

IntegrAGE project

STRATEGY & ACTION PLANS

FOR THE HEALTHY INTEGRATION OF SENIOR EMPLOYEES
AND HOLISTIC AGE MANAGEMENT ON THE LABOUR MARKET



Grant agreement No.: DRP0200406
Acronym: IntegrAGE
Project name: A practical approach to support the healthy adaptation and integration of 55+ workforce into the labour market.
Output No.: 1.3

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1. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

A milestone of the IntegrAGE project is developing an IntegrAGE Strategy and Action Plan (S&AP) that integrates innovative solutions tailored to the Danube region's needs.

This document is the comprehensive approach, through which the IntegrAGE project will raise awareness on age management, promote age-friendly work environments and share inputs on work-life balance for the 55+ workforce.

After a brief introduction into the project IntegrAGE and the relevance of an age management approach in the Danube Region, some relevant stakeholders will be presented, as fostering an IntegrAGE Alliance is essential for achieving the desired impact. We will present the IntegrAGE Framework, which summarizes our key findings, and it serves as a theoretical framework and common ground for outputs, events and dissemination.

The strategy for the Danube Region is presented through a set of general and specific objectives which will be operationalised through four Action Plans tailored to specific regional clusters based on shared challenges and opportunities. Each action plan aligns with the overarching goals of promoting age-friendly workplaces, supporting skill development, and ensuring the active participation of older workers. By enhancing collaboration among stakeholders - including policymakers, businesses, and civil society - the strategy seeks to create a sustainable and inclusive labour market across the Danube Region.



2. STRATEGY for the Danube Region

The IntegrAGE Strategy will give you an overview of project objectives and relevance for the Danube region while clarifying what is the IntegrAGE Framework. This strategy sets main general and specific objectives that will crystallise in four Action Plans, presented in section 3.

2.1 Introduction to the IntegrAGE Project

The IntegrAGE project addresses the social and economic integration of the 55+ workforce in the context of demographic ageing and skill shortages. This transnational initiative strives to extend the productive participation of older workers in the labour market while leveraging their unique expertise and fostering intergenerational solidarity across the Danube Region.

By bridging policy gaps and fostering cross-border collaboration, IntegrAGE highlights the shared responsibility of stakeholders -public authorities, policymakers, companies and communities- to empower older workers. The project fosters social inclusion and active ageing aligning with the Danube Region Programme's priority of creating accessible, inclusive, and effective labour markets.

IntegrAGE envisions a future of economic resilience and innovation through cross-generational collaboration, with a particular focus on the active participation of the 55+ workforce. Through targeted interventions and sustainable practices, the project offers a set of policy recommendations for national and regional authorities and decision-making bodies. It also offers a compilation of tools and training concepts on age management for companies and employment support bodies and, finally, it offers a variety of awareness raising tools for employees over 55 years on the topic of work-life balance.

2.1.1 Objectives of the project

The common challenges that the IntegrAGE project deals with are ageing populations, regional development and labour market development.

IntegrAGE project addresses these challenges, by focusing on 55+ workforce and job seekers in the Danube region, to enable them to stay in the working process at least until their legal retiring age, and – if they wish – beyond that. The project aims to support the healthy integration of older working generations (55+) into the labour market, capitalising on their knowledge and assisting them in adapting to the challenges of new ways of working. The goal is to enhance their participation, avoid undesired early retirement, and extend their productive life.

Significant emphasis is put on promoting an age-adapted and healthy work life balance, by first recognising the unique needs and requirements of older workers. IntegrAGE seeks to create an environment that supports their well-being and fosters a positive and inclusive work culture.

Number	Specific objective
1	Strengthening the holistic approach of the integration of employees 55 + into the labour market
2	Capacity building to develop an efficient and integrated internal age management strategy for employers.
3	Enhancing the resilience of employees over 55 and boosting knowledge exchange between generations

To achieve project goals, the project includes several main activities which resulted in important outputs. Firstly, country analyses were conducted to identify the individual challenges of 55+ employment, such as the status and goals of age management, regional skill gaps, reasons for early retirement, national strategies, and initiatives.

Another important output is the creation of a joint Strategy & Action Plan (S&AP) to enhance the healthy integration of older working generations into the labour market.

To facilitate age management training for companies, the project will conceptualise, pilot, and evaluate "train the trainer" measures. A company's internal, game-based training concept for age management is created, tested, and validated, including the evaluation of available support tools and applications.

Additionally, a software-supported awareness-raising concept is developed to decrease the risk of physical and mental health issues among senior employees. A gamified training concept customised for the age group 55+ is created to close skill gaps and support their adaptation to the challenges of the new way of working. This training covers areas such as resilience, power skills, digital skills, and mental health awareness.

Finally, the project establishes a company-internal train-the-mentor program targeting senior employees to boost their knowledge-sharing abilities.

