

## Regional context – Slovak Republic

### Challenges and Issues Facing the 55+ Workforce

Findings from previous project outputs within the international IntegrAGE project ("A practical approach to support the healthy adaptation and integration of the 55+ workforce into the labour market") have shown that **age management is not sufficiently supported on a systemic level in the Slovak Republic** (hereinafter "SR"). Overall, awareness of the issues and concepts related to age management and work-life balance within companies and among the broader public is weak, despite being implemented in some mostly international corporations.

Legislative changes are underway that could contribute to more systematic support for adult education in SR. On August 18, 2024, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the SR (hereinafter "Ministry of Education") submitted a draft law on adult education and amendments to certain regulations to the Economic and Social Council of SR. This law, effective from January 1, 2025, regulates:

- *The Slovak Qualification Framework and the National Qualification System,*
- *Certification of educational institutions,*
- *Accreditation of educational programs,*
- *The system for verifying educational outcomes, including master exams,*
- *Individual educational accounts.*<sup>1</sup>

The new regulation issued by the Ministry of Education, effective from January 1, 2025, implements certain provisions of Act No. 292/2024 Coll. on adult education and amendments to certain laws. The regulation covers the following:

- *Documents proving quality assurance systems;*
- *Requirements for the qualification card;*
- *Details of the educational program proposal for accreditation;*

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<sup>1</sup> ACT of ... 2024 on adult education and amendments to certain laws, available at:  
<https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=551225>

- *Professional and teaching qualifications of the educational guarantor and lecturer;*
- *Documentation of accredited educational programs;*
- *Requirements for certificates of completion of accredited programs;*
- *Requirements for programs leading to micro-certification;*
- *The scope of the program leading to a micro-certificate corresponding to one credit;*
- *Requirements for micro-certificates;*
- *Professional competence of authorised persons and the national guarantor;*
- *Requirements for certificates of professional qualification, portfolio, and audit protocol.<sup>2</sup>*

Legislative changes aim to create a **unified accreditation system for adult education**, with the Ministry of Education responsible for its implementation. This new legislation will also influence proposed measures regarding adult education funding. The new law is expected to lead to increased adult participation in further education. The law will support flexible opportunities for acquiring skills and better transparency and applicability of qualifications in an international context. It will also help systematise qualifications in SR, clarify their typology, and regulate the process of verifying educational outcomes according to the Slovak Qualification Framework standards. It will facilitate the recognition of skills acquired at work or through hobbies. The Ministry of Education is preparing an electronic platform for individual educational accounts, which will enable the search and offering of accredited educational programs.

Many adult education programs are available in SR; however, a lack of a systematic approach to ensuring their quality, limited funding opportunities, and other commitments for those aged 55+ restrict their participation in educational courses. The new legislation addresses challenges related to quality assurance, certification of education, and funding, which are key to increasing participation from this age group. In addition to systemic changes, it is crucial to encourage adults to participate in education, such as through:

- Flexible learning opportunities,

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<sup>2</sup> Draft (Proposal). REGULATION of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Youth of the Slovak Republic, implementing certain provisions of Act No. .../2024 Coll. on adult education and amendments to certain laws, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=551235>

- Access to online resources,
- Tailoring educational materials for individuals aged 55+.

Beyond systemic changes, it is important to raise awareness among the broader public and employers about **age management and the benefits of generational diversity in the workplace**. Key focus areas include:

- Work-life balance,
- Raising awareness of the importance of employing people aged 55+,
- Reducing prejudice against employing people aged 55+.

Previous findings highlighted the need to address the following barriers:

- Insufficient research into the educational needs of adults, especially those over 55, represents a major shortfall in understanding their specific requirements.
- Insufficient initiatives to support health and a healthy lifestyle among employees, including supplementary health and preventive services and counselling.
- The need to focus on improving technological skills for employees aged 55+. Adapting educational methods to the needs and pace of these employees is crucial in this context.
- A lack of a comprehensive age management strategy within companies. Such a strategy should address transitions from school to work and the unique challenges faced by different age groups within the workforce. Supporting companies to integrate age management practices into their organisational structures will be key to creating an inclusive environment for employees of all ages.

