

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**



**IntegrAGE**

**IntegrAGE project**

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**AUSTRIA**

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## 1. Country and regional context

Austria's workforce includes a significant proportion of individuals aged 55 to 64, with a notable prevalence of part-time work and gender differences, favoring women. Although the country's employment rate for older workers is below the EU average, recent trends show improvement. This progress highlights the importance of maintaining and enhancing age management strategies to promote the well-being of senior employees and retain their valuable expertise in the labor market. National initiatives in Austria include training programs to improve older workers' skills and employability, flexible work arrangements, and health promotion activities aimed at supporting both physical and mental well-being. Additionally, Austria aligns with the EU's Active Ageing Index, which encourages the active participation of older individuals in society and the labor market.

Austria has developed a range of key strategies and policies to address age management, focusing on promoting the well-being and productivity of its aging workforce. At the national level, initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, health promotion programs, and training opportunities aim to support older employees. Programs like the "50+ employment funding" and the "Employment Initiative 50+" are critical components of this strategy, incentivizing employers to hire and retain older workers through financial support and other benefits. Additionally, partial retirement options and lifelong learning initiatives help maintain the employability of older generations by reducing skill gaps and encouraging intergenerational knowledge transfer. Austria's approach is also aligned with EU-level policies, particularly the Active Ageing Index, which provides a framework for fostering older individuals' active participation in society and the labor market.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Studies reveal significant age discrimination in employment, with the Equal Treatment Ombudsman documenting 427 cases in 2018/19, representing 10% of all discrimination complaints. To address this, policymakers and companies must work collaboratively to implement measures that facilitate longer working lives and combat bias against older workers. Key recommendations include reviewing collective agreements on seniority pay to align wages with productivity and ensuring employers provide incentives to retain and support older employees. While Austria has taken a proactive approach to age management, these steps are crucial to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for the aging workforce.

## 2. Regional methodological approach

In Austria, priority areas have been identified from analysis and data collected. The three priority areas for age management measures in Austria are:

- Priority 1: Employment measures at the market level
- Priority 2: Awareness-raising initiatives
- Priority 3: Training programs for senior employees.

Employment measures are macro-level, state-driven initiatives closely tied to labor market conditions. Awareness-raising efforts operate on multiple levels, from societal to company and individual levels, often driven by organizations and companies with some public support. Training measures focus on addressing the digital skill gap among senior employees through targeted workshops and programs, emphasizing the role of HR departments, strategic management, and specialized training providers in bridging generational differences and promoting age-inclusive workplaces.

The validation workshop took place on **4th of December, in hybrid format**. 6 participants attended in person and 2 online. The meeting was moderated by ipcenter project manager and trainer, and it consisted of:

- Round of introduction and presentation of working sector
- General insights into the **IntegrAGE project** and presentation of **6 key measures on age management**, which are being currently implemented in Austria.
- **Group discussions** on how these measures can be applied effectively, pros and cons and applicability in other contexts.
- Shared **conclusions** and collected valuable **feedback** through Mentimeter.

The quadruple helix approach was considered when looking for relevant stakeholders in Austria and we contacted different representatives from education (ÖJAB, BildungsLAB & VHS Burgenland), industry and businesses (HR representative of a software company & Innovation center ZSI) and civil society (2 employees of senior age).

Stakeholders carefully reviewed the proposed measures and analysed their potential impact and the applicability in other contexts. All responses were gathered in a systematic way through mentimeter. Responses have been analysed and according to stakeholders' input, we have selected 3 main measures, which has been transformed into concrete recommendations.

### 3. SELECTED MEASURES

#### 3.1. Measure 1 - Employment Initiative 50 Plus

##### **Short Description:**

The Public Employment Service (AMS) aims to encourage the hiring of older workers by providing targeted support to both employers and employees. Key features of this initiative include wage subsidies for employers hiring individuals over the age of 50, tailored job placement support, and career guidance designed to address the specific needs of older job seekers. Additionally, access to relevant training programs helps improve employability and bridge skill gaps for older workers.

Since its implementation in 2018, this program has successfully integrated over 50,000 older workers into the job market. By fostering inclusivity and supporting lifelong learning, the initiative has had a significant impact on enhancing employment opportunities for older individuals while addressing challenges associated with an aging workforce.