2.1.2 Project partnership

The implementation of the project is carried out by an experienced partnership with many experiences in international projects.

Lead Partner:

1. BSC, Business support centre L.t.d., - Slovenia

Partners:

2. ipcenter.at Ltd. – Austria
3. Cluster of social entrepreneurship in Vojvodina - Serbia
4. Association for Creative Development Slap (Waterfall)- Croatia
5. Schirmacher Ltd. – Germany
6. The Human Innovation Group Nonprofit Ltd.- Hungary
7. Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Bulgaria
8. Business incubator BIOS Osijek – Croatia
9. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia – Serbia
10. Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation Non-profit Ltd. – Hungary
11. Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem – Czech Republic
12. TREXIMA Bratislava, Ltd. – Slovakia
13. Development Agency of the Una-Sana - Bosnia and Herzegovina
14. Jasa Association – Slovenia
15. Innovation Centre of the Ústí region – Czech Republic

2.2 Relevance of a holistic age management approach in the Danube Region

2.2.1 The basis of the holistic age-management approach in the Danube Region

The need to maintain activity in old age and the challenges associated with this need to be addressed is an issue that applies to the Danube Region as a whole. Although the region has traditionally been a very heterogeneous macro-region with significant social and economic differences, the essence of the problem is similar everywhere, which makes it an ideal area for applying a holistic age-management approach. The challenges posed by an ageing society, rapidly changing demographics, and diverse cultural backgrounds demand a comprehensive approach to identifying issues and developing effective solutions and management strategies. This calls for innovative, cohesive thinking across company, regional, sectoral, national and Danube region levels.

2.2.2 The general relevance of age management

Age management refers to the management of human resources that focuses specifically on the needs of an ageing workforce. Age management is holistic, intergenerational and career oriented.

Benefits of age management:

Proactively managing an ageing workforce benefits workers, employers/companies/ organisations and the state.

The benefits of age regulation for workers:

- Increased motivation to remain active in the labour market.
- Increased job satisfaction.
- More motivated employees, higher job satisfaction.
- More balanced and sustainable performance in physical, mental and professional areas.
- Greater job satisfaction and greater job security.

The benefits and opportunities that age management provides to employers/companies/ organisations include:

- Ensuring a stable labour supply and proactively addressing potential skills or talent shortages.
- Preventing the costly loss of valuable skills and experience through effective knowledge transfer.
- Reducing employee turnover and recruitment costs by fostering retention strategies.
- Facilitating positive succession planning and smooth transitions when employees retire.
- Maximising the strengths, talents, and contributions of all age groups, including leveraging the networks, expertise, and experience of older workers to enhance overall organisational performance.

The benefits and opportunities that age management offers to the state:

- Slowing the increase in the retirement age and moderating the upward trend in pension expenditure.
- Reducing social problems and social costs.
- Increasing labour market activity among the age group concerned.
- Increased economic output and tax revenues.
- Reduced generational conflicts and tensions.
- Improving health and reducing health expenditure.

2.2.3 Description of target group

The following target groups have been identified during the preparation of the project. Reaching and actively involving these target groups is essential for the implementation of the project.

a) The target population concerned is the 55+ population: the project will increase the resilience of 55+ people (workers or job seekers), helping them to adapt to a new, more changing and digitalised working environment, while prolonging healthy, productive lives and promoting active ageing.

b) Stakeholders among organisations:

- Regional public authorities: the S&APs and policy recommendations directly affect public authorities at the regional level as well
- National authorities: the S&APs and policy recommendations also serve the relevant ministries, and the project consortium adopts recommendations and action plans at the national level.
- Business support organisations: capacity building measures target business support organisations to raise awareness of age-related labour market issues and to train them to deliver age-management training to enterprises.
- SMEs: The introduction of change is most likely to start on the employer side, so it is important that businesses start to shape their attitudes. Without the employer side, measures targeting employees cannot be successful.
- Education/training centres and schools: Training programmes can be used by education and training providers and their support is needed to multiply the results of the programme in the region.



2.2.4 Summary of the challenges identified by European clusters in relation to ageing dynamics

Labour market participation and unemployment

The employment rate of older workers (aged 55-64) varies significantly across countries due to differences in policies and labour market structures. Germany and Hungary have employment rates for this demographic group of 71.8% and 69.1% respectively, compared to 56.4% and 51.7% in Austria and Croatia, for example, which are also below the European average. Long-term unemployment is a notable problem in several countries. In Austria, for example, almost half of the older unemployed (49.3%) face structural barriers to re-employment, or in Germany, for example, this group experiences longer unemployment spells than the general population.

Technological adaptation and discrimination

The digitalisation of the workplace, the rapid digital transformation driven by Industry 4.0, creates new barriers for older workers. The so-called "digital skills gap" is particularly striking in this age group, and rapid technological progress is adding to the difficulties of adaptation. In addition, age discrimination in the workplace, while prohibited by law, is still present and hampers the career prospects of older workers. Discrimination is often linked to concerns about health, digital skills gaps and work-life balance.

