Interreg

Co-funded by the European Union

Central Baltic Programme

Silver Careers

Employers needs analysis summary

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About the Silver Careers Project

Silver Careers (CB1000616) is a cross-border cooperation project implemented under the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2021–2027 and co-funded by the European Union. The project runs from 1 June 2026 to 30 November 2028 and aims to improve employment opportunities and labour market competitiveness for people aged 55 and over in Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

The project addresses challenges faced by older employees and jobseekers in a rapidly changing labour market, particularly the growing demand for digital competencies, the need to adapt to technological and organisational changes, and the importance of maintaining confidence in managing one's career.

Silver Careers focuses on strengthening work-related digital skills and career management competencies through a practical, individualised learning approach. The project targets employed people aged 55+, as well as unemployed and retired individuals who wish to enter or re-enter the labour market.

Project Partnership

The project brings together four organisations from three Central Baltic countries:

- **Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)** – Latvia, Lead Partner
- **Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA)** – Latvia
- **Pärnu County Development Centre** – Estonia
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS)** – Finland

The partnership combines expertise in business development, employer engagement, adult education and applied learning, enabling the development of a training programme that responds to labour market needs across different sectors and countries.

Project Activities and Expected Results

The project will develop and implement a jointly designed training programme combining practical digital skills development with career management and self-management competencies.

The programme will include six digital skills modules and two career management modules, delivered through face-to-face workshops, online and international learning sessions, practical assignments, teamwork and individual coaching.

The project aims to involve 140 participants aged 55+, of whom at least 120 are expected to complete the full programme. At least 80 participants are expected to take part in cross-border mobilities, strengthening international cooperation, peer learning and professional networks.

The Role of Employer Needs Analysis

An essential part of the Silver Careers approach is ensuring that the training programme reflects actual workplace requirements rather than relying solely on predefined assumptions about the skills of older workers.

Within Work Package 1, Activity 1.1, the project partners conduct a needs analysis examining two complementary perspectives: the experiences and expectations of employers and the skills development needs of employees and jobseekers aged 55+.

The employer interviews presented in this report provide insights into workforce demographics, the strengths and challenges associated with employing older workers, current and emerging digital skills requirements, career development needs, and effective approaches to workplace learning.

By examining employer perspectives across Latvia, Estonia and Finland, this report identifies both shared challenges and country- or sector-specific differences. The findings contribute to the evidence base for developing the Silver Careers training programme while also offering relevant insights for employers, adult education providers and other stakeholders interested in age-inclusive workforce development and lifelong learning.

1. Purpose, scope and method

This public employer-side needs analysis examines workforce ageing, workplace digitalisation and career development needs in Latvia, Estonia and Finland. It is connected to Silver Careers Activity 1.1 (planning and preparation, stakeholder and employer engagement, needs analysis and programme design) and deliverable D.1.1.3. It complements, but does not replace, the separate employee needs survey. All individual respondents and organisations are anonymised in this report; codes identify interviews for internal analytical traceability.

Method: each interview was reviewed for (i) strengths and barriers for workers aged 55+, (ii) career and self-management skills, (iii) current and emerging digital requirements, (iv) employer support and (v) preferred training methods. Recurring themes were compared across interviews and countries. Where an interview did not specify a skill, training provision or formal ranking, no missing response was inferred. Interview material includes edited interview records, translated material and automatic transcripts of varying clarity. Findings are qualitative and are not population prevalence estimates.

Country	Partner contribution	Interviews	Sector coverage
Latvia	LCCI: 5; LAEA: 4	9	Retail, education, manufacturing, HR services, infrastructure, municipality, healthcare, postal services
Estonia	Pärnu County Development Centre	4	Healthcare, preschool, higher education, manufacturing
Finland	Turku University of Applied Sciences	5	Employment services (2), vocational education, recruitment services, real-estate/financial services

1.1 Employer profile dataset: size and share aged 55+

The tables below reproduce workforce figures stated in individual interviews. "Not reported" means that the interview does not establish an employee count or an employee-age share. Figures for different units are kept separate. Approximate values are not treated as exact. Organisations are identified only by anonymised code and sector.

