

# Cover Story

## Seniors and businesses



# I love you, me neither!

TEXTE Catherine Moisy

TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH Martin Davies

**In the context of a general aging of the population, seniors have come to occupy an increasingly significant place within society and companies have understood that it is necessary to develop products and services adapted to the needs and tastes of this target group. But what about in the world of work? In several European countries, governments are gradually raising the retirement age to maintain the balance of pension systems and respond to economic challenges. In Luxembourg, where labour shortages affect various sectors, the contribution of older workers should also be considered as a solution to be explored. However, despite this growing need to keep seniors active in the job market, a certain disenchantment is observed within companies. This distrust of seniors is often fuelled by stereotypes about the productivity or adaptability of older employees, obscuring the benefits of their experience and know-how. The current challenge is therefore two-fold: to effectively integrate seniors into companies while combating the prejudices that hinder their full participation in the economy.**

What is a senior? In fact, there is no single, definitive answer to this question. Etymologically, the word comes from Latin and means “older”. Senior is the origin of the word Senate which in Roman times designated the council of elders, implying wise men. In the field of sport, a senior is one who has passed the age of being considered a junior in his discipline (20 years for most federations), and who is not yet a veteran (around 45 years). In sport we therefore become seniors at a young age! Professionally, senior often means “confirmed”, someone whose expertise in his field is recognized. Employees are generally happy to obtain this addition to their title. But, most often the term senior refers to the age of a person and this fashionable anglicism is used to avoid the term “old” which has become pejorative.

But at what age do you become a senior? Again, no single answer. STATEC, in its report No. 10, published in September 2023 sets the limit at 60 years; the Larousse dictionary at 50 years; while the European Commission and the world of work rather see the threshold at 45 years. But we all know that not all seniors should be put in the same basket. Everyone is different in their perception of their age and the societal context of each individual

strongly influences how they will age. In terms of generations, seniors include both Generation X who are now between 50 and 60 years old and Boomers who are over 60 years old. Here again, perceptions, experiences and needs are different.

In quantitative terms, STATEC identified just over 136,000 seniors (60+) in Luxembourg as of January 1, 2023. They therefore represent 20.6% of the resident population, or one in five inhabitants. This is less than elsewhere in Europe. The European Union average is in fact 28% of residents aged 60 and over. This is not due to a high birth rate which would rejuvenate the population of Luxembourg, but rather to a dynamic job market which attracts many younger “early/mid-career” profiles from abroad to settle in Luxembourg.

## **Underemployment of seniors in Luxembourg**

The legal retirement age being set at 65 in Luxembourg, in theory, a 50-year-old person still has 15 years of work ahead of them. In fact, the reality is often very different. Indeed, in Luxembourg, the proportion of seniors aged 55 to 64 in work is the lowest in the European Union with 48.7% in 2022

according to Eurostat. In this ranking, our Belgian and French neighbours respectively display 56.6% and 56.9% employment rates for seniors, while 73.3% of Germans in this age group are in work and the European average is located at 62.5%. Given the trend towards aging populations - in 2030 almost a third of European workers will be over 55 - the European Commission recommends aiming for an employment rate of 55-64-year-olds of at least 50%. Luxembourg, although having seen the share of workers of this age increase by 6.8 points since 2012, still needs to make some efforts to achieve this objective. Especially since for people over 60, the activity rate drops to 10%!

The situation in Luxembourg can be explained by several socio-economic and cultural factors. First of all, Luxembourg has a relatively generous pension system, which can be seen as an incentive to leave the labour market prematurely, allowing people to be pensioned, if they wish, at a younger age than in other European countries. In addition, there are special schemes for certain sectors, such as the civil service, for which early retirement conditions are particularly advantageous.

Then, Luxembourg has an economy strongly focused on the financial sector and services.



## Older people around the world

The number of people aged 65 or over in the world is expected to more than double by 2050, from 761 million in 2021 to 1.6 billion. The number of people aged 80 and over is growing even faster.

Population aging is an irreversible global trend. In 2021, 1 in 10 people worldwide were aged 65 or older. In 2050, this age group is expected to represent 1 in 6 people.

Women tend to live longer than men and therefore make up the majority of older people. In 1950, women could expect to live almost four years longer than men. In 2021, the difference between the two had grown to more than five years.

The number of seniors of working age (55 to 64 years) is expected to increase from 723 million in 2021 to 1,075 million in 2050, then to 1,218 million in 2100.

On 14th December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1st October as the International Day of Older Persons.

