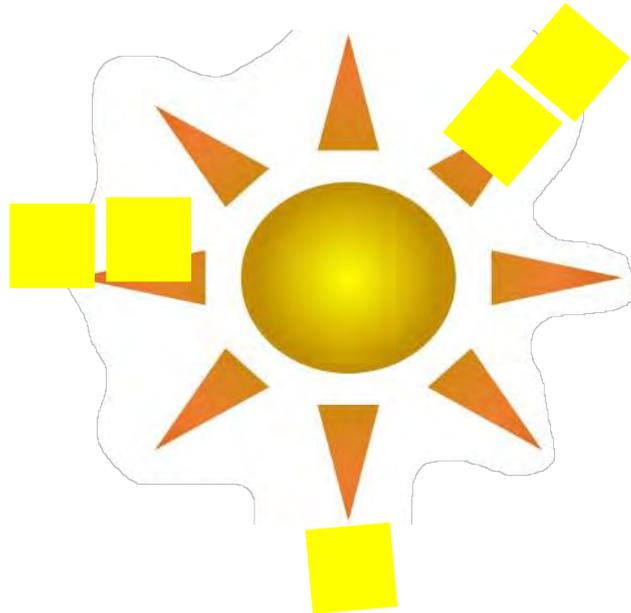
- Reduce anxiety and resistance from older employees.
- Offer tailored training and support to ensure older employees can comfortably adopt the new digital platform.
- Promote positive change by encouraging a culture of continuous learning and development within the company.

5.7. Closing

5.7.1. Summarizing the workshop

To summarize the workshop, you could use the **method of the SUN**, which consists of the following steps:

1. Give 3-4 yellow post-its to participants.
2. Tell them to wrap-up and write the main highlights of the training session (what they learnt, what they missed, what they liked/disliked).
3. Draw a sun in a flipchart.
4. Each participant puts its post-it around the core of a sun.
5. The ideas need to be grouped together according to its similarity, so the ideas that come up more often will build up bigger rays.
6. Debrief on the ideas with the whole group and make a closing summary.



5.7.2. Key takeaways

Digital Skill Gaps: Companies need to address the gap between employees' current digital skills and what is required, especially for older workers. Tailored solutions and continuous learning are essential.

Lifelong Learning: Continuous learning must be promoted across all levels of an organization, and leadership should prioritize inclusive, ongoing education strategies.

Positive Change: Kotter's 8 Steps for Leading Change provides a framework for implementing change, emphasizing communication, short-term wins, and embedding changes into company culture.

5.7.3. Q&A and Feedback

Open the space for any question participants may ask and collect feedback from them. You can use digital tools to keep up with the dynamic of the workshop and to show them other possibilities they might well use in the future:

- Mentimeter – <https://www.mentimeter.com>
- Slido – <https://www.sli.do>
- Kahoot - <https://kahoot.com>
- Poll Everywhere – <https://www.polleverywhere.com>
- SurveyMonkey - <https://www.surveymonkey.com>

- Padlet - <https://www.padlet.com>
- Typeform - <https://www.typeform.com>
- Pigeonhole Live - <https://www.pigeonholelive.com>