Demographic challenges and economic impacts

It is encouraging to see that the elderly population has become healthier on average over the years, with a significantly longer average life expectancy everywhere, although there are large differences across the Danube region. However, population ageing is a problem in many areas. The ageing population directly affects pension systems, in particular pay-as-you-go systems where current workers finance pensioners. The declining number of active workers and the growing pensioner population place a huge strain on its sustainability. This would require structural reforms of the pension system. Health and social care systems are also under increasing pressure as older people require longer-term and more intensive care. These tasks are very resource intensive. They are also

increasingly challenging to staff and provide infrastructure, and are slowing economic growth, particularly due to labour shortages in key sectors.

Social care and social isolation

The ageing population is increasingly in need of social support, particularly in the form of home care and elderly support schemes. Isolation and loneliness are also major problems, which affect older people's mental health and quality of life. Low-income older people are particularly vulnerable as they have limited access to the services they need.

Knowledge transfer and institutional risks

Tackling stereotypes and promoting inclusive policies is critical. The generation gap in the workplace is problematic. Furthermore, with the retirement of experienced workers, the lack of effective knowledge management and intergenerational knowledge transfer can lead to dysfunction and competitive disadvantage.

Efforts to address the challenges of ageing require innovative strategies, including labour market reforms, health investments, pension restructuring and strengthened social care systems to ensure sustainability and inclusiveness across Europe.

2.2.5 Holistic approach to the age management and its importance

The holistic approach of the IntegrAGE project is essential because it identifies the specific situations and needs of each country within groups of countries with similar levels of development, using country personas. It examines the challenges faced by individuals aged 55 and over, as well as the difficulties employers encounter in the labour market in relation to this age group.

Population ageing is a ubiquitous process in this region. Social challenges, and the lack of digital skills, are also present in all countries and are increasing due to demographic developments. However, the structure of each country and their existing experiences are different. To address these challenges, the different experiences and best practices of each country need to be exploited. Peer reviews, exchange of good practices, transnational cooperation and a holistic vision of the project will allow us to address common challenges.

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2.2.6 Holistic vision in the IntegrAGE project

The holistic approach of the IntegrAGE project is necessary because we identify the specific situation and needs of each country and examine the challenges faced by workers over 55 and the challenges for employers in the labour markets. Skill shortages are present in all countries and are increasing due to demographic developments, but the structure of each country is different. To address these challenges, it is necessary to take advantage of the different experiences and best practices of each country. Peer reviews, exchange of good practices, transnational collaboration and the holistic vision of the project enable finding solutions to common challenges.

2.2.7 Overall and specific goals of the Strategy

The holistic age management strategy, focusing on workers and job seekers 55+, offers a comprehensive approach that seeks not only to maintain individual health and well-being but also to support economic and social value creation. As the older age group plays an increasingly important role in the labour market and society due to demographic changes, the strategy must consider the need to balance the physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of ageing. This approach aims to empower older workers and promote their active participation in both the labour market and society.

One of the key objectives of the strategy is to increase the employment of older people, which will bring economic benefits and contribute to social inclusion. Older workers need to be assisted in the labour market in a way that prioritises their skills and compensates for the disadvantages of their age. This requires the creation of healthy and sustainable working conditions, including a work environment that supports physical and mental well-being. For example, promoting ergonomic workstations and flexible or reduced working hours can help older workers to work efficiently and comfortably.

An integral part of the strategy is to break down prejudices that often prevent older workers from succeeding. It is important to emphasise the benefits of age, such as experience, reliability and problem-solving skills, to reduce the impact of stereotypes. In addition, it is essential to develop the skills and competencies of the older generation, particularly in line with the needs of the modern

labour market. To update professional and technological competencies, training programmes should be organised to help the older generation to keep their skills up to date.

Promoting health and well-being is also a key element. Occupational health screening, stress management training and exercise programmes contribute to improving the physical and mental well-being of older workers. However, supporting work-life balance is also essential to help older workers cope with change and workplace challenges. Community networks need to be built to promote social inclusion, for example by organising labour market events and intergenerational programmes. These events promote cooperation between older and younger generations while creating opportunities for the transfer of experience and knowledge.

The development of digital competencies is also at the heart of the strategy, as the use of digital tools and platforms is increasingly a prerequisite in the labour market. Equipping older people with technology and introducing them to online job search tools can help them to better navigate the digital world and to be more confident in their job search.

Overall, the holistic age management strategy aims to ensure that older workers and jobseekers remain economically, socially and emotionally active and valued members of the community. By simultaneously improving personal well-being and labour market competitiveness, this approach offers the opportunity to preserve the dignity and quality of life of the older generation, while contributing to social and economic development.