Interview	Sector / organisation type	Employees	55+ share
LV01	Retail / department store	270	Approx. 26%
LV02	Public higher education	Approx. 3,000	Approx. 30%
LV03	Optical manufacturing / wholesale	Approx. 16-17	Approx. 18%
LV04	HR consultancy / recruitment	2 core staff; external experts excluded	100% of core staff
LV05	Road infrastructure / maintenance	Approx. 1,050; approx. 1,080 in summer	Approx. 45%
LV06	Local public administration	1,900	34.98% as stated
LV07	Large retail network	5,000	43%
LV08	Healthcare / hospital	2,100	26%
LV09	Postal / logistics services	1,500	Approx. 30%

2. Latvia: employer needs (9 interviews)

The Latvian interviews cover both operational roles and knowledge-intensive workplaces. The most consistent issue is the growing need to perform ordinary work administration digitally: employee portals, electronic signatures, authentication, collaboration tools and organisation-specific systems. Several employers stress that hesitation and lack of confidence can be as important as technical knowledge. Career development is understood broadly, including lateral movement, mentoring, reduced workloads and continued employment, not just promotion.

2.1 LCCI interviews

LV01 | Retail and customer services

Employer perspective. Experienced employees contribute customer communication, calm handling of difficult situations and responsibility. Differences in technology use vary by individual and role.

Identified needs. Electronic signatures, secure authentication, Teams and email, internal systems, practical device use, change acceptance and self-management. Supervisory roles additionally benefit from data analysis and AI awareness. Learning should be accessible and job-relevant.

LV02 | Higher education

Employer perspective. Experienced academic staff provide institutional memory, networks and continuity. Digital change can cause anxiety for some employees, but the interview does not establish a universal age-related skill gap.

Identified needs. Use of digital work and learning systems, independent adaptation to new tools, and continued professional learning. Online sessions may reach substantially more participants than classroom sessions; engagement and practical follow-through still matter.

LV03 | Small manufacturing and sales

Employer perspective. The employer emphasises the work discipline, planning and stability of experienced employees. Established habits may sometimes limit openness to new approaches.

Identified needs. Practical AI and automation literacy, readiness for technological change, time management and resilience. The interview did not identify a preferred training format or specific internal software.

LV04 | Human-resources consulting and recruitment

Employer perspective. The interviewee rejects age as a sufficient explanation for skill differences and emphasises motivation, workplace culture and individual health and life circumstances.

Identified needs. Cloud document management, remote collaboration, generative AI, information verification and safe digital working. Short, hands-on small-group workshops (approximately 5–7 participants) and respectful pacing were recommended.

LV05 | Infrastructure and road maintenance

Employer perspective. A substantial older workforce contributes practical expertise, reliability and safe judgement. Moving from paper to employee self-service tools can generate uncertainty, especially where device access is limited.

Identified needs. Guided use of staff portals, authentication and work systems; change communication; supportive managers and hands-on practice. Individual support is preferable to sending instructions alone; development conversations and flexible pathways support retention.

2.2 LAEA interviews

LV06 | Local public administration

Employer perspective. The respondent describes pressure to learn changing systems quickly and identifies experience, communication and decision-making as older employees' strengths.

Identified needs. Role-specific software, digital platforms, AI orientation, adaptability, goal-setting and presentation. Hybrid training with accessible in-person questions and individual assignments is preferred; mentoring is useful.

LV07 | Large-scale retail

Employer perspective. The employer reports that digital skill cannot be inferred from generation: many older employees are capable and motivated, while some younger employees also need support.

Identified needs. Computer basics alongside smartphone use, digital scheduling and leave systems, workplace tools, change readiness and confidence. Face-to-face coaching and competence-based mentoring support system adoption.

LV08 | Healthcare

Employer perspective. The respondent highlights experienced employees' loyalty and professional judgement while reporting anxiety around unfamiliar digital processes. Requirements differ substantially by job role.

Identified needs. E-signatures, staff portals, Excel, email, reliable information, cybersecurity and safe AI. Simple practical hybrid training, mentoring and realistic time allocation are needed; workload can limit uptake.

LV09 | Postal and logistics services

Employer perspective. The employer stresses loyalty and responsibility, with organisational change creating pressure to adapt. It also describes options to reduce workload or move to a different role.

Identified needs. AI awareness, Excel, communication channels, devices and route-planning tools. Rarely used systems require refresher support; simple hybrid or in-person teaching and competence-based mentoring are valued.

2.3 Latvia: synthesis

Priority needs are: (1) everyday digital independence, particularly e-signature, authentication, file handling and staff self-service; (2) role-specific applications and emerging AI; (3) adaptability, self-assessment and career choices; (4) confident, respectful practical learning. A distinctive issue is that even routine HR transactions can exclude employees who lack a suitable device or confidence. Employers also highlight age-inclusive mentoring, flexible workloads and knowledge transfer. Training modality should not be uniform: a higher-education employer reported stronger attendance online, whereas frontline and infrastructure employers preferred practical face-to-face instruction.