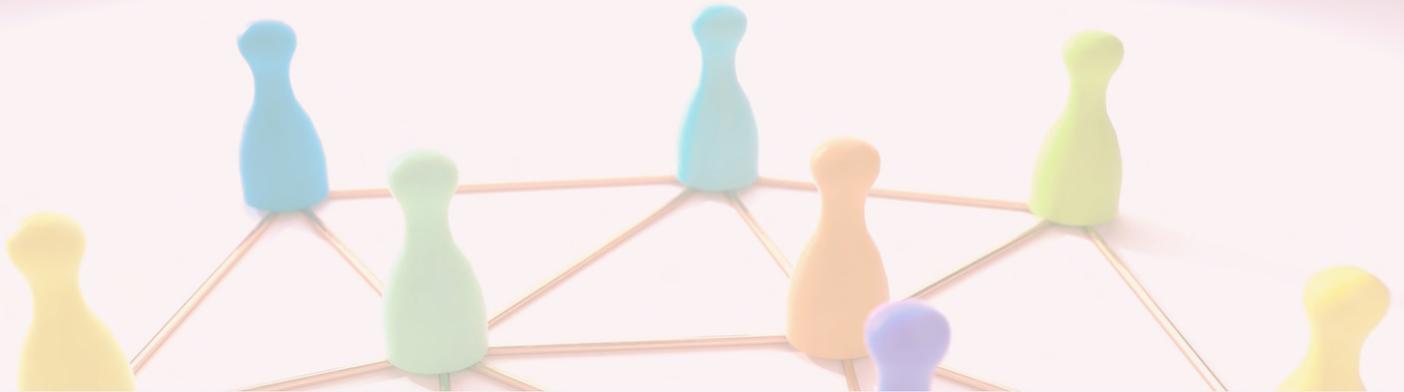
**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
the European Union



IntegrAGE



MODULE 6

**Age-friendly employment practices and
strategies for phased retirement**

IntegrAGE Train the Trainer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Interreg Danube Region Program. Neither the European Union nor DRP can be held responsible for them.

6. Module 6 – Age-Friendly Employment Practices and Strategies for Phased Retirement

6.1. Description

In response to the challenges of an aging population and increased life expectancy, the employment of older workers is becoming an increasingly important issue in the modern business world. Older workers bring valuable experience, maturity, and stability, but they also face numerous obstacles that complicate their integration and long-term retention in the workforce. Flexible work arrangements, continuous professional development, mentoring, and adapting the work environment are some of the key strategies employers can adopt to create inclusive, age-friendly employment policies.

One particularly noteworthy concept in these efforts is phased retirement, which allows for a gradual transition from active employment to retirement, facilitating the transfer of knowledge within the organization and reducing the shock of a sudden withdrawal from professional life. This workshop aims to provide insight into the importance of employing older workers, present best practices that employers can implement, and encourage the adoption of inclusive policies, with a special focus on phased retirement as an effective tool for extending working life and improving the quality of life for older employees.

Through this training, participants will gain an understanding of the key challenges and benefits associated with employing older workers, along with concrete recommendations for improving employment practices and working conditions.

6.2. Smart objectives

Objective 1. Raising awareness of the importance of employing older workers:

The training will raise participants' awareness of the importance of employing older workers, highlighting their benefits for organizations, such as experience and stability. After the training, participants will have a clearer understanding of how older workers contribute to team success and development.

Objective 2. Identifying key practices for hiring older workers:

The training will help participants identify key strategies that employers can use to attract and retain older workers. These practices include flexible working conditions, mentorship, and lifelong learning, enabling the creation of a more inclusive working environment.

Objective 3. Recognizing the advantages and challenges of employing older workers:

The training will enable participants to recognize and understand the advantages, such as knowledge transfer and stability, as well as challenges, such as workplace adaptation and increased healthcare costs. This will help them balance expectations and make better decisions regarding the employment of older workers.

Objective 4. Explaining the concept of phased retirement:

The training will provide participants with a detailed understanding of the concept of phased retirement, explaining how to facilitate the transition of older workers from active work to retirement and how to use phased retirement to retain key knowledge within the organization.

Objective 5. Encouraging the implementation of inclusive policies:

The training will encourage participants to apply inclusive policies, such as anti-discrimination measures and workplace adjustments. Participants will be motivated to create a work environment that ensures equal access to training and adjustments for older workers.

Objective 6. Providing practical recommendations for the integration of older workers:

The training will offer participants concrete recommendations for supporting older workers, including workplace adaptation, developing mentorship programs, and promoting lifelong learning. Participants will acquire the skills needed to apply these recommendations in their organizations.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Increased awareness of the importance of employing older workers.
2. Recognition of key practices for hiring older employees.
3. Understanding of the advantages and challenges of employing older workers.
4. Adoption of the concept of phased retirement.
5. Development of inclusive policies.
6. Motivation for action.