##### **Barriers or Preconditions for successful implementation:**

While measures such as wage subsidies and tailored job placement support for older workers already exist in Austria, several barriers hinder their broader diffusion and successful scaling. A key challenge lies in the limited awareness and acceptance among employers, many of whom still perceive older workers as less adaptable or productive, despite evidence to the contrary. Additionally, funding schemes and resources allocated to such programs may be insufficient, particularly for smaller companies that struggle to implement these measures without financial strain.

To overcome these barriers and enable successful scaling, specific preconditions must be addressed. These include the creation or adjustment of strategic documents and action plans that align with national and EU-level policies on active aging and inclusion. Enhanced legislation may also be required to incentivize participation, such as stronger tax benefits for companies hiring older workers. Moreover, expanded funding schemes and sustained awareness campaigns could help shift perceptions and promote the benefits of employing older individuals. Collaboration between the public sector, private enterprises, and training providers is essential to ensure these measures achieve their full potential.

##### **Impact Assessment:**

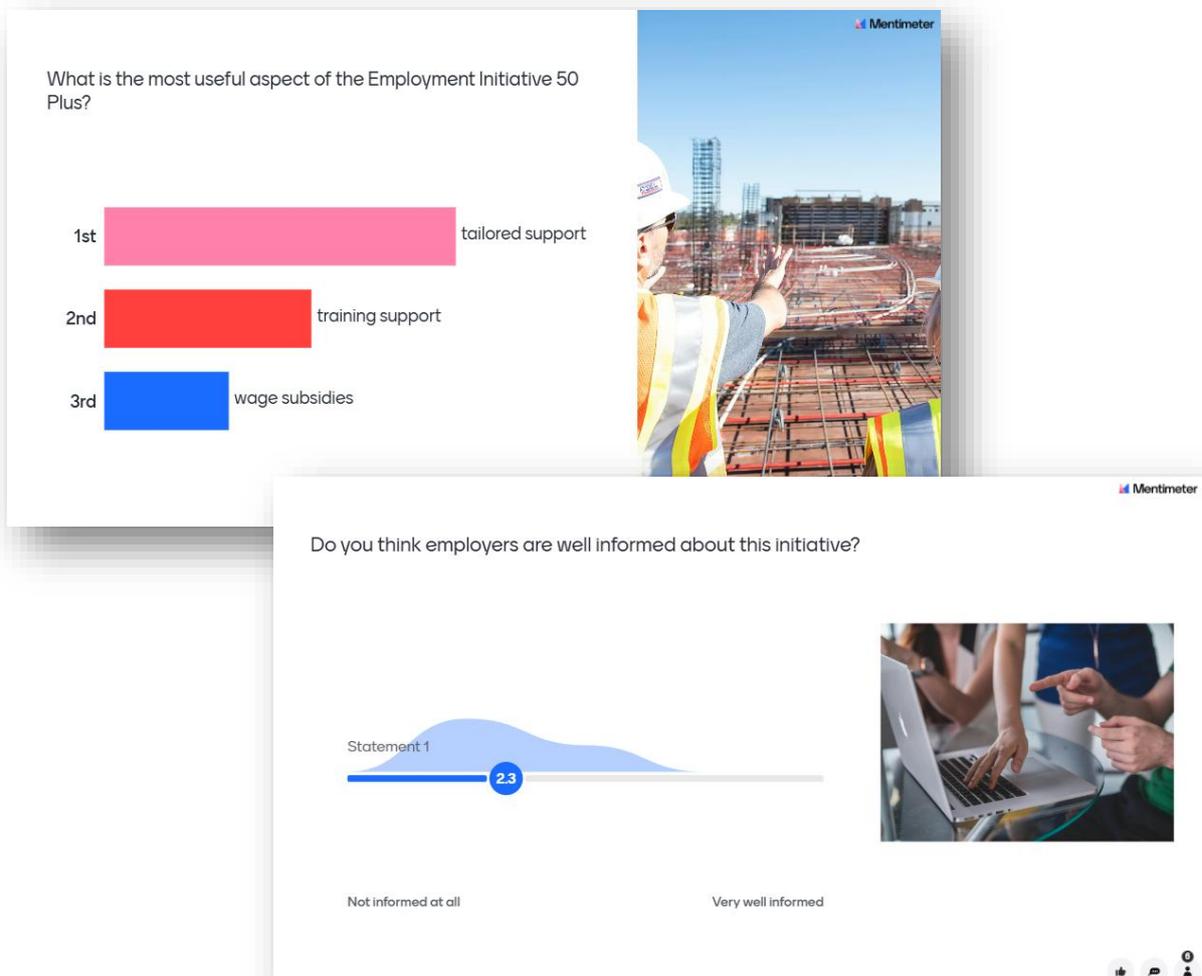
The proposed measures to encourage the hiring of older workers are highly relevant to Austria's demographic challenges and labour market needs, particularly in addressing the digital skill gap and retaining the experience of senior employees. Their alignment with broader national and EU-level employment strategies reinforces their importance in promoting workplace diversity and combating age discrimination. Over 50,000 older