## **Regional methodological approach**

### **Process**

Measures and activities proposed for implementation in the SR were primarily identified during the first project activity and emerged from source studies, qualitative workshops,

and expert discussions. In this project phase, eight measures were identified, each comprising various subgroups of detailed activities, divided into five main themes: **awareness-raising, tools for employers, employee health, systemic changes, and education.**

In the second project phase, **five measures** were elaborated in more detail, consulted with key stakeholders, and subsequently refined. The selection of measures for further development also considered the ongoing legislative changes in the SR concerning adult education, as mentioned above.

### Key stakeholders and participants

TREXIMA Bratislava established a network of stakeholders collaborating in the SR to promote innovation and cooperation in the field of age management. The network brings together experts, researchers, and organisations from various sectors and institutions. During previous workshops and meetings, knowledge was gathered through the exchange of information. The *“Quadruple Helix”* model was used to assemble the stakeholder team. Stakeholders were involved in the identification of initial measures. Subsequently, a selection process based on processed priorities was conducted, and measures were chosen to be further elaborated in detail.

The selected measures were individually consulted with key stakeholders, and subsequently, we prepared a workshop on November 8, 2024, where the selected measures were presented and verified. All stakeholders received invitations for the meeting and the following partners participated.

#### Structure of participants

<b>Ministries' budgetary organisations</b>	The Institute for Labour and Family Research	1
<b>Companies</b>	TREXIMA Bratislava	5

<b>Civil society</b>	Slovak Association of Age Management, Slovak Chamber of Commerce and industry	3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>

## Measures, tools, funding options, and responsible entities

### 1. Area of measure – Awareness-raising

**Title:** Awareness of Age Management through Media Campaigns and Educational Podcasts.

**Description:** Influence recruitment and career development while supporting work-life balance.

**Impact Assessment:** The initiative will raise awareness within companies and motivate them to actively address age management practices and integrate them into corporate structures. It aims to create a supportive work environment for employees of all age groups, emphasising generational differences. It will encourage employers to hire and retain older workers, elevate the status of employees aged 55+, and reduce myths and stereotypes suggesting that older workers are slower or less adept with new technologies. The measure seeks to eliminate inequality in access to education and job opportunities and actively supports continuous professional development for all employees, including those aged 55+.

**Responsible Entity:** Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter “MPSVaR SR”) in collaboration with employers and major trade unions.

**Deadline:** December 2025

**Monitoring:** yet to be determined.

**Monitoring entity:** the Alliance of Sectoral Councils

**Budgeting and Financing:** yet to be determined.

**EU Funding:** European Social Fund (hereinafter “ESF”)

**Estimated Costs:** yet to be determined.

## 2. Area of measure – Tools for employers

**Title:** Supporting an Inclusive Work Culture and Integrating Older Workers

**Description:** Establish methodological support for employers to promote an inclusive work culture and integrate older workers, thereby fostering generational diversity within organisations.

**Impact Assessment:** An inclusive work culture and the integration of older workers will bring numerous benefits to companies. Effective age management strategies will ensure that valuable knowledge and skills are transferred from older to younger employees, increasing the overall competence of the organisation. Flexible working conditions and a respectful work environment will lead to higher employee satisfaction and retention, particularly for older workers.

### **Activity 1 – Development of an Age Management Strategy**

Develop a methodology and training materials to assist companies in effectively implementing an age management strategy. The methodology should address key areas and focus on eliminating ageism—prejudices related to age. It should also address solutions to the specific needs and challenges of various age groups in the workplace—generational diversity—and support intergenerational cooperation and mutual communication. Overall, it should contribute to improving the status and recognition of older workers.

### **Activity 2 – Flexible Working Conditions**

Introduce standardised and proven procedures and methodologies for companies (guidelines, internal documents) aimed at adapting work schedules to the individual needs of older employees and persons with disabilities—such as flexible working hours, the option to work from home (remote work), and job-sharing opportunities, especially for physically demanding tasks. This will accommodate the needs of older workers while maintaining their productivity in the labour market.

**Responsible Entity:** MPSVaR SR in collaboration with employers and major trade unions.

**Deadline:** December 2025

**Monitoring:** Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of measures on employees—employee well-being, productivity, and organisational performance, and the effectiveness of educational programs through the Information System on Labour Costs (ISCP). Monitoring should include feedback collection from employees and employers within each organisation.