6.3. Introduction

The target group for this module consists of trainers and HR professionals who will use these materials to conduct workshops on age-friendly employment practices and phased retirement strategies. This curriculum is designed to empower these professionals to share knowledge and implement these practices within their organizations or in collaboration with companies.

When organizing this training, it is important to allocate time for participant introductions, as getting to know each other and establishing guidelines for discussion and collaboration is key to a successful workshop. This should be factored into the main agenda to ensure smooth interaction throughout the training.

To begin the session and introduce key concepts, such as age-friendly employment and phased retirement, it is useful to encourage participants to reflect on their own understanding of the topics. As a facilitator, you will guide their thoughts and tailor your approach based on their existing knowledge, ensuring the training is both relevant and engaging.

You can divide the introduction into three parts:

- Defining key concepts through the World Café method to foster group interaction
- Testing baseline knowledge with a quiz to gauge participants'
- Providing background information to build a solid foundation for the rest of the workshop

This approach will ensure that participants are actively engaged, encourage collaboration, and ensure that the content is aligned with their current level of knowledge.

6.3.1. Basic concepts

To encourage participants to reflect on the proposed topics, you can use the World Café method. This method fosters group interaction and collective exploration, allowing participants to discuss the given topics in small, rotating groups. By the end of the discussions, participants will develop shared insights and group-based definitions.

In this case, the proposed topics would be:

- Age-friendly employment practices
- Phased retirement strategies

This approach will help participants engage more deeply with key concepts, sharing diverse perspectives that will lead to a comprehensive understanding of these topics.

World Café

Instructions for Group Activity:

Provide a specific topic to the group and explain that the objective is to define it as clearly and concretely as possible, ensuring it is understandable to everyone.

1. Individual Reflection:

Each participant will first think individually about how to define the given topic based on their knowledge and understanding.

2. Pair Discussion:

Participants will then pair up and share their ideas. Together, they will create a refined definition that incorporates both perspectives.

3. Group Refinement:

Pairs will continue meeting with other groups, gradually reshaping the definition as new insights are added, until the entire group works together to create a unified definition.

4. Final Definition:

Write down the final definition that the whole group agrees upon and share it out loud.

5. Facilitator Input:

The facilitator will provide a short debrief, complementing the final definition and offering additional insights on the topic.

Suggestions for Larger and Smaller Groups:

For large groups: Divide them into two smaller groups, assigning each a different topic. They will work separately and then present their definitions at the end.

For small groups: Have them go through the process twice, creating definitions for both key topics.

Topics for this training:

- **Age-friendly employment practices**
- **Phased retirement strategies**

This activity will ensure active participation, collective learning, and a clear understanding of the key concepts.

6.3.2. Background information

Once participants have considered the concepts of employing older workers and phased retirement, you can present cards containing essential information. The main aim is to enhance the insights shared by participants with further details.

The basic information you can present includes:

Notion 1

Employing older workers offers many benefits, including valuable experience and stability in the workplace. It is important for employers to recognize the need for flexible working conditions and training to ensure that older workers remain competitive in the labor market. Investing in the development of these workers through tailored training programs helps maintain high productivity and engagement within teams.

Notion 2

Phased retirement allows workers to gradually reduce their work responsibilities before fully retiring. This approach not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge to younger colleagues, but also allows older workers to stay active and engaged while preparing for retirement. Research shows that companies that implement phased retirement retain more critical expertise within the organization.

Notion 3

Employers who adopt practices tailored to older workers often witness higher retention of key knowledge and experience within the company. However, older workers face challenges such as increased healthcare costs and the need for workplace adjustments. Adaptations such as ergonomic solutions and flexible work arrangements can help overcome these challenges, enabling older workers to remain in the workforce for longer.

Notion 4

Inclusive policies and mentoring programs play a key role in transferring knowledge between older and younger workers. Older employees can use their years of experience to train younger colleagues, ensuring continuity of knowledge and development within the company. Mentoring also helps older workers stay engaged and relevant in teams, while younger workers gain valuable guidance and advice.