2.3 IntegrAGE framework on Age Management

The IntegrAGE Age Management framework aims to provide recommendations to ensure a sustainable and balanced life for 55+. It focuses on maintaining and improving health, well-being, activity and quality of life to address the challenges of older age. The framework focuses on age-appropriate prevention, personalised support and the promotion of community participation, thus contributing to the active and valued participation of older workers and pensioners in society.

2.3.1 Introduction

Demographic change in society is one of the greatest challenges of our time, especially with the growing proportion of an ageing population. In many countries of the European Union, there is a growing emphasis on rethinking the economic and social role of the over-55s. While the ageing generation has accumulated considerable experience and knowledge, they face increasing challenges in maintaining good health, staying in the labour market and participating in society. The IntegrAGE age management framework offers a comprehensive approach to address these challenges. The challenges facing the older generations are felt at several levels: the sustainability of health and pension systems, declining labour market participation, social isolation and prejudice against older people all call for comprehensive, integrated approaches. IntegrAGE aims to focus not only on symptomatic treatment of problems but also on strengthening the social inclusion of older people, improving their health and promoting their active participation.

We propose three pillars for the IntegrAGE framework:

THE THREE PILLARS



1. PREVENTION

Health promotion and disease prevention are of fundamental importance for older people, as their health status directly affects the quality of their daily lives and their activity levels.



2. PERSONALISED SUPPORT

It is important to consider and address the individual needs of the ageing generations. This includes offering flexible employment, training programmes, and health co-ordination. By doing so, we can ensure their sustainable and active role in society.



3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Involving older people in community activities, maintaining and strengthening their social ties not only at an individual level but also at a societal level contributes to strengthening solidarity and cooperation.

The framework was developed considering both international good practices and national specificities. The IntegrAGE framework offers a holistic approach that can balance the individual needs of older generations with socio-economic sustainability in the long term.

Such a comprehensive strategy not only improves the quality of life of those concerned but can also support economic growth by maximising the contribution of older generations to the labour market, communities and social innovation. The IntegrAGE framework is therefore not only a response to demographic challenges but also an opportunity to create a more inclusive and balanced society.

2.3.2 The three pillars of the IntegrAGE framework

Prevention - Basics of health promotion

As people get older, maintaining good health and preventing disease becomes a priority. Prevention solutions may primarily include:

Health screening and advice

- Regular check-ups: annual health check-ups, vision and hearing tests.
- Healthy lifestyle promotion: initiating healthy eating and physical activity programmes, promoting sporting activities.

Workplace ergonomics

- Providing an ergonomic working environment: adapting work areas to the needs of older workers, e.g. providing adjustable chairs, desks and adequate lighting.
- Reducing physical strain: Detailed job analysis to determine the optimal workload.

Protecting mental health

- Stress management programmes: introducing relaxation techniques and mindfulness training.
- Mental health counselling: making mental health professionals available, including in the workplace.

Protecting work-life balance

- Stress management programmes: introduction to relaxation techniques and mindfulness training.
- Work-life balance counselling: access to work-life balance specialists, including at the workplace.

Personalised support - Taking individual needs into account

Given the heterogeneity of the older age group, tailored support to individual needs is key. To this end, the framework offers the following solutions:

Flexible forms of employment

- Teleworking and part-time opportunities: for older workers, the flexibility of working allows them to balance health, family or other personal needs.
- Gradual retirement: Providing part-time employment in the years before retirement to ease the transition and sustain activity for longer.

Training programmes

- Digital skills development: Targeted training programmes to bring older workers up to speed with technology.
- Exploring new career paths: Training and courses to enable a career change or business start-up.

Addressing individual life situations

- Family support: advice and logistical support for the care of sick relatives, such as making local care services available.
- Health care coordination: developing personalised health plans to ensure coordination of medical treatments, medicines and lifestyle recommendations.

Community participation - Maintaining social embeddedness

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Supporting community participation is essential to improve social well-being and quality of life. Examples of community-building elements of the framework include:

Intergenerational cooperation

- Mentoring programmes: transferring the experience of older workers to younger colleagues or taking on an advisory role.
- Joint projects: intergenerational workplace or community initiatives.

Community programmes

- Clubs and events: organising local community meetings, cultural programmes, and sports clubs.
- Volunteering opportunities: Involving older workers in socially oriented projects such as mentoring, education or environmental initiatives.

Social recognition

- Career recognition: Public recognition of the contribution of older workers, for example in the form of awards or company commemorations.
- Encouraging participation: Programmes that support the active involvement of the older generation, such as the establishment of local advisory forums.

The IntegrAGE Age Management framework offers a comprehensive and flexible structure for the over-55s that considers their physical, mental and social characteristics. Prevention, personalised support and community involvement complement each other to help the older generation stay healthy, active and satisfied. The implementation of the proposals will not only improve the quality of life of individuals but will also enhance social and economic sustainability.