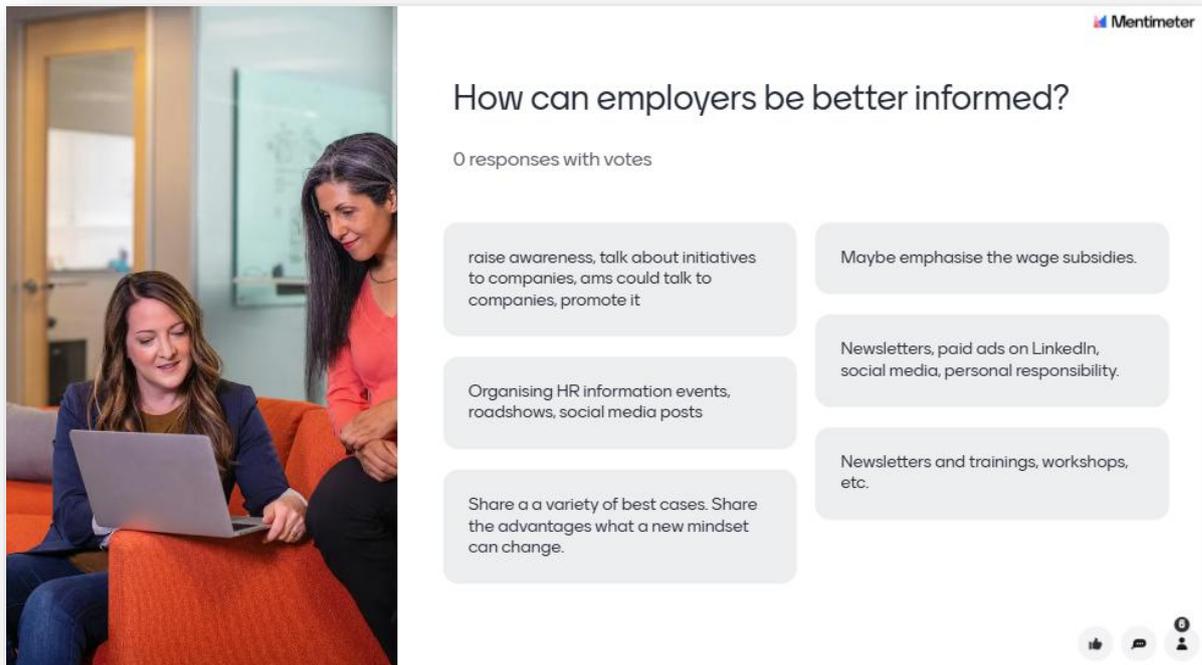
workers have already benefited from these initiatives, demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing unemployment and fostering intergenerational collaboration and knowledge transfer.

While the measures have had a positive impact, challenges in administrative efficiency and long-term sustainability remain. Complex processes for accessing subsidies and training programs often discourage participation, highlighting the need to simplify procedures and ensure timely allocation of resources. Additionally, sustaining these initiatives requires continued funding, stronger employer engagement, and embedding the measures into broader employment strategies to adapt to future labour market changes. Another problem that was highlighted during the workshop was that employers sometimes do not know about his initiative.

The feasibility of implementation is promising but relies heavily on stakeholder collaboration. Policymakers, employers, and training providers must work together to overcome barriers, such as employer biases and limited awareness of the benefits of hiring older workers. Strengthened cooperation, targeted support, and streamlined processes can maximize the impact of these measures, creating a more inclusive and sustainable labour market for Austria's aging workforce.