Notion 5

Investing in lifelong learning and the training of older workers is a strategic advantage for any organization. Companies that invest in training and adapting working conditions for older employees create a more innovative and efficient workforce. According to research, companies that promote lifelong learning and include older workers in digital training programs see improved productivity and higher employee satisfaction.

6.4. Session 1

After participants have explored and defined the basic concepts, it is time to provide them with deeper insights into age-friendly employment practices and phased retirement strategies.

To do so, this training concept includes two presentations, which are available for download and contain the following information:

6.4.1. Topic 1: Age-Friendly Employment Practices for Older Workers

Even today, the employment of people over the age of 55 faces numerous problems and challenges arising from various social, economic, and political factors. Although older workers can significantly contribute to the labor market with their experience and knowledge, there are certain obstacles that make it difficult for them to integrate and remain in the workforce for a long time.

The main problems related to employing people over the age of 55 include stereotypes and age-based discrimination, higher hiring costs, perception of low digital and technological skills, fear of reduced work ability and health problems, lack of adaptable working conditions, early retirement as an option, less investment in the professional development of older employees, lack of retraining programs, rapid changes in the nature of jobs, migration of younger employees.

A major issue affecting older workers is long-term unemployment. Many people over the age of 55, once they lose their job, find it difficult to secure new employment. Long-term unemployment has particularly negative consequences for older individuals, including reduced self-confidence, loss of professional skills, and an increased risk of social exclusion and financial difficulties.

Employment practices for older employees are becoming increasingly important due to changes in the demographic structure of society and the aging workforce. Due to longer life expectancy and work tenure, many companies and organizations are now adjusting their policies to harness the advantages older workers can provide.

Some of the key practices for hiring and retaining older employees include:

1. **Flexible working hours**

This practice allows employees to gradually reduce their work obligations and more easily balance work tasks with personal needs or the transition to retirement.

2. Gradual retirement

This practice enables the transfer of knowledge and experience to younger employees while older workers maintain financial security.

3. Education and lifelong learning

It includes training for new technologies and tools, allowing older workers to remain productive and adaptable in the modern business environment.

4. Mentorship and knowledge transfer

The mentoring practice allows older employees to pass on their knowledge and skills to younger colleagues, ensuring continuity of knowledge within the company and reducing the cost of training new employees.

5. Workplace adaptation

Adapting the work environment: ergonomic equipment, adjusting workspaces, and reducing the physical demands of certain jobs.

6. Competency-based hiring, not age-based

This practice reduces prejudice against older workers and provides them with equal opportunities to participate in the labor market.

7. Anti-age discrimination policies

A practice that ensures a fair hiring and retention process for employees.

8. Health and wellness programs

This practice includes preventive health programs, counseling, and physical activities aimed at the specific needs of older employees.

9. Occasional work after retirement

This practice allows companies to leverage the expertise of older employees when needed, while providing retirees with the opportunity for additional income and continued engagement with work.

10. Incentives for employment

Companies increasingly offer incentives for hiring older employees through tax breaks, subsidies, or other financial measures.

These practices not only enhance the efficiency of the workforce but also maintain high productivity levels, reduce the costs of training new employees, and promote workplace inclusivity. Older workers also bring valuable experience, maturity, and stability, which can be of great benefit to the organization.

6.4.2. Topic 2: Strategies for Gradual Retirement

Gradual retirement refers to the process during which an individual gradually reduces their work activity before fully retiring.

This option allows the worker to slowly reduce the number of working hours or the intensity of work, rather than abruptly stopping work, while simultaneously mitigating financial stress that may arise from a sudden loss of income.

Each country adapts its models depending on the specificities of the labor market and national regulatory frameworks. These models not only extend the working life but also promote active aging and ensure a better quality of life for older workers.