(Source: United Nations)



## Age management in business

Within IMS, an Autonomous Working Group of signatories of the Lëtzebuerg Diversity Charter was formed to reflect on intergenerational management. Their thoughts and recommendations have been brought together in a publication "*Âge et management intergénérationnel*" which is accompanied by an Excel tool for quantitative analysis. This provides an in-depth understanding of the distribution of ages and seniority within the organisation, thus facilitating the identification of strengths and opportunities, while identifying weaknesses and potential threats in the intergenerational dynamics of the company. The publication and the Excel tool are available on request to signatories of the Diversity Charter from [info@chartediversity.lu](mailto:info@chartediversity.lu)



However, intellectual and scientific professions (33.3% of resident employment, compared to 19.5% in the European Union, according to Eurostat figures) often require very specialized and up-to-date skills. Seniors may therefore find themselves at a disadvantage if their skills are not regularly upgraded, reducing their employability in these dynamic sectors. Finally, we can also cite the underemployment of women which persists in Luxembourg compared to other countries, even if the situation is changing well. Thus, women who are 55-64 years old are automatically more prone to underemployment than subsequent generations. This situation has the consequence of pushing down the activity rate of seniors, women of this generation having an employment rate of only 40% - still up 5 points compared to 2012 - so that the employment rate of men aged 55 to 64 reached 56.6%.

On these different points, certain policy changes could act as an incentive to keep seniors in employment longer, but businesses also have a role to play. Prejudices that rather value youth in the professional world can implicitly disadvantage older workers, making their retention or reintegration into the labour market more difficult.

## Accepted wisdoms need to be challenged

On certain continents, Asia and Africa in particular, elders are traditionally recognized, valued and respected for their experience and wisdom. In the West, for several decades, the start-up culture originally from the United States has brought with it an overvaluation of the image of the young entrepreneur surfing the internet and new technologies to build success. Seniors may have felt destabilized by this new situation

or felt reluctant to join companies where the managers were the age of their children!

Certain preconceived ideas are stuck on seniors. They would be slower than their junior counterparts, less comfortable with new technologies, less flexible and open to change, less creative, less endowed with an entrepreneurial spirit...and moreover more expensive. To stop at these prejudices would be to forget that we cannot classify all individuals of the same age group into stereotypes and above all it would be to forget to weigh up all the qualities that age can confer on employees: wisdom, taking a step back, patience, respect for the rules, the fact of often being released from certain family obligations, ease of relationships, a spirit of collaboration, etc. So many things that can translate into added value for the company and which can therefore justify the higher price to pay for such a profile. Seniors who also have seniority in their company have other advantages. They have acquired a solid knowledge of it, can be good relays of its culture and be guarantors of continuity and cohesion in a context of increasingly rapid transformations. They also know the challenges of their sector of activity and can more easily anticipate the reactions of customers or other partners of the company. These elements taken together generally make seniors good managers, capable of managing complex issues and/or situations, including and especially when people come into play.

A study carried out by Quest at the end of 2023 and published at the beginning of 2024 also reveals that seniors have a generally benevolent attitude towards companies, whilst younger people have a marked level of distrust. 57% of people aged 55 and over interviewed for this study said they had



a good opinion of companies whilst among the younger generations only 41% of 18–34-year-olds and 48% of 35–54-year-olds shared this opinion. Seniors are also more likely (44%) to think that companies are part of the solution to societal and environmental challenges, while 41% of 18–34-year-olds believe that companies are generally part of the problem. This study seems to show in any case that seniors have more faith in businesses than juniors so we can therefore imagine that they are ready to continue to engage with them. Companies, in return, need to show more faith in their seniors. Failing to maintain their motivation and employability by giving them new missions or perspectives and offering them training will deprive businesses of a valuable human resource.

### Seniors are a human resource like any other

Whilst it may be important to retain seniors already present in the company, workers over 45 and with more than 20 years of experience can also represent a good source of recruitment. Many of them, as previously mentioned, are looking for prospects for the 10 to 15 years of work that they still have ahead of them. Some, after a first career, retrain in new professions, finding a whole new motivation which they offer to employers. People over 50 already represent 1/5th of Luxembourg's active population and, according to the INDR, more than half of the country's job seekers are over 45. They

**01.** Etymologically, the word senior comes from Latin and means "older". In Roman antiquity, the Senate was the council of elders, meaning wise men.

**02. 03.** The employment rate for men aged 55 to 64 in Luxembourg is 56.6%, while that of women of the same age is only 40%.

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**04.** The start-up culture, coming from the United States, has favoured youthfulness in companies, giving more value to younger generations familiar with modern technologies.