3. Estonia: employer needs (4 interviews)

Estonian interviews show sector-specific requirements against a common background of digitalisation. Interviewees repeatedly caution against treating all older workers as digitally unskilled. Familiarity with tools, workplace culture, confidence and exposure to change differ between individuals.

3.1. Estonia: workforce profiles

Interview	Sector	Employees	55+ share
EE01	Healthcare	1,618	Approx. 42%
EE02	Public early childhood education	Approx. 44-45	Approx. 31-32%
EE03	Public higher education	Approx. 57	More than 50%; exact share unknown
EE04	Building-material manufacturing	Approx. 125 in Estonia; approx. 100 at main site	Approx. 35% at main site only

EE01 | Healthcare

Employer perspective. Professional expertise and experience in complex situations are major assets. The interview highlights emotional demands, intergenerational communication and the importance of lifelong learning.

Identified needs. Digital health documentation, information evaluation, safe digital communication, cybersecurity, employee systems and responsible AI. Practical in-person training, resilience and self-awareness should complement technical learning.

EE02 | Early childhood education

Employer perspective. Experienced educators offer continuity and sound practical judgement. The employer identifies psychological demands and physical workload, not a broad occupational skill deficit.

Identified needs. Smartphone photography, transferring and organising files, digital learning documentation, folders and employee portals. Guided hands-on practice, teamwork and constructive feedback are prioritised; AI was not identified as a concrete immediate requirement.

EE03 | Higher education

Employer perspective. Institutional memory and specialist knowledge are strengths. Some long-serving staff may need support adapting teaching and administrative practices; the underlying transcript contains uncertain passages.

Identified needs. Practical AI, assessment of online information, digital administration and project/self-management. Mentoring and individual career guidance should lead to concrete next steps; face-to-face discussion was preferred.

EE04 | Manufacturing and construction materials

Employer perspective. The interviewee stresses professional reliability and notes that change resistance may reflect long tenure rather than age. Digital systems now cover office, warehouse and production activities.

Identified needs. Excel, business applications, AI, cybersecurity, communication, confidence, English and preparedness for career transitions. In-person discussion and ongoing internal training support adoption.

3.1 Estonia: synthesis

Estonian priorities include digital confidence and system navigation, responsible AI, information security, adaptability, communication and practical career planning. The sector mix makes it important to offer distinct task examples: patient data and digital etiquette in healthcare, file-based documentation in education, and enterprise applications in manufacturing. Several respondents favour face-to-face instruction and real exercises. Language and career-transition confidence appear as additional needs in the manufacturing interview.

4. Finland: employer and labour-market needs (5 interviews)

The Finnish set includes direct employers and organisations serving jobseekers or employers. Its results should therefore be read as a combined employer and labour-market perspective. The partner-provided thematic summary corroborates the prominence of digital skills, AI, self-direction, networking and practical instruction, but is not counted as an interview.

4.1. Finland: workforce profiles and data gaps

Interview	Sector / perspective	Employees	55+ share
FI01	Public employment services	Not established; interview mentions roughly 500 in a service unit as an uncertain guess	Not reported
FI02	Public vocational education	Approx. 220	Approx. 30%
FI03	Recruitment services	Approx. 50-100 direct employees (transcript unclear); temporary workers additional	Not reported
FI04	Municipal employment services	Not reported	Not reported for staff; speculative ~30% refers to jobseeker clients, NOT employees
FI05	Real-estate / financial services	Approx. 65	Approx. 25%

FI01 | Public employment services

Employer perspective. Employment-service perspective on career transitions and employability among older jobseekers, including the difficulty some candidates face in making their experience visible.

Identified needs. Identifying transferable skills, job-search communication, professional networks, digital job-search platforms and confidence in presenting experience. Guidance should be tailored rather than assuming one pathway fits everyone.

FI02 | Vocational education and training

Employer perspective. Education-provider perspective on changing occupational and digital competence requirements and the importance of continued learning.

Identified needs. Digital confidence, readiness to learn new applications and career-related self-direction. Training should connect technology to realistic tasks and recognise existing professional expertise.

FI03 | Recruitment and employer services

Employer perspective. Recruitment-sector perspective on matching skills to changing employer expectations and on barriers that can affect older applicants.

Identified needs. Presenting competencies clearly, networking, career adaptability, online recruitment skills and AI literacy. Employers and intermediaries should assess actual competence rather than rely on age-based assumptions.

FI04 | Regional employment services

Employer perspective. Public employment-service perspective on older jobseekers and career support; this interview is a labour-market intermediary view, not a single company's internal skills assessment.

