

Press release

15 July 2008

EU project launches e-learning platform

Online training course takes aim at age discrimination in recruitment

“Age-diversity in recruitment made easy” is the aim of the initiators of a new e-learning platform. Their goal is to win support for a new approach to the employment of older workers. The platform is designed to sensitise key individuals who influence employers’ recruitment policies to older workers’ needs and abilities. The online training course is free of charge. It is highly user friendly, and is available in eight languages. All the documents posted in the toolbox area of the site are downloadable for use as learning materials and as awareness raising resources inside learners’ organisations.

The platform’s learning objectives were developed by *mature@eu*, *Supporting Employers In Recruiting And Selecting Mature Aged Persons* — and EU project that addresses the low level of participation in the employment market by older persons. This began with a study in seven EU member states which looked into age and employment trends in the ICT sector, recruitment policies, strategies for overcoming age discrimination, and information and knowledge transfer methods. The long-term goal of the project is to increase the proportion of older workers in the labour force and to improve the occupational situation of older people.

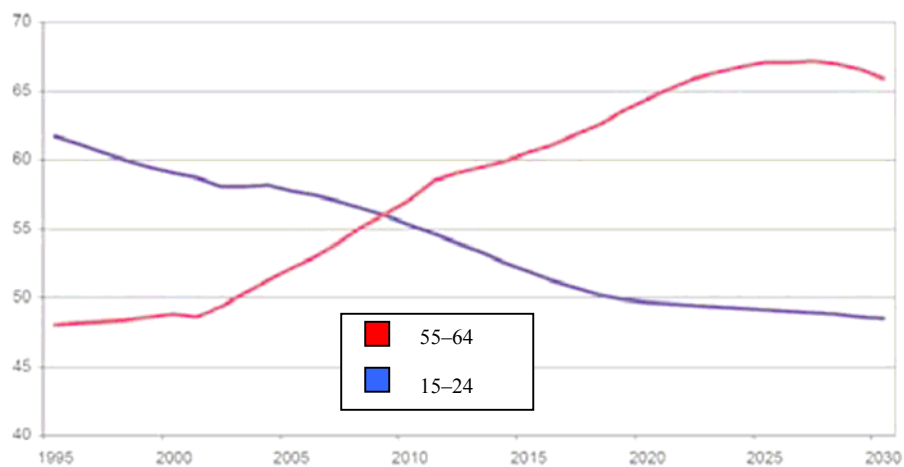
The e-learning platform offers users three training modules with a strong focus on providing practical support. Module 1 provides information on current changes in the labour market and the main demographic trends in Europe, and teaches users to become effective advocates of age-diversity. Module 2 looks at how to convince decision makers of the need for age-diverse recruitment policies, and to develop and communicate a formal policy statement against age related discrimination. Module 3 is an introduction to implementing age-diverse recruitment policies — for instance, by creating age neutral application forms and selection procedures.

The learning program responds to a counterproductive international trend. Older employees are often overlooked or discriminated against in recruitment processes. This is particularly noticeable in the ICT sector. The 50–65 age group accounts for less than 6% of the sector’s workforce. Meanwhile the proportion of women has actually declined, and the European average is below 20%.

At the same time the supply of younger employees is shrinking, and the working population is ageing. This is both creating an increased need for older workers and causing a growing shortage of skilled labour. The labour market will not be able to do without older workers in future.

A demographic finding on Austria in the *mature@eu* study throws this trend into sharp relief: the percentage of over 65-year-olds will grow from 15% in 2000 to 30% in 2050.

Absolute size in millions of young and old aged groups for EU25,
1995–2030



mature@eu, *Supporting Employers In Recruiting And Selecting Mature Aged Persons* is funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Between 2006–2008 a total of 15 partner organisations — universities, social partner organisations, research institutes, NGOs and IT companies — from ten European countries participated in research and action aimed at improving recruitment policies. The project is coordinated by Maria Schwarz-Wölzl of the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), Vienna.

The brochure *Become an employer of choice. Take age out of recruitment decisions* (32 pages) is available free of charge from Maria Schwarz-Wölzl (e-mail: schwarz@zsi.at). For all other information visit: www.mature-project.eu/. The open source e-learning platform is at www.mature-project.eu/e-learning/.

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