© Austin Distel / Unsplash



**Magali Zuber**  
 Executive coach &  
 Senior advisor, Cometes

*"Having learned from my mistakes and my successes helps me save time."*

### At what age did you create Cometes, your company specialising in executive support?

In my fifties, I created a business in order to carry out my dream job which requires independence and experience. Let me explain: my business consists of supporting managers and teams in their dynamic of professional success. I intervene in high-stakes situations - market challenges, taking up a position, reorganisation, etc. - by offering tailor-made support combining coaching and advice. I rely on my long business career - I was a manager myself for more than 25 years - and on a solid foundation of training in business management (Sciences Po, ESCP) and coaching (university diploma).

I am convinced that carrying out my activity in complete independence brings the most added value to my clients. I am never a part of their professional world; and this distance helps them to take a step back, to question themselves and find their way in complete freedom, without embarrassment or taboo.

### Why did you wait to get started in entrepreneurship?

If independence is key in my job, experience is just as essential. The fact of having been seasoned in business issues, management, governance bodies, etc. is undeniably an asset for my clients who see me as a sparring partner. This is why I waited before getting started. And the right expression is indeed "launched": we launch into entrepreneurship as we launch into an adventure or into the unknown! It takes a dose of courage and probably a touch of unconsciousness. And already having a certain number of strings to one's bow.

### In your opinion, is age an asset or a hindrance to entrepreneurship?

In my opinion, it is less a question of age than of state of mind. To start a business, you must first want to create something on your own initiative, want to develop your professional activity in your own way and by being accountable only to yourself, want to leave your own mark too.

Age is certainly not a hindrance but rather an asset. My clients trust me because they see me as someone experienced and credible. My experience of having learned from my mistakes as well as my successes also helps me to save time, to better assess risks and - a key point- to obtain the support of my entire professional network.



**Claire Talbot**

Diversity, Equality and  
Inclusion Coordinator, Sodexo

***"We do not stigmatise anyone.  
We offer flexibility to everyone."***

### **Do you have any reservations about hiring seniors?**

We really have no reservations. People aged over 50 represent 30% of our workforce, which is far from anecdotal. That said, we prefer to interpret the word senior as the achievement of a certain level of competence in a profession, regardless of the age of the person concerned. In the company, we have an inclusive approach that encompasses all aspects of diversity. Age is part of this but also gender, cultures and origins, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. This approach is at the heart of our "Diversity, Equality and Inclusion" policy, which aims to give everyone a chance. We recently added the dimension of equality which expresses our wish to adapt to the diverse needs of our employees so that they each have the same chances of succeeding in their career with us. The goal is to develop everyone for the benefit of the organisation as a whole.

### **In your opinion, what are the main assets of seniors?**

Everyone has assets that the company can benefit from. Once again, we do not just think in terms of age. It is true, however, that seniors have often accumulated professional experience, either in our company or in other organisations, which is very enriching for us, and which helps to develop the company culture. On certain subjects, they sometimes have more expertise than juniors, but the opposite can also be true. This is why we attach immense importance to intergenerational management for better collaboration.

### **What has your company put in place to recruit and retain seniors in employment?**

We do not conduct specific actions for seniors, but we ensure that everyone in the company finds what they need at the stage of life they are at. We have internal procedures to facilitate changing profession, activity, place of work, working time or schedule according to needs. This is not specific to seniors, but they can take advantage of these possibilities. For example, those who no longer have dependent children may decide to work more hours; others who are approaching retirement age can, on the contrary, reduce their working hours. We do not stigmatise anyone by offering things specifically reserved for seniors. We prefer to offer flexibility to everyone. This requires additional organisational effort, but it pays off in terms of attracting and retaining staff.



represent a significant part of the labour reserve which should not be neglected. However, we can see that companies do not easily turn to these people when recruiting. In March 2024, the UEL and the FR2S (Federation for Recruitment Search and Selection) published their second employment barometer. This reveals that companies mandate recruitment firms to search mainly for candidates with 5 to 10 years of experience and that the recruitment of candidates over 50 years old remains very limited. In doing so, and since most companies adopt the same behaviour, they are accentuating the shortage of candidates because they are all looking for the same increasingly rare intermediate experience profiles.

Hiring seniors is not just a solution to combat the labour shortage, but also an action of inclusiveness which can only be beneficial for the balance of the age pyramid within companies enabling them to benefit from the specific skills each age group brings to value creation. According to the International Labor Office (ILO), companies with a strong inclusion policy have a 60% greater chance of seeing their profits increase, enjoying a better reputation and attracting new profiles. Companies that diversify the profiles of their employees also contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 10, "Reducing inequalities".

Employers cite two factors for their reluctance to hire seniors: their salary expectations and their supposed lesser appetite for new technologies. Concerning the first point, it must be emphasised that the higher expectations of seniors are generally largely justified by

**05.** Most companies in Luxembourg are looking for candidates with 5-10 years' experience, which makes recruiting seniors longer and more difficult.