Goals of Gradual Retirement:

- **Long-term sustainability of the pension system:** Many countries implement gradual retirement to ease the pressure on national pension funds due to an aging population and a reduced number of working-age people.
- **Health and well-being of workers:** A gradual transition to retirement helps older workers better cope with changes and reduces the stress associated with abruptly stopping work. Studies also show that gradually reducing the workload contributes to better mental and physical health.

Role of Employers: Employers often play a key role in gradual retirement. To enhance opportunities for gradual retirement, employers can take advantage of options such as:

- **Flexible work conditions:** Introducing models that allow part-time work alongside partial use of pensions.
- **Incentives for employers:** Encouraging companies to hire older employees through subsidies or tax breaks.
- **Lifelong learning programs:** Developing professional development programs for older employees to remain competitive in the labor market.

Introducing gradual retirement requires systemic changes but could, in the long term, facilitate the transition from working life to retirement and improve the quality of life for older individuals.

6.5. Session 2: Promotigon of digital skills through Technology Training

This session is composed of three case studies, which are basically example of good practices, resources and reference entities, through which you can learn about technological

training and gain some insights on how your own organization could put in place these tools or similar ones.

6.5.1. Case study 1: Phased Retirement in the Company "Energie"

Background

The company "Energie" is a leader in the renewable energy sector, known for its sustainable business practices and innovations. It employs a workforce of different age groups, including a significant number of employees over 55 with years of experience. Management recognized the challenges of retaining these experienced employees, who are facing the question of when and how to retire. To ensure a smooth transition and retain expertise within the company, management decided to implement a phased retirement program.

Approach to Problem-Solving

The company developed a detailed phased retirement plan to address the challenges faced by older employees:

1. **Initial Assessment:** It was found that older employees were concerned about the sudden transition to retirement, fearing the loss of daily routines and professional identity. At the same time, the company recognized the risk of losing critical knowledge and skills that these employees possessed. Younger employees also expressed a need for mentorship and learning from more experienced colleagues.
2. **Phased Retirement Plan:** A plan was developed focusing on three key aspects. The first is flexible working hours, allowing older employees to reduce their working hours, such as part-time work or shortened working days. The second aspect is the mentoring program, where older employees pass on their knowledge to younger ones, ensuring business continuity and supporting their professional involvement. The third aspect is gradually introducing younger employees into key roles with the support of senior mentors.
3. **Support and Mentoring:** During the transition, older employees had the opportunity to teach younger colleagues about processes and pass on their knowledge of the company's operations. This approach reduced the pressure of a sudden retirement transition while giving younger employees a chance to gain practical experience.

Outcome

- Reduced rate of sudden retirements.
- Ensured continuous exchange of knowledge between older and younger employees.
- Increased employee loyalty to the company.
- Improved the company's image as a socially responsible employer.

Conclusion

By introducing a phased retirement program, the company successfully enabled older employees to transition to retirement more smoothly while retaining their valuable knowledge within the company. This practice improved employee satisfaction and ensured knowledge transfer.

Discussion

- How could the implementation of phased retirement impact the organizational culture and productivity in your company?
- What key factors should be considered when introducing phased retirement in your organization?
- How would you assess the importance of mentoring between older workers and younger employees?
- How could flexible working hours be applied in your organization?
- What are the potential risks if phased retirement is not implemented properly?
- What is the role of management in the successful implementation of phased retirement?
- How could phased retirement be used as a tool to improve the company's image?
- What other strategies, besides phased retirement, can help retain and engage older workers in your company?

6.5.2. Case study 2: IT Training for a Municipal Employee Over 55

Background

Mr. Marko, 58 years old, a municipal employee in the department of public works, had worked traditionally using paper documentation and phone communication for many years. With the digitalization of the municipal office, Marko had to adapt to new IT tools, such as electronic citizen request logs and email, which caused him stress and decreased work efficiency.

Approach to Problem-Solving

It was determined that Marko had basic IT skills but lacked experience with new software and communication tools.

