

EU project to keep older professionals in the workforce

March 29 2010

They are healthier than ever and highly competent, but tend to leave the labour market.

The University of Gothenburg is involved in a new EU project that sets out to explore how businesses and organisations can best utilise the competence of older professionals.

'A high level of welfare in a society requires a certain ratio between the number of citizens who [work](#) and those who don't,' says Roland Kedefors, docent and researcher at the Department of Work Science, University of Gothenburg, and now Swedish director within the Best Agers project.

Eight countries

Nineteen organisations from eight Baltic Sea countries participate in the project Best Agers, which is part of the so-called Baltic Sea Region Programme.

The background of the project is that the EU population is aging. The EU has declared the Union's age [demographics](#) one of its four principal challenges. The combination of older people leaving the [workforce](#) and an accelerating shortage of valuable competence can be witnessed all over Europe, and the trend is expected to continue as a result of the problematic [age distribution](#).

More people must work

'The EU labour market strategy indicates both that the ratio between the number of people who work and those who don't work must increase, and that those who work must remain working for a longer time than today,' says Kadefors, who has spent many years studying the issue of a sustainable working life.

The three-year Best Agers project has an SEK 44 million budget and was officially launched at a meeting in Riga in February 2010. One of the aims of the project is to identify and spread methods to keep the older generation in the workforce. Another purpose of the project is to identify examples of how the competence of professionals aged 55 and over can be successfully transferred to younger generations.

Identifying obstacles

The Department of Work Science is in charge of one of Best Agers' research projects. The plan is to look at the participating countries and identify the factors that make it difficult for the 55+ age group to remain in, or return to, the [labour market](#).

'It might be a matter of laws and regulations, health, competence or attitudes,' says Kadefors.

Small and medium-sized businesses are vulnerable to key competencies being lost when older professionals quit working. For example, there is a lack of efficient methods for businesses to identify critical competence and transfer it to younger generations.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

Citation: EU project to keep older professionals in the workforce (2010, March 29) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-eu-older-professionals-workforce.html>

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