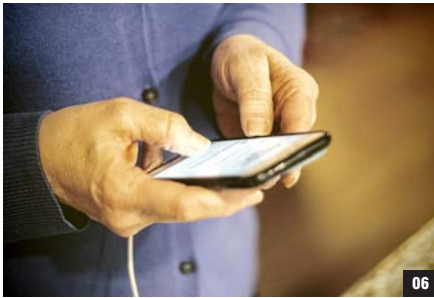
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**06.** Today's seniors are completely familiar with the Internet, and they use it every day. The Covid 19 pandemic boosted the use of computers by all generations.

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**07. 08. 09.** Forming diverse teams or work and/or mentoring duos is an effective way to get the best out of all the age groups that companies employ.

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***“In Luxembourg, the proportion of seniors aged 55 to 64 in work is the lowest in the European Union with 48.7% in 2022 according to Eurostat.”***

the experience they bring, and which enables them to save time and be more efficient in taking up new positions and tasks. In this sense, experience must be seen as a skill in its own right. Their experience also gives them valuable soft skills, especially in a world where AI and various technologies can replace low-value-added tasks but where we still need behavioural skills such as critical thinking, empathy, collaboration, autonomy, risk and decision-making... which are often the prerogative of seniors and which, unlike some technical skills, have not yet become obsolete. Additionally, it is commonly observed that seniors stay longer in their positions than younger people. The turnover of the latter is significantly higher, and this also has a cost for the company, to be considered when comparing two profiles.

Concerns about the IT skills of seniors seem to be mainly raised by the IT sector itself or by industries which are digitalizing at high speed. However, the seniors of today are not those of yesterday and are generally much more familiar with new technologies and more capable of being trained to master and use them than their predecessors.

**How to better recruit seniors?**

To encourage the recruitment of seniors, a few simple rules can be put in place. First, as far as possible, we must diversify the profiles of those people who conduct recruitment interviews, so that they are more representative of all generations. Next, recruiters must be trained to recognise the cognitive biases that are at the origin of prejudices and stereotypes. These are the

result of a natural mechanism in the brain to simplify information, but which sometimes summarizes to the extreme information that is conveyed by the media, by television or by what is heard on the street... The IMS Sustainability Academy offers “Stereotypes and cognitive biases” training which aims to raise awareness of these biases and implement practices to counteract them.

Sure techniques to avoid rejecting applications from seniors would include avoiding discriminating terms in advertisements, such as “young and dynamic”; not asking for a precise number of years of experience and replacing this with just “solid experience” which would be more open and allow everyone to project themselves; or asking for CVs without photos or dates of birth. Thus, only skills (knowledge and know-how) would be considered when sorting applications and companies could form a more realistic opinion of people by giving them the opportunity to attend an interview. This good practice is notably implemented at Hospilux, a medical equipment distribution company which, since signing the *Lëtzebuerg Diversity Charter in 2022*, has already hired several seniors using this technique, including Michael, a 56-year-old medical representative who joined the company in April 2023 and says: *“I am very happy with the welcome I have received in the company. I enjoy great autonomy and flexibility to organise meetings with my clients. This flexibility helped me integrate into the team without difficulty.”* The company has noted that hired seniors require less supervision, that they exert a beneficial influence on the teams, particularly the junior members, and

that they bring both stability and flexibility to the business. The INDR, in sheet number 27 “Recruit responsibly” of its CSR guide, also recommends basing recruitment on objective and non-discriminatory criteria, and identifying candidates on the strict basis of the skills necessary for the position.

Businesses should be aware that state aid exists for hiring seniors. Hiring an unemployed person aged 45 and over allows the employer to recover, for a certain time, the employer’s share of the social security contributions. This is two years for workers aged between 45 and 50 and until retirement for people hired when they are at least 50 years old. Another mechanism is that of the Employment Reintegration Contract (CRE) which promotes the return to employment of people furthest from the labour market. This mechanism may concern people over 45 years old under certain conditions. This is a 12-month contract, with an obligation to offer real prospects to the employee at the end. The conditions for obtaining these two types of aid are described on the ADEM website (*Recruitment of older jobseekers – Employers – ADEM – FACILITONS L’EMPLOI – Luxembourg (public.lu)*)

**How to get different generations to work together?**

Intergenerational management is a subject on which 55% of companies that participated in the 2021 IMS Diversity and Inclusion Barometer are working. Companies are concerned about the transfer of experience between generations of workers within their departments and sometimes report a certain difficulty in getting them to interact and cooperate with each other. The objective of intergenerational management is therefore to identify the possible mutual contributions of each generation for the creation of collective value.