2.4 Relevant stakeholders

2.4.1 Inclusion of stakeholders

A typical feature of the IntegrAGE project is creating a systemic framework leaving enough room for the established stakeholder network to have an impact on project implementation and results.

In the first row, the strategy should help policymakers, and representatives from the public sector – local, regional and/or national authorities who are responsible for conceptual and strategic documents, their development and implementation through related policies and measures. They can provide financial resources, expertise, or organisational and other support. As a result of coordination, they can benefit from faster knowledge and best practice transfer and spill-over effects. The effects support increasing awareness, and acceptance of new solutions of 55+ age management.

When setting up the stakeholder network for the IntegrAGE project, it was important to be inclusive, identify all stakeholders, and consider not only what they may be able to contribute to the project but also what will motivate them to become involved. Stakeholder identification was done by the project partner team alone, or in collaboration with other colleagues, organisations and cross-sectoral stakeholders, to ensure key groups are not missed. The stakeholder identification process is reassessed/ enriched regularly throughout the project to ensure that no groups or individuals have been missed.

In the stakeholder engagement phase, the partners collected stakeholders in a table, with their potential impact on the project and their priority in relation to other stakeholders. Partners outlined multiple interests, particularly those that are overt and hidden in relation to project objectives. Identification of interests was done from the perspective of the stakeholders, not from the perspective of the project partners. Each interest is related to the appropriate project phase; that is, interests change as the project moves from beginning to ending phases. Stakeholders from different levels have various motives and expectations for the project.

There are several possibilities for discussing stakeholders' interests. The method chosen by each partner depends on how former steps of stakeholder analysis were discussed and what kind of overviews for stakeholders' identification and stakeholders' importance and influence was chosen.

2.4.2 Main stakeholder categories

Regional public authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local and regional authorities/municipalities/ government offices
National public authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ministries of national economy, ministries of labour and employment, ministries of social affairs, ministries of education, ministries of healthcare
Business support organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regional/national/ international development agencies unemployment and employment agencies HR support institutions
SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not specified particular sectors
Education/training centre and school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools, centres, universities and institutions dealing with adult education

2.4.3 Networking opportunities for stakeholders

In addressing the challenges of an ageing society, it is essential that various organisations and institutions collaborate closely. Governmental bodies, such as ministries for social affairs and health, play a central role in developing policies and regulations that support the elderly. These institutions are responsible not only for providing the necessary services for older populations but also for ensuring that policies and measures addressing the needs of the elderly are implemented and coordinated. The government's primary role is to create an integrated and comprehensive policy environment that ensures the elderly receive the support and services they need.

The strategy documents of the international organisations, such as the Danube Transnational Programme, also have a significant impact on shaping global guidelines and best practices. The DTP's role lies in facilitating the exchange of experiences between countries and offering guidance on addressing issues related to ageing. International organisations help ensure that local governments and civil organisations work together by providing common solutions and policy recommendations focused on promoting healthy ageing and social integration for older individuals.

Civil society organisations and nonprofit foundations are key players in providing direct support and services to the elderly. These organisations maintain close contact with older individuals and offer essential services such as healthcare, social support, community programs, and counselling. Through volunteer work, community-based initiatives, and local-level support, these organisations play an important role in improving the quality of life for older adults. Their task is to intervene directly at the community level, while maintaining close links with governmental bodies and other relevant groups to ensure that services are efficiently and specifically delivered to those in need.

Academic institutions, such as universities and research institutes, play an indispensable role in scientific research and innovation related to ageing. Through their research, academic institutions contribute to a better understanding of age-related health issues and the development of responses to those challenges. Their scientific findings assist in refining public policies and services to better meet real-world needs, while also introducing new solutions, such as technological innovations, that can improve the daily lives of the elderly.

Businesses and workplaces also have an important role in integrating older workers into the labour market and society. Flexible working conditions, such as part-time or remote work options, can help older employees balance their professional and personal lives more effectively. Additionally, continuous training and further education programs, especially in digital skills, ensure that older workers remain competitive in the job market. The experience of older generations can be invaluable, and mentorship programs can facilitate knowledge transfer between older and younger employees, benefiting both the organisation and the individuals involved.

Moreover, companies can support the health and well-being of older employees by offering health screening programs and workplace wellness initiatives. Anti-discrimination measures ensure that older workers are treated equally and are not subject to age-based bias in the workplace.

Local governments and communities also play an essential role in this collaborative network. Ensuring access to local-level services such as transportation, housing support, social services, and community programs directly contributes to improving the quality of life for older adults. Local authorities, working in partnership with civil organisations and governmental bodies, help facilitate direct assistance while promoting social inclusion and community engagement for the elderly.