The municipal office developed a personalized training program for Marko:

1. **Training Plan:** A plan was created tailored to his needs. In the first phase, he received training on the basics of working with email and the internet, and in later phases, he was trained on specific programs used by the municipal office.
2. **Support and Mentoring:** During the training, Marko had a mentor – a colleague who guided him and gradually introduced him to working with new tools.
3. **Gradual Introduction:** After completing the initial training, Marko, with support, began using new digital tools in his daily work.

Outcome

After four months, Marko became confident in using digital tools, including the system for tracking citizen requests and email. His productivity increased significantly, and citizens noticed faster and more efficient processing of their requests.

Conclusion

Personalized IT training and support helped Marko adapt to the digital work environment, resulting in increased work efficiency and greater citizen satisfaction with municipal services.

Discussion

- How important is personalized training in helping employees like Marko adapt to new digital tools?
- What role does mentoring play in supporting employees through technological changes?
- How can organizations effectively assess the digital skill gaps among their employees?

- What challenges do older employees typically face when adapting to digital tools, and how can they be addressed?
- How can gradual introduction to technology improve employee productivity and reduce stress?
- How can the success of a digital training program be measured in terms of employee performance and satisfaction?
- What additional support could have been provided to Marko during his transition to using new IT tools?
- How can organizations ensure that all employees, regardless of age, feel confident and capable of using digital tools in their work?

6.5.3. Case study 3: Older Employee Experience Compensating for Lack of IT Skills

Background

Mrs. Ana, 57 years old, is a longtime employee in the human resources department of a large company. Throughout her career, she gained extensive experience in people management, recruitment processes, and resolving internal conflicts. Although she possesses excellent communication and analytical skills, Ana lacks advanced knowledge of IT tools and digital technologies. Recently, the company hired a young colleague, Marko, 26 years old, who is technically very skilled but lacks practical work experience and an understanding of internal HR processes.

Problem Identification

Although Marko is well-versed in modern HR tools and digital technologies, he is unfamiliar with the internal policies and strategies that Ana has developed over the years. On the other hand, Ana feels pressure due to rapid technological changes and often relies on Marko for help with digital tools.

Approach to Problem-Solving

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: The company decided to leverage their complementary skills through a mentoring relationship.

Marko became Ana's "digital mentor," helping her master new technologies, while Ana taught Marko about people management, conducting interviews and resolving conflicts.

Practical Training: Ana involved Marko in actual recruitment processes and employee consultations. Through work on specific tasks, she taught him communication, interview, and negotiation skills.

Digital Support: Meanwhile, Marko provided Ana with support in using HR software, online databases, and employee tracking tools, enabling her to improve her IT skills.

Regular Meetings: They held weekly meetings to exchange knowledge and address challenges, discussing best practices in HR management and the use of digital tools.

Outcome

After several months of collaboration, Marko significantly improved his skills in HR management, while Ana became more confident in using digital tools. Their mutual support resulted in more efficient department operations and improved communication within the team.

Conclusion

This case study shows how rich work experience can compensate for a lack of IT skills and how mutual mentorship can benefit both older and younger employees. The combination of Ana's expertise and Marko's technical skills created a positive working relationship and increased the overall efficiency of the department.

Discussion

- How does mutual mentorship benefit both older and younger employees in this case?
- What challenges do older employees like Ana face when adapting to new digital tools, and how can mentoring help overcome these challenges?
- How important is it for organizations to leverage complementary skills between employees of different generations?
- How can organizations create a supportive environment for knowledge sharing between employees with different skill sets?
- In what ways did the collaboration between Ana and Marko improve the overall efficiency of the department?
- What are the potential risks if companies do not provide support for employees struggling with technological changes?
- How can regular meetings, like those between Ana and Marko, help address ongoing challenges in the workplace?
- How can organizations encourage and facilitate similar mentoring relationships between experienced employees and those with more technical expertise?