The first step is being aware that the different generations in a company’s workforce have not experienced the same events and



### Use of digital technologies by seniors

More and more older people are adopting new technologies. According to a recent STATEC study, around 75% of people aged over 65 use the Internet regularly. In addition, seniors are increasingly dynamic users of social networks: more than 70% of them have an account, which allows them to stay in touch with their loved ones and meet people sharing the same interests. This online presence helps combat social isolation. Digital health and fitness apps are also seeing great success among this population, contributing to better management of their health and well-being. The government and various associations, such as *ErwuesseBildung* and Digital Inclusion, organise training to improve the digital skills of seniors. These initiatives aim to reduce the digital divide and fully integrate seniors into an increasingly digitalised society.



### What if you became a mentor?

Business Mentoring, an association created in 2008 to encourage entrepreneurship in Luxembourg through mentoring, is looking for seniors to complete its pool of mentors. If you are an entrepreneur yourself or have had an executive role within one or more companies for at least 15 years, do not hesitate to apply.

Mentors are passionate and experienced people who volunteer their time to share their skills and knowledge and thus support leaders on the path to their entrepreneurial or managerial development. They offer them a neutral and critical perspective to help them acquire better business reflexes, better understand the options and issues related to their decisions, feel confident, clarify their needs and improve their well-being.

Currently 32 mentors are active within the organisation which has already supported 350 business leaders from all sectors of business since its creation.

Join them!

■ More information  
[info@businessmentoring.lu](mailto:info@businessmentoring.lu) and  
[www.businessmentoring.lu](http://www.businessmentoring.lu)



have not lived with the same technological tools. These differences have an influence on their relationship with time and communication, the youngest being much more into immediacy and digital channels while their elders tend to favour face-to-face communication and time for analysis. There are differences also at the level of their relationship to the collective, to authority, to success, to priorities... It is a question of making all these differences in experiences and perception an asset in the company's strategic or operational choices.

Researchers who work on these questions insist on the need to establish in companies a generation-friendly culture that is truly lived and not just decreed. This can be expressed in multiple ways: in the company's values of inclusion, in certain rituals and norms, in certain organisational behaviour and in formal and informal exchanges. For example, in order to promote good collaboration, companies must have the reflex of forming teams that bring together the various generations to think about key or strategic projects, whether they are internal to the company or involve external stakeholders, even, and above all, if they concern the future of the company and the adoption of new technologies. In these working groups, the knowledge of the company, the

experience and the commitment of seniors will be valuable as will their expression of possible obstacles to which they may be able to co-create answers and solutions. On another note, when organizing convivial moments for teams, think about activities and schedules for everyone and not just after-work table football tournaments!

Some companies who have become aware of these issues are putting things in place so that the different age groups working together become aware of each other's expectations and constraints in order to build a climate of mutual trust and respect and promote better teamwork. Thus, Sodexo systematically offers intergenerational training, in e-learning and during the integration process of all new employees. The law firm Allen & Overy has set up a specific mentoring system: reverse mentoring during which juniors share their experience with seniors. Learning and sharing happens in both directions, and a relationship of reinforced trust is created. To get the maximum benefit from this practice, the company insists on the need to train junior mentors and establish a framework of good practices to respect. At Argest, a design office specializing in the life cycle of buildings, junior-senior duos are formed for daily skills transfer through work projects. Within HSBC bank, a match making platform



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has been developed to encourage internal intergenerational mentoring. Each employee can register and fill out a description of their knowledge and the know-how that they are ready to share. The system asks several questions to filter mentor applications based on the expertise offered. For their part, employees who are looking for advice or people who can help them in their work can consult mentoring offers and get in touch with the mentor of their choice.

**Adapt the senior to their position and vice versa**

Business leaders who participated in the latest *Baromètre de l'Économie* of the Chamber of Commerce (S1\_2024, published June 4, 2024) were questioned on the measures needed to guarantee the balance of the pension system in the long term. The measure they most favour is the reduction of the gap between the legal retirement age (65 years) and the average effective age which is 61 years. Furthermore, in one of its studies devoted to the quality of life at work, Liser underlined the strong link between working conditions (drudgery, working hours, decision-making margin, IT requirements, etc.) and the desire of any given person to remain in employment.

These two findings argue for paying particular attention to maintaining the employability of seniors. This is based on three levers: adapting skills to the evolution of the company, maintaining motivation and guarding a state of health compatible with the position occupied. Maintaining the employability of seniors is therefore a joint responsibility between them and their employer.

