

Age diversity on job market – value unused 2/25/24



PhD, PwC Latvia Head of Diversity and
Inclusion
Agnese Cimdiņa

The European Union (EU) celebrates May as the month of diversity to highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in society. Diversity basically reflects the nature of a person's unique and distinct qualities and relates to people's different values in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, abilities and experience.

One of the D&I issues is discrimination on grounds of age, existing on the job market for a long time and affecting people of different generations. While competition on the job market is becoming increasingly intense and the law prohibits discrimination in the workplace, in reality many people still face this issue when trying to find or keep a job or being denied the opportunity to develop professionally. This issue is not limited to these people alone – it's a wider social issue affecting organisations and communities at large. So it's important to be aware of how people are discriminated on grounds of age and to look for solutions promoting equal employment opportunities and professional growth for all age groups.

Age diversity in the workplace is a matter that cannot be ignored. On the contrary, we need to appreciate the important role of age diversity, in particular considering the Latvian job market, which lacks skilled and experienced workers because the Latvian population is ageing and the current recruitment practices, often cutting out a large part of the population, are not sustainable. People in the EU, including Latvian respondents, cite the candidate's age as the main threat to employment, according to the [Eurobarometer survey published in December 2023](#). Although the workforce availability issue is becoming increasingly relevant ([PwC's Baltic CEO survey](#) also suggests this) experienced jobseekers often face age discrimination on the job market. [Data gathered by the WHO](#) suggests the population is ageing, yet recruiting employers tend to ignore it. This trend not only neglects a significant human potential but also drives discriminatory attitudes in society and slows down economic growth.

'Too little is being said about the positive aspects of age diversity. If we are cutting out older workers, we are losing not only a unique experience potential that complements the vision of newly graduated young people but also the innovation potential that is born in the synergies of maturity, experience and digital solutions. And rejecting older workers' contribution means we are sawing off the branch we are sitting on, because we ourselves are getting older every day. Will the perceptions and practices on the job market favour us when we are 50 years old?' asks Agnese Cimdiņa, PhD, PwC Latvia D&I leader.

It's important to note that people over 50 can offer a considerable value on the job market. They have vast experience, deep knowledge and good problem-solving skills. And when it comes to willingness to learn and adapt to new working practices, they do not usually fall behind their younger colleagues. It's important for business leaders to be aware and appreciate the advantages of age diversity and to create a workplace where people can thrive despite their age. This includes not only a well-balanced age profile but also a commitment to building an open culture that appreciates every worker's experience and potential regardless of their age.

This is a particularly significant issue in the EU and Latvia, with the average age going up and people working increasingly longer. According to the Central Statistical Office (CSP), in 2023 Latvia had slightly more than 260,000 people of working age in the 55–64 age group (around 14% of the population); 180,000

of those were employed. According to [Eurostat](#), [over 30% of the EU population are over 55](#) (35% of the entire population in Latvia, according to the CSP). Forecasts suggest the EU ageing rate will accelerate in the coming decades, with the percentage of older people rapidly increasing. So it's important to be aware of the potential and value of older employees.

What qualities determine a person's value on the job market? What is the ideal worker in today's organisations? What is the role of age? And what is it that prevents us from seeing the value of a 50-year-old worker? All these questions have become particularly relevant in recent years in the field of diversity management. While age discrimination is common in Latvia, age diversity challenges are often sidelined by the media highlighting other diversity dimensions such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability.

We will be discussing this topic in more detail at the LAMPA Conversation Festival to look for ways of addressing this issue on the job market. [The 'On your marks, get set - finish!' discussion](#) will be held on 5 July at 18:30 in the Cēsis Castle Park (the Flash! stage). The discussion can also be followed online.