### **Feedback from Mentimeter:**





## 3.2. Measure 2 - Dialog Healthy and Active Aging

### **Short Description:**

The Health Fund Austria (FGÖ) aims to create healthier, more age-friendly workplaces by actively involving older employees in the development of new programs. Key initiatives include improving workplace ergonomics to ensure healthy working environments, launching health promotion programs such as fitness activities and mental health workshops, and implementing flexible work arrangements tailored to the needs of older workers.

These measures have a significant impact, enhancing productivity, reducing absenteeism, and increasing job satisfaction among senior employees. By fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace environment, the program not only improves the well-being of older workers but also contributes to the overall sustainability and efficiency of organizations.

### **Barriers or Preconditions for successful implementation:**

While the measures to create healthier, age-friendly workplaces exist to some extent in Austria, several barriers limit their broader diffusion and scaling. A significant challenge is the lack of widespread awareness and prioritization of age-friendly workplace strategies among employers, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Furthermore, limited funding and resources for implementing ergonomic improvements, health promotion programs, and flexible work arrangements hinder their adoption. The absence of mandatory requirements or strong incentives in national legislation further reduces the urgency for companies to adopt these measures.

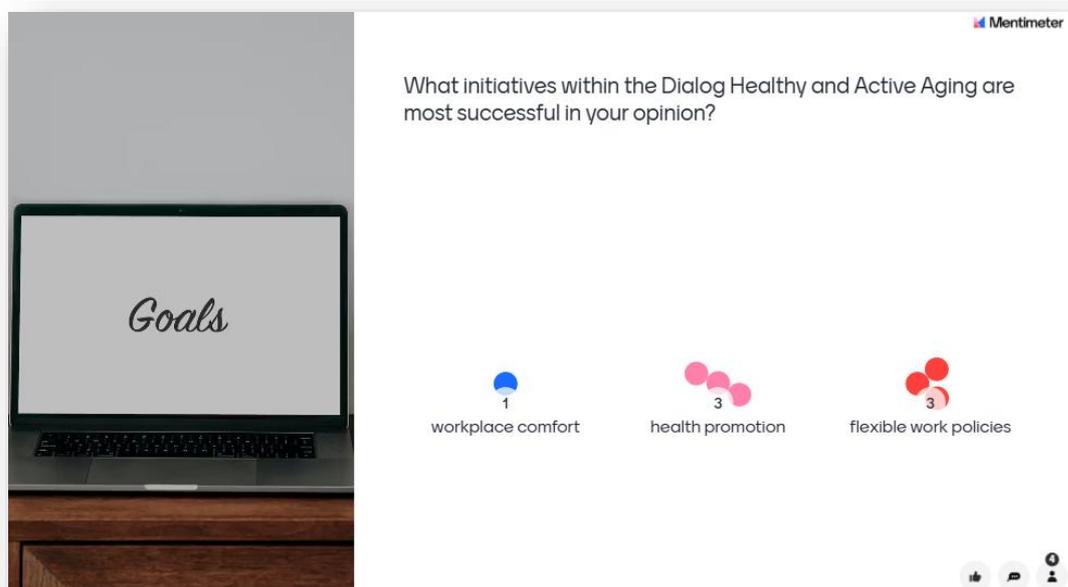
### **Impact Assessment:**

Improving workplace ergonomics, promoting health initiatives, and offering flexible work arrangements directly respond to the needs of older employees, fostering well-being and productivity. Discussions emphasized the importance of involving older workers in designing these programs to ensure they are tailored to their specific requirements, making them more effective and impactful.

While these measures have shown effectiveness in reducing absenteeism and enhancing job satisfaction, their efficiency is influenced by company size and resource availability. Larger organizations have been more successful in implementing these changes, whereas small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges due to limited funding and expertise. Streamlining funding mechanisms, offering technical support, and simplifying administrative processes were identified as key strategies to improve the efficiency and accessibility of these initiatives.

Sustaining these measures long-term requires embedding them into company culture and securing ongoing funding and engagement from employers. Their impact goes beyond older workers, as healthier, more inclusive workplaces benefit entire organizations, enhancing productivity and job satisfaction across all age groups. Collaboration between policymakers, health institutions, and employers is essential to overcoming barriers such as funding constraints and limited awareness, particularly among SMEs. Tailored incentives and targeted support can further increase the feasibility and scalability of these initiatives, ensuring broader adoption across Austria's labor market.