Skills can be directly linked to the issue of lifelong learning. Seniors being those for

10. Seniors' digital skills can be strengthened quite easily through training activities.

11. 12. In industry, but also in more sedentary professions, adjustments to workstations are possible and desirable to reduce arduousness and encourage seniors to remain employed.

© Clinique GO (12)

13. The retirement bonus is a tradition worth keeping because it allows the retiring employee to mark this important stage in their life and the company to express its gratitude.



**Stanislas Dutreil**  
 Managing Director,  
 LHH Luxembourg

***"We must support companies in their perception of senior workers and eliminate prejudices."***

**As the manager of a recruitment firm, what is your perception of senior profiles?**

The role of a recruitment firm is above all to evaluate skills and analyse someone's suitability to be integrated within the client company depending on the context and the tasks to be performed. This role leads us to interact daily with senior candidates actively looking for a new professional project, but helpless in the face of age discrimination which is still all too present. We recommend experienced candidates to employers who are sometimes too focused on seniority criteria. Remember that the notion of "senior" can be perceived differently depending on the sector, profession and expertise; but that age is the natural and paradoxical criterion for defining a senior person.

**What is your clients' perception of these profiles?**

During my job seeking period, which lasted several months, I often observed that it was very difficult to attract interest from a business sector different from the one I had left. I sent many applications and covering letters. Many received no response at all. In this context, I did find it difficult to keep my motivation intact at times.

**How can we reconcile these perceptions? What advice for companies and for candidates?**

We could talk about implementing more incentives for hiring seniors, or even mandatory quotas, but this will not impact the upon the state of mind which employers must have in order to facilitate and encourage the recruitment of seniors. Before anything else, we must support companies in their perception of senior workers and remove prejudices, in addition to teaching everyone to collaborate with employees of all types of seniority. The aim here is to streamline intergenerational management in companies by distinguishing between age, expertise and experience to create links and complementarity between employees.





14. 15. 16. Today's retirees still have a very active life where sport, travel, tourism and restaurant meals have pride of place.

© Marc Schoetgen / SIP (14) et Getty image / Unsplash (15)

***“People aged 60 and over devote a greater part of their budget to food, hotels/restaurants and the maintenance of their home and their garden and they spend more on “social life” than younger people.”***

whom initial training is now most out-of-date it is evidently true that they are most in need of training to update their skills. However, we observe the opposite: the older people are, the less they participate in training. At 50, only half of employees take part in training programmes. This is reduced to only 25% after the age of 60 (source STATEC – Adult Education Survey 2022/2023). Seniors can be proactive players in remedying this situation. They can identify the training courses needed to help them progress in their position or lead them to another, by consulting the vast catalogue made available on [www.lifelong-learning.lu](http://www.lifelong-learning.lu), a portal which lists all of Luxembourg's training offerings. Job seekers who wish to participate in upskilling or reskilling of transferable and technical skills in order to boost their new professional projects can participate in the Skills4job programme offered by ADEM in partnership with the House of Training. Half of the participants

in this programme are over 45 years old. Employers are equally responsible for managing skills and positions. They can keep a record of training hours followed by each age group of employees and ensure that everyone has the same chance of improving their skills.

Furthermore, training constitutes a very important element in maintaining the motivation of older employees, in the same way as internal mobility. After a certain age and a certain level, seniors, who no longer have much to prove (to themselves), do not necessarily seek to be valued by vertical promotion but their skills and experiences can still often be useful in other departments of the company or in cross-functional positions or one-off mentoring or transition management missions (horizontal elevator). It might therefore be interesting for companies to build a rotation of positions and offer skills reassessments at certain key ages into

employees' career paths, but sadly we are rather seeing a sort of glass ceiling in the internal mobility of senior employees.

Finally, the question of working conditions arises. This is especially so in the industrial sector where certain positions can be physically arduous (postures, repetitive gestures, noise, extreme temperatures, vibrations, etc.) but it is also present in virtually all sectors and all professions to varying degrees. With the help of occupational medicine, preventative health and safety actions can reduce risks but it is sometimes necessary to suggest that people move to less restrictive positions, adjust their schedules, or invest in ergonomic equipment that reduces arduousness. Outside of the industrial sector, any company can implement health and well-being plans. It is normal that with age certain faculties become dull (sight, hearing, memory, concentration and/or physical strength). Monitoring these parameters without making the person concerned feel guilty and proposing solutions reflects a positive attitude towards aging and respect for what the person continues to bring to the organisation. Solutions exist, for example, to make IT tools more inclusive. Height-adjustable desks and certain accessories to relieve musculoskeletal disorders through a better working posture are becoming more popular. Companies wishing to think about the layout of workstations can use the