**Monitoring Entity:** Trexima Bratislava, MPSVaR SR

**Budgeting and Financing:** State Budget through the MPSVaR SR / EU Funding: ESF

**Estimated costs:**

The costs should include the development of the methodology (content creation), training materials, initial pilot training, and dissemination of the materials. The total costs for implementing both activities across multiple sectors could range from several hundred thousand euros to up to one million euros, with potential EU funding coverage of up to 80%.

### 3. Measure Area – Tools for employers

**Title:** Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring

**Description:** Strengthening intergenerational collaboration (generational diversity) through the use of mentoring and reverse mentoring practices.

**Impact Assessment:** Intergenerational collaboration among employees will be enhanced, enabling knowledge transfer between older and younger workers and maintaining inclusion within the work environment.

#### **Activity 1: Development of methodologies for mentoring and reverse mentoring**

Develop methodologies to support mentoring programs, providing guidelines for leveraging the experience of older employees and facilitating knowledge transfer to younger colleagues. The methodologies will also include reverse mentoring, where younger colleagues train older ones, particularly in areas like technology, digital literacy,

and modern communication methods. Additionally, opportunities for role rotation and cross-departmental training will be provided. These intergenerational mentoring programs will contribute to a culture of continuous learning and increased employee engagement.

### **Activity 2: Implementation of Mentoring Programs**

Adopt proven procedures and methodologies developed within the IntegrAGE project for companies when designing and implementing effective mentoring and reverse mentoring programs. These procedures will account for the specific needs of individual sectors and work environments, emphasising the value of intergenerational collaboration.

**Responsible Entity:** MPSVaR SR in cooperation with employers and major trade unions, TREXIMA Bratislava

**Deadline:** December 2025

**Monitoring:** yet to be determined

**Monitoring entity:** The Alliance of Sectoral Councils in cooperation with Sectoral Councils

**Budgeting and Funding:** Company resources/European Union funding

### **Estimated Costs:**

Each organisation will allocate a portion of its budget for human resources (HR), using funds already utilised for onboarding processes for new employees. For effective development and maintenance of the mentoring program, existing resources will also contribute to better work habits for new employees. This includes costs for training materials, software tools, and administrative support (10,000 to 50,000€ annually, depending on company size and program scope).

Companies can apply for funding from EU programs such as the ESF, which offers financial support for initiatives aimed at increasing workforce skills and adaptability. Potential EU grants could cover 50% to 80% of project costs.

#### **4. Measure area – Employee health**

**Title:** Corporate Health and Healthy Lifestyle Policy

**Description:** Support initiatives (methodologies, training, and media campaigns) focused on promoting the health of all employees, including additional health services and psychological counselling, to foster a positive work culture and employee well-being.

**Impact Assessment:** Reduction in employee absenteeism due to illness. Positive influence on employees' physical and mental health, improving their overall well-being. The initiative will emphasise the importance of prevention and regular health check-ups for employees, including dental health. It will minimise lifestyle-related risk factors associated with chronic diseases through health literacy, promotion of physical activities, and healthy nutrition.

##### **Activity 1 – Employee Health Education**

Increase employee awareness of health and safety. Provide access to informational resources that improve health literacy—conduct online seminars and make digital educational platforms available focusing on key health topics. Encourage employees to take responsibility for their health and healthy lifestyle. Organise regular workshops on self-care, health maintenance, healthy eating habits, and nutrition counselling.

##### **Activity 2 – Provide Opportunities for Employee Health Development and Maintenance**

Ensure employees receive regular health check-ups (beyond the legal requirements), including dental check-ups and dental hygiene. Promote regular exercise and physical activities for employees by providing access to fitness clubs and sports facilities. Encourage employee participation in company fitness challenges and group activities.

##### **Activity 3 – Employee Mental Health Care**

Support employees' mental well-being by regularly monitoring stress levels and providing access to therapy and counselling. Promote work-life balance.

Support preventive programs aimed at preventing and eliminating socio-pathological phenomena and risky behaviour among employees of all age groups.

#### **Activity 4 – Health-Conscious Working Conditions**

Adapt workplaces to meet the physical needs of employees, with a focus on older employees, by creating ergonomic workstations. Provide ergonomic equipment to prevent injuries caused by repetitive strain, such as adjustable desks, chairs with back support, monitors set to the proper height, mats, keyboard stands, wrist supports, and ergonomic mice. Regularly assess ergonomic settings in the workplace and identify physical needs and potential workplace adjustments.

Enable flexible working conditions, including remote work options. To minimise physical strain and promote overall well-being, encourage employees to take regular breaks and move throughout the workday.