### **Feedback from Mentimeter:**



What other activities or partnerships could strengthen this dialog?

4 responses

include the target group, let them speak

More events like this one but for bigger audiences, more focus groups

Age management prize for companies to motivate them

It may be very valuable to other initiatives with its participation of the target group



Which of these three measures is the most impactful in your opinion, and why? (Rank them, please.)



1st



Employment initiative 50+

2nd



Dialog Healthy and Active Aging

### 3.3. Measure 3 - Mentoring Scheme in Retailing

#### **Short Description:**

The objective of this mentoring initiative is to facilitate knowledge transfer and career development by pairing experienced older employees with younger workers. Through this collaboration, the program focuses on skill-building, customer service enhancement, and fostering professional growth. By promoting mutual learning and intergenerational cooperation, the initiative helps bridge generational gaps within the workplace.

The impact of this program is multifaceted. It strengthens team dynamics, ensuring smoother collaboration and communication among diverse age groups. Additionally, it retains valuable institutional knowledge by allowing senior employees to pass on their expertise while supporting the development of younger workers. This creates a more cohesive and future-ready workforce, emphasizing the benefits of intergenerational teamwork in achieving long-term organizational goals.

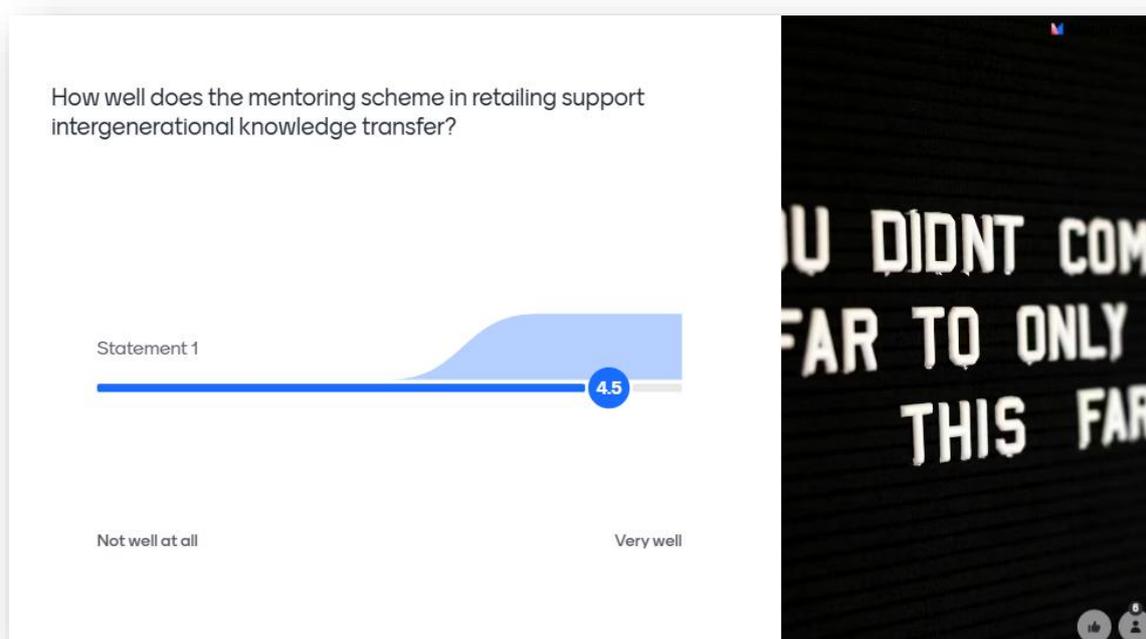
### **Barriers or Preconditions for successful implementation:**

While mentoring programs for knowledge transfer and career development exist to some extent in Austria, several barriers limit their broader diffusion and scaling. A primary challenge is the lack of formalized mentoring structures in many organizations, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many companies rely on informal knowledge sharing, which lacks consistency and measurable outcomes. Additionally, limited resources for training mentors and providing ongoing support hinder the effective implementation of such programs. There is also a need for awareness and buy-in from employers, as some may underestimate the value of mentoring in enhancing team dynamics and retaining institutional knowledge.