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*“Seniors who have seniority in their company have acquired solid knowledge of it, can relay its culture well and be guarantors of continuity and cohesion in a context of increasingly rapid transformations.”*

Multisectoral Occupational Health Service (STM) created in 1994 and to which all employers are obligatorily affiliated. Its Ergonomics department can analyse the risk factors of workstations and advise on appropriate equipment for any sector of business. It is also possible to consult the Labor and Mines Inspectorate (ITM) and the Ministry of Labor concerning the assistance available to companies for these types of improvement

### **Transition to retirement**

Is it up to employers to raise the issue of retirement with their senior employees and, if so, when is the right time? The question of retirement should not be a taboo in the company. It is necessarily an important concern for HR departments, if only for the establishment of supplementary pension plans within the company and to plan for the replacement of retirees.

Employers should broach the subject of retirement with each employee at an appropriate time to ensure a smooth transition and adequate planning. The question could be addressed at various times: during annual performance reviews for example. This is a good time to discuss future plans, including retirement, if the employee is approaching legal age. It is advisable to start talking about it around 5 years before the actual retirement age to allow the employee

to prepare well and explore all possible options. If the employee takes the initiative to talk about retirement, the employer must be prepared to discuss their options and provide relevant information. In Luxembourg, in addition to directing the employee to the National Pension Insurance Fund (CNAP), the company may inform the employee of certain resource sites such as luxsenior.lu or gero.lu or they may prefer to entrust this mission to retirement coaches who offer interventions in companies.

If new laws or changes to company policies affect retirement requirements, this may also be an appropriate opportunity to raise the subject with affected employees.

It is essential that employers approach this subject in a respectful and sensitive manner, taking into account the wishes and needs of the employee, in order to facilitate a smooth transition to retirement (phasing out) but also an effective transfer of tasks and records of the person leaving to one or more successors.

This crucial step for both the employee and the company contains several essentials. First, the closing of files by the employee who is preparing to retire. Just as is done for people who leave the company during their career, well-organized off-boarding should allow the retiree's successor to take over as

smoothly as possible. The departure must be planned well in advance to be able to establish a retro-schedule and, if possible, welcome the successor before the retiree's departure. The latter should be able to establish a summary of the current files, accompanying it with a list of useful contacts and transferring knowledge and know-how to the successor. The retiree should inform all of their contacts, both colleagues and external professional contacts, of their upcoming departure and, if possible, of the name of the successor, sufficiently in advance of the planned departure date. HR, for their part, can organise an end-of-career interview to collect feelings and ideas from the person leaving. Speech is always freer at this point in the professional life. The lessons learned from such interviews can therefore be enriching for the company.

During this period, which should above all be used to organise the continuity of the activity, some companies go further and offer real coaching to people who are preparing to leave, to help them build their new life after and to imagine their future activities. These can also be linked to the company. Ferrero therefore offers its “alumni” the option to guide factory visitors either during open days or when welcoming new employees. Other companies can offer their former colleagues the opportunity to mentor younger employees or supervise apprentices,

***“Employers cite two factors for their reluctance to hire seniors: their salary expectations and their supposed lesser appetite for new technologies.”***

whether on a voluntary or paid basis. The end of a professional career can be the start of a new ambitious project. Seniors can thus be valuable resources for the social and solidarity economy; they can create their own business...or devote themselves to traveling or their family...everything is possible, but everything must be anticipated.

Whatever the project, it is important to organise a departure ritual. This allows the departing employee to symbolically mark this stage of life and the company to express its recognition for the work carried out.

### **Seniors as marketing targets**

One can never stress enough the importance of having diverse profiles in a company to respond to clients and partners who are also diverse. In many sectors seniors represent real development potential as customers, hence companies need people in the workforce who are themselves seniors and who understand this target audience and can suggest the right ways to address and seduce it.

It is easy to understand that seniors are a prime target. At the end of their career, their income is more comfortable than in their younger years. For the most part, they no longer have family responsibilities, and their housing is often fully paid off. Their purchasing power can therefore be directed towards less constrained and more discretionary spending. According to STATEC, seniors (60 years and over) in Luxembourg spend on average 3,300 euros per person per month. From the age of 60, what changes is not so much the average amount of a person's expenses as the way they allocate their budget. People aged 60 and over devote a greater part of their budget to food, hotels/restaurants and the maintenance of their home and their garden and they spend more on “social life” than younger people.



The sectors which can therefore naturally target seniors and especially retirees, who have both time and money, are those that we have just mentioned as well as everything relating to leisure, culture, sports, hobbies, travel and tourism, the development or redevelopment of the living space, but also pets, training, financial products (asset structuring, succession plans, life insurance, etc.) and of course everything regarding health and well-being.