**Responsible Entity:** Individual companies in collaboration with accredited educational institutions (Ministry of Health SR).

**Timeline:** 2026

#### **Monitoring:**

- Statistical survey of working conditions
- Employee participation rate in health programs.
- Improvement in health outcomes (e.g., reduced absenteeism)
- Employee satisfaction surveys regarding healthy lifestyle initiatives and workplace satisfaction.

**Monitoring entity:** MPSVaR SR

**Budget and Financing:** Own Resources of Companies

- Ergonomic equipment and adjustments: adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs, and supportive accessories. Cost range: €250–€800 per employee.

- Training programs: costs for health literacy, ergonomics, and other healthy lifestyle topics. Cost range: €100 per employee per training.
- Health check-ups and screenings: employer responsibility to ensure employee participation in preventive check-ups, or an employer benefit—covering costs for regular health and dental check-ups and other preventive services. Cost range: €100–€455 per employee annually.
- Mental health support services: costs for counselling services, stress management programs. Cost range: €100 per employee annually.
- Fitness programs and resources: gym memberships, and subscriptions to fitness apps. Cost range: €216 per employee annually.

### **Estimated Costs:**

For full implementation, the total cost per employee is estimated to be between €455 and €1,820 annually (one-time cost, repeating every three years).

## **5. Area of Measure – Systemic Changes**

**Title:** Prevention of Age Discrimination, Support for Age Diversity, Generational Mix, and Inclusion in the Workplace.

**Description:** Support for legislative changes to increase age diversity and generational mix in the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for employees regardless of their age.

**Impact Assessment:** Stimulating economic growth by increasing the participation of older individuals in the labour market, thereby contributing to overall stability and reducing dependency rates. Promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities in workplace practices across various age groups, thus supporting a more resilient and age-diverse economy. Ensuring fair practices in the recruitment of candidates and providing equal work opportunities for employees aged 55+, guaranteeing employers offer equal access to job opportunities, training, and career advancement based on the skills, abilities, and potential of employees aged 55+.

**Activity 1** – Comply with the provisions set out in the Labour Code, Act No. 311/2001 Coll., and the Anti-Discrimination Act, Act No. 365/2004 Coll., which directly and indirectly prohibit discrimination based on age in employment relationships, career evaluation, workplace qualification advancement, and termination of employment for any legal reason. Clearly define internal documents and mechanisms for effectively monitoring adherence to anti-discrimination principles, including establishing effective sanctions for their violation.

**Activity 2** – Analyse the impacts of introducing tax incentives aimed at encouraging companies to employ people aged 55+ to facilitate increased employment in this age group.

**Responsible Entity:** Labour Inspectorate

**Deadline:** yet to be determined.

**Monitoring:** MPSVaR SR

**Monitoring Entity:** Tripartite (Government, Employers, and Unions/Associations)

**Budget and Financing:** yet to be determined.

**Estimated Costs:** yet to be determined.

## Summary

The presented measures were extensively discussed during a workshop with key stakeholders, who underscored their importance. Participants highlighted the critical need to promote age management strategies in Slovakia. However, they acknowledged that persuading key stakeholders and actors to prioritise this topic may pose challenges.

Participants emphasised that promoting and supporting part-time employment and flexible work arrangements for older employees is crucial, noting benefits such as increased workforce flexibility and enhanced well-being for older workers. Establishing robust mentoring programs within companies was also highlighted as a key step to ensure seamless knowledge transfer, fostering intergenerational collaboration and maintaining organisational expertise.

Recognising the value of employees aged 50 and over, organisations can leverage their experience and insights to build an inclusive and age-diverse workforce, fostering a culture that values diverse perspectives, enhances collaboration, and drives innovation through generational knowledge-sharing.

When implementing these measures, the broader benefits, such as improved knowledge retention, workforce resilience, and overall sustainability, must be considered. Collaborative efforts with organisations and stakeholders in Slovakia are vital for developing tailored methodologies that address the needs of large, medium, and small enterprises.

The workshop also brought attention to the unique challenges faced by each country within regional clusters. A country persona-based approach was emphasised, with strategies tailored to the socio-economic conditions and cultural contexts of each country, ensuring that the proposed measures are not only effective but also adaptable and relevant to local realities.

Overall, we assess that all defined measures are relevant and beneficial.