In a network of this kind, close cooperation between organisations ensures that the services and support available to older adults are holistic, mutually reinforcing, and effective. Governmental guidance, alongside international recommendations, provides the framework for action, while civil organisations ensure that services reach those in need on the ground. Academic institutions continuously provide the scientific foundation for developing new solutions and policies, and businesses and workplaces facilitate the ongoing participation of older workers in the labour market.

The coordinated efforts of these organisations ensure that the challenges of an aging society are addressed successfully, offering older individuals a dignified quality of life and active participation in society.

2.5 Policy recommendations for stakeholders

Policy Recommendations - a thematic grouping of the recommendations developed by each country

Ensuring the labour market integration and well-being of older workers is an increasingly important policy objective across Europe. Different countries have different strategies to improve employment opportunities, health support and skills development for this age group. The following summary sets

out five priorities, based on a systematic synthesis of the recommendations from the countries involved in the project. The details are included in the individual policy recommendations.

1. Employment and Labour Market Integration

- **Employment Initiative 50 Plus:** Providing wage subsidies to employers for workers over 50, personalised job placement support and career guidance to help older jobseekers find a job.
- **Awareness raising and media campaigns:** Targeted campaigns are proposed to raise awareness of age management and improve intergenerational cooperation.
- **Mentoring programmes:** the aim is to promote knowledge transfer between older and younger generations, professional development, cooperation and team dynamics in different contexts.
- **Promoting an inclusive work culture and the integration of older workers:** They propose to provide methodological support to employers to promote an inclusive work culture and integrate older workers.
- **Part-time employment with full pay:** it is proposed to reduce the working hours of older workers before retirement while maintaining their wages.
- **Active employment measures and job retention:** increasing the employment of people aged 55+ requires complex measures focusing on skills development, employer incentives and workplace adaptability. Croatia, as a model country, has launched a number of programmes to integrate older workers and improve their employability, including training, wage subsidies and tax incentives. Measures include the introduction of part-time work, teleworking, job-sharing and mentoring schemes. Particular attention will be given to social economy and civil society organisations that contribute to the integration of vulnerable groups. The aim is to increase economic participation among older generations.

2. Health and Wellbeing

- **Healthy and active ageing programmes:** to create more age-friendly workplaces through workplace ergonomic improvements and health promotion programmes, with the active

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involvement of older workers. To ensure a healthier working environment, the Australian Health Insurance Fund is initiating such a programme.

- **Encouraging company policies on health promotion and healthy lifestyles:** a proposal to encourage company programmes to promote health promotion and health promotion to maintain and improve the activity and working capacity of older workers. Policies have also been proposed to promote healthy lifestyles and a positive work culture. The development of these programmes should be supported by training, media campaigns, and subsidies and incentives for companies at government level.
- **Mandatory systematic examinations:** health screening and the introduction of employer-sponsored health programmes implemented systematically on a mandatory basis. It is also recommended to provide incentives for health education and regular check-ups, as well as financial incentives for employers who organise them.
- **Age-friendly certification:** Encourage a health-friendly work environment by introducing a "Family-friendly" certificate. Establish a national standard defining the optimal work-life balance. In addition to the Social Responsibility element, the measure could focus on the provision of discounts to certified business organisations.
- **Raising awareness of the benefits and rewards of good/healthy workplaces:** A long-term campaign to promote the benefits of policies and practices and create a positive public opinion is needed to create an environment supportive of older people's employment. The aim is to involve the public and all age groups so that they recognise that this is not only solidarity, but also effective management of human resources. Campaign tools include a good jobs award scheme and recognition of companies that support older workers. Promoting a positive organisational climate will also be a priority.
- **Health insurance schemes:** the programme proposes the development of supplementary insurance packages aimed at protecting the health of older workers. These could include, for example, supplementary medical care, regular preventive medical examinations and screenings, mental health services.

3. Training and Lifelong Learning

- **Training programmes for the 55+ age group:** the opportunity to acquire marketable skills and knowledge for older people is essential to maintain their labour market activity and opportunities. It is essential that such a programme is available free of charge to those concerned and that it offers a continuum of opportunities. The content proposals are wide-ranging, from digital skills development to vocational training.
- **Complementary support measures for training and education:** The programme proposes complementary improvements to training programmes to improve the labour market situation of the over 55s. This will target the development of cognitive, manual and social skills, with a particular focus on digital and communication competences. Complementary mentoring schemes could also help intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- **Employer training:** the proposed action aims to raise awareness among employers of the specific challenges faced by older workers and the importance of using age management models. Cooperation between institutions, universities, chambers of commerce and other employers' associations is needed to expand employer training. NGOs can raise awareness among employers through promotional campaigns.
- **Developing digital competences:** The continued use of vocational training and skills development is seen as essential for older workers to adopt and use technological innovations. This is considered crucial to maintain the productivity and competitiveness of the age group concerned.