Identified needs. Career guidance, transferable skill recognition, confidence, accessible digital tools and practical learning for re-employment or transition.

FI05 | Real-estate and financial services

Employer perspective. The employer values professional expertise, client interaction and sales skills. Digital capability is uneven within age groups; self-direction, accuracy and regulatory responsibility are central.

Identified needs. Browser and file basics, uploading, naming and storing documents, office tools, scam recognition, workplace systems, AI prompting and time management. Demonstrate first, then let each participant perform the task in person.

4.1 Finland: synthesis

The strongest shared Finnish themes are recognition and communication of expertise, self-direction, career transitions, workplace digital literacy, AI confidence and practical supported learning. The employment-service and recruitment perspectives make professional visibility and job-search tools more prominent than in several employer-only interviews. The real-estate interview particularly emphasises fundamental file operations and supervised practice. The evidence does not support assuming advanced programming is a priority for the target group.

5. Quantitative coverage and comparability

Measure	Latvia	Estonia	Finland	All interviews
Interviews	9	4	5	18
Workforce size available (including approximate / unit-specific)	9	4	2 clear; 2 uncertain; 1 missing	15 clear; 2 uncertain; 1 missing
55+ employee share available (including approximate)	9	4	2	15
55+ employee headcount explicitly provided	4	2	0	6

6. Cross-country comparison

Theme	Latvia (9)	Estonia (4)	Finland (5)
Digital foundations	E-signature, portals, devices, office tools	Documentation, business systems, information security	Files, office tools, job-search platforms
AI and change	Emerging AI and automation; change readiness	Responsible AI; adaptation across sectors	Practical AI literacy and openness to learning
Career management	Self-assessment, lateral roles, workload adaptation	Confidence, resilience, transition preparation	Competence articulation, job search, networking
Strengths of 55+	Loyalty, expertise, customer service	Experience, reliability, institutional memory	Expertise, social skills, work experience
Learning delivery	Face-to-face, hybrid; some online reach benefits	Mostly hands-on, in-person	Guided practice, small groups, blended options

6.1 Shared findings

All three countries report demand for practical digital competence and continued learning. Interviewees commonly value older workers' professional knowledge and reliability while recognising individual variation in digital readiness. Adaptability and confidence matter alongside technical skills. Most favour learning that allows participants to practise real tasks with immediate support. AI is an emerging topic, but its urgency and use cases differ by sector.

6.2 Meaningful differences

Latvian employers give particularly concrete examples of digital administrative inclusion (e-signatures, leave requests, staff portals) and discuss role redesign and flexible workloads. Estonian employers highlight highly sector-specific workflows and, in healthcare and education, emotional resilience and communication. Finnish interviews place comparatively more emphasis on recruitment, career visibility and navigating employment services, partly because several respondents represent labour-market intermediaries. These are differences in the interview sample, not measured national differences.

7. Thematic findings: what employers actually need

7.1 Digital independence is a workplace participation issue

Digital competence in the interviews is not limited to advanced software. In several Latvian workplaces, the practical threshold for independent participation is the ability to authenticate, submit leave requests, sign documents electronically and access employee self-service platforms. Similar patterns emerge in Estonian early childhood education, where photographing activities, creating folders and sharing documentation are now routine tasks. Finnish service-sector

interviews likewise identify basic file handling, browser navigation and document uploading as prerequisites for productive work. These examples demonstrate why digital exclusion can arise through ordinary administrative processes, even when an employee is highly competent in the main occupation.

The type of digital task depends on the workplace. In healthcare, safe handling of sensitive records and digital communication are central. In education, documentation, learning platforms and teaching practices are changing. In retail and logistics, workforce scheduling, traceability and operational systems matter. In manufacturing, business applications and production-related digital workflows are relevant. A single list of software products cannot capture these differences; the recurring requirement is the capacity to learn and use the systems that each job actually demands.

7.2 Artificial intelligence: growing relevance, uneven immediacy

AI appears in interviews across the three countries, but its practical status differs. Some respondents discuss existing use in administration, content creation or higher education, while others anticipate future adoption without naming a concrete application. An Estonian early childhood education interview explicitly did not establish a forthcoming AI requirement. In higher education, AI also raises questions about evaluating students' work and checking generated information. Elsewhere, employers associate AI with efficiency, routine tasks and new learning needs. The common finding is not that every role already requires AI, but that employees increasingly need enough understanding to judge when and how it can be used safely.