6.6. Session 3: Implementation of positive change

Introduction to the Role-Playing Scenario

To give participants a better understanding of the real challenges that older workers and management face in today's work environment, the next part of the training will involve a **role-playing scenario**. This method allows participants to take on different roles and experience situations where workers are adapting to new technologies, phased retirement strategies, or changes in working conditions.

The role-playing scenario serves as an opportunity to **apply and practice new knowledge** acquired during the training.

The goal of this scenario is to enable participants to:

- Experience different perspectives within the organization, whether in the role of older workers, managers, or younger colleagues.
- Apply the knowledge gained in practical situations.
- Develop communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills in the context of specific challenges, such as phased retirement and digital changes.

After the role-playing session, there will be a group discussion where participants can share their impressions, identify potential obstacles, and explore best practices for addressing similar situations in real life.

6.6.1. Role play exercise

Implementing the use of Coursera for Older Employees

Situation:

You are the HR representative of a mid-sized company (or use your own company as an example) that employs a 56-year-old sales representative named Mrs. Marija, who works for a PVC window manufacturing company. Marija has been facing challenges due to frequent travel, which has caused physical strain and reduced her productivity. The company is now looking for ways to adjust Marija's role to reduce the physical effort while still allowing her to contribute to the team by passing on her experience to younger colleagues.

Objective:

The goal of the exercise is to find a solution that allows Marija to continue working with less physical strain, while also enabling her to share her valuable experience with younger employees. Participants will need to propose a plan for role adjustments and mentorship that will benefit both Marija and the company.

Roles:

- **HR Representative/Manager:** Engages in discussions with Marija to understand her challenges and propose role adjustments that reduce physical strain while allowing her to continue working.
- **Sales Manager:** Discusses possible adjustments to Marija's duties and proposes how she can continue contributing through remote work and mentoring younger employees.
- **Colleague (Younger Worker):** Offers to take on some of Marija's tasks that require travel and suggests learning from her through mentorship.

Scenario & Flow:

1. Opening Discussion: HR Representative + Marija

- Marija explains her difficulties caused by frequent travel, physical strain, and reduced productivity. She suggests taking on more tasks via phone and email to lessen the need for fieldwork. The HR representative listens and offers support, exploring potential adjustments to her role.

2. Problem-Solving Session: HR Representative + Sales Manager + Colleague

- The HR representative discusses the challenges with the sales manager and a younger colleague, Ana, to explore solutions. Ana suggests that Marija handle client relations remotely, while Petar, the younger colleague, offers to take over some of her fieldwork duties and learn from her through mentorship.

3. Joint Meeting with Marija:

- The new plan is presented to Marija, which involves remote work for client management and fieldwork being transferred to her younger colleague. Marija is satisfied with the solution and agrees to mentor the younger worker.

Outcome:

By the end of the role-play exercise, participants should have developed strategies to:

- Implement role adjustments that reduce physical strain on older employees.
- Facilitate the transfer of knowledge through mentorship to younger colleagues.
- Ensure continued contributions from older workers in a way that benefits both the employee and the company.

6.7. Closing

6.7.1. Summarizing the workshop

Today, the employment of people over 55 faces numerous challenges, including long-term unemployment, age-based discrimination, high employment costs, the perception of low digital skills, and fear of health problems and reduced work capacity. Long-term unemployment particularly affects older workers, reducing their self-confidence and increasing the risk of social exclusion.

6.7.2. Key takeaways

1. Flexible working hours – enabling part-time or remote work.
2. Phased retirement – reducing work obligations while transferring knowledge to younger colleagues.
3. Lifelong education – improving older employees' skills in new technologies.
4. Mentorship – transferring experience and knowledge to younger colleagues.
5. Workplace adaptation – reducing the physical demands of the job.
6. Anti-age discrimination policies – ensuring equal opportunities for all workers.

6.7.3. Q&A and Feedback

During the Q&A session, give participants the opportunity to ask any questions they have about the training. You can either host this as an open forum where anyone can raise their hand or, if time is limited, request that participants submit their questions in advance. This ensures that all key topics are addressed while keeping the session organized.