4. Flexible Employment and Workplace Culture

- **Promoting more flexible forms of employment:** encouraging home working, part-time work and teleworking can help to increase such offers. This can help older workers to balance work and personal commitments and thus remain in the labour market more easily.
- **Flexible, hybrid working model:** the introduction of a flexible hybrid working model combines the benefits of teleworking and office work, providing flexibility in terms of where

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and when people work. It aims to attract talent, increase satisfaction and maintain productivity while fostering collaboration. This model became widely popular after the COVID-19 epidemic.

5. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Financial support for entrepreneurs over 55: The aim of the measure to support entrepreneurship for people over 55 is to make it easier for older people to start a business, taking advantage of their experience and expertise. Financial support includes start-up grants, soft loans and other financing instruments. It also provides non-financial support such as mentoring, advice, business training and networking opportunities. Comprehensive support helps older people overcome barriers and achieve business success.

SUMMARY

The recommendations have the common goal of increasing the labour market participation of older workers, maintaining their health and improving their skills, while fostering intergenerational cooperation and inclusiveness at work. Different approaches in different countries offer a rich set of tools that can be adapted to local needs.



2.6 General and Specific Goals for action plans in the Danube Region

The overall aim of the Action Plans linked to the holistic approach to age management is to provide decision-makers with practical models for implementing the strategy's proposals and to help them plan and implement improvements that will affect the target group effectively. Support the improvement of the labour market situation of older workers and jobseekers aged 55 and over through the practical implementation of the action plans, while contributing to their social and economic inclusion through concrete measures and programmes.

These Action Plans aim to make active living conditions accessible to the target group in the longer term and to promote increased labour market participation of this age group. They can, for example, promote the introduction of targeted training and retraining schemes to ensure the acquisition of new technological, professional and digital skills. They can create opportunities for older people to continue working in a healthy, physically and mentally sustainable way, or provide a model for promoting intergenerational cooperation.

Overall, the Action Plans aim to help put the strategy into practice by showing, through concrete examples, how to improve the quality of life and labour market situation of 55+ workers. The resulting improvements will serve as a model for the project area and beyond, helping to improve policy-making practice and disseminate effective measures tailored to the needs of older workers.

Specific Objective 1: Strengthening the holistic approach of the integration of employees 55 + into the labour market.

Priority 1.1: Raising awareness on the topic of age management with policymakers

Number	Line of action	Project resources / events
A1.1.1	Participating and organizing national policy roundtables according to the quadruple helix approach	D1.1.1 - Country analysis of challenges of 55+ workforce
A1.1.2	Contacting policy makers in relation to the topic of age discrimination and age management	D1.2.2 - Policy recommendations per country
A1.1.3	Establishing cooperation networks with relevant stakeholders	
		D1.5.2 - Policy roundtables in P3

Priority 1.2: Sharing good practices on ageing and employment

Number	Line of action	Project resources / events
A1.2.1	Promoting the exchange of good practices between countries and organisations	A1.3 - European catalogue of good practices and feasibility study D2.6.4 & D2.6.5 - Image film about age-friendly companies
A1.2.2	Incorporate new good practices in new organisation's work in each country	

Priority 1.3: Disseminating the project results with the general public

Number	Line of action	Project resources / events
A1.3.1	Sharing results in transnational events	Mid-term conference in Period 4 Closing conference in Period 5
A1.3.2	Sharing results in national events	D2.6.6 - Danube Region Roadshows in P5
A1.3.3	Sharing results through online communication channels	-

Specific Objective 2: Capacity building to develop an efficient and integrated internal age management strategy for employers.

Priority 1: Raising awareness on the topic of age management with employers

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A3.1.1	Reaching out companies that navigate and feedback IntegrAGE Platform materials	D2.5.1 - Engaging platform about holistic age management D2.6.4 - Business brunches
A3.1.2	Reaching out to CEOs, employers and relevant strategic managers that can promote age-friendly changes within their company	

Priority 2: Training employment support bodies and employers on age management strategies

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A2.2.1	Conducting the Train the Trainer for employment support bodies on age management	A2.1 - Template with needs of employment support bodies A2.2 - Train the trainer curriculum (8 modules) + Piloting (O2.1 & O2.2)
A2.2.2	Conducting training for companies on age management	A2.3 - Needs of companies/employers A2.4 - Curriculum and Age Management Toolbox for companies/employers + Piloting (O2.3 & O2.4)

Priority 3: Promoting the inclusion of employees over 55 years in the creation of age management strategies

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A2.3.1	Promoting dialogue between employers and employees over 55 years old	D2.4.2 - Peer Learning Groups with employers and employees over 55 D2.6.4 - Business brunches
A2.3.2	Organizing events about age management in co-creation with employees over 55 years	
A2.3.3	Establishing cooperation networks with employee associations with a focus on employees over 55 years	

Specific Objective 3: Enhancing the resilience of employees over 55 and boosting knowledge exchange between generations