7.3 Experience remains an economic asset

Respondents describe 55+ employees as holders of professional knowledge, institutional memory, customer-service experience, reliability and workplace judgement. These strengths are visible across retail, education, healthcare, infrastructure and manufacturing. Several interviewees explicitly reject treating age as a proxy for digital competence: some older employees adopt technology readily, while younger colleagues may also need support. This matters for employers because an age-based assumption can obscure the difference between a genuine skills gap, an unfamiliar process, limited device access and lack of confidence.

7.4 Career development is wider than promotion

Career management in the interviews includes remaining in employment, adapting responsibilities, moving laterally, reducing workload, changing occupation and preparing for recruitment. Latvian logistics and infrastructure perspectives illustrate the importance of retaining expertise when a previous workload or managerial role becomes less suitable. Finnish employment and recruitment interviews make transferable skills, professional visibility and job-search confidence especially salient. Estonian education interviews emphasise concrete mentoring and realistic individual guidance. Together, these perspectives show that continued employability is shaped by the relationship between personal capacity, work organisation and changing skill requirements.

7.5 Learning conditions shape whether training works

The preference for practical learning is one of the clearest recurring patterns. Several interviewees favour in-person guidance because learners can try the task, ask questions and correct mistakes without embarrassment. Some favour hybrid delivery, combining independent theory or exercises with accessible instructor support. One Latvian higher-education interview notes the reach of online delivery, illustrating that no single format suits every group. Other barriers identified include heavy workloads, limited practice time, infrequently used systems, device access and anxiety about making mistakes. These are workplace and training-design conditions, not simply individual motivation problems.

8. Overall employer needs assessment

Priority 1 — Digital independence

Enable participants to perform routine workplace transactions independently: sign in securely, manage passwords and multifactor authentication, create and find files, use email and collaboration tools, complete digital forms and use workplace portals.

Priority 2 — Practical AI and information judgement

Teach what AI can and cannot do, simple prompting, verification of outputs, privacy and confidentiality, and examples tied to work. Avoid treating AI use as a substitute for foundational digital skills.

Priority 3 — Adaptability and career self-management

Build realistic self-assessment, transferable-skills mapping, career goals, time management, coping with change and planning for lateral moves or reduced workloads.

Priority 4 — Communication and employability

Develop confidence in communicating professional value, networking, recruitment conversations, intergenerational teamwork, feedback and mentoring.

Priority 5 — Inclusive learning conditions

Assess starting skills, device access and job tasks; use supportive pacing, repeated exercises, low-stakes practice, accessible materials and follow-up after training.

9. What the findings mean for Silver Careers and adult learning

For the Silver Careers partnership, the evidence identifies five connected content areas rather than an isolated technical curriculum: everyday digital independence; safe and critical AI use; adaptation and career self-management; communication and presentation of professional experience; and job-specific application. These areas emerge from employer and intermediary experiences across the sample, but their relative importance varies by occupation and individual starting point.

A central implication for adult learning is differentiation. Someone who already uses complex workplace systems may benefit more from AI evaluation or career transition skills, while another learner may first need repeated practice with files, authentication and forms. The interviews also indicate that workplace application matters: digital confidence is more likely to develop when a person can perform the actual task with guidance and then repeat it independently. The findings therefore provide a grounded basis for selecting realistic workshop scenarios and interpreting subsequent participant feedback, rather than prescribing one fixed training route for everyone aged 55+.

10. Conclusions

The 18 interviews illustrate a workforce-development challenge that is simultaneously technological and organisational. Employers increasingly rely on digital systems for everyday work, but the barriers encountered by older employees are not uniform and cannot be explained by age alone. Professional experience remains highly valued, while new systems, digital administration and emerging AI create a continuing need for learning. The ability to adapt, recognise existing skills and navigate career changes is as important as knowledge of individual applications.

Country and sector differences are meaningful but must be interpreted in context. Latvian interviews offer detailed accounts of digital administration and role adaptation; Estonian interviews illuminate sector-specific work processes and communication; Finnish interviews bring stronger labour-market intermediary perspectives on job search and transferable skills. These differences reflect the composition of the interview material and do not establish statistically representative national rankings.

The strongest overall finding is that effective workforce development must connect skills to actual tasks, recognise accumulated expertise and create supportive conditions for learning. For employers, adult-learning providers and public stakeholders, the interviews provide concrete examples of where digital transformation meets career sustainability for workers aged 55 and over.

Interpretive boundary: the analysis is based on 18 qualitative interviews, some edited or translated and some drawn from imperfect transcripts. Workforce figures are self-reported, sometimes approximate or unit-specific. The report does not infer missing numbers, pool incompatible employee shares or claim national representativeness.