### **Impact Assessment:**

The program's sustainability and feasibility depend on the creation of a strong support system, including consistent funding and organizational commitment. Long-term sustainability requires embedding mentoring programs into organizational policies and offering incentives to participants. While the initiative is feasible, scaling it nationally will require collaboration among policymakers, employer associations, and training providers. Addressing barriers such as limited awareness and resource constraints is crucial to ensure successful implementation and widespread adoption, maximizing the initiative's impact on Austria's workforce development.

### **Feedback from Mentimeter:**

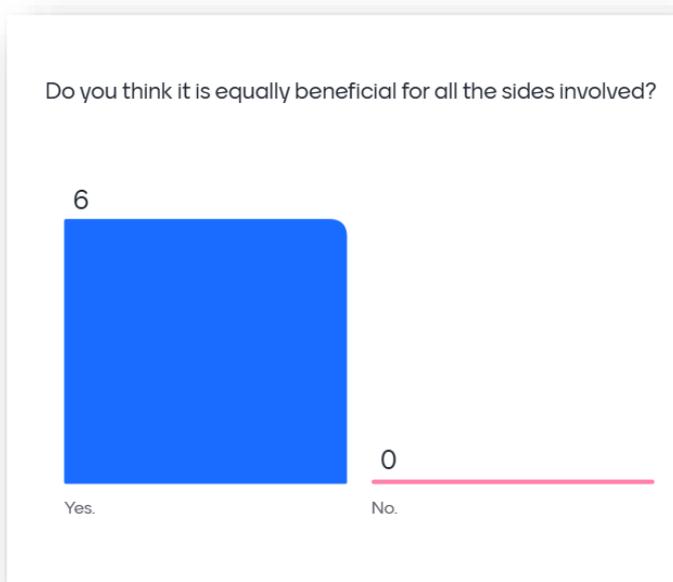


## 4. STAKEHOLDERS

To ensure the successful implementation and scaling of the measures presented, it is crucial the involvement of multiple stakeholders, targeted instruments, and well-coordinated. The following table outlines the key policy actors, instruments, and their contributions:

National Government (Ministries of Labor & Social Affairs)	Strategic documents, funding schemes, legislation adjustments
Public Employment Service (AMS)	Job placement programs, career guidance, and training subsidies
Employers Associations	Flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and internal policy development
Unions and Employee Representatives	Advocacy, monitoring of age-related discrimination, and input into collective agreements
Training Providers	Lifelong learning programs, digital upskilling initiatives, and pedagogical resources
Civil Society Organizations (NGOs)	Awareness campaigns, research on age discrimination, and community support programs
European Union	Framework policies (Active Ageing Index), funding instruments, and guidance

## 5. Summary



### Main Conclusions

The overall impact assessment revealed that the measures addressing age management, such as Job offensive 50+, mentoring programs, and health-friendly workplace initiatives, are highly relevant to Austria's aging workforce.

These measures enhance job opportunities for older workers, support active and healthy aging, and improve digital and professional skills.

For employers, they provide financial incentives, access to experienced and motivated workers, and foster workplace diversity and collaboration. However, barriers such as limited awareness, resource constraints, and administrative complexity hinder their efficiency and broader adoption. Long-term sustainability depends on embedding these initiatives into organizational cultures and ensuring adequate funding and policy support.

### Implications for Action Plan

To ensure the successful implementation of these measures, the action plan should focus on raising awareness among employers and workers about the benefits of age management initiatives. Adjustments to national strategic frameworks, such as incorporating specific existing measures in the action plan are crucial.

Training and workshops tailored for employers and HR professionals can provide the necessary knowledge and resources to implement these programs effectively. Lastly, collaboration among stakeholders such as government agencies, employer associations, unions, and NGOs is essential to create a supportive ecosystem.

The next steps involve aligning the measures with Austria's national and regional strategies while incorporating EU-level frameworks.

Additionally, efforts should focus on conducting pilot programs to showcase the benefits of these initiatives, which can then be scaled based on feedback. The action plan must also emphasize capacity building through training providers and awareness campaigns to ensure successful implementation and long-term impact.

What is one final suggestion or idea you'd like to share to improve support for workers over 50?

13 responses

- Speak louder (metaphorically) and keep promoting your ideas
- Raising awareness is the most important. Companies, public bodies, the direct target group
- Teach them the general idea of having a positive thinking and mindset.
- Be as sector-and contextspecific as possible, maybe figure out methods to do so
- Being grateful what life still can give you.
- present success examples that this really is beneficial