

# EMPLOYING SENIOR CITIZENS

This opinion continues on from work carried out by the Cour des comptes (Court of Auditors) over recent years on assessment of public policies in favour of employment of senior citizens. The mixed assessment of the Generation Contract published in the Courts annual report for 2016, the search for explanations as to why the scheme failed to “achieve lift-off”, and, finally, the decision to abandon it constituted departure points for thought on the part of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

Starting In the early 2000s, a reorientation of public policies characterised by the disappearance of publicly funded early retirement schemes and progressive postponement of ages of retirement in order to ensure financial balance of pension plans brought about a radical change in senior citizens’ situation on the labour market. It did not take long for such reforms to result in a regular significant increase in activity and employment rates among people in their fifties and sixties, accompanied by a stepping-up of dialogue between 2005 and 2012 (the national interprofessional agreement of 13 October 2005, the June 2006 concerted action plan in favour of employment of senior citizens, and the national interprofessional agreement of 19 October 2012 bearing on the Generation Contract).

Senior citizens’ increasing presence on the labour market is likely to continue, given the progressivity of the pension reform enacted in 2010: unless regulations change, the average retirement age will stabilise at 64 y/o within 15 years.

Although there has been a major increase in the over-50s’ participation in employment over the last fifteen years, they are nonetheless still highly vulnerable to unemployment, and are overrepresented among the long- and very long-term unemployed. However long-term, the unemployment rate among senior citizens is certainly lower than that among the general population, but increased at a particularly sustained pace between 2009 and 2016, approaching that of 25-49 y/o. Situations of inactivity prior to retirement are also on the increase; They may be partly due to discouragement after a job search has proved unsuccessful.

Senior citizens therefore stand out on the labour market as having much greater difficulty in returning to work than other age brackets. Low recruitment rates among senior citizens are fairly general in OECD countries, but the situation is particularly marked in France, where it is not compensated by a stronger job retention trend. Yet, despite the evident specificity of senior citizens’ situation vis-à-vis employment, all public policies dedicated to them have recently



**Alain Cordesse**

At the ESEC, he is a member of the Section for Labour and Employment, and represents the Group of Enterprises with regard to the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

### Contact:

alain.cordesse@lecese.fr  
+33 (0)1 44 43 62 42

been abandoned, sometimes in the name of better consideration of people’s individual characteristics.

On the strength of these findings, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council intends to promote a choice on society’s part encouraging activity and job retention among senior citizens, in companies and the civil service alike, based on the fight against stereotypes and discrimination depending on age and sex, securing of career paths and improvement of quality of work life for one and all. Cohesion between generations and the passing on of professional values and skills condition companies’ sustainability and even their competitiveness.

# 17 THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS IN FAVOUR OF EMPLOYING SENIOR CITIZENS

## FOCUS 1: COMBATING STEREOTYPES AND APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SENIOR CITIZENS

- Organising information campaigns targeting all sectors of the public
- Training and raising awareness among private and public sector management personnel on the question of stereotyping and discriminating against senior citizens
- Preventing risks of discrimination due to age and deploying responsible recruiting practices

## FOCUS 2: GUARANTEEING SENIOR CITIZENS JOB RETENTION

- Undertaking negotiations in the civil service on the second part of career paths
- Creating a national mechanism for supporting negotiation of active measures in favour of age management
- Incorporating active measures for support of elderly employees in the context of mobility leave
- Assessing the use and effects of individual conventional termination on employment of senior citizens
- Promoting a lifelong learning culture via professional assessment interviews
- Developing CléA certification in professional branches in order to ensure greater recognition of qualifications
- Increasing recognition of qualifications and qualifying training courses in activities where a great majority of employees are women
- Preventing and countering the effects of onerous working conditions in professional sectors and companies with a view to securing career paths
- Encouraging sports in the workplace (negotiation of collective agreements, national plan drawn up with sector professionals and the public authorities). Supporting investments in sports facilities via financial incentives for companies with fewer than 300 employees and development of partnerships (signatory bodies to provision agreements, and occupational health services)

## FOCUS 3: ACCOMPANYING PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS

- Tasking the future Agence France Compétences with testing out sponsorship of volunteer senior citizens' skills in favour and at the request of VSEs/SMEs, and launch of a call for projects supporting innovative local initiatives fostering professional integration or retraining of senior citizens
- Generalising referral to the Conseil en Évolution Professionnelle (CEP – Council for Career Development) in the context of physical reception and follow-up of jobseekers over 50 y/o by Pôle Emploi
- Assisting return to work by jobseekers aged 57 and above by creating a work contract accompanied by financial aid to companies
- Providing more information on retirement rights and conditions throughout professional careers. Generalising the information workshops for jobseekers held by Pôle Emploi and Caisses d'Assurance Retraite et de Santé Au Travail (CARSATs – Funds for Pension Insurance and Health at Work)
- Encouraging negotiation of end-of-career adjustment contracts at sector and company level, guaranteeing upkeep of retirement contributions on a full-rate basis, and incorporating aspects of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the situation of women