Priority 3.1: Promoting the evaluation of 55+ employees' needs through self-assessment tools

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A3.1.1	Reaching out to employers and employees over 55 to use of the IntegrAGE self-assessment tool	D3.1.1 - IntegrAGE Self-assessment tool D3.2.1 - Regional calls to share ideas with 55+ employees A3.3.1 - Curriculum on new ways of working + Piloting (O3.1 & O3.2)
A3.1.2	Detecting concrete needs and skill gaps in real-life companies in each country	
A3.1.3	Conducting trainings for the new ways of working with employees over 55	

Priority 2: Promoting the implementation of mentoring programs in organisations with employees over 55 years old and their younger colleagues

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A3.2.1	Promoting intergenerational learning between 55+ workforce and younger colleagues through joint workshops	D3.4.1 - Living learning labs (mentoring program) + Piloting (O3.3 & O3.4)
A3.2.2	Mentoring of younger colleagues through mentors that are employees over 55	
A3.2.3	Inverse mentoring employees over 55 through mentors that are young	

Priority 3: Raising awareness on age-friendly employment and work-life balance issues with employers and employees over 55 years old

Number	Line of action	Project resources
A3.3.1	Establishing cooperation networks with stakeholders that promote age-friendly and work-life balanced environments	D1.1.2 - Comprehensive analysis of work-life balance factors for 55+ workforce D3.2.1 - Work-life balance app D3.2.2 - Communication campaign
A3.3.2	Reaching out to employers and employees over 55 that use IntegrAGE App	
A3.3.3	Raising awareness on the topic through online communication channels	

3. Appendix

Project documents used to develop the Strategy:

- Country analyses to identify individual challenges of 55+ employment
- Comprehensive analysis of work life balance factors for 55+ employees
- Impact assessment of planned measures in project countries
- Policy recommendations by partner countries
- Country personas by 4 country-clusters

<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/integrage/library>

ACTION PLANS

Action plans are mainly based on four Cluster Personas, composed of 2-4 countries each, according to shared common challenges and opportunities within the Danube Region.

1. Justification of the cluster division





For the country personas, the intention of the project consortium was to create groups of countries based on similar challenges and characteristics, who would then work together to develop the country persona template and action plans.

After several rounds of discussions, an indicator table was developed, which each country filled in with data and was given a score according to the data provided.

Indicators selected for the evaluation:

INDICATORS	Description
Demographics	The proportion of 55+ people in the total population
Ageing dynamics	Life expectancy at birth (M,F)
Retirement Patterns	Official retirement age (M,F) Early retirement possibility: YES/NO
Socio-Economic Situation	Average wages; proportion of people at risk of poverty
Labor market conditions	Proportion of unemployment 55-59 Proportion of unemployment 60-64
Health care system*	Health-adjusted life expectancy (M,F) Quality of national health care system (1-5)
Level of Awareness on Age Management	Implementation of strategies and the existence of key documents at the national level / presence at the company and NGO levels (1-5)
Well-Being of senior employees in the workplace	Physical, mental, social and economic well-being of 55+ (1-5)
Career development / Training opportunities	The proportion of adults involved in lifelong learning (LLL)
Disadvantageous discrimination in the labor market	The proportion of people over 55 among jobseekers

Clusters A,B,C and D were thus established. In addition to the scores obtained in the indicator table, the content of the documents produced under Action 1.1 was considered, and Serbia was moved to Cluster D.

Ranking and Clusters:			
A	Germany	43	
	Austria	39	
B	Czech Republic	30	
	Slovenia	36	
C	Croatia	27	
	Hungary	26	
	Slovakia	25	
D	Bulgaria	24	
	Bosnia	20	
	Serbia*	27	

2. Current situation and concrete challenges in the Danube Region

- a. Persona A
- b. Persona B
- c. Persona C
- d. Persona D

3. Four action plans in the Danube Region

- a. Action plan - Cluster A
- b. Action plan – Cluster B
- c. Action plan - Cluster C
- d. Action plan – Cluster D

Potential structure of for cluster action plans – as overview!

SO1: Strengthening the holistic approach of the integration of employees 55 + into the labour market.				
Priority 1.1:				
Action 1.1.1:				
Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome
Action 1.1.2:				
Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome
Priority 1.2:				
Action 1.2.1:				
Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome
Action 1.2.2:				
Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

SO2: Capacity building to develop an efficient and integrated internal age management strategy for employers.

Priority 2.1:

Action 2.1.1:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Action 2.1.2:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Priority 2.2:

Action 2.2.1:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Action 2.2.2:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

SO3: Enhancing the resilience of employees over 55 and boosting knowledge exchange between generations.

Priority 3.1:

Action 3.1.1:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Action 3.1.2:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Priority 3.2:

Action 3.2.1:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome

Action 3.2.2:

Description	Timeframe	Target group	Funding	Outcome