According to Eurostat, Luxembourg's retirees have one of the highest tourism participation rates in Europe with 69.5% of them engaging in tourist activities compared to the European average of 49.6%. Thus 71% of people aged 60 to 84 in Luxembourg will spend at least one trip of at least one night per year and, if we look only at those people in this age group who continue to travel, they make an average of 5.3 trips per year for an average of 57 nights. People over 60, being freer to do so, will in fact enjoy much longer leisure trips than people still working. 49% of these trips will be spent in hotels and 60% of them will be made by car.

If seniors are a prime marketing target, it is valuable to know how to reach them and in particular which media they appreciate the most. The ILRES Plurimédia Luxembourg 2022.II study tells us that, on average, more people over 50 and over 64 read the daily and weekly press than the rest of the population. This trend is less true for monthly publications, which seniors read as much as the rest of the population but less than other press formats. Those aged 50 and over also

consume more radio and television than the average, with the older population preferring Luxembourgish and German channels. Today's seniors are avid users of the Internet, and their usage rate is growing quickly. The STATEC Social Statistics department published some telling figures in March 2024. 89% of 55–64-year-olds use the Internet every day, up from only 76% in 2019. The Covid 19 pandemic, which boosted the digital uses of the entire population, therefore had an effect on older people as well. There are also more people aged 65–74 on the Internet since the pandemic with 79% using it daily compared to 71% in 2019. Elderly people who do not use the internet have become almost non-existent. There are no longer any among 55–64-year-olds whereas they were still 7% before Covid and there are only 2% of non-users among 65–74-year-olds instead of 13% previously. On the other hand, e-commerce is progressing slowly among older people who continue to prefer traditional stores, probably for the quality of human contact. This is something to consider by brands which are gradually replacing human interactions with machines and bots, particularly for customer relations over the telephone.

Seniors (55 years and over) make up 27.34% of Luxembourg's population according to the 2021 census, or a share that is increasing as they were only a quarter of the country's population ten years earlier. They can therefore play an active role both in businesses and society, before they become too old and need society to take care of them. Their image can usefully be enhanced through



testimonials, feedback, and advice, so as not to make them invisible, including in the media and internally within companies.

The contribution of seniors to businesses and to society in general is invaluable. Their experience, their know-how and their ability to transmit knowledge enrich the economic and social fabric. Companies that know how to capitalise on this wealth benefit from a diversity of approaches and perspectives, promoting innovation and resilience. Furthermore, the involvement of seniors in various aspects of society contributes to intergenerational cohesion which is essential for sustainable and balanced development. It is therefore essential to recognize and actively support their crucial role in our communities. —

**17. 18.** The free time of retired seniors, as well as their purchasing power, makes them a marketing target for sectors such as DIY or decoration.



**Marie-Pascale Trevalinet**  
 Meeting & Events Sales  
 Manager, TravelPro

***“My first piece of advice is to make your network work and make yourself visible.”***

**You recently changed jobs. What motivated this change?**

I simply wanted to take on a new challenge after 12 years in the same company and I felt that I had acquired solid know-how that I wanted to put to effective use in another service company.

**What difficulties did you face in your job search?**

During my job seeking period, which lasted several months, I often observed that it was very difficult to attract interest from a business sector different from the one I had left. I sent many applications and covering letters. Many received no response at all. In this context, I did find it difficult to keep my motivation intact at times.

**You have finally found a new challenge. How is your integration going with your new employer?**

My integration is going very well. My new employer trusted me and offered me the chance to start an activity that I had done several years ago, before arriving in Luxembourg. TravelPro is a company open to diversity of ages and experiences and looking for mature profiles like mine. Of course, I had to go through a “re-learning” phase, particularly regarding the company’s products, but my professional reflexes very quickly returned and are a real asset for my current role.

**What advice would you give to seniors looking for a job?**

I have several tips to share, the first of which is to make your network work and make yourself visible by participating in both professional or more informal events and meetings. We must train ourselves to “sell” everything that makes us different. By this I mean our rich experience, our know-how and our skills, rather than our diplomas. To adapt to the current context, we must include the right keywords in our CV so that it passes certain stages in automated processes. It is also essential to work on your CV on a modern tool and to adapt it to the target sector. You must also register on all possible dashboards and post spontaneous applications on the sites of companies that attract you. Subscribing to a premium LinkedIn account is also a promising idea and do not hesitate to follow certain training courses in areas where you feel that your CV is weaker. Last but not least, you must strive to remain positive and optimistic, which is not always easy but is necessary to project a good self-image.