## Implications for the Action Plan

### **The impact of population ageing and the need for cohesive policy measures**

Population ageing has a profound impact on economic, social, and healthcare systems, necessitating cohesive and coordinated actions from policymakers and stakeholders to address the resulting challenges. Ensuring a sustainable future requires supporting systemic reforms and developing policies that can adapt to demographic shifts. **Central to these efforts is strengthening intergenerational collaboration, recognising that older individuals carry valuable experience and skills that can enhance and enrich the work environment for everyone.**

### **Intergenerational collaboration as a key focus**

The IntegrAGE project has identified four representative country clusters, termed "Country Personas," based on various qualitative and quantitative indicators. Slovakia, along with Hungary and Croatia, is part of Cluster C. Detailed analyses have been developed for each cluster, covering aspects such as demographic trends, pension systems, socio-economic conditions, the level of age management implementation, labour market conditions, healthcare systems, and overall well-being (including physical health, mental wellness, and life satisfaction). This comprehensive Cluster C analysis could serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, stakeholders, and organisational managers interested in addressing challenges related to population ageing and an ageing workforce. This analysis offers practical insights and highlights strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats concerning age management and workforce inclusivity. This analysis should be taken into account while developing an Action plan (hereinafter "AP").

### **Creating an inclusive labour market**

Employers and political leaders face the challenge of fostering an inclusive labour market where older workers feel valued, needed, and motivated. This involves creating supportive work environments, offering flexible work arrangements, and implementing mentoring programs that facilitate knowledge transfer between generations. By valuing and engaging older employees, organisations can enhance productivity and leverage the diverse perspectives within their workforce.

To further strengthen the integration of older workers, it is crucial to improve access to education and digital skills training for seniors. This not only boosts their employability but also enhances their quality of life, enabling them to participate more fully in modern work environments. Investments in continuous learning for older employees help bridge generational divides and equip them with the tools needed to adapt to changing labour market demands.

By promoting intergenerational collaboration and mutual respect, we pave the way for a more resilient and supportive community. The benefits of supporting employment for older workers and enhancing their access to skills and education extend beyond individual gains. They contribute to the overall economic stability and productivity of the region. By recognising and acting on the value of our ageing population, we create a society that thrives on diversity, inclusion and shared growth, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

### **Implications for the AP in addressing population ageing**

The ageing of the population has far-reaching implications for economic, social, and healthcare systems. To effectively address these challenges, the AP must

propose cohesive and coordinated measures aimed at systemic reform and policy development that respond to demographic changes. One of the fundamental aspects of this AP involves **enhancing intergenerational collaboration, given the valuable experience and skills that older individuals can contribute to the workplace.**

## **Strategic Priorities and Actions for the AP**

### **1) Strengthen intergenerational collaboration:**

- **Mentoring Programs:** Encourage the establishment of structured mentoring programs within organisations, pairing older employees with younger colleagues to facilitate knowledge transfer and skill development.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Launch initiatives that promote the value of older employees in the workforce, highlighting their contributions to workplace diversity and organisational resilience.

### **2) Promote inclusive labour market practices:**

- **Flexible work arrangements:** Advocate for the adoption of part-time and flexible work options for older employees, offering them greater autonomy and improving their work-life balance.
- **Supportive work environments:** Encourage policies that foster inclusivity and ensure that older workers feel respected, motivated, and essential within their organisations.

### **3) Enhance Education and Digital Literacy:**

- **Access to Training:** Improve access to lifelong learning opportunities, including digital skills training, for older workers to enhance their employability and adaptability in a rapidly evolving labour market.
- **Tailored training programs:** Develop and provide training programs specifically suited to the needs and capabilities of older workers, aligning with current industry demands.

### **4) Collaboration with Stakeholders and Tailored Approaches:**

- Country-specific adjustments: recognise the unique challenges faced by different country clusters. For Slovakia (Cluster C), for example, strategies should reflect its specific socio-economic conditions and cultural context.
- Stakeholder engagement: Facilitate collaboration with government bodies, industry leaders, and civil society to ensure that methodologies and initiatives align with the needs of large, medium, and small enterprises.

Implementing these measures within the AP will lead to improved knowledge retention, a more resilient and adaptable workforce, and enhanced economic stability. By prioritising intergenerational cooperation and creating opportunities for older employees, the AP can promote a sustainable and inclusive labour market